

Naomi Even-Aberle

4/10/2017 | VCFA - 1st Semester | Mailing #2

Channon, Alex, and Christopher R. Matthews. *Global Perspectives on Women in Combat Sports: Women Warriors Around the World.* , 2015. Print.

"I'm Not the Type of Person Who Does Yoga": Women, "Hard" Martial Arts and the Quest for Exciting Significance; an UK professional athletes interview study conducted by Mark Mierzwinski and Catherine Phipps from 2014-2015.

This text is an expanded study regarding women's increased participation in "Hard" (Muay Thai and MMA) martial arts, and their quest for exciting significance within the sport. Mierzwinski and Phipps define Muay Thai and MMA as sports that include Mimetic violence as a part of the training and competitive routines, which is a simulation that puts the physical, emotional and mental strength of the athlete to the test in a socially acceptable arena/context. These Hard martial arts are spaces in which women can socially experience and engage in emotions and physical behaviors that are typically associated with masculinity, and not femininity.

The participating athlete's original motivations for joining a martial art included fitness, self-defense and self-identifying as a "tom-boy" or one of the "guys". However each athlete switched from a "Soft" martial art to a "Hard" martial art in order to experience the mimetic violence associated with sports such as Muay Thai and MMA. A primary reason was that the Hard martial arts allowed the women to challenge certain conventions of femininity through accentuating their ability to be aggressive physically, mentally and emotionally; without apology. Training sessions helped create spaces for tension balances through the election of emotions such as; fear, anxiety, anger, and joy. Creating a whole new state of consciousness and community for the participants.

By participating in sex-integrated training the athlete were able to develop new communities around shared-pain, and shared-social practice. One athlete stated, "*You all know what each other are going through...you know the stuff that you put your body through*".

The quest for exciting significance led to the idea of martial arts athleticism; the achievement of a body of strength, speed, endurance, hardness. A body that can give and receive pain regardless of sex. For female practitioners this is a quest for equality, control over their bodies and self-definition.