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Global Perspectives on Women in Combat Sports

Women Warriors around the World

Edited by

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University of Greenwich, UK

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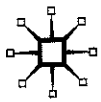

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Notes

1. A traditional approach is defined as emphasising unity and coordination between internal (e.g. spiritual and mental) and external (e.g. physical) elements.
2. An efficiency approach is defined as emphasising the efficient application of techniques in a 'real' fight. Martial arts, as per this approach, are mainly practised for self-defence reasons.

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Outlaw Emotions: Gender, Emotion and Transformation in Women's Self-Defence Training

Jocelyn A. Hollander

Thirty women stand in a circle in a large room at the university's recreation centre. The room is lined with padded mats; sunlight filters through the high windows. The women look nervous: many have their arms crossed or held protectively around their bodies; others stand on one leg, making themselves smaller. There is occasional quiet talking, punctuated by long moments of anxious silence.

The teacher, a small, dark-haired woman in black pants and t-shirt, calls the class to attention. 'Welcome to women's self-defence,' she says. Over the next three hours, she leads the group through a series of exercises designed to teach women the verbal and physical skills that will allow them to prevent and resist assault. On this first day, the students are tentative. When the students are asked to introduce themselves, many say their names quietly or as a question ('My name is Karen?'); the teacher asks them to say them again as a confident statement, taking up verbal space. She teaches them to yell 'NO!' as both a self-defence strategy and a way of giving power to physical moves. At first their voices are not loud, but by the end of the exercise the room echoes with the collective force of their yells. She demonstrates the first physical skill: a back elbow strike in which the bony part of the defender's elbow connects with an assailant's nose or solar plexus. The students practice this move in the air, then in slow motion with a partner and finally full force against a pad. Some students jump into the task with enthusiasm; others are reluctant to strike with any force at all, even when encouraged by the instructor.

Ten weeks later, the class meets for the last time. The women come into the room talking and laughing. When they practice verbal skills, such as

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The term 'outlaw emotions' is borrowed from Alison Jaggar's important work, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology' (1989).

saying 'no' to a persistent acquaintance during a role-play, they are able to keep their faces serious; their words are clear and assertive, and the mock assailant backs off. When it comes time to practice physical skills, nearly all the women in the room emanate toughness and power. Several assistants hold striking pads and heavy bags at different 'stations' around the room; the students begin at one station, practicing an arm strike or kick, then run to the next station to practice a new skill. The students use the full force of their bodies and yell powerfully as they strike; in many cases, the assistants are driven back across the room by the power of their blows. In the final drill, a student stands alone at one end of the room with her eyes closed. Four assistants approach her, each holding a large pad. One taps her on the shoulder with the pad, representing the initiation of an assault. The student's eyes open and she yells forcefully 'NO!' as she turns to strike the pad with the heel of her hand. Then another assistant approaches her, holding a different pad at shoulder level. The student turns her attention to that pad and executes several elbow strikes. A third assistant approaches, holding a heavy punching bag on the floor. The student kicks the bag several times, holding her hands up to protect her face and yelling all the while. The other students, clustered around the defender in a large circle, encourage her with their own yells and applause. The student drops to the ground, her legs poised to strike and her hands protecting her face. She kicks the bag and pads powerfully as the assistants take turns approaching her. Finally, one of the assistants drops her pad on the ground, symbolizing the end of the assault. The defender strikes the pad with a forceful axe kick, then leaps to her feet and runs back to join the rest of the class, to the cheers of her classmates.

Empowerment-based self-defence training (Telsey, 2001; Thompson, 2014) has distinctive features that differentiate it from both self-defence classes for men and other martial arts and combat sports training. Most obvious is its focus on the kinds of assaults that women are most likely to suffer, especially sexual assault. For example, women's self-defence classes often include both strategies to deflect the early stages of assault, which might entail setting clear verbal boundaries, and techniques for resisting physical assault, including rape. Women's self-defence classes are concerned with the real-world assaults that women suffer at the hands of strangers or acquaintances, not controlled sparring or grappling in a class or tournament context. They tend to be time-limited, lasting hours or weeks, rather than continuous practice. Their focus is not on form but on impact, and 'dirty fighting' strategies that might disable, maim or kill an assailant are discussed as appropriate in extreme circumstances. The strategies taught in a comprehensive women's self-defence class are not solely physical, but also include awareness, verbal self-defence, boundary-setting, and de-escalation. Finally, empowerment-based self-defence training discusses violence against women and self-defence in their social context, including gender inequality and the differential gender socialization that can make resisting violence psychologically challenging for women.

Women who complete this kind of self-defence training often report that the experience is transformational. As one participant in my research asked, in response to my question about how learning self-defence had affected her everyday life, 'Is there any way it hasn't?' (Zoe, post-class survey response).[1] Although self-defence training is nominally focused on learning the skills to defend oneself against violence, students report deep and enduring effects on their relationships, sense of self, everyday interactions and aspirations (McCaughey, 1997; Rentschler, 1999; Hollander, 2004).

Past research has examined this transformation principally in terms of changes in elements of cognition such as self-efficacy (e.g. Ozer and Bandura, 1990; Weitlauf et al., 2001) and in embodied experience (McCaughey, 1997). I focus in this chapter on a third element: emotion. I use data from a longitudinal, mixed-method study of women enrolled in a self-defence class to explore the central role of emotion in the experience of learning self-defence. I demonstrate that the transformation women experience in self-defence classes is not only cognitive and physical, but also emotional.

More broadly, I argue that these data provide a window on the process of change in gender expectations and practices. Currently dominant social constructionist theories of gender have been criticized for their tendency to focus on gender stability (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009): for example, how do people learn to do gender appropriately, and how are gender boundaries and inequalities enforced? Much less attention has been paid to questions of gender change, and, in particular, *how* change occurs. How do people come to understand and accomplish gender differently, and how might these individual and interactional shifts contribute to large-scale change in the meaning and practice of gender?

In addressing these questions, I take a 'doing gender' approach (Fenstermaker and West, 2002; West and Zimmerman, 1987). This ethnomethodologically-based conception of gender argues that gender is not an individual attribute, but an interactional accomplishment. According to West and Zimmerman, 'the key to understanding gender's doing is... *accountability to sex category membership*' (2009, p. 116). People shape their behaviour in response to the knowledge that others will evaluate it against gendered expectations. These expectations are not simply static gender 'roles' or norms that exist outside of social relationships. Rather, they are dynamic, situational and inherently interactional. Accountability is the engine for doing gender: people behave in appropriately gendered ways because they imagine that if they do not, others will judge their gender performance as unacceptable, and social consequences may follow (see Hollander, 2013 for a fuller discussion of accountability).

Past research in the 'doing gender' tradition has tended to focus on behaviour – on observable actions, utterances and interactions. However,

emotion is also part of gendered expectations. For example, women are expected to feel fear in 'risky' situations, and to articulate that fear by refusing to travel alone or by asking for a (preferably male) escort when walking alone at night. Meeting these expectations, through the emotional experience and the interactional display of fear, helps to maintain gender and gender inequality (Fields et al., 2006).

Research on emotion work fits well with the doing gender perspective's focus on accountability. According to Hochschild (1979, 1983), societal 'feeling rules' articulate the type, duration and extent of feeling appropriate in a given situation. Paralleling West et al.'s conceptualization of gender accountability, people manage their emotions to conform to these feeling rules because they anticipate social sanctions. Importantly, these feeling rules are gendered: some emotions are considered more appropriate for men, and others for women (Brody and Hall, 2000). Shields (2002) argues that men and women display particular emotions in order to confirm to others that they are competent men and women. At the same time, their experience of particular gendered emotions confirms to themselves that they are indeed masculine or feminine.

This approach makes clear that emotions are key to the construction and maintenance of inequality. Emotion displays help communicate individuals' positions in systems of social inequality (Clark, 1987; Fields et al., 2006; Shields et al., 2006). These are social processes; individuals both claim their own position and attempt to evoke or suppress particular emotions in others (Thoits, 1996) in order to achieve interpersonal goals. Moreover, 'identity work', or 'the work people do individually and collectively to signify who they are, who they want to be, and how they expect others to treat them' (Fields et al., 2006, p. 164), is an emotional as well as a cognitive and behavioural process. Emotions help convey identity claims, as well as responses to those claims.

While the emotion literature has enriched our understanding of doing gender, it has not fully addressed the question of how gender can change. I argue below that if 'appropriately' doing gendered emotion reproduces gender, then changes in gendered emotional expression have the potential to change gender. The example of women's self-defence training illustrates how this change can occur. Self-defence training affects both the emotions women experience and the emotions they see as possible and appropriate for women. It encourages the experience and expression of 'outlaw emotions', which, according to philosopher Alison Jaggar,

> enable us to perceive the world differently from its portrayal in conventional descriptions. They may provide the first indications that something is wrong with the way alleged facts have been constructed, with accepted understandings of how things are... [They] may lead us to make subversive observations that challenge dominant conceptions of the status quo.
> (Jaggar, 1989, p. 167)

These shifts affect not only students' own experiences, but their understanding and practice of gender.

While I focus on emotion in this chapter, it is clearly impossible to disentangle emotion from cognition, on the one hand, and behaviour, on the other. Emotional expectations, beliefs about how one *should* feel, link cognition and emotion. Changes in emotional gender expectations derive from new ways of thinking about men, women and gender, and these changes are both felt and expressed in behaviour. In this chapter, however, I confine my focus to emotion to emphasize its importance for understanding how people do gender in interaction. I turn now to a discussion of the research project.

Methods

The data analysed here are of three types. First, I analyse survey responses from 118 women who enrolled in a women's self-defence class at a state university in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Students completed written surveys at the beginning of the class, immediately after completing the class, and approximately one year after finishing the class. Survey questions included both pre-existing scales and original measures focusing on safety strategies, perceived self-efficacy, fear, perceptions of danger and beliefs about violence. Although the survey included a range of closed-ended questions, I focus here on a series of open-ended questions that asked participants to reflect on their perceptions of themselves, their experiences in the self-defence class and how the class had affected their lives. Complementing these survey data are in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 self-defence students that focused on participants' experiences in the class and their perceptions of how learning self-defence had affected their lives. I supplement these data with field notes from my participant observation of one full term of the class.

The self-defence class was offered through the Women's and Gender Studies Program as an academic, four-credit class that met weekly for three hours; students also participated in small weekly discussion groups led by assistants. Approximately half of each class period focused on physical self-defence skills, which students practiced in slow motion against a partner and then full-force against large pads. The remainder of the time was divided between brief lectures, group discussion and practice of verbal self-defence skills. The class fit the criteria for effective self-defence classes laid out by the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCASA, 2010) and was similar to other feminist self-defence classes offered throughout the US (e.g. see Rentschler, 1999; Thompson, 2014).

Of the approximately 180 enrolled in the class over six terms, 118 women volunteered to participate in the survey component of the research and completed the first survey during the first week of the term. Of these, 96 (81%) completed the second survey at the end of the class, and 70 (73% of those

who completed the post-class survey) completed the follow-up survey one year later.[2] Participants ranged in age from 18 to 37, with a mean age of 21.5 years. 89% were white, 8% were Asian and Pacific Islander, 7% were Latina and 3% were Native American; this distribution was similar to the demographics of the university as a whole. 29% of participants reported a prior experience that met the legal definition of rape; another 17% reported an attempted rape. These percentages were not significantly different from those reported by a group of similar women enrolled in other classes at the same university (Hollander, 2010).

College students are of course not representative of all US women; on average they are younger, wealthier and more likely to be white. However, college students are one of the major constituencies for women's self-defence training: many self-defence classes are offered on college campuses, and they are at particularly high risk for sexual assault (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). College is also a time of tremendous development for students, and therefore is a moment at which gender change may be particularly visible. While gender is likely to evolve throughout the life course, the rapid rate of development during college may make such change especially clear. It is important, however, to recognize that a more diverse group of participants might report different experiences of self-defence training (see, e.g. Speidel, 2014).

To analyse the qualitative data, I read through a subset of the data and developed a coding scheme that systematized the wide variety of emotions mentioned by students or instructors. These included emotions experienced as positive (e.g. calm, pride, confidence, excitement), as negative (e.g. fear, anxiety or shame) and as neutral or mixed (e.g. awareness, fatigue or simply 'mixed feelings'). I then coded all the data based on this scheme. I read and reread excerpts identified with particular emotion codes to detect both patterns and exceptions, and then returned to the full transcripts and field notes to place these excerpts in context. I quote below from the interview transcripts, open-ended survey responses and field notes. Quotes were selected to be representative of multiple participants' comments and sentiments.

Emotional transformations

In the sections below, I describe four ways that women's emotional experiences and expressions changed as a result of participation in the self-defence class. Some of these changes were explicitly encouraged by the self-defence teacher; others arose more organically as the participants experienced the various discussions and exercises in class, and took this new knowledge out into the world. All were part of the 'emotional pedagogy' of the class, which told participants 'what and how to feel and what to do in light of those feelings' (Gould, 2009, p. 28). I use these data to theorize about the role of emotion in gender change.

Controlling fear

Perhaps the most obvious change in women's emotional experience after taking a self-defence class is a decrease in both the quantity and quality of fear.[3] As one student said,

> [Before I took the class,] I didn't feel safe ever walking by myself... I just never felt safe on my own. And... directly from taking this class and reading the readings about women who had survived an attack, gotten out of it, whatever, and through role playing and stuff, I feel so much more confident now. And I'm still aware and I'm still wary of places and people, but I'm not as afraid anymore. It's more like, OK, well, if this person is going to attack me, they're going to have a fight on their hands. So it's definitely made me more confident in my ability to protect myself.
>
> (Sarah, interview one month after completing the class)

By the end of the class, nearly all participants reported experiencing much less fear than they had prior to taking the class. Of those who completed the post-class survey, 98% answered 'yes' to the question, 'Has this class decreased your fear of violence?' In addition, as Sarah's quote above demonstrates, the *quality* of women's fear changes as well. Prior to taking the self-defence class, fear was diffuse and omnipresent; as Sarah says, 'I just never felt safe on my own.' After learning self-defence, however, she is cautious rather than fearful. She does not dismiss the risk of violence, but her fear is more measured, and tempered with the knowledge that she has the skills to respond. Both the decrease in fear and the change in its quality represent a fundamental change in women's emotional experiences of the world.

How does this change occur? Three elements of the self-defence class seemed especially important. First is simply the information presented in the class. Students learn that most assaults against women are perpetrated by acquaintances or intimates, that few involve weapons, and that most entail little physical injury beyond the sexual assault itself (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). Students also learn that resistance is both common and successful: in the majority of attempted rapes, the intended target fights back and is able to stop or escape the assault (Ullman, 2007). For example, one student commented that,

> [The instructor] did a really good job too of giving us a lot of reading material that was success stories. Which is good, because when you read the paper or something, you always hear of, you know, women getting murdered. You never hear of women fighting off their attacker.
>
> (Irene, interview one month after completing the class)

These success stories present alternative narratives for sexual assault, which, together with the factual information presented in the class, make the case that women can and often do successfully resist violence. Many women reported previously being unaware of this reality, perhaps because incidents of successful self-defence are rarely represented in news reports, giving the impression that men who intend to rape women are all but unstoppable (Heath, Gordon, and LeBailly, 1981; Hollander and Rodgers, 2014).

Second, the visceral, embodied experience of the self-defence class was also key to women's decreasing fear (McCaughey, 1997). As one woman wrote, 'I loved doing the physical exercises and realizing the amount of power I had in myself.' (Cass, post-class survey) In addition, simply watching their classmates learn and practice self-defence moves challenges the belief that women are weak and must therefore be fearful. Instead, students learn that women of all ages, sizes and physical abilities can defend themselves. As one student remarked, 'I was astonished to see how women I perceived to be meek or small were able to defend themselves very effectively. Any woman can be strong.' (Valerie, follow-up survey) Self-defence students develop a new belief that resistance is possible, not only for athletes and superheroes, but for ordinary women like themselves.

Finally, women learn effective practical skills for resisting assault. In part, this is a matter of simply knowing what to do. Every class session included instruction in both verbal and physical skills that women could use to protect themselves. Instructors demonstrated the skills, students practiced them out loud (in the case of verbal skills) and against heavy bags and mats (in the case of physical skills), and finally used them in realistic role-playing scenarios. Mastering these skills produced profound changes in women's emotional experience:

> [Q: Do you think that this class will affect how you would defend yourself in the future if you were attacked?] Oh yeah. Definitely. Because when I thought about [being attacked] before, I mean I wasn't unaware that I could be attacked. I just didn't know how to defend myself. So I was really super scared of like [someone] jumping out of the bushes or whatever... Like, before I took the class, I would think about, OK, well, if I were attacked, what would I do? And I couldn't think of anything besides just submitting and trying to be as passive as possible so that they didn't hurt me. I was like, if I fight back they're just going to hurt me more. And now I don't think that way at all... Now if I were attacked, I would have so much at my disposal, like physical moves, or I'd know to look around for something to grab... So definitely, how I would defend myself has changed so much... And I didn't even think about that before. I was just scared.
>
> (Sarah, interview one month after completing the class)

Simply learning concrete strategies for what to do in an assault allows women to feel some sense of control over the possibility of assault. Girls and women have few models for effective self-defence. In movies and television, for example, they often see women powerless in the face of men's violence (McCaughey and King, 1995). In the face of these images, women see few alternatives if assaulted: they may freeze, try to talk him out of it, attempt to resist (though with little hope that the resistance will be effective) or submit. If these are one's only options, fear is a logical response. In self-defence class, however, women learn an arsenal of strategies for defending against assault. As a result, students report that their fear no longer dominates their consciousness. As one woman commented, 'The fear is still there, but now I know I can do something' (Leah, post-class survey).

Evoking anger

It is clear from the quotes above that students' fear is replaced by a sense of confidence in their physical ability to defend themselves, a finding that has been well documented by other research on self-defence (Hollander, 2004, 2014; McCaughey, 1997; Ozer and Bandura, 1990; Weitlauf et al., 2001). Some students also mentioned feeling anger after taking a self-defence class. These comments were notable because anger is the single emotion most closely associated with men and masculinity in US society. For women, however, anger is an 'outlaw emotion' (Jaggar, 1989, p. 166), one which does not conform to the gendered emotion norms of a given situation (Shields, 2002).

Participants reported experiencing two kinds of anger. First, there is anger experienced in a specific situation when confronted by someone who intends harm. This is what self-defence handbooks mean by turning 'fear into anger' (Bateman, 1978): women learn to react to potential threats not with fear, but with outrage. This emotional transformation was clearly visible during class sessions, when students were encouraged to forcefully yell 'No!' or other expressions of resistance as they practiced physical techniques. This anger was further crystallized during the closing ritual used at the end of many class sessions, when the instructor asked students to form a circle, think of something that had been troubling them, visualize that thing in the centre of the circle and powerfully yell 'No!' towards it while performing strikes in the air.

The second type of anger focuses on the social conditions that facilitate sexual assault. In feminist self-defence classes, women learn a great deal about the social factors that encourage violence, on the one hand, and discourage resistance, on the other. For example, they learn about gender socialization, which encourages women to be polite, passive and attuned more to others' needs and desires than to their own – all patterns that can put women at risk and discourage resistance to assault.

In the class I observed, the instructor discussed these gendered expectations at nearly every session. For example, during the second class she

introduced the metaphor of a flower to illustrate the effects of gender expectations on women. From my field notes:

> F [the instructor] asked students to imagine a flower. The flower is what women and girls are supposed to be: the ideal woman, nice girl, prettier, better. F asked, 'What are the characteristics of this flower?' Students volunteered: smells good, delicate, quiet, small, vulnerable, not useful, fragile, selfless, sexy yet virginal. F: 'What happens if you have a flower with petals and leaves but no roots?' Students: It dies. F: Roots are other ways women can be. What are these? Students: Strong, loud, assertive, smart, proud, mean, selfish, demanding, angry.... We got up and got into a circle. We went around the circle saying our names 'like the flower,' with everyone repeating/mimicking it back. Then we did it again, but this time said our names 'like the roots of the flower,' again with reflection from others. Very powerful exercise: we saw that the 'flower way' doesn't take up space, makes the self small.

Feminist self-defence training thus encourages women to understand their experiences and observations as socially patterned. This reframing creates the conditions where anger can arise (Hercus, 1999).

The emotion of anger has two cognitive prerequisites. First is a sense of entitlement: 'the expectation that one ought to receive or retain something that one values' (Shields, 2002, p. 140). Anger ensues when one believes one's rights have been violated. With sexual assault, what is violated are women's rights (as individuals and as a social group) to bodily integrity and self-determination. As one woman commented,

> [What was most important about the self-defence class] was just someone saying, 'You can love yourself and you deserve this and you should be able to do this and not be afraid, and this is your right.' And it was like, whoa, you're right. I *should* be able to be in a working environment and not be uncomfortable about the men around me and what they say. I shouldn't have to just watch what I say, how I act or anything.
>
> (Rachel, interview immediately after the end of the class)

Prior to learning self-defence, many women do not believe they have these rights. They take violation by men, whether emotional or physical, for granted; it is something that just happens (Hlavka, 2014). Anger did not surface in the past, for many students, because they did not believe they were entitled to safety and physical and emotional integrity. Their status as women meant that they were inevitably vulnerable to men's violence; they took the gendered social structure for granted.

Learning self-defence changes this belief and provides a new frame for understanding violence against women. They no longer see men's violence

against women as inevitable and natural, and start to believe that they (and all women) have the right to live free from violence. When this right is violated – or when they think about the fact that violation is taken for granted in this culture – they become angry. As two interviewees argued,

> Why do we even have to defend ourselves in the first place? You know? And I think that's one of the most frustrating things about it, is that we're taking this class on self-defence, but we shouldn't have to. We have the right to feel safe twenty-four hours a day, and we don't.
>
> (Karen, interview six months after the end of the class)

> [I learned] that I have the right to be angry and to be fierce about taking care of myself, and that I can hurt someone else if I need to and there is no reason to worry about how someone else perceives me if they are not caring about my feelings.
>
> (Melissa, post-class survey)

Although not all participants expressed this kind of anger, many discussed in less charged language a new understanding of their right to be safe.

The second cognitive prerequisite for anger is a sense of self-efficacy. According to Shields (2002), anger is based not only on a sense that things *should* be different, but also that they *could* be different, and that one has the ability to make them so. Many studies of self-defence training have found that women overwhelmingly report feeling better able to defend themselves from violence after taking a self-defence class (e.g. Cermele, 2004; Hollander, 2004, 2014; Ozer and Bandura, 1990). Moreover, this sense of self-efficacy extends into a wide variety of everyday life situations (Weitlauf et al., 2001).

These two changes together create the conditions in which anger becomes possible. Before taking a self-defence class, many women have neither the sense of entitlement nor the self-efficacy necessary to produce anger. By teaching women that violence against women is not inevitable, by deconstructing the social conditions that facilitate it, and by viscerally demonstrating that women have the ability to defend themselves, feminist self-defence training challenges women's beliefs about gender and allows anger to develop.

Transforming shame into pride

Also present in women's narratives about self-defence training are the twinned emotions of shame and pride. This discourse is focused primarily on women's bodies. Women report that whereas they previously felt ashamed of their bodies, they now feel proud of them and what they can do.

Body-focused shame has long been a theme of the scholarly literature on women. Many US women (and especially white, middle-class women, as most of these students were) view their bodies as objects of decoration

and others' desire (Brumberg, 1997). The constantly shifting and unattainable beauty standards promulgated by media and consumer industries cause many women to feel shame about their bodies. Because of the identification of body with self (Furman, 1997), this shame translates into shame about one's self.

In addition, women typically see their bodies as a source of vulnerability (Hollander, 2004). In a society that values self-sufficiency and independence, women's bodies are believed to make them dependent on others and therefore less than full human beings and citizens. This dependence is itself a source of shame. The sense that women are 'less than' may also contribute to notions of female inferiority; if women cannot take care of themselves, how can they be as competent as men?

Learning self-defence helps deconstruct these notions. Women move from thinking of their bodies as ornamental objects that produce vulnerability and dependence, to something that has agency and can protect them (McCaughey, 1997). For example, more than half of the participants indicated on the follow-up survey that learning self-defence had affected the way they felt about their bodies. In response to a follow-up question about how the self-defence class had changed their sense of their bodies, many noted that they now see their bodies as a source of strength rather than vulnerability:

> I feel that I can depend on my body more.
>
> (Dana, post-class survey)

> I am a small girl and have often felt weak, but I feel more capable now.
>
> (Erica, post-class survey)

> I view my body less as a trophy and more as a tool for survival.
>
> (Katherine, follow-up survey)

These transformations in women's conceptions of their bodies result in an emotional shift from shame to pride. Women report that before taking the class, they felt embarrassed about their bodies. After learning self-defence, in contrast, they view their bodies with pride and self-love:

> I used to feel uncomfortable taking up space because I'm bigger, but now I don't.
>
> (Meredith, interview six months after the end of the class)

> I have always been self-conscious, but this class has given me a stronger ability to love my body and all female bodies for what they look like and to appreciate my body for what it can do, the strength that I have in my ability to produce physical moves.
>
> (Anna, post-class survey)

> I feel more at ease with my body, and more proud of its strength.
>
> (Victoria, post-class survey)

> I am perfect the way that I am. Women are all different shapes and sizes and we should love our bodies and what they are.
>
> (Holly, follow-up survey)

This is a remarkable transformation to occur as the result of a single class, and one that represents significant gender transgression. Women are expected to feel and express criticism, dislike and shame about their own bodies; loving one's body and taking pleasure in one's greater size and strength are far from normative. Importantly, this shift has occurred in students' perceptions not simply of themselves as individuals, but of *all* women; this is a change in understandings of gender, not just self.

Moving from anxiety to confidence

The final pattern of emotion change involves a shift from anxiety to confidence in students' social interactions. Students' comments suggested that before taking the self-defence class, they felt a pervasive sense of anxiety, centred on worrying about others' feelings and perceptions. For example, many interviewees reported that at the beginning of the term, they worried about publicly practicing physical moves in the self-defence class:

> When we first did the floor exercises, I was very nervous and I was very scared, because I didn't want other people to see me. It's so stupid, but I didn't want people to see me doing these moves. If I messed up or if I looked stupid, you know, I was so concerned about how I looked at that time.
>
> (Hannah, interview six months after the end of the class)

Students also reported experiencing anxiety in interactions with friends, strangers and intimates. They described feeling trapped in unwanted interactions, being unable to speak up when uncomfortable and feeling compelled to allow others to invade their space or touch their bodies.

These anxieties stem in part from socialization into 'nice girl' or nurturing femininity (Fox, 1977). Normative gender ideals require women to be concerned for the feelings of others, accommodating to their needs and responsible for their emotional states. In the context of a mutually caring relationship, these feelings are socially functional. But with people intent on harm, or who have only their own self-interest at heart, they can put women at risk. When women's attention is focused on others, they may not notice warning signs of possible assault, and may hesitate to respond to the initial stages of an attack because they fear embarrassing themselves, offending the

perpetrator, or damaging social relationships (Norris et al., 1996; Rozee and Koss, 2001).

Research participants reported that learning self-defence shifted their focus from others' feelings to their own. The instructor repeatedly suggested that when in an uncomfortable situation, instead of wondering, 'what will he think of me?' that students ask themselves, 'what do *I* think of *him*?' She also suggested that students weigh the risk of social embarrassment against the risk of assault. Students spoke eloquently of the changes this reframing had produced in their consciousness:

> Now I'm more in tune with myself and knowing what I want. I know what I want when I'm in a relationship with a man and I'm more comfortable and easy to say it, and more able to say yes or no... [Before I took self-defence], I was never once thinking about myself or what I actually wanted or anything. And so I definitely don't do that now, and I just care more about myself and care less about being in a relationship or not being in a relationship. But I care more about the relationship with myself and how I view myself and how I love myself.
>
> (Rachel, interview immediately after the end of the class)

In the past, Rachel says, she 'never once' thought about her own desires; her attention was focused entirely outside herself. After completing the self-defence class, she reports that she now attends to her own desires and standards; her emotional expectations have undergone a radical reorientation.

Beyond simply refocusing attention on their own feelings, students learn that they do not have to obey feminine feeling rules, such as feeling obligated to please others, worrying about appearing rude and worrying about others' reactions. This was clear both in brief responses to survey questions about how self-defence had affected their lives and in longer statements during the interviews:

> I feel more entitled to be assertive and maintain my boundaries, whereas I used to feel I was being rude.
>
> (Valerie, post-class survey)

> It [the self-defence class] just gives you respect about yourself, and saying you don't have to submit to all these people. If you want to do something, fine. If you don't, that's all right too. And it's telling you just basically you don't have to be submissive, it's okay to take your space. And that's what's really important, because I think a lot of women feel like people own parts of their bodies, or have rights to like, hold their hand or touch their hair or things like that... This class is like, 'No, it's your body, and they don't have any right.'
>
> (Nora, interview half-way through the class)

Self-defence training helps women re-centre their attention from others to themselves, and especially importantly, changes their emotional expectations so that they now 'feel okay' about doing so. This challenges one of the strongest requirements of gender relations: that women be emotionally available to others, even at their own expense. Women's anxiety about failing to please others is replaced by a sense of confidence that they have the right and the ability to shape interaction to meet their own, as well as others', needs.

Conclusions

Women report that before taking the self-defence class they felt fearful, ashamed of themselves and their bodies, and anxious about social situations. These are all normative emotions; women are *expected* to feel afraid of men's violence, ashamed of their inevitably imperfect bodies and worried about others' feelings and perceptions. This is not to say, of course, that women always *do* display (or feel) these emotions. Rather, women are always potentially accountable to others for their emotions (Fields et al., 2006; Hollander, 2013; Shields, 2002). When they appropriately express these emotions, they enjoy smooth social interaction; should they fail to conform to these norms – for example, by insisting that they feel comfortable walking alone after dark, by failing to take part in women's self-denigrating appearance talk, or by refusing to make others comfortable in interaction – they may suffer social penalties. In this way, my analysis here fits well with the doing gender perspective, which sees women (and, of course, men) as being constantly at risk of gender assessment (Fenstermaker and West, 2002; West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Taking a self-defence class transforms gendered emotions. Women report feeling new emotions, particularly self-confidence, anger, pride and self-respect. Even when previously-felt emotions persist, like fear of violence, their meaning changes because of the new skills and information they have learned. And, it is not just the *experience* of emotion that changes: students also report feeling confident that these new emotions are possible and appropriate for them as women. In other words, their *expectations* for their own emotions – and for women's emotions more generally – change. Self-defence training decreases the perceived rewards of conformity to normative expectations, as well as the perceived costs of resistance – though of course, it does not entirely change them (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004). While women recognize they may still be held accountable to normative emotional expectations, their reevaluation of the belief system underlying these expectations causes this threat to lose some of its power. As Gould writes, 'outlaw emotions can help to unravel hegemonic ideologies' (2009, p. 41).

These changes in emotion are, at root, changes in beliefs about both sex and gender. Fear arises out of the belief that vulnerability and powerlessness

are inherent to women's bodies. Shame stems from women's perception that they, and their female bodies, are inadequate. Social anxiety is rooted in gendered beliefs about women as nurturers and caretakers. When these beliefs are challenged, new emotions – and new understandings and enactments of gender – are possible. As a result of learning self-defence, women do gender differently.

While the changes that self-defence classes produce may seem individual, they have implications for the collective level as well. The interactional enactment of gender both responds to cultural norms and expectations and reinscribes the gendered social structure (Fenstermaker and West, 2002; West and Zimmerman, 2009). For example, women's performance of gendered fear reinforces men's perceived and actual dominance, not only in everyday interactions but in the structures of family, work and politics (Fields et al., 2006; Shields et al., 2006). Fear leads women to constrain their lives (e.g. by not going out alone, by not engaging in activities they want to do, or by asking others to accompany them for protection), which increases their dependence on others and limits their participation in public life. In addition, it helps reconfirm the perception of women and men as two substantively and significantly different categories, thus legitimating gender inequality.

As they learn self-defence, women begin to perceive the social world in different ways. They feel differently about themselves and their interactions, and their gendered behaviour changes as a result. These new patterns, while originating with the individual, can have collective consequences. Individual acts of resistance or transgression can embolden others to behave similarly, can reshape social interaction and can encourage institutional change (Deutsch, 2007; Hollander, 2013; Martin, 2004).

Examining emotion, I suggest, both expands our understanding of how gender functions and illuminates how gender can change. Emotions play a central role in how women and men do gender, and they are a key element of gender relations and structures. When gendered emotion norms shift, older expectations lose their power and new ones take their place; this allows new gendered behaviour and interaction to occur. By changing women's emotional experiences and expectations – both for themselves and for others – self-defence training both leads people to understand and accomplish gender differently, and lays the groundwork for large-scale change in the meaning and practice of gender. In this way, women's self-defence training is potentially transformative, not only for the women who complete it, but also for their interactions, their communities and society as a whole.

Appendix: Participants Quoted

Name	Year in School	Age	Race
Anna	Senior	21	White
Cass	Senior	21	White
Dana	Senior	22	White
Erica	Senior	22	White
Hannah	Junior	20	Asian
Holly	Senior	22	White
Irene	Senior	27	Did not self-identify
Karen	Junior	20	White
Katherine	Junior	23	White
Leah	Senior	24	White
Melissa	Senior	21	White
Meredith	Senior	21	White
Nora	Senior	20	White
Rachel	Sophomore	20	White/Hispanic
Sarah	Freshman	19	White
Valerie	Ph.D. student	22	White
Victoria	Senior	22	White
Zoe	Junior	20	White

Notes

1. Quotes included in this chapter have been edited for readability but are otherwise reproduced verbatim; all names are pseudonyms. See the Appendix for the demographic characteristics of participants quoted in this chapter.
2. Completion rates for the follow-up survey are low in large part because many students graduated from the university before the administration of the third survey and contacting them proved difficult.
3. Some women do report a short-term increase in fear while taking the class, due to their heightened awareness of sexual assault. However, this increase is generally temporary.