

# 'Do you hit girls?' Some striking moments in the career of a male martial artist

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## Abstract

This paper considers the phenomenon of sex-integrated martial arts training, adopting an auto-ethnographic perspective to outline the transformative potential of physical

cultural practices. By foregrounding the concept of habitus, the paper discusses how gendered dispositions are formed, reinforced, and at times challenged, throughout one's life course. Through a discussion of the author's own experiences of mixed-sex martial arts training, along with data drawn from observations and interviews with other martial artists, the suggestion is made that (men's) deeply-held, embodied dispositions and values might be challenged and transformed following experiences at the level of the body, such as 'being hit by girls', and indeed 'hitting girls', in the context of mixed-sex martial arts practice. The paper suggests that for scholars interested in the potential of sport and related physical activities for 'subverting' inequitable formations of gender, such phenomena as the transformative potential of sex integration are worth closer examination.

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