MINDFUL MOVEMENT AS A CURE FOR COLONIALISM

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This study investigated aikido, a martial art that emphasizes non-violent conflict resolution. After an extensive period of preliminary research including personal study of aikido and historiographical contextualization of aikido lore, fifteen aikido students and instructors were interviewed, and thirty-four students were observed during a total of sixty-four classes at two different aikido schools, each of which were led by female head instructors who taught a mixed-sex student body. Ethnographic data was analyzed from a multidisciplinary perspective that blends feminist cultural studies with decolonial and psychoanalytic theories. Connections between research participants’ understandings of the concept of power and their approaches to conflict resolution are explored. Participants described power as: physically internal, the ability to be grounded and centered, the ability to direct and re-direct energy, the ability to maintain awareness of one’s self and environment, and the ability to cultivate growth. Study participants’ sense of generative power resonated interpersonally through participants’ self-reported and observed conflict resolution strategies, which include: maintaining awareness of one’s environment, adjusting one’s posture through practices called centering and grounding, not fighting by turning (tenkan) and blending with one’s “opponent” while entering (irimi) the conflict with measured assertiveness, and maintaining a capacity for a wide range of reactions (ukemi). Participants demonstrated an ability to think about and productively engage with large-scale social conflicts (such as gender violence) by relying on philosophically and kinesthetically sophisticated understandings of links between the personal and the political. This is because the movement practice aikido challenges colonial ways of knowing by functioning as an embodied
meta-ideological deconstruction, one of several (r)evolutionary tactics discussed in decolonial feminist theory. This dissertation concludes with a meditation on the application of aikido philosophy to a practical deconstruction of the social institutions of contemporary American imperialism.
I dedicate this work to my mom and dad and all sentient beings.
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I am eternally grateful to all the people who have stood up for people’s rights to their own bodies. I was able to write this book because I did not have to get married and raise a family
instead of going to school. I especially thank my politically conscious foremothers for this highly valued personal freedom.

Most of all I want to thank all my haters. You’ve made my game tighter and for that I am deeply appreciative.

Though my mistakes are my own, my debts are many!

Gassho, Namaste, and Respect
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TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

The topic of this dissertation is a transcultural practice. The current study investigates the conflict-resolution strategies of long-term practitioners of a martial art called aikido. This study draws on field work conducted with a subcultural group located in a major metropolitan area on the West Coast of the United States of America. The martial art aikido is of Japanese origin. The interactions of a Japanese aesthetic practice and the North American social context combine to create an aesthetic practice that is neither Japanese nor American. Transcultural practices, such as the one studied in this dissertation, pose interesting challenges for one who would translate an idea from one place (or language, or way of knowing) to another.

Transcultural phenomena occur when and where multiple flows\(^1\) intersect. Transcultural research examines how meanings are changed in the context of contact with other meaning systems. In transcultural situations new meanings emerge from culturally complex situations. Cultural theorists Ellen Berry and Mikhail Epstein describe transcultural phenomena using a metaphor derived from the physics of light and sound. Transcultural phenomena are similar to the beats in a bell’s ring, or the rainbow colors emanating from a film of oil on water. In these instances, sound waves or light waves intersecting through a single point in space have the effect of creating their own wave pattern, distinct from the pattern that the waves would create if they were not traveling through the same location at the same time. “Two or more flows or waves interact in such a way that the amplitudes of the frequency either reinforce or neutralize each other – which corresponds to ‘constructive’ and ‘destructive’ interference – and the result is a

The theory of transcultural interference operates in a similar way but is found at the intersections of cultural waves rather than sound or light waves.

The words that I use to convey this research demand careful consideration. This study was conducted in English in a social context in which English was the primary language. All study participants were fluent English speakers. On several occasions, though, study participants spoke in Japanese. During classes, instructions were sometimes given in Japanese. Japanese terminology was used for moves, equipment, and movement principles. Much of the Japanese that is used reflects both the founder’s neologisms and English-speakers’ linguistic modifications (imagine a game of telephone that crosses both language and geographical barriers). Therefore, nothing about this practice is Japanese in a simple sense of the term, though it does borrow sincerely from Japanese aesthetic traditions. Many aikido practitioners in the United States of America, including myself, do not speak fluent Japanese. This creates a transcultural linguistic space in which translation is complex. I explicitly note that my translations in this study are from an embodied aesthetic practice into a narrative conveyed in English. This is slightly but importantly different than translations from Japanese language into English language.

Traditional academics would have me italicize foreign words, thereby marking them as Other and maintaining the boundaries of the English language. Certainly, I utilize many words that are not in common use in English, but I learned them all in primarily English speaking contexts. Some of my uncommon words come from aikido; some of my uncommon words come from cultural theory. I recognize that my language stretches the English language. Because

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stretching English is a deliberate and political choice, I do not italicize foreign words in this text but I do italicize phonemes where it is stylistically useful to do so.

Though my cultural theories may appear to be jargon (and perhaps sometimes are), they are much more than mere jargon. The specificity of terms is important. Though my English renditions of Japanese phrases and Ueshiba’s neologisms may appear to be an ideological colonization of Japanese aesthetic forms (and perhaps sometimes are), my renditions are much more than simply Orientalist appropriations. They are an investigation into a unique and potentially liminal language situation. Though the language used in this study may be difficult and contestable I urge the reader to join me in these linguistic stretches. The social and political significance of this word play is discussed further in chapter 7.
INTRODUCTION: DECOLONIAL FEMINIST CULTURAL STUDIES AND COUNTERHEGEMONIC EMBODIMENTS

This dissertation examines the martial art aikido as a counterhegemonic deconstruction of imperialism. The study topic, research methods, and analysis were all composed against the academic backdrop of decolonial feminist cultural studies. This interdisciplinary line of inquiry critically examines relationships between gender, sexuality, class, race, nation, and empire. Considering connections between the personal and the political, many cultural theorists turn their scholarly attention to the body as a nexus of intersections between various axes of identity. This is because it is upon the body that one’s position within the colonial order makes itself corporeal. Many scholars have explored relationships between the body and the inextricably related intersections of gender, sexuality, race, nation, and empire. Before proceeding with a discussion of the current study, it would be advantageous to define a few key terms and articulate the scholarly conversations that inspired the current study.

In the prologue to Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic, Chalmers Johnson offers a clear and straightforward definition of imperialism: “Imperialism means one nation

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imposing its will on others through the threat or actual use of force.”

Imperialism refers to the processes by which an empire attains and maintains colonies. Colonies are areas that have been invaded by occupying forces that pull resources from the colonies in order to sustain the empire. Colonialism refers to the processes by which colonies are attained and maintained. In some ways the distinction between imperialism and colonialism is merely semantic; the two terms can sometimes be used interchangeably because they describe similar and interrelated processes. At the same time, there are important nuances that emerge from a careful delineation of the two concepts.

In Johnson’s description of imperialism, the “threat or actual use of force” is an important factor. The processes of colonialism often feature this threat or actual use of force. Too, the processes of colonialism often feature a complicated psychological phenomenon called hegemony. Hegemony causes a colonial situation to appear to be consensual and therefore not properly imperial. Hegemony’s “manufactured consent” is often a function of people’s acceptance of (or inability to escape) the roles they have been assigned (into which they have been interpellated) by the colonial belief system. This tendency has been termed and described differently by various cultural theorists.

Marx and Engels’ “false consciousness” was a rudimentary exploration of people’s tendencies to support economic systems that are not in their best interests. These theorists noted that the organizing principle of capitalism is profit. Profit, in turn, is the alienated product of human labor. Therefore, capitalism fundamentally siphons off the value of human labor, and in

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the process devalues the humans who provide the labor in favor of the humans who own the means of production. Setting aside the framework of nationality that is often emphasized in discussions of imperialism and colonialism, capitalism colonizes laborers. Marx and Engel’s “false consciousness” explains laborers’ choice to engage in capitalism anyways by noting that those laborers are not aware of their larger social situation, and thereby foolishly think that they are benefitted by a system that routinely rips them off.

Gramsci elaborated on this over-simplified analysis of why people behave in ways that support their own colonization. Writing about why the children of laborers tend to become laborers and the children of professors tend to become professors, Gramsci noted that human bodies are shaped, or socialized, by the circumstances of their environments. The children of laborers live in a milieu that celebrates physical competencies while the children of professors live in a milieu that celebrates intellectual competencies. Having learned subtle lessons about what a body is supposed to do, these children tend to “choose” to occupy the roles into which they have been socialized, even when it is against their interests to do so. They do collude with capitalism’s colonization of their labor, but not because of an overt “threat or actual use of force.” Hegemonic colonialism’s “threat or actual use of force” is administered subtly and socially. Hegemony relocates the spacio-temporal locus of the colonial event through developmental years on a largely psychological level that in turn shapes the physical possibilities of embodied subjectivity. Where colonialism refers to the processes by which colonies are attained and maintained, hegemonic colonialism refers to the processes by which colonies are attained and maintained, and the process seems to be a fully consensual, natural outgrowth of

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12 I should note that my discussions of imperialism and colonialism are not limited to the framework of nationality – imperialism and colonialism occur throughout all axes of identity, of which nation is only one.
people’s choices. Gramsci noted that although physical socialization is formidable, bodies can retrain themselves to perform tasks different from those they were socialized to replicate. “Organic intellectuals” can combine the roles of laborer and intellectual worker to create a new kind of subjectivity that does not unquestioningly replicate hegemonic norms.

Hegemonic colonialism is an important concept for this dissertation. As the flip-side of imperialism, hegemonic colonialism allows for an analysis of the “choices” (often severely constricted) that people make to live in accordance with imperial systems. The idea of hegemonic colonialism creates space to consider both the ways in which people are colonized and the ways in which people come to colonize others. Similarly it invites analysis of ways that education can function as a liberatory practice and analysis of the potentials of various kinds of everyday subtle revolutions.

Decolonial scholarship, in the field of study from which this dissertation is written, refers to scholarship that actively deconstructs colonialism. To deconstruct a complex cultural phenomenon is to analytically take it apart and then put it back together in a new way. Deconstruction’s theoretical work hopes to manifest real-world transformations, but its game occurs primarily in the realm of ideas. That is, decolonial scholarship is like a game if idea-ball in which the goal is to theorize non-colonial ways of being into being.

I describe this dissertation as decolonial.\textsuperscript{16} In an important sense a more accurate descriptor would be anti-Imperial. My key concern in this work is the deconstruction of Imperialism. I describe this work as decolonial scholarship with the caveat that what I am really interested in is how individual subjects can step away from colonial relations when they occupy positions seemingly privileged by those colonial relations. How can we be decolonial when we occupy positions that are privileged by colonial economic relations? How can people embody subjectivities that are different from what hegemonic socialization would choose for them?

Hegemonic ideas and counter-cultural ideas are grounded in and given physical form in individuals’ corporeal experiences.\textsuperscript{17} Many feminists have taken up this line of inquiry, beginning their investigations of patriarchal social systems by considering an engagement with their own flesh.\textsuperscript{18} They have discovered that gender is a performative construct; never complete and therefore always in need of reinforcement.\textsuperscript{19} It is upon and through the body that the norms of gender are inscribed\textsuperscript{20} and resisted.\textsuperscript{21}

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\textsuperscript{16} Too, I recognize that this dissertation is deeply implicated in both ideological and material realities of colonialism. While I strive to conduct this study as a decolonial transcultural project it may fall into more common patterns of cultural appropriation. Too, as an academic and as a subject privileged by colonial economic relations my lifestyle has been supported by colonial economic relations on many counts. This point will be discussed in the concluding chapter.
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\textsuperscript{19} Butler, \textit{Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"}; Simone de Beauvoir, \textit{The Second Sex} (NY: Modern Lib, 1952).
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Along these lines, several studies have fruitfully investigated women and girls who participate in physical activities that have been (and sometimes still are) considered gender inappropriate for girls and women. These studies have comprised rich scholarly debates about relationships between women’s participation in sport and personal and political empowerment. An interesting line of inquiry within this scholarly conversation includes women-centered considerations of martial arts and bodybuilding.

Barbara Browning’s *Samba: Resistance in Motion* found that martial arts such as Capoeira were physically practical in struggles against colonizing forces in Brazil. She also found that the act of maintaining these embodied repertoires functioned as a powerful form of social resistance by maintaining a physically-oriented epistemology contrary to (and consequently invisible to) colonial ways of knowing. Leslie Heywood remains undecided in *Bodymakers: A Cultural Anatomy of Women’s Bodybuilding* about whether women’s bodybuilding has or will create widespread social change. She is optimistic, however, about the degree to which bodybuilding encourages feminist empowerment in a liberal and individualistic manner. Shirley Castelnuovo and Sharon Guthrie found that many participants in a women’s only karate dojo described in *Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon Within* experienced their sporting activities as profoundly empowering. Many participants used their sport to embody feminist social change to the extent that the “care for the self” ethic required for

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23 Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion*.

sports participation represented a significant and performative departure from patriarchal orderings of gendered access to free time. They also found that collaborative participation in a physically empowering activity created the conditions necessary for participants to collectively assess and seek instrumental responses to commonly experienced social problems. Participants utilized their individual empowerment as a basis from which they constructed liberatory strategies to productively address oppressive situations.

These interpretive ethnographies of women in traditionally masculine sports represent an ongoing debate about how and under what circumstances the individual development of physical skills and intelligences have been and can be utilized in the service of social activism. What unites these works is a common questioning of relationships between physical empowerment, personal empowerment, and social empowerment. These theorists all ground their studies of wider societal phenomenon in the personal experiences of their own and/or their subjects’ embodied physicalities. They begin with a traditionally feminist assumption that the personal is political, and extrapolate that the political can be perceived anew via personal embodiment.

Inquiring after the possibilities of encountering various kinds of others, scholars have noted connections between the ways that bodies are educated and the perpetuation of racial, national, and gendered meaning. They consider ways in which ideology is grounded in physical corporeality and in the somatic possibilities available to sexed, raced, and classed beings. Imperialist aspects of socialization can be revealed by consideration of the kinds of physical activities that people tend to be channeled toward depending on their gender and racial attribution. Gendered and raced bodies are shaped and trained into different kinds of movements at an early age, and transgressions are clearly disapproved of.

25 Castelnuovo and Guthrie, *Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon Within*. 
How are bodies made to carry the meanings of race, nation, gender, class, and sexuality? What is the function of the body in the transmission of nationhood? The transmission of gender norms? If the body is a key site of the perpetuation of the logics of empire, does it follow that the logics of empire can be disrupted through interventionist embodiment? Is the realm of the body the realm at which the individual can find agency to productively engage in social change? How has, does, and can the interference of meaning systems productively respond to the meeting ground between embodiment and transculturation? What are some ways that people have gone about disrupting the bodily comportment of imperialist projects? How is this work effective? What are its potential drawbacks?

While I was studying these debates in graduate school I serendipitously also developed a prolonged study of martial arts, and came to study Aikido most intensely. I was delighted to find that students take up many of the same questions in aikido class. They studied these questions in an entirely different way, though. The major difference I noticed included an emphasis on studying these questions through embodied interactions with oneself and ones classmates. In school I studied theory about embodied subjectivities, while at the dojo I studied some of the embodied subjectivities that cultural theorists pointed to and played with. During this experience I developed a deep appreciation for the epistemological potential of embodied research methodologies.

In this dissertation I propose to examine what the martial art of aikido has to contribute to some of the central debates concerning postmodern and decolonial theorists. This project will bring political questions to the history of transcultural appropriation, interference, and experimentation by placing cultural theory and the martial art aikido into dialogue with each other.
The substantive chapters of this dissertation explore how aikido’s intervention in the logic of the phenomenon of violence resonates through various spheres of practitioners’ lives: intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural, political, and philosophical.

Chapter 1 introduces the martial art aikido as the topic of the current study. An overview of the history and philosophy of the practice flows into a discussion of the practice as an example of what cultural theorists call a meta-ideological deconstruction.

Chapter 2 describes my study protocol and discusses the rationale behind my research methods. This chapter discusses ethical commitments of feminist and decolonial ethnographers, and a consideration of how my study design was informed by these commitments. Study design included careful consideration of the possibilities of psychological harm to participants, inadvertently coerced Informed Consent, inability to ensure absolute confidentiality, and complexities of personal and social identities.

Chapter 3 begins the exploration of aikido with a description of an aikido class.

Chapter 4 delves into interview data to explore participants’ understandings of the concept of power. Participants’ interviews showed that they actively disagreed with what they perceived as more common perceptions of power: the ability to obtain the objects of one’s desire through domination or violence. Rather, they asserted, power is:

- physically internal
- the ability to be grounded and centered
- the ability to direct and re-direct energy
- the ability to maintain awareness of one’s self and environment
- the ability to cultivate growth
The conceptualization of power-with, rather than power-over echoes feminist conceptions of power and negates the hegemonic conflation of power with control.

Expanding from with this understanding of power, aikido offers a repertoire of conflict resolution strategies. Chapter 5: “Interpersonal Tactics of Conflict Resolution” considers how participants use aikido skills to deal with interpersonal conflicts in their daily lives outside the dojo. Participants discussed several tactics of conflict resolution, including:

- maintaining awareness of one’s environment, including the physical environment as well as the human environment, and one’s distance (ma’ai) from potentially dangerous elements within one’s environment
- adjusting one’s posture, through practices called centering and grounding, and allowing oneself to adopt a large comportment
- not fighting by turning (tenkan) and blending with one’s “opponent” while entering (irimi) the conflict with measured assertiveness, adding a little energy to the direction in which one’s “opponent” is already travelling
- maintaining a capacity for a wide range of reactions when it is one’s turn to be thrown (ukemi)
- and engaging in systems of community support and interdependence.

Chapter 6: “Structural Applications of Conflict Resolution Tactics” considers the application of conflict resolution strategies to more complex structural phenomena: gender violence. This chapter begins with participants’ understandings of how gender violence works in larger society. It then explores ways that participants proactively address the potential for gender violence within their own dojos. Each dojo had specific policies and procedures that counteracted the prevalence of gender violence in larger society.
Chapter 7: “How It Works: Aikido as an Example of Meta-ideology” discusses aikido as an example of meta-ideological deconstruction, one of several (r)evolutionary tactics discussed in decolonial feminist theory. Aikido’s reverberations through the intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural, political aspects of students’ lives are considered through the lens of decolonial feminist theory. The theory and the art clarify each other.

Finally, chapter 8 offers concluding thoughts about aikido’s alternative approaches to violence. Considering the basic approach to conflict resolution discussed in this dissertation, this chapter is a meditation on the application of aikido philosophy to a practical deconstruction of the social institutions of contemporary American imperialism. This chapter outlines specific tactics that would support the transformative deconstruction of hegemonic social institutions.
CHAPTER 1. AIKIDO AS METAIDEOLOGICAL DECONSTRUCTION OF VIOLENCE

In order to compose a contribution to the scholarly exploration of counterhegemonic embodiment I completed an ethnographic study of living practitioners of the martial art aikido. Aikido is martial art that overtly emphasizes non-violent conflict resolution. As such, aikido is a particularly appropriate art through which to consider counterhegemonic embodiment.

This art was developed in Japan by Morihei Ueshiba (1883 – 1969). Despite being one of the best-reputed martial artists in 20th century Japan, Ueshiba was against militarism. In his youth he had gained notoriety for his military ferocity in Japan’s war in Russia, but later in life Ueshiba worked to prevent Japan’s participation in WWII. He declined to participate in the nation’s war efforts by moving to a barn in the countryside rather than training troops in the years prior to WWII. He was a peace activist with tight military credentials in a country with an atrocious military history in a time of impending war. I count him among the more interesting characters of world history.

His response to the bizarre circumstances of his life and times was aikido. Reflecting on Ueshiba’s philosophy and life, I am struck by the conundrum of what it must have been like to be actively invested in anti-militarism, and yet to also be recognized as the preeminent expert in martial arts in Japan on the verge of WWII. Ueshiba’s response to that conundrum, aikido, is a philosophical puzzle that tickles my decolonial brain.

I have chosen to focus the inquiry of this dissertation specifically on Aikido because, having done a substantial amount of background research, I feel that this art lends itself most specifically to decolonial questioning. Although I will address other martial arts, such as karate,
judo, tai chi, and others where appropriate, they are in no way central to this project. This choice is not arbitrary. Aside from the philosophical preoccupations of the art, aikido occupies a very particular location in relation to military and commercial American imperialism. As a white working class female from Pittsburgh I note that the situation in which I came to study a Japanese martial art is necessarily fraught with questions of empire and nation.

Karate is probably the most popularly known martial art in the United States. This is partially a result of media images representing the art. But it is also because of where it developed and how it was transmitted to the United States. Karate developed on the southern island of Okinawa. After World War II, military forces from the United States occupied the largest number of bases in Okinawa partly because the infrastructure for military occupation was already in place. Prior to U.S. presence there Okinawa was occupied by various forces from northern Japan at different times. Citizens of Okinawa were prohibited from using or owning weapons. One translation of karate is “empty hand.” The movements of this art are astounding collections of techniques that can be used without weapons. That is, they offer an embodied history of a particular kind of domination that is most closely related to military presence in Japan. Many soldiers learned karate while they were living in Japan and the art was transmitted to the United States primarily via veterans.27

The history of Aikido in the United States calls upon an examination of an entirely different kind of transcultural exchange, one more closely related to economic and commercial domination. Aikido was founded by Morihei Ueshiba, who died in 1969. But U.S. Aikidoka (Aikido students) assert that his art evolved primarily from Judo, which in turn evolved primarily


from Samurai (or the Japanese military class) traditions. The United States population that had
the most access to karate included men enlisted in the U.S. military and stationed on military
bases in the south of Japan. The U.S. population that had the most access to aikido and its
aesthetic predecessors were U.S. civilians from relatively privileged backgrounds. Many of them
traveled to Japan with the express purpose of learning the esoteric secrets of what they perceived
as a romantically primitive and spiritual society. U.S. aikido students are a particularly revealing
manifestation of a long history of a fascination with Japanese society. I consider aikidoka to be
members of an aesthetic lineage that is closely related to students of zen, tea ceremony, and other
“seated arts”, to borrow sociologist Eiko Ikegami’s term.28

Focusing primarily on the experiences of the social circle often referred to as the Boston
Brahmins and their extensive and sustained travels throughout Japan, Christopher Benfey shows
convincingly that Japanese forms and philosophy began influencing American art, literature,
social, and political life almost immediately upon Commodore Perry’s “opening” of Japan to
Western trade in 1854. Benfey emphasizes the role of cultural interaction in United States’
imperial efforts in Japan and shows that cultural interaction “did not begin in 1950 with the Beat
poets, or during the 1920’s with the Imagists. It began much, much earlier, and shows no signs of
abating.”29

Where studying karate would entail a more detailed examination of transculturation in
 overtly military contexts, the study of aikido very easily lends itself to considering the roles of
hegemonic domination in colonial encounters. Throughout the history of transcultural aesthetic
practices one may encounter innumerable personalities who sought to achieve intercultural

28 Eiko Ikegami, Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture (Cambridge,
29 Benfey, Christopher, The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics and the Opening of Old Japan.
harmony via artistic exchange. Aesthetic appreciators must always be considered in their wider context. At many historical points, U.S. relations with Japan have been less than friendly. The U.S. has pursued both foreign and domestic policies that have been infamously injurious to Japan and the people residing within that nation, as well as to people of Japanese descent living in the U.S. We dropped atomic bombs and put U.S. citizens of Japanese descent in “Internment Camps,” seizing their property and uprooting their families. United States’ foreign relations with Japan (as with other countries) have been marked by unthinkable aggression. The material reality of this very real violence coexists with the ideological reality of affluent U.S. citizens’ relentless admiration of Japanese aesthetic forms.

Because of this historical context it is easier for me to study a Japanese martial art than a military technology more pertinent to my closeness to Appalachian, Irish, or Native American diasporas. The prevalence of Japanese aesthetic forms in U.S. society is inseparable from a history of international and interracial violence. This is the broad social context that has given rise to the current study.

In this dissertation I describe ways that Aikido functions as a performative intervention in the logic and semantics of domination and the epistemology of conflict. That is, this martial art is fascinating in that it is a physical practice that responds to violence as a memetic phenomena by undermining the ways of knowing that support it.

Aikido is a non-competitive martial art. There are no tournaments. Rank is determined by the chronological order in which students join a dojo. During class, students pair up and follow a common choreography that is set by the teacher. At the end of each choreography one partner pins/throws their partner, and the other partner is pinned/thrown. Who pins/throws and who is

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pinned/thrown is determined by the choreography. Importantly, the person who initiates the attack is the person who is pinned/thrown at the conclusion of each move. This choreographical tendency highlights the philosophical and physical reality that excessive aggression always creates an opening in the aggressor which can be used to offset their balance.

Aikido is a game of balance. Many choreographies are revisions of judo, another popular Japanese martial art. In many places where judo focuses on breaking opponents’ bodies, aikido focuses on breaking opponents’ balance. The physical theory is that an opponent who cannot balance to stand cannot continue an attack. Thus, in breaking an opponents’ balance, an aikidoka can neutralize an attack without physical harm coming to either party.

Aikido's unique approach to violence is echoed in one of the most popularly anthologized and repeated stories about aikido. Teena, one participant in this study who has practiced aikido for 9 years, shared a story about an aikido sensei (teacher) who got a lesson in aikido from an old man on a train. Terry Dobson’s story is a widely anthologized demonstration of the kinds of conflict resolution strategies to which students of aikido are urged to aspire. When confronted by a belligerent drunk, a young and misguided Terry Dobson Sensei was excited by an opportunity to fight. He was eager to use martial arts skills to dominate the belligerent drunk into submission. He was bested, though, by an old man who pacified the drunk, showing Dobson a more effective way to “put that guy down”:

Have you read the story by Terry Dobson about being in the train? He’s talking about being on a subway car, and there’s some drunk guy that comes in and is being belligerent to everyone. And [Dobson] starts thinking about how “oh, I’m just going to just take care
of him.” And you know he’s going to put that guy down if it needs to happen. And then [the drunk] starts shoving around some older lady or something.

And there’s an elderly man that calls out to him and says something about, “what have you been drinking?” And [the drunk] says how he was drinking sake. And [the old man] starts talking to him about how he used to sit and drink sake in the back yard with his wife. And [the drunks’] wife has just passed away [pause].

And it starts to really unfold how just, damaged, and horrified this man is, in his situation, and his alcoholic drunkenness. And he ends up on the bench with his head in this old man’s lap, and this old man’s stroking his hair, and they’re talking about drinking sake with their wives, who had passed away.

And Terry Dobson’s just blown away, and realizes how he hasn’t been practicing aikido at all. And really, that’s aikido. And he’s just been throwing people and for all these years and how he’s just missed it completely.

And that’s power. To be able to unravel that situation without you know, taking that guy’s feet out from under him. You know? Letting him basically unravel it himself, just by pulling on the threads a little bit, getting it to kind of come apart, yeah. It’s a sweet sweet story.

The main point of this story is that it can often be more effective to solve conflicts through compassion. Dobson’s realization that he was missing the point highlights aikido’s compassionate approach to non-violence. The basic point is that it is effective and ideal to approach conflict with love. This point is reflected in the arts’ name.
After WWII, Ueshiba placed increasing emphasis on the ai of aikido, which can be translated as love.\textsuperscript{33} Aikido is constructed of three conji: ai, ki, and do. Ai is usually translated as love or harmony, ki is energy (chi or qi in Chinese; echoed in the gy of energy in English), and do is the way (Tao in Chinese; arguably similar to ology or “the study of” in English). Thus, aikido is commonly translated as the “way of harmony” or the study of harmony\textsuperscript{34} or the “art of peace”\textsuperscript{35}. The word “ai” is discussed at length in anthropologist Ruth Benedict’s classic work about Japan, \textit{The Chrysanthemum and the Sword}:

Ai means “love” in Japan and it was this word ai which seemed to the missionaries of the last century the only Japanese word it was possible to use in their translations of the Christian concept of “love.” They used it in translating the Bible to mean God’s love for man and man’s love for God. But ai means specifically the love of a superior for his dependants. A Westerner might perhaps feel that it meant ‘paternalism,’ but in its Japanese usage it means more than that. It was a word that meant affection. In contemporary Japan ai is still used in this strict sense of love from above to below, but, perhaps partly due to the Christian usage, and certainly as a consequence of official efforts to break down caste distinctions, it may today be used also of love between equals.\textsuperscript{36}

Ueshiba’s use of the conji ai hints at the ways that aikido functions through a game of transcultural appropriation and reappropriation. The meaning of ai had entered a state of flux in relation to changing attitudes about caste distinctions, as well as contact with and appropriation by Christian missionaries. That is, Ueshiba’s response to the conundrum of violence in his life

\textsuperscript{34} Gleason, \textit{The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido}.
was to create an artform that seeks to replace violence with love, specifically with a type of love that was already hooked into processes of transcultural reverberation. The art is a philosophical investigation of conflict, a kind of aesthetic intervention in the assumptions of imperialism.

Ueshiba’s interest in love as a strategy of non-violent conflict resolution echoes and is echoed by decolonial feminist theorist Chela Sandoval’s exploration of the decolonial aesthetics of love. In this dissertation I explore aikido as an example of the tactic that feminist decolonial scholar Sandoval calls “meta-ideologizing.” This tactic appropriates dominant ideological forms and uses them whole in order to transform them. Meta-ideology is “a political activity that builds on old categories of meaning in order to transform those divisions by suggesting something else, something beyond them.”

One way aikido works is by appropriating, recontextualizing, and transforming violence. Much of the philosophical sophistication of the art relates to its deconstruction of conflict. On a surface level it may appear that the art simply performs and fetishizes a ritualized version of violence. On a deeper level, through its physically philosophical investigation of violence, aikido de-naturalizes many common assumptions about relationships between self and other that fuel the logic of conflict.

By engaging in a philosophical investigation of the nature of conflict, and doing so through embodied consciousness, students of aikido are brought into a utilitarian relationship with the phenomenon of conflict. This utilitarian relationship with conflict undermines the logic of colonialism at the psychoanalytic roots of consciousnesses of people who are privileged by the systems of colonialism.

38 Ibid., 84.
The way that aikido achieves this decolonial epistemological shift is by coordinating an intervention through embodied consciousness that reprograms participants’ understanding of power. In turn this affects their problem solving skills. This psychological shift is orchestrated through an intentional deployment of embodied consciousness that instigates a perceptual shift. During aikido class participants induce peak states of consciousness and physically work out nonviolent approaches to physical conflicts through choreographies that emphasize love as a tactic with which one might assertively and effectively engage conflict resolution.

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39 See Robert Allan Epstein, "A Phenomenological Study of the Therapist's Experience of Being Centered in Therapy Based on an Understanding of Centering in Aikido" (Ph.D., California School of Professional Psychology - Berkeley/Alameda); Brian Peter Heery, "Awakening Spirit in the Body: A Heuristic Exploration of Peak Or Mystical Experience in the Practice of Aikido" (Ph.D., Institute of Transpersonal Psychology); Susan J. Newton, "Exploring the Interstices: The Space between in the Body/Mind Disciplines of Aikido and Fencing" (Ph.D., Institute of Transpersonal Psychology); Renee Rothman, "Aikido Sensibilities: The Sociosomatics of Connection and its Role in the Constitution of Community at North Bay Aikido in Santa Cruz, California" (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Cruz); Yuji Ueno, "Eastern Philosophy and the Rise of the Aikido Movement" (Ph.D., University of Toronto, Canada).

40 This assertion draws on the work of several scholars who have considered various aspects of how aikido can function as a subtly revolutionary pedagogy. Noting that the ability to disagree well is an important skill for citizens in a democracy, Miller-Lane examines aikido as an educational system that teaches children the skills of loyal opposition. Loyal opposition is a way of disagreeing with ideas or parts of a system when one maintains loyalty to that system. Teaching children that dissent is patriotic, and that dissent from within a system is highly effective, loyal opposition relies on a blend of philosophy and civics that can be taught kinesthetically through aikido (2003). Similarly, studies have examined how aikido is a form of physical education that also functions as art (Linden, 1981), and as a game that demonstrates philosophical principles (Brown, 1997). Aikido emphasizes the vital role of embodied re-creation as an epistemological condition of knowledge (Ritscher, 2006). This martial art has also been studied as a tool that supports teacher’s use of cooperative improvisation that allowed teachers to productively operate classrooms on the “edge of chaos.” The skillful use of embodied knowledge valued in aikido class, (including intuition, caring, and emotion), allowed teachers to conduct classes that featured dynamic and genuine energetic exchange in the transmission and creation of knowledge (Burris, 1999). These studies have all used aikido to understand ways that creative engagement with one’s social circumstances can be developed through physical educational systems. One philosophical reason for this is that aikido is a game that explicitly, somatically, invites students to play with the quality of connection between self and other. Sport psychologist Haller proposes that aikido’s physical stimulation of the motor cortex improves vestibular functioning, balance, orientation in space, and co-ordination. The same study showed that these personal skill improvements correlated with improvements in team members’ self-image, sense of resource, personal power, self-esteem, confidence, and communication on intra and interpersonal levels. These personal skills, in turn, contributed to enhanced team collaboration, presence, and performance (Haller, 1988). The finding that improved person skill level impacts aikidoka’s social participation is corroborated by studies that specifically examine connections between aikidoka’s self, relationships with others, and with their communities (Ingalls, 2002). Taken together, these studies examine the role of aikido as a teaching tool that supports students efforts to productively engage with the occasion of their existence in relation to their co-constructed social realities. The current study builds on this knowledge by describing one ideological process through which the art functions.
CHAPTER 2. DECOLONIAL FEMINIST INTERPRETIVE ETHNOGRAPHY:
ONE OF MANY METHODS OF CONDUCTING
CULTURAL STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP

As an interdisciplinary field of study, cultural studies is able to draw on the research methods of many different academic disciplines. The ones to which I was most attracted in graduate school included art history, English, history, performance studies, and philosophy. These disciplines each have numerous ways of conducting scholarship. Any given topic could be studied via several different methods and result in very different kinds of scholarship. One could write a history of the aikido, a biography of its’ founder, a work of historical fiction about Ueshiba’s travels, a philosophical treatise about similarities and differences between yin/yang and Cartesian dualism, or a play about any one of these things. So as I was deciding how to go about studying this interesting social phenomena that I had found I had numerous methods of conducting scholarship available to me.

I decided to study aikido as a social phenomena primarily through a method that could best be described as decolonial feminist interpretive ethnography. In the broadest sense, ethnography is writing about people, especially groups of people. It investigates the causes, effects, and manifestations of social groupings. What kinds of people are there? What makes them different from one another? In what ways are they similar? How do people far away do things? How do people who are close do things?

Decolonial feminist interpretive ethnography presented itself as an ideal method through which to conduct this study for several reasons. First, there is a resonation between the ethical commitments of this study method, my personal political commitments, the political and academic commitments of cultural studies, and (I propose) aikido. Second, it is particularly well suited to a study of living arts. Third, this method of conducting research allows for the careful
selection of an interesting group of people, or study population. Plus, I happened to take graduate classes at a University that featured a cohort of numerous scholars who were virtuosic with some variation of this method.

Ethics and Poetics

Like all scholars, my politics shape my scholarship. The processes through which this occurs are often subtle. My politics have affected my choice of academic field, the topic of my research, and the methods through which I gather and interpret information. To state my politics simply: I am an anti-racist anti-sexist commie pinko body-loving queer. I am a peacelover but if I need to kick ass I can and will. I actively pursue systems of locally based agrarian/artisanal systems of non-monetary economic exchange. I work as a scholar because philosophy does shape material realities and I would like to shape a world that is pleasant for all of its inhabitants. I know that knowledge is power.

I have felt these political and ethical commitments resonating with many scholars. I have been particularly drawn towards the ways that some ethnographers have engaged their scholarship. The academic field of ethnography has a long history of resisting colonial power systems. Franz Boas, Elsie Clews Parsons and Claude Levi Strauss are three notable members of this academic lineage. While anthropologists were measuring the skulls of people from different ethnic groups in the hopes of proving a physiological basis for the socioeconomic differences between those groups,\(^1\) Franz Boas showed that widespread socioeconomic differences between ethnic groups was more a matter of social context. People of color weren’t poor because of the size or shape of their skulls, Boas pointed out, but rather because of centuries of discrimination.

throughout various social institutions.\textsuperscript{42} Boas’ ideas about ethnic groups were developed by several scholars including Elsie Clews Parsons, a patron of American ethnography and one of the earliest academic articulators of feminism. Clews Parsons was so devoutly anti-militaristic that her husband, a senator who had joined the military against her wishes, was not allowed in their house while wearing a uniform.\textsuperscript{43} Another ethnographer, Claude Levi-Strauss, was called upon by UNESCO after the holocaust and WWII to consult about how to prevent further ethnicity based conflicts and genocides.\textsuperscript{44} He asserted that the totemic logic of indigenous peoples was a sophisticated method of delineating kinship groups, rather than a barbaric fairy tale, as many of his contemporaries believed. He asserted that approaching marginalized groups with respect and curiosity, rather than dismissive ethnocentric arrogance, would be a great way reduce the violence that tends to happen between different groups of people.\textsuperscript{45} These three figures in ethnographic history demonstrate that this field of study features a series of scholars whose work is overtly anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-militaristic.

However, this field also has a long history of producing knowledge that is used in collusion with colonial powers. The portraits of cultures produced by ethnographers have often been used for nefarious purposes by colonizing groups. Just as one would not attempt to conduct a military invasion of an area without a map, a hegemonically colonial power would not attempt to conduct an occupation without a map of the local culture's belief structures.\textsuperscript{46} An ethnographic text can function as a map of the belief structures of a local culture.

In an admirably self-reflexive exercise meant to examine and prevent the field’s (often inadvertent) collusion with colonial powers, James Clifford and George Marcus edited the seminal anthology *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. This was a critical investigation of the relationship of anthropology to colonial powers. Academically prominent ethnographers carefully considered the role of their research in the maintenance of colonial power relations. They called for methodological innovations in ethnography that would help the field to step out of collusion with oppressive social practices. They called for a shift towards interpretive ethnography.

Interpretive ethnography is a way of studying groups of people that has been practiced by scholars who have decidedly decolonial and feminist commitments. They conduct scholarship in a way that strives to understand discord and harmony amongst the groups of people they study. Within the field of ethnography, this “new” ethnography emphasizes researchers’ roles as interpreters of culture. Rather than asserting “the truth is x,” interpretive ethnography recognizes and celebrates a revision to “what I see is x.” They consider the implications of power-laden and intricate relationships between researcher and researched. They pay careful attention to the politics and poetics of representation. They turn their scholarly gaze on practices closer to their own homes (metaphorically as well as geographically). In many ways interpretive ethnography studies that which cannot be counted; it is far more concerned with quality than quantity. It is narratively oriented, though in the feminist tradition welcoming of innovation of many kinds.

In calling for this methodological shift, though, Clifford and Marcus professed as though it was a new idea. They failed to recognize ethnography’s rich history of creating scholarship.

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according to these methods. The methodological and theoretical innovations called for by the authors of *Writing Culture* had been developed and practiced by a number of feminist anthropologists for quite some time. Their work had gone unnoticed at best, and discredited and attacked at worst by their mostly white male colleagues who were now proposing that ethnographers make this methodological shift.

Of course it has been widely discussed that Clifford and Marcus were less than egalitarian in their selection of ‘leading scholars’ whom they invited to contribute to *Writing Culture*. When called out on their failure to include more female ethnographers in this seminar, Clifford and Marcus demonstrated their ignorance of the history and (then) current state of their discipline by asserting that there were no female ethnographers who were both academic enough and methodologically innovative enough to be considered leaders in the field.

To the benefit of current practitioners of interpretive ethnography, Clifford and Marcus’s blatant disregard of the personal manifestation of their academic and political ideals inspired a proliferation of discussion amongst feminist ethnographers. Two different groups of scholars simultaneously published edited volumes titled *Women Writing Culture*. They responded to Clifford and Marcus’s claim that there were no ethnographers who were both feminist and methodologically innovative by pointing out that there most certainly were. These two volumes featured germinal examples of interpretive ethnography and delineated feminist ethnography’s rich herstory of practicing those methods. The essays included in these volumes both discuss and demonstrate interpretive methods of ethnographic research and dissemination in keeping with

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feminist and decolonial ethical commitments. The methodological discussions featured in the Women Writing Culture volumes have since been expanded upon by feminist scholars who critique the research methods that they had inherited from the phallocentric academy. These productive critiques explored new ways of doing research that were more in line with feminist and decolonial commitments.\footnote{Leslie R. Bloom, Under the Sign of Hope: Feminist Methodology and Narrative Interpretation (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), Alison M. Jaggar, \textit{Just Methods : An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader} (Boulder, CO: Paradigm} They tend carefully to issues of inadvertent collusion with colonial knowledge systems. One tactic of doing so includes offering various forms of poetics as a solution to the need for decolonial communication.

Ethnography. Ethnos, graphos. The writing of people, particularly with an eye towards ethnicity, or social groupings. What people shall I write? How shall I go about writing them? The poetics and layered narratives of decolonial feminist ethnography make it possible to play with language in a way that just might pull this tricksterish endeavor off.

**Studying a Living Art**

Beyond the ethics and poetics of decolonial feminist interpretive ethnography, another reason why this research method fits this study topic is that ethnography allows for the study of things that real people do with their actual bodies, or physical embodied culture. Decolonial feminist cultural studies is a method of research that is particularly well suited to examining the social significance of living arts. The thing about aikido that really fascinates me is that it is a way of moving. It was (and is) a historical moment. It is an artistic creation authored by interesting people. But most significantly, it is movement. Which is quite difficult to write.

Aikido is a living art. It is a thing that people do. It is a participatory sport, as opposed to a spectator sport. It is a way that people engage artfully with their bodies. It is a physical investigation of conflict.
In composing this dissertation I take inspiration from several studies that have discussed embodied practices by engaging an ethnographic method (as discussed in the Introduction). Feminist body theorists examine different embodied practices to see what these practices have to say about how political subjects are developed through corporeal relationships with gender, race, class, sexuality, and/or nation. These theorists all ground their studies of wider societal phenomenon in the personal experiences of their own and/or their subjects’ embodied physicalities. They begin with a traditionally feminist assumption that the personal is political and continue to explore ways that the political can be perceived anew via personal embodiment. They wonder exactly how, where, why, and when colonialism, race, gender, and class inscribe themselves on bodies and what we can do about it.

The body is at an axis of many of the key themes of cultural inquiry, including race, sex, gender, nation, colonization, class, and sexuality. Both hegemonic ideas and counter-cultural ideas, are grounded in and given physical form in the corporeality of individual experience. It makes sense to me that if colonialism happens in the realm of the body, then too, the body is one realm in which individuals can find agency to engage in social change. The research methods of decolonial feminist interpretive ethnography allow for an emphasis on embodied knowledge. It is also well suited to this study because it allows me to focus on an interesting thing that real people do with their bodies.

Selecting an Interesting Study Population

Studying a living art can entail carefully selecting an interesting study population. Owing partly to design, luck and timing, I was able to gain access to a couple of aikido dojos where the head sensei was a woman.

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When I first proposed this study, I hoped to travel to several weekend seminars that are held throughout the country. I had a schedule of target seminars that would occur during semester breaks in different cities – Boulder, Washington, Boston, Santa Barbara, and several backups... I hoped to travel to seminars during semester breaks, work out, meet people, have conversations, come back and write about it. Though I wasn’t able to articulate it at the time, I was attracted to this study plan because it would optimize the confidentiality of participants. An advisor suggested that instead I pick one dojo and spend a longer period of time there.

There are a lot of interesting dojos that I would like to visit. One stood out, though. During my preliminary research I once saw a sensei engage in an act of bystander intervention. This sensei had stuck up for a much younger aikido student. Sensei has no reason to think that I had witnessed that intervention. This was a private moment that I saw by accident (and so I’m certainly not going to describe the incident). But I saw it and was impressed. When it came time to pick one dojo as a field site, that’s the one I wanted to go see. It is important to note that I did select a study population that I knew would provide me with the kind of data with which I hoped my dissertation would play. I knew that this study population was one that took an active and effective approach to disrupting systems of oppression in their daily lives.

It also happens that this sensei is female. That’s a bit of an anomaly, and so I found it interesting.

What kind of social space would that sensei create?

I was curious, so she was at the top of the list. She would be travelling to teach seminars in the spring. I happened to receive University approval to commence the study the same week she was passing through Ohio. I went to meet her and ended up completing field work at two dojos in her lineage (or group of related aikido schools). As it turned out these dojos were very interesting social spaces.
Group Portrait

The study population consisted of members of two dojos. Each dojo featured a female owner/ head sensei and a mixed-sex student body. The following group portrait provides a broad view of this study population.

First, all participants in this study were self-selecting long-term members of a voluntary association. Membership in these associations entails paying dues (at the rate of $100 U.S. per month in 2008) and a time commitment (ranging from 1 to 12 hours a week, considerably more for instructors). Membership in a voluntary association such as this can be taken to indicate several things. First, participants live with a class standing that provides them with discretionary time and income. Second, membership in these associations reflects an expression of what Castelnuovo and Guthrie\textsuperscript{52} called a “Care of Self Ethic.” Participants make a difficult choice (for women - disregarding the gender norms that dictate that all of their energies should be expended in the care of others) to set aside a portion of their time, income, and energy to the development of their selves. Third, membership in these voluntary associations can be taken as an indication that all participants are accepting of strong female leadership of the head instructors.

Interview participants had been studying aikido for an average of 12.4 years and ranged in experience from having studied for 4 years to 30 years. Several had studied other martial arts for significant periods of time.

Of the 15 participants who completed an interview, 10 presented as female and 5 presented as male. All would be casually read as white, 3 discussed having specific ethnic identifications (this is discussed in more depth later in this chapter). When discussing sexuality 9 participants talked about living a heterosexual lifestyle, 6 were reproductive (had or were trying

\textsuperscript{52} Shirley Castelnuovo and Sharon Guthrie, \textit{Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon within} (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).
to have children), 4 left all information about their sexual lives unspecified, and 2 discussed living as lesbians.

When discussing occupations, 7 participants talked about working as academics. 5 participants were healers, working at different times as a naturopathic physician, various kinds of massage therapists, psychotherapists, and psychologists. 6 worked in a field that combined the skills of musician/artist/athlete/dancer. 3 were teachers, 2 worked as writers, 2 worked with computers. The group also included a safety coordinator, a cake decorator, and a river guide. Several participants discussed having several jobs.

The schools where I conducted observations and interviews were both led by female head instructors. Female head-leadership in a martial arts context makes these schools relatively rare social environments. There are many reasons why there aren't more schools that combine intensive martial arts training with female leadership. Our culture tends to ascribe martial competence exclusively to males. Feminists (rightly) are very critical of activities that they perceive as encouraging violence. And within this larger capitalist social context it is very difficult to negotiate often-conflicting core philosophical prerogatives. And yet there are people who dance in this space as though nothing could be more interesting.

Martial arts schools often have excessively autocratic governance structures, while feminists yearn towards collaborative governance structures. This difference in governance style is complicated under the stress of the financial reality of operating an educational institution, particularly one that flies in the face of gender norms and involves inherent physical risk. An association of schools operating throughout the Midwest additionally experienced difficulty negotiating a philosophical commitment to equitable distribution of resources (such as work-out
activities) with the material reality of being not privileged enough to choose to devote equitable
time and energy (let alone locally accessible practice space) to underprivileged groups. These are
some of several reasons why female-led martial arts schools are nearly unworkable institutions.54
And yet they do exist. And there are more than a few of them. I had to go looking for them and it
wasn't convenient. But I found them. And they were very interesting social spaces.

Neither school was a female-only dojo. The active student body of each school55 was
made up of approximately 60% men and 40% women. Classes were made up of anywhere from
one to 20 students, and gender ratios of individual classes varied greatly. Some classes were
100% female, some were 100% male, and most classes were evenly mixed.

Men and women take classes together and intermix freely in pairs while practicing
choreographies. Students only self-selected into pairs that were polarized by gender when they
were asked to do one exercise. During this single instance the teacher showed a choreography
that would allow students to work on the skill of grounding. One partner stood in a horse stance
(feet hip distance apart, hips square with feet) and the other partner tried to push them over by
pushing on the center of their chests. The teacher showed an incredible movement in which he
somehow dropped his weight below that of the person pushing him. This movement was so
graceful and precise; it looked like a butterfly picking up an elephant that had almost accidentally
stepped on him.

When the class broke into pairs to practice this (and at no other time during my residency
at either school) all but one of the pairs were girl-girl or boy-boy. They had not been instructed to

53 Though some feminists' lack of differentiation between activities that encourage violence and activities that
investigate violence with an eye towards transforming systems of domination is problematic. This chapter seeks to
clarify this distinction, and to revisit, clarify, and improve upon the idea of self-defense.
54 Patricia Searles and Ronald J. Berger, “The Feminist Self-Defense Movement: A Case Study” Gender & Society 1
practice in same-gender pairs. They did so of their own volition. The other school practiced a very similar choreography but had students push through each other's hands. This was a more complicated set of movements but did not result in gender striation. I suspect that students who were instructed to push on their partner's chests self-selected into same-gender pairs during this exchange because of the larger social context, in which women are often exposed to low-level physical harassment by men who attempt to grab their breasts. This corroborates Rothman's finding that community building strategies within a dojo setting is affected by identity-based inequities in the larger social context.56 This negative case of the one instance of gender separation that I observed during fieldwork highlights the degree to which aikido dojos, particularly those that feature prominent female leadership, are heterosocial sporting environments.

Participants in the interview portion of this study had been studying aikido for an average of 12.4 years. Despite the numerous factors in the design of the sport that discourage competition, people who are together for that long of a period of time in an environment featuring a philosophical investigation of conflict find ways to compete with each other. And in these unofficial interpersonal competitions men and women compete on an equal footing. And females frequently demonstrate grounding, centering, flexibility, and endurance that is equal and/or superior to their male counterparts. That is, women frequently “win” by demonstrating greater proficiency at valued skills. Interestingly, it may be the lack of an officially competitive context that allows women and men to practice and compete together in unofficial ways.

55 Determined primarily by class attendance, with the complication that during my observation period, several female students traveled to attend an out-of-state aikido workshop. They were members of the active student body, then, but not present at the observation site.
56 Renee Rothman, "Aikido Sensibilities: The Sociosomatics of Connection and its Role in the Constitution of Community at North Bay Aikido in Santa Cruz, California" (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Cruz).
Although co-educational sporting environments such as these are relatively rare, I did not specifically ask about gender, sex, or sexuality during interviews. This was a conscious choice. I went to a place where I suspected that gender would be salient, and I allowed participants to bring it up on their own accord. And they did, with gusto. My positionality as a researcher from a Women's Studies Program, living in a female body but fully capable of holding my own in martial arts classes resonated quite well with the gender salience that attracted me to these dojos in the first place. I didn't have to ask about gender. My showing up in that particular place and in this particular body was question enough. Gender, gender norms, sex differences (or lack thereof), and sexuality were frequent topics of discussion during interviews.

This snapshot offers a brief overview of the current study population. Fuller meanings of participants' identity affiliations will emerge throughout the following ethnographic text. Above all these people make an interesting study population because they have undertaken an extensive study of conflict.

In composing this dissertation I take a great deal of inspiration from several studies that have discussed embodied practices by engaging an ethnographic method. They all examine different embodied practices to see what these practices have to say about how embodied subjects are developed through corporeal relationships with gender, race, class, sexuality, and other subjects of interest to cultural studies. Some of the books that have most influenced my thinking include Barbara Browning’s *Samba: Resistance in Motion*, Leslie Heywood’s *Bodymakers: A Cultural Anatomy of Women’s Bodybuilding*, Shirley Castelnuovo and Sharon Guthrie’s *Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon Within*, Cynthia J. Novack’s *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*, Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Sharon Mazer’s *Professional Wrestling: Sport and Spectacle*, and Lisa Wolford-Wylam’s *Grotowski’s Objective Drama Research*. Although these scholars all
consider some of the questions that are central to cultural studies through ethnographic studies of embodied practices, they conduct research in different ways. These theorists demonstrate a breadth of methodological paradigms available to those who would undertake study of the body from a cultural studies perspective. Browning’s field work consisted of moving to Brazil for a season every year for a number of years. Heywood did not perform field work per se but grounds her highly theoretical analysis of women’s bodybuilding in her personal practice of bodybuilding. Castelnuovo and Guthrie completed semi-structured interviews with participants in a feminist karate dojo and women’s bodybuilding. Novack conducted interviews with people who had been active in Contact Improvisation and allowed these interviews to augment archival work. Anzaldua’s work has come to be described as performative writing. She shamanistically invokes and explores the embodied demons of various facets of colonialism through her poetic compositions. Mazer sat ringside and observed a professional wrestling school without participating except as an observer for several years. And Wolford completed six months of field work at the Work Center of the esoteric dramaturg Jerzy Grotowski before composing her ethnography through memory work.57

These works utilize very different kinds of ethnographic approaches. Rather than uncritically adhering to a formulaic approach to conducting scholarship, feminist interpretive ethnography embraces the methodological flexibility that allows information-gathering methods to be tailored to each specific research situation.

The data on which this study is based was obtained through various forms of information gathering. These include preliminary research, naturalistic and participant observations, and interviews. These research methods resulted in an ethnographic record that was then sculpted by coding, autoethnographic reflection, and writing.58

Preliminary Research

Gaining access to this interesting study population began with an extensive period of preliminary research, during which I spent four years pursuing my personal study of aikido. While I was taking graduate coursework I also took classes in aikido, tai chi, yoga, and contact improvisation. Grounding this study in an extensive period of preliminary research played a valuable role in the development of this study method. Aikido is a complex art. Taking the time to learn the embodied language of this art gave me a chance to develop a study method that suited the topic of study. It allowed me to hone in on questions that were suited to the study population. It also allowed me to target a study population that is academically interesting.

This preliminary research was indispensable to the process of figuring out what questions I should ask, where I should go to ask them, and exactly how those questions should be presented. It also allowed me to conduct field work in a way that I was close enough to my subject matter to understand it, and yet far enough away that the ethnographic relationship was comfortable. I was able to set my study parameters specifically enough that I would have to travel a good distance to find the specific kind of school that I was looking to study.

My reflections on the intersections of aikido and cultural studies are very specific to my embodied understanding of them. Although I studied aikido intensely for four years I would not be considered an expert on the art within aikido circles. Aikidoka generally propose ten years as

the average period when a student begins to gain proficiency in the art. I stopped practicing because of an injury after only four years of study. I do not write as an expert practitioner of aikido. I write as a cultural theorist who has had a substantial opportunity to reflect, via aikido, on the manifestations of the subjects of concern to cultural theory.

Gaining Access

After designing a research protocol and receiving approval from Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board to contact potential study participants I began seeking people who would be willing to participate in this study. The weekend after I received approval I attended an aikido seminar that was lead by the Sensei whom I hoped would be a part of my research.

Since I had never met the Sensei with which I hoped to conduct research I made certain to attend a seminar at which I was able to personally introduce myself. Giving her an opportunity to see and feel me play aikido gave her a basis to consider whether or not she was interested in participating in this study. The day after the seminar at which I had introduced myself, I e-mailed this woman to describe the study and ask whether she would be interested in participating. She replied that she was not able to do so because of health reasons but knew people who might wish to open their dojos to a research study. She gave me a list of contacts including the head instructors of several aikido schools and some academics whom she thought I would like to know. She suggested that I introduce myself to these people and let them know that she had given me their names.

Happily, I revised my initial contact e-mail to include the phrase “Sensei suggested that I contact you and inquire whether you might be interested in participating in my dissertation research.” I sent this e-mail to the instructors on Sensei’s list and sent another e-mail to the academics whom Sensei had mentioned. For the rest of the week I had wonderful conversations
with these new contacts. I was invited to do research at two schools. And the academics were outrageously kind. They shared their ideas, sources, and articles with me. They asked me about my study and were incredibly supportive.

During summer break I travelled to the dojos where I had been invited to complete field work. I observed and participated in classes and social events. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with instructors and students at each school.

When I first arrived at each dojo I had a private meeting with each head instructor. I took this opportunity to describe my research methods and complete the paperwork for the informed consent process with each schools’ head instructors.

**Observations**

Shortly after meeting privately with each head instructor I attended my first aikido class. During each class that I observed during my first week of residency the aikido instructor introduced me to the students and allowed me to tell them about my research study. I briefly explained my research protocol and began the informed consent process, emphasizing that they were not in any way obligated to participate in this study.

During that first week, I conducted naturalistic observations. I toured facilities, read bulletin boards and promotional materials, and talked to dojo members. During classes I sat on a bench in the dojo with a notebook. I made notes about the demographic configuration of classes, the ranks of students, the movements taught in class, and anything else that seemed significant. After class I went to a local coffee shop and continued to write an ethnographic log of the days’ events. I wrote about interactions and conversations with and between dojo members. I also journaled about my personal reactions to what I saw, my feelings about being in an aikido space after having been away for so long, and my feelings about the research process.
During this week of naturalistic observations I became acclimated to the schools and gave participants the opportunity to see me in my role as researcher. After watching classes for one week I began conducting participant observations. During this period I joined the aikido classes and worked out with research participants. I completed my ethnographic log every day after class. I took opportunities before and after classes to ask questions. These informal interviews provided impromptu opportunities to seek clarification and context. I observed and logged sixty-four classes during a one month residency at two dojos.

Interviews

In addition to conducting observations, I interviewed 15 aikido students. I met with these individuals in a location of their choice. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted for about an hour each. As much as possible, I allowed them to speak without interrupting them. When a participant came to a concluding point in their remarks I guided them to discuss one of several topics of interest.

I began interviews by asking participants to tell me when and why they began studying aikido. In the ensuing conversation I prompted them specifically to discuss:

- Peace
- Violence
- Power
- Their bodies
- A time when they had used something that they had learned in aikido to resolve a conflict in their lives outside the dojo
- And what they would tell George Bush and Dick Cheney if the duo invited them out to lunch and wanted their advice about how to deal with U.S. military policy.
In practice, while conducting an interview, I asked each question in a way that followed the flow of my participants’ discourse. If they followed their train of thought to a concluding point, I asked about another topic. Frequently, I was able to ask about a topic that they had mentioned during their previous discussion. So if they had told a story and briefly mentioned that an action seemed violent, my next question might take the form: “You mentioned that that one action seemed violent. Tell me more about violence.” Asking questions in this way made the interview feel more like a dance. This kind of choreographed improvisation is very well suited to the topic of aikido. Participants often responded to a prompt by discussing a physical interaction that had happened in class, thus contextualizing and elaborating on information gathered during observations.

I developed this interview guide and questioning style through an extensive period of reflection and revision. After my period of preliminary research (during which I read about and physically practiced aikido for four years) I developed a list of topics that I was curious to hear aikidoka discuss. Because I had studied both Cultural Studies and aikido, I knew that these topics were points of interest for both fields of study. I then developed a list of specific questions that would guide study participants to discuss these topics. With the guidance of a critical friend trained in ethnography I developed a questionnaire of 20 specific questions, each phrased in three different ways (for use in case a participant gave a too-brief answer or did not understand the question). I then conducted a pilot interview with an aikido friend. During this pilot interview I learned that the questionnaire of 20 specific questions was not appropriate to this study population. Aikido is a philosophically oriented art with a participant base that is generally well educated and articulate. My pilot interviewee and I spent 45 minutes discussing the first four questions before he noticed the time and started giving briefer (but less interesting)
answers. Having learned from this pilot interview, I continued to develop the interview topics and questioning style described above.

Coding

After conducting these interviews I prepared the resulting data for analysis. I typed word for word transcriptions of each interview and reviewed my field notes to fill in any information that I had not fully explained. I completed open and axial coding\(^{59}\) with the interview data.

Conducting semi-structured interviews with intelligent people is an incredibly pleasant experience. Coding those interviews can be maddening. In this process the transcript is broken down into meaningful segments of data, and then reorganized into categories. I engaged in this process until the axial coding drew out the themes that resonated between interview data and field notes, my knowledge of the art, and the cultural theories that can illuminate the social significance of aikido. Before coding I had a transcript that shared the stories that participants told in the order that they told them. After coding I had a transcript that had all those same stories arranged according to key themes that recurred throughout several participants’ stories.

After my coding process provided me with thorough outlines of main points that could be discussed in several chapters, I continued to use writing as a process of clarifying the data. For each key theme that emerged from the coding process, I selected one (or sometimes more) interview segment(s) that nicely summarized that point. I then used those direct quotes as the foundation for each substantive chapter.

That is, after sorting through (coding) the data (interviews and field notes), I had an outline of the key points about aikido that I found academically interesting. I also had a version of interview transcripts that consisted of several stories told by participants for each theme. With

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my outline and narratively-organized transcripts in hand, I edited down this interesting but unwieldy transcript into a smoother document. That is, I remixed the ethnographic record into a book-length non-fiction essay. Using this edited ethnographic record as a framework I began the process of writing my academic perspective and personal knowledge into a well-composed essay.

**Writing**

Writing is the practice of allowing ideas to flow through your mind and catching them with paper and ink. Mediating between the worlds of ideas and physical reality, writing has often been seen as a religious or shamanistic task.\(^6\)

Seeking the most useful representation of my study participants' thoughts and actions, my approach is narrative in nature. My goal is to create a non-fiction essay that touches on some of the bizarre intricacies of American culture. It slips in and out of poetry where phallogocentrically hegemonic English simply does not make a linguistic cut as artfully as it could, or should slip through space. Throughout, I seek to provide a representation of an American subculture that has something interesting to say about some of the conundrums with which our generation gets to play. Through the writing process I cultivated participants’ contributions in conversation with my memories of playing aikido and academic ruminations on cultural theory and counterhegemonic embodiment.

Writing movement is a tricky endeavor. Translating movement into written English flattens the reality of my participants, their tone of voice, speech rhythms, and gestures. Something is lost when my vignettes fail to convey the way someone rolled their eyes or where they laughed sarcastically, as opposed to where they laughed from the depths of their bellies. And I fear that my representation does not fully communicate the force of participants’ humor. I
have proceeded, though, hoping that this representation might provoke interesting and useful thoughts.

I have sought a balance between authorial and participant voices. In some sections I step back as the author, shaping the narrative by selecting and combining participants’ comments. In some sections my academic voice is more overtly prominent as I place academic theories into dialogue with practices that I observed during field work. In some places I employ autoethnographic reflection by inserting my personal stories into the text. I allow the contestatory nature of critical consciousness, feminism, and peace-loving tree hugging to interact with one another, calling each other out quite distinctly in places (see especially the Discussion in Chapter 5).

Autoethnographic reflection creates a dialogue between researcher’s personal experiences and larger social and academic issues. This approach to scholarship draws on autobiographical experience as another information resource (similar to interviews, observations, and historical contextualization). Autoethnographic writing creates a rich analysis by incorporating memory work and theory building in the project of anthropologizing the self as deeply and well as the other. In autoethnography, as I am writing I think about how my research relates to my own life, and both the particularity and generalizability of what I have learned. As I work memories surface. Instead of brushing them off as irrelevant I pause to dwell with them. Sometimes they yield insight. Journaling, free-writing, sometimes even meditative doodling help to tease

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61 Rhetorically acknowledging the researchers’ self is contrary to patriarchal research and writing styles that de-emphasize the role of the researcher’s self in an attempt to rhetorically secure an appearance of objective Truth. Instead, autoethnography is honest about the personal dimensions of seemingly impersonal research. When I write in the first person I acknowledge that my questioning and analysis has issued forth from a self. Positivist/patriarchal research delegitimizes the first person, as though clearly stating “I think …” necessarily renders the following information highly suspect. All research is the product of a fleshly, fallible being. Acknowledging it keeps us honest and opens the possibility for further clarification. See Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson, eds., *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1998).
meaning and nuance out of both personal experience and research-derived information. These writing methods allow me to draw on what I learned about aikido before I commenced the “research” upon which this study draws.

My writing process is largely one of contextualizing, allowing data and academic theories to float through my mind, seeing where aikido and cultural studies converge and diverge. Inviting philosophies to play through my body, trying to enact enough discipline that the resulting words land on a page and form a coherent, or better yet useful (or at least harmless) representation of study participants. Finding a way, through the writing process, to demonstrate alignment amongst academic field, ethical commitment, theoretical lens, study topic, study population, data collection method, analysis method, representation and dissemination of findings. Coming to know these factors of a study as I know the chakras of my body. Noticing them, playing with them, learning to use them, and pulling them into proper relation to the others. Making friends with the characters into whom my participants have morphed, cultivating our relationships, and introducing them to each other, to see what happens. During writing I often enter a deeply meditative state. Different spiritual practices have different personal effects. Writing this project affected me in several ways.

During the writing process I learned a lot about my own limits, how to sustain myself, burnout, and writers block. I found that I can not write about the philosophy of non-violent decolonial subjectivity without physically, practically working to embody it. My thinking developed very physical and practical aspects. While this dissertation consists of a philosophical analysis of movement my life came to revolve around practical manifestations of that philosophy. I became intensely aware of the political ramifications of my personal movement. Where some would find this paralyzing I made it into a puzzle. While I continue to be
unsatisfied with the many ways in which my life is sustained by colonialism I have found several practical ways to embody the philosophy about which I write. Writing has focused my concentration on larger political issues, thereby encouraging me to imagine innovative approaches to the logistics of decolonialism from privileged axes of identity.

For example, my field site was over a thousand miles away - how could I get there in a decolonial (or at least not simply colonial) method? I used student loans to convert a VW Bug to run on recycled vegetable oil and traveled cross-country with extremely limited use of fossil fuels. My body has to be sustained while I do my academic work – how can I work to contribute to my physical sustenance rather than just relying on exploited workers to feed me? When I reached a point of burnout where I couldn’t write I spent three months working at an urban farming project, laboring physically to increase our food supply. The writing of this dissertation has shaped my life choices in ways that would not have been feasible without the sustained focus created through (tortuously) sustained writing. The physicality of the writing practice demanded a consistent attention to the actual embodiment of decolonial ideals, which I found perpetually inspiring.

Trustworthiness

I promise that there really is a group of aikido students in the United States of America who said all of the things that are set aside in block quotes. I promise that their physicality

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62 While appreciating that this approach to the logistics of this research project allowed me to opt out of United States’ occupation of oil-producing forces in the Middle East, I also acknowledge that as this car was manufactured in Mexico after 1994 and therefore under the governance of the NAFTA treaty, my purchase of this car supported the economic transformations that have resulted in maquiladora settlements, which have proved to be hotbeds of systemic revolting violence against poor women of color who do not enjoy the privileges of citizenship in the United States of America. Part of the challenge of conducting decolonial scholarship from privileged social positions is that interventions meant to divest oneself from ones privilege often simultaneously reinforce that privilege. Attending to the complexity of material cultural in late capitalism as a physical reality in ones daily life is a difficult but ultimately interesting and inspiring academic practice.

63 I learned that I think best when my daily life consists of a combination of physical, intellectual, and self-caring labor. In fact, my writing efficiency dropped sharply during periods when I was not working on a project or a job
performatively demonstrated the deconstruction of power described in this dissertation. I promise, as a performance art historian, that I believe that Ueshiba Sensei created aikido as an epistemological koshi for colonialism. Another scholar coming from another academic perspective or another set of life experiences might look at my interview transcripts and field notes and draw altogether different conclusions. This does not mean that my conclusions are incorrect. It means that they are a product of my unique (academically trained and personally situated) perspective, which can be usefully augmented by other perspectives. In contrast with academic traditions seeking to provide concrete answers to problems involving science and mathematics, cultural theory seeks to provide explanations (and sometimes solutions) for complex behavioral phenomena. Where the scientific method holds that a true finding is replicable, cultural studies holds that truth is infinitely deep and complex and personal. It is only with this caveat that I make a claim for the truth and trustworthiness of the current study. I am philosophically opposed to closed answers. I would prefer that a reader not simply trust what I have written. I would prefer that she would engage it thoughtfully. But I did follow a tight research protocol with carefully considered safeguards meant to provide sufficient useful and academically relevant (aka trustworthy) data and analysis.

A number of steps were taken to increase the trustworthiness of data. I negotiated a dynamic balance between the intimate experience of practicing aikido and the alienating strangeness inherent in ethnographic relationships. My lengthy period of preliminary research familiarized me with aikido terminology, customs, and group dynamics, thus increasing the likelihood that I would interpret social interactions correctly. During preliminary research I

\[64\] A koshi is a hip throw. Aikido’s memetic manifestations of this move are explored at length in chapter 7.
developed an intense personal practice of aikido. By practicing aikido I learned what the art communicates through the movement of my own flesh.

When the official HSRB-approved academic research study commenced I stepped away from my personal practice of aikido and looked at the art from a much greater distance. With the help of a sprained ankle and an increasingly busy schedule I stopped practicing aikido altogether and reduced my social interactions with aikidoka in my home town. This reduced the likelihood that their self-interests would shape my analysis of research data. I also chose to conduct field work at dojos that were geographically removed from my then-current home and my family home. Again, geographical barriers in the ethnographic relationship gave me space to develop my own analysis, not overly influenced by study participants’ continued involvement.

During the study I carefully documented all data. I took meticulous notes during field work and reviewed these shortly after completing data collection to fill in any gaps in documentation. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed word for word. During analysis I met with a critical friend regularly to review coding schemes and discuss findings. Study participants were provided with a copy of the final dissertation and invited to e-mail me with comments or concerns.

After a final draft of the dissertation was completed I presented the findings in several public contexts and invited comments from critical family members, friends and colleagues. This important step in the writing process brought my research into active dialogue. Each audience asked insightful questions and helped me to clarify my presentation of study results. With the help of the interlocutors with whom I thought and danced at these presentations I developed an hour-long presentation that consists of a brief overview of the findings and theorization of this study and then flows into a series of carefully choreographed experimental movement exercises. First, I made a formal presentation to my family members at my maternal
grandmothers house and another at my paternal grandmothers house in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Second, I hosted a discussion and workout for my friends, neighbors, and my best friend’s
family in Frog Island Park in Ypsilanti, MI. Third, I conducted a lecture and movement session
for friends, fellow dancers, and potential future colleagues at the yoga studio where I worked,
A2 Yoga in Ann Arbor, MI. Fourth, I successfully completed a final presentation and refinement
of dissertation research with the members of my dissertation committee at Bowling Green State
University on September 23, 2011. Fifth, I conducted an hour-long workshop titled “Morning
Movement” at the annual meeting of the National Womens’ Studies Association in Atlanta, GA.
I hope that one day I will have the opportunity to share this presentation with the original study
participants.

Considerations

While designing and conducting this study, as with writing up the results, I sought to treat
study participants with care. The risks of harm posed by this research study were minimal.
Participants were not asked to do anything other than what they already did as a part of their daily
lives, and participate in an interview if they wished.

However, research with humans should always be designed with a great deal of care for
research participants. Every ethnography carries inherent risk because it involves researching
human beings. Although human beings are not excessively delicate (particularly in this study)
there is always a danger of causing harm to participants. Aikidoka do use this martial art for a
number of serious purposes.

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65 This ritual is usually called a “Defense.” I call it a “Final Presentation and Refinement of Research” because one
of the major things that I learned as a graduate student of American Cultural Studies is that our uncritical reliance on
combativeness as a mode of linguistic interaction has real consequences. As individual subjects we can choose not to
perpetuate habitual metaphorical combativeness. Therefore, I did not “defend” my dissertation; I presented it and
worked with my dissertation committee to refine it.
Because I took aikido classes for four years I know in my flesh that it is a very useful coping device. Some aikido students use it as a philosophical support for other important work; some use it to maintain a positive outlook on life. Aikido is not just a game to the people who do it. If my research protocol upset some kind of balance and interfered in someone’s ability to play aikido I would feel horrible. So although the likelihood of that happening was minimal I enjoyed the exercise of designing a research protocol that made a point of minimizing risks.

My research protocol carefully addressed several concerns. These related to consent, the possibility of harm to participants, confidentiality, and the complexities of representing identity. Practicing the tenant of striving to do no harm in a relatively simple research project has prepared me to apply that principle in studies where risks are more complicated.

**Consent**

Consent is absolutely central to the politics of this project. Ethnographic research in sporting environments poses some interesting problems for informed consent. I wanted to ensure that all participants gave truly voluntary informed consent.

Within the cultures at many martial arts schools, it is considered extremely rude to refuse a request made by one's instructor. Because of this, if the head instructor invites her students to participate in this study or otherwise appears to endorse the study, students may feel pressured to participate. This study design helped ensure that participants’ engagement in this study is truly voluntary, and therefore properly consensual. My #1 rule was not to pressure anyone to participate.

I conducted this study with the assumption that there would be aikido students who were present while I was observing classes who did not wish to be included in my study. While conducting observations I interacted with everyone in the dojo. While writing my notes, though, I did not record specific interactions with individuals who had not indicated consent.
All students were asked to complete informed consent forms that asked them to respond “yes” or “no” to questions asking whether I had their consent to: observe them, write about them, photograph them, and video-tape them. I also informed students that their participation in this study was entirely voluntary and they could decide not to participate at any time by telling me in person or via phone or e-mail, and I would immediately destroy any data that I had recorded about them. While conducting the study I maintained distance from anyone who appeared to not want to participate in my study. Finally, after I had completed data collection I inventoried the informed consent forms and made certain that I had not recorded data in my field notes about any aikido student from whom I had not received informed consent.

While scheduling and conducting interviews I similarly took measures that ensured that participants were voluntarily consenting to be interviewed. First, I asked that any person who wished to complete an interview contact me to set up a date and time that was convenient for them. Allowing students to take the initiative in scheduling interviews helped to ensure that their participation is truly voluntary. All interviews were conducted at a location away from the dojo, so participants had to go slightly out of their way to be interviewed. This ensured that any aikido student who had been encouraged to be interviewed by their teacher or other students could gracefully decline by indicating that they were unable to work it into their schedule.

My rule about not pressuring people to participate in interviews was tested towards the end of my visit to one dojo. Two people volunteered to be interviewed. However, I suspected that they had been nudged to volunteer for an interview by an authority figure in their lives. Although they approached me to schedule an interview we had difficulty finding a time when we could get together. I would have loved to have heard their stories (both of them had very interesting stories, which is part of why I suspect that they were nudged). Unfortunately, I had to return home before I had a chance to interview either one of them because this happened during
the end of my field work. It is quite possible that they were not “nudged.” It is quite possible that they were as eager to tell me their stories as I was eager to hear them. Ultimately though I feel that not pursuing their interviews was an appropriate choice.

Possibility of Harm to Participants

One reason for selecting aikido as a good first research project has been its relative safety. Aikidoka are generally stable, resourceful people. Because I realize that it is very easy to make mistakes during a first attempt at any endeavor I took comfort in knowing that my initial study population consisted of individuals who could take care of themselves. Although risks were minimal I would hate to be responsible for any harm to the people who were generous enough to help me out with my research. Considering potential risks of harm caused by even a relatively safe research method like participant-observation ethnography has been a valuable learning experience.

One area of concern for this study related to the possibility of causing psychological harm to participants during the interview process. Previous ethnographic research into female martial artists\(^66\) indicates that some students of martial arts begin studying to deal with previous experiences of abuse. Although my research questions did not specifically ask about this, I did suspect that interviewees might initiate discussion of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. There is a risk of causing psychological harm to interview participants who are compelled to revisit traumatic memories.\(^67\)

The study design included several safeguards against the possibility of study participants experiencing psychological harm as a result of my research activities. First, the interview questions were designed to be vague enough to allow participants to discuss sensitive personal

\(^{66}\) Castelnuovo and Guthrie, *Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon within*.
issues if they wished to do so. But since I did not ask them to talk about sensitive topics they were under very little pressure to discuss anything that they were uncomfortable discussing. The interview prompt “Tell me about a time when you used something that you learned in aikido to resolve a conflict in your life outside the dojo” could lead participants to discuss sensitive topics. But participants could just as easily answer this question by discussing traffic patterns. If they hesitated to tell me a story I reminded participants that they did not have to talk about anything that they did not want to talk about. At that point, they almost always proceeded to finish their story.

Second, while conducting interviews I had phone numbers for local emergency psychological help. If a research participant did enter a state of emotional distress during an interview I would have been prepared with the contact information of people who could provide assistance. Upon reflection, in future studies I will include this information with participants’ copies of their Informed Consent paperwork. This is because I may not realize that a participant is in distress or a participant may enter distress much later.

Several interview participants did discuss sensitive personal issues. I heard stories about times when people were attacked or were almost attacked, injuries, Vietnam, social dramas, family dramas, and many other kinds of intensities. Happily, none of the individuals who shared these stories entered a state of emotional distress. But there was one interview during which I came to truly appreciate having taken the possibility of emotional distress into consideration. I was interviewing a participant and this person mentioned a time when they had arrived home to find their life partner in the process of committing suicide.

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This participant did not seem to be the least bit uncomfortable discussing this situation. But as I was sitting there listening to this story, trying to keep my face in a neutral yet receptive “I’m fascinated, tell me more” expression, I must admit that a part of my mind reached down into my bag and touched the page on which I had written the psychologists’ phone numbers. Having them handy gave me a level of comfort while I listened to participants’ stories of intense situations. It felt as though my comfort in those situations contributed to interviewees’ willingness to relate these stories.

Creating an atmosphere in which interviewees feel comfortable relating intense stories is an art form in itself. I greatly admire the work of ethnographers who work with more sensitive issues. But because the risk of inadvertently causing psychological harm to interview participants researchers should use a great deal of caution when soliciting stories of abuse and trauma.

Another potential harm to research participants is that some weirdo could read this study and decide that he needed to prove to my research participants that all women are weaker than men and start stalking the dojo. It’s highly unlikely, but possible. Sometimes research can have totally unpredicted and unhoped-for consequences. That is one reason why it is a good idea to maintain a certain degree of separation between the humans who are researched and the characters who appear in disseminations of that research. One way of doing that is by maintaining the confidentiality of research participants.

Confidentiality

In the interest of my long-term training as an ethnographer I elected to conduct my first major study as a confidential one. There are benefits and drawbacks to this choice. Confidentiality gives participants an opportunity to discuss topics without being overly concerned that their participation in the study causes unforeseen negative consequences. This is
particularly important in studies that analyze information that would cause harm to participants who would likely come to harm if it were known that they were the humans who had provided that information. I have had the good fortune to study ethnography with scholars who have worked with sensitive topics like female athletes balancing the conflicting demands of femininity and athleticism,68 graffiti artistry,69 and participants affected by immigration exclusion.70 Topics like these necessitate a heightened sensitivity to the confidentiality of research participants. This study did not feature a highly sensitive study population but I did strive to maintain the confidentiality of study participants.

Ultimately, it was most appropriate to maintain confidentiality in this study because confidentiality minimizes the potential risks to participants. Also, conducting the current study “as if” it were sensitive gives me a safe place to consider small details that would become increasingly important in a more sensitive study. For example, I did not ask for mailing addresses on my informed consent forms. (If this was a highly sensitive population, like undocumented immigrants, this would be an appropriate choice because it reduces the risk of accidentally revealing the identity of study participants.) At the end of my residency at each dojo, though, I realized that I wanted to give each participant a thank you card. Not having their addresses threw a kink in that plan. Now that I messed that up I have a better understanding of the practicalities of confidentiality.

Confidentiality is difficult to ensure with a population consisting of aikido practitioners. In the ethnographic record (my field notes, research log, and reflexive journal) and all presentations of this research, I have changed the names of all research participants. A reader unfamiliar with aikido would have no way of connecting a character in this dissertation to a real human. But I fear that a reader who is familiar with this subculture may be able to identify some research participants. Because of the epistemological valuation of movement, some aikido practitioners can identify kinesthetic influences with surprising accuracy. Many schools are distinctive enough that other aikido practitioners may be able to identify a school if I accurately described series of movements, the gym space or altar (shomen), or if I include photographs. Because there are relatively few students who attend each school (usually well under 50), other aikido students may be able to identify a student who is quoted, or whose movement is described. Because I did not feel that I could absolutely guarantee participants’ confidentiality I informed each of them that other aikidoka may be able to identify them if I quote them directly but that I would not intentionally reveal their identities in any presentations of this research.

In one sense it would have made more sense to not attempt to maintain confidentiality with this particular study population. There is a great deal of interesting information about these participants that cannot appear in write-ups of this material because the information is specific enough that it would increase the likelihood of identifying participants or the schools to which they belong. In some cases identifying characteristics (such as credentials or identity characteristics) are relevant to quotes presented in this dissertation. So keeping this study confidential does have a homogenizing impact on my descriptions of participants.

Additionally it is materially problematic to study the work of living, commercially functioning artists without identifying them. Recognizing that artists may benefit financially from association with scholars, choosing to withhold association was a carefully deliberated
choice. Interestingly, the ethnographic tradition of anonymizing the knowledge contributed by study participants while fetishistically citing the knowledge of academically-legitimated authors turns in upon itself when subjects occupy overlapping subject positions. In future studies with similar populations it would be more appropriate for me to negotiate confidentiality with individual participants. But the choice to use blanket confidentiality in this study has helped protect participants and has helped me gain a greater understanding of conducting confidential research.

Complexities of Representing Identity

When I was designing this study, I had first planned to begin interviews by asking participants to complete a survey asking participants to list easily quantifiable information about themselves. Age, number of years studying aikido, other avocations, occupation, income, marital status, family status, sexuality, race, and ethnicity.

A critical friend who had reviewed my study protocol invited me to rethink this strategy. Noting that sport is usually a virulently homophobic social space, she noted that participants might be put off by being asked about their sexuality at a point so early in the interview. This might, in turn, negatively affect their willingness to share their stories and thoughts with me. My previous experiences with similar aikido populations led me to believe that aikido environments were not as homophobic as mainstream sporting environments. I appreciated the larger point that opening a conversation by asking participants to identify all of the boxes into which they fit might not be the best way to get this information. Since interviews were going to be largely about how participants engaged with conflicts in their lives, I suspected that some very useful information could be gained by simply allowing participants to tell me their stories, and seeing what identity affiliations emerged during interviews.
So I did not ask interview participants to complete the Identity Survey. Instead, I completed it after the interview based on the information that they shared with me during their interview. This approach worked wonderfully for this set of interviews. I doubt, though, that it would work as well in other kinds of interviews unless the interview invites discussion of social conflict or an identity category is highly salient in the local population because of discord between local norms and mainstream norms. Although this method worked well for this study it may have limited applicability to other study topics.

As it turned out creating a space that invited participants to tell me about identity, rather than overtly asking them about identity, gave me data that was very well suited to my research concerns. The difference between inviting and asking seems so trivial but inviting gave me data that was richer and deliciously messier than I could have hoped. For each participant there was at least one question on the “Identity Survey” to which the answer was more complicated than the space on the worksheet would allow. Each time, as I flipped to the back of the page to continue my notes, I was amused that I had not foreseen the possibility of that conjunction of axis of difference.

Inviting information about identity, as opposed to asking, allowed participants to not divulge information about any given axis of identity. Within this method they could easily not mention their sexuality, or their race, their occupation, or any other factor that they choose, for whatever reason, not to discuss. What participants don’t say is often as interesting as what they do say.71 Inviting identity information, rather than asking about it, allowed for significant play between personally felt identity and socially interpellated identity.

interpellation

Socially interpellated identity relates to the subjectivity that one’s social context attempts to call forth from one. To interpellate one is to call one into being, specifically as a social subject. It is what your social context thinks you are. Donna Haraway's description of interpellation is precise, relevant, and worth quoting at length:

According to Althusser, interpellation occurs when a subject... recognizes or misrecognizes itself in the address of discourse. Althusser used the example of the policemen calling out, “Hey you!” If I turned my head, I am a subject in that discourse of law and order; and so I am subject to a powerful formation. How I mis/recognize myself – will I be harassed by a dangerous armed individual with the legal power to invade my person and my community; will I be arrested for a crime I too acknowledge as a violation; or will I see an alert member of a democratic community doing rotating police work? - speaks volumes both about the unequal positioning of subjects in discourse and about different worlds that might have a chance to exist.72

Interpellated identity, then, is a matter of social recognition and mis/recognition. It is a matter of appearances, and particularly related to negotiations with agents of the state, agents of capitalism, and agents of normative social interactions. Interpellation renders identity a political matter. A particularly fleshy political matter.

What I learned from this approach to gathering information about identity is that identity is far more complex than I had first thought. As I was designing this study, I composed a one-page survey soliciting information about participants' identity affiliations. I thought I could get enough self-reported demographic information to properly contextualize study participants from

a one page survey. What I learned is that allowing participants to create narratives that explain
the meaning of identity provides a rich and theoretically useful portrait of participant’s
perceptions of the meanings of their identity affiliations. The meanings of participants' identity
affiliations will continue to emerge throughout the following chapters.

*interpellation and social violence*

The main reason that this study plays with interpellated identity relates to my interest in
understanding how violence functions socially. When violence is perpetrated against an
individual because of an aspect of their identity affiliation, it is very rarely connected to
personally felt identity, but instead is an imposition of socially interpellated identity.

And even where a victim's personally felt identity and their socially interpellated identity
align perfectly (I feel that I am a woman, and my aggressor feels that I am a woman too), the
meaning ascribed to that identity is importantly different (to me being a woman means being in
touch with the ability to create life, to a misogynist aggressor being a woman means… what? that
I am different from the norm, other, scary and dangerous, and so need to be destroyed?). And
violence is perpetrated based on the aggressor’s interpretation of that identity category, regardless
of the victim’s interpretation of their identity.

This difference between interpellated identity and personally felt identity, and the
importance of this difference in relation to violence, was crystallized for me during my
preliminary research. During my preliminary research period I taught kids’ classes in exchange
for a scholarship that would cover my aikido dues. One day I taught a kids’ class that featured a
movement that I had used the previous weekend to evade street harassment. After class my co-
instructor and I had a conversation that helped me understand the complexity of the relationships
between negative impositions of identity, positive expressions of identity, and identity-oriented
violence.
The previous weekend, I had been at a Queer Pride Parade in Columbus. Me and my lady friends were walking through the crowd and passed a group of men in short shorts who were celebrating exuberantly, walking in the opposite direction. I heard one of them say “I want to touch your boobies” and I felt him encroaching on my personal space. I did not want my boobies touched. So I raised my arm to meet his, put a little pressure in my hara, and engaged both of our arms in a spiralic motion that redirected his hand away from my body while moving my body away from the area where he was grabbing. He never touched me, and both of our groups kept on walking; nothing escalated. (This is the thing about aikido – when it works well it’s quite anti-climactic).

This motion was the focus of the next kids’ class that I taught. In aikido, classes for children focus on helping children to move with good posture and coordination, breath deeply, and fall down safely. When children are taught martially-applicable skills, they are usually taught these subtly, through games. A person who has seen a children’s class in most karate or tai kwon do schools (and perhaps even some aikido schools different from ones described here) might not recognize aikido kids’ classes as martial arts. This is because aikido seeks to enable children to engage productively with conflicts without valorizing conflict, or scaring them by asking them to imagine violent scenarios. Children are occasionally shown the martial applications of their “games,” but classes are taught with an emphasis on fun movement. So during this class, I led students through the “game” of this choreography (through which I redirected my harasser’s hand earlier that weekend) but never explained that this choreography was derived from an actual evasion of street harassment that I had experienced.

After teaching this kid's class together, my co-teacher and I sat in the dojo drinking tea, talking, and waiting for the adult's class to begin. He asked me “Kristy, do you ever have to use any of this stuff we study here?” So I told him about why I had just focused the kid's class on that
particular spiralic motion. He listened, sighed, and told me his own story about that previous weekend.

He had been in a southern state with a long history of overtly and covertly condoning various kinds of violence against people who looked like him. He was waiting for the subway when the hair on the back of his neck suddenly stood up. A group of young men stepped onto the platform, and proceeded to behave aggressively. He had been wearing his earphones but not listening to music. He began shifting his weight around as though he were dancing. The young men decided to leave him alone. This interaction, which happily resolved anti-climatically, reverberates a telling connection between social interpellation and potential violence that will be explored throughout this dissertation.

Someone who didn't study aikido probably would think nothing of the sorts of events at the Pride Parade or the subway platform. But I suspect that practitioners of this art would easily recognize the centering, grounding, awareness of one's body, and energetic engagement implicit in the above stories. From considering these subtle kinds of psuedo-violences that we had encountered on the street, turning them over, tossing them back and forth, my friend and I realized that a huge part of what makes social violence so soul-killing is the complete disregard for personally felt identity and the possibility of positive expressions of points of difference.

My co-teacher in this kid's class was a performing artist. At another time, I sat in an auditorium of highly prestigious performance space, watching this man embody a work of art that had never before been performed in that type of venue only because of the racial identity of the original artist. The work was phenomenal. It received a standing ovation from a packed house. Watching a man who, not too long ago and even today in certain places, would be barred from

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performing in a venue that prestigious simply because of his race, performing a masterpiece that had never before been performed simply because of the original artists' race, my heart overflowed with … something I can't quite say. But in communicably dry academic language: I was acutely aware of positive aspects of my co-teacher's identity affiliations.

But when he was standing on the subway platform, shifting his weight in anticipation of not quietly succumbing to the young men's potential aggression an entirely different set of meanings of his racial identity became salient. His art was made into nothing. The richness of his culture and mind rendered irrelevant, non-existent, by a history and social context too ignorant to even recognize his humanity. And the boys didn't even have to do anything to him to invoke a mis/recognition as a potential victim of identity-rich (if not identity-based) violence.

Taking note of the social complexity of identity, narrative approaches allow for an individual's identity affiliations to take on meaning, rather than lying inert as statistical calculations of pseudo-scientific categorizations. It allows for an individual to occupy identity in a way that passes in one context while contesting norms in another context. And it allows for omissions and silences to invoke significant meanings.

*identity quandaries: race, ethnicity, and sexuality*

Supporting participants' choices in their self-representations, particularly about identity affiliations, is not antithetical to contextualizing participants' identity affiliations. Participants provided narratives about themselves, which allowed me to derive meanings from those narratives. This write-up is an exercise in the difficult art of bringing individual's perceptions of themselves into dialogue with social perceptions surrounding them. I have sought a balance between respecting both participants self-articulated identity affiliations and socially interpellated identity affiliations. Towards that end, I adopted a general strategy regarding marginalized identity positions. If an interview participant spoke with me about being a member of a
marginalized group I allowed the character derived from that participant to discuss that point for the reader. That is, if an interview participant came out to me as gay during research that character comes out to the reader somewhere in the resulting narrative. If they discussed their ethnic identity, their character discusses that ethnic identity in the resulting narrative. If an identity pattern was highly salient to me as a cultural theorist, but unremarked-upon by participants I include my thoughts about that identity pattern in the dissertation narrative.

If I felt that an interview participant declined to provide information about any identity axis because they wanted privacy in that area of their life, I do not discuss that individuals’ situation in the resulting narrative, except in a very generalized and anonymous manner. Also, I began this research with a policy that the locker room was off limits to my scholarly gaze because the locker room is a zone of privacy that I ought to respect. Some private information was shared with me in the locker room. But if the person sharing that information did not also discuss it with me outside the locker room, I omitted it from the ethnographic record.

One axis of identity that manifested in an interesting way in this study includes ethnicity and race. When discussing ethnicity and race, participants left most information unspecified. 3 participants discussed being Jewish, 1 discussed being Scandinavian, and 11 participants did not overtly identify as a member of any ethnic group.

Overall, participants in this study did not have very much to say about race or ethnicity. But they did share some fascinating information about the intersections of racial identity and conflict, particularly as these relate to whiteness. The relationship between whiteness and privilege became quite salient during the course of this study. Noticing and decoding this conjunction of meanings requires active listening and ethnographic analysis. It requires reading between the lines by drawing on knowledge of social context. And it requires listening to
participants when they get quiet, watching carefully for the significance of various kinds of silences.

Recalling interpellation as a matter of social recognition and misrecognition, interpellated identity is the identity into which one would be categorized by an agent of the state or a similar regulating social body. Race and ethnicity, like other identity formations, are made up of a combination of personally felt subjectivity and socially-interpellated identity. Sometimes these match up well, sometimes they do not. This is important because any discussion of the social functioning of race must consider how one's appearance would be perceived in various social contexts.

To a casual observer, such as a police officer or store clerk, all interview participants in this study would pass as White. In the context of participants’ own discussions of their bodies and from an interpretive framework that emphasizes the social importance of ethnicity, some also appeared Jewish, Indigenous, and Latina. But these ethnic variations occurred within presentations consistent with dominant codes of whiteness in a major metropolitan area in the Northwestern United States of America. There were big differences in participants' expressions of whiteness, but these would all be perceivable within the social category of whiteness. However, during participants' interviews, which featured a sustained discussion of conflicts in their lives, participants rarely and briefly mentioned racial identification. That is, participants passed, though they also experienced presenting in ethnically specific manners and might not pass in other temporal or geographical regions. And participants did not discuss this at length during interviews in which they were invited to discuss conflicts in their social lives. From a Cultural Studies perspective, this is fascinating.
This study was conducted in 2008. Interview participants had been practicing martial arts for an average of 12.4 years. Participants had been engaging in aikido activities throughout the post-9/11 Bush years. In many contexts, openly practicing martial arts has been considered a paramilitary activity. Granted, this is a form of paramilitary activity that would fly under the radar of most domestic wiretappers and probably wouldn't even be considered as a paramilitary activity by its practitioners.

Participants in this study were totally out about their martial arts activities. They had commercially operating storefronts with official certifications of business registry. Considering this, the degree to which participants in this study pass, in a social sense, has helped me to clarify an interesting meaning of whiteness. Whiteness is the performance that allows individuals to pass with the least possible amount of conflict caused by interpellated racial identification.

As a Cultural Studies Scholar, I assert that the fact that participants would casually pass as white is an important factor in their ability to engage in aikido in the social climate of the Bush era. This is because one of the privileges of whiteness is social legitimation. An action that would be perceived as dangerously anti-social if performed by a Black or Muslim body (like paramilitary activities such as martial arts) can be perceived as “quaint” when performed by a body that looks like a sweet little grandma or the straight middle-class white girl next door.

The interpellation tensions of navigating ethnic/racial interpellation also came up in regards to sexual identification. While analyzing interviews I was similarly intrigued by some participants' choices to leave information about their sexuality unverbalized. During field work, I was made aware of some participants' sexuality by other study participants. In one interesting instance some participants were outed to me as a heterosexual couple. I would not have gathered these elements of comportment. See Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New*
that this pair was a couple from the stories they told me or the way they behaved in public. This placed me in the position of having to think carefully about what to do about this information. The information was interesting and surprising, but not vital to the study. And so I note it in only the most general terms.

While I was wondering how best to represent participants' sexuality I was fortunate enough to observe a roundtable discussion at which Sport Journalists were criticized for their coverage of athlete's sexual lives. Particularly with apparently heterosexual and reproductive female athletes journalists had tended to place excessive and often unwanted emphasis on athlete's sexual lives. Simultaneously, journalists had refused to report information about non-heterosexual athletes even when those athletes wanted journalists' reporting to reflect a recognition of their sexual and social lives. That is, sport journalists insisted on reporting instances of heterosexuality while refusing to report instances of non-heterosexuality, contrary to the wishes of athletes.\(^75\) This representational pattern is a mainstream example of how heterosexism requires that heterosexual couplings be performed under the public gaze, while homosexual and other couplings not be socially recognized.\(^76\) In this representational context, following participants’ lead in their self-representations becomes a specifically queer intervention in heterosexist representational codes.

Many of the developments of decolonial feminist interpretive ethnography have articulated the complexities of representing research participants. In my exploration of this study method, I have sought to both respect and contextualize participants’ self-representations. Sometimes I follow participants’ lead; sometimes I impose my researcher perspective.

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Representing research participants is an intricate dance, to which the steps are not always obvious. I hope that the interplay between the perspectives of researcher and researched results in a respectful representation.

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CHAPTER 3: AIKIDO CLASS

Upon arriving at an aikido dojo (school, or “place of the way”), a student removes their shoes at the door and places them on a shoe rack. Some students proceed into the school barefoot, while others exchange their shoes for a pair of slippers. One dojo that I visited had a colorful array of slippers on the shoe rack, ranging from pink bunny slippers to comfy ballet-style slippers to traditional Japanese sandals. Students exchange hello’s with each other on the way to the changing rooms. Each school had two small changing rooms, one for females and one for males. Students could also change in a private bathroom. They change into a white practice uniform consisting of drawstring pants and a wrap-around jacket-style top, called a dogi. The dogi is worn over underwear and (frequently) a tank-top or t-shirt.

The dogi is held closed with a belt. This belt fulfills the functional purpose of literally tying the practice uniform together. It also gives an indication of each student’s rank within the school. Different schools use different belt systems to indicate rank. One dojo that I visited had white belts and black belts, with no color variations in between. Another dojo had white belts, blue belts, brown belts, and black belts to indicate students’ skill level, which was roughly connected to the amount of time each person had been a student. In both of the dojos that I observed a black belt indicates that a student has reached a “dan” level, and a hakama is worn over top of the dogi.

The amount of time that a student takes to reach a level of first dan varies widely depending on the school at which they study and the abilities and study habits of each individual student. Students did not generally test for a dan rank before about three years of practice and I encountered several students who had spent over ten years working towards the first dan test. The meaning of a black belt is very different for different arts, different schools, and different students. In American higher education a degree in Physics is different from a degree in Rhetoric,
and a degree from Stanford is different from a similarly-named degree from Online U.
Complicating this matter, all of these degrees may or may not be an accurate indication of the quality of any given student possessing that degree. Students sometimes receive degrees by virtue of little more than paying tuition bills for a designated period of time. For similar reasons many aikido participants asserted that while attaining a blackbelt was an admirable life goal, the fact that a person has a blackbelt does not necessarily mean that they are a skillful martial artist.

Once students successfully tested for a dan level, or blackbelt, they also wore a hakama in this lineage (group of aikido schools that share common teachers). This hakama looks like a pair of pleated skorts with very wide floor-length legs. It is tied on at the waist with four long straps, two attached to the front of the hakama, two attached to the back. Tying a hakama is a complicated procedure, taking at least five minutes. In this lineage, each student ties theirs on in the manner that best suits them. In some other lineages students must tie theirs according to a very specific pattern.

Once students are dressed, they enter the practice area. Before walking onto the mat they stand and bow towards the shomen, a large altar featuring a calligraphy and a photograph of Morihei Ueshiba, and sometimes other items including flowers, a weapons rack with various wooden practice weapons, and incense. Before class has officially started, students may talk with other students, stretch, or sit in quiet meditation.

When class is about to begin, students line up along a single line in a kneeling position, or sitting cross-legged if they are unable to kneel (or in another position if they are unable to do either of these). When the teacher is ready to begin class, s/he kneels in front of this line of students and leads them in a formal bow to signal the beginning of class. This bow is performed toward the dojo’s shomen. All students face the shomen and perform a formal, kneeling bow. Every school does this bow slightly differently, and there are even greater variations between
lineages. Then, at both schools, the teacher and students then say “onegai shimasu” (will you please practice with me?) to each other.

After the completion of the formal bow, the teacher leads the class in 10 to 15 minutes of warm-up exercises. The warm-up consists of various stretches, core-work, self-massage, stances, and energy work. Many warm-up moves perform more than one of these functions simultaneously. The warm-up also touches on all of the major joints and muscle groups, from head to toe, though not necessarily in that order. The warm-up is generally consistent from class to class, though different teachers leave out some elements and bring others in. At one school the warm-up had a formal feeling to it and was done in silence. At another school the warm-up was more casual; students, teachers, and observers exchanged greetings, bantered back and forth, and exchanged information about traffic conditions, job opportunities, or the topic of the day.

When the warm-up period is finished students again kneel in a line. The teacher selects a student to be the first uke (this term is commonly translated as attacker, but also means receiver; the meaning of this term and the term nage is discussed in detail in chapter 5). The teacher then demonstrates a technique with that student at the front of the room while the other students watch. During demonstration, the teacher will perform the technique several times; usually at least 3 times, and sometimes up to a dozen times. The teacher may (but does not always) give verbal instructions and/or stop the technique in different places to point out different aspects of what s/he is showing. The teacher indicates that s/he has finished demonstrating by offering a standing bow to the uke and to the students, saying “domo” or “domo arigato” (domo meaning thank you, arigato adding formality) and then may say “dozo,” meaning (please, go ahead and practice together.)

Students then bow to the teacher, and partner up by bowing to someone next to them. If there are an odd number of students in the class, the last student without a pair selects any pair
with which s/he wishes to train and joins that group. That trio then trains together by rotating 
participation; one student will sit out for a set while watching the other two perform the 
technique, and then another student watches the other two and so forth.

Once students pair off, they try to perform the technique that the teacher had 
demonstrated, emphasizing the elements of the technique on which they wish, or are able, to 
focus. Whoever has the highest rank is supposed to perform the role of nage (thrower) first. The 
pair performs the technique four times (two times if they are part of a trio), and then switch roles. 
The person who has the lower rank then performs the nage role, while the other partner performs 
the uke role. They again perform the technique four (or two) times, and again switch roles. 
Sometimes partners bow to each other between sets, sometimes they do not.

Occasionally students begin by asking each other if they saw what just happened, and 
whoever thinks they can approximate what they saw performs the role of nage first. The pair then 
clarifies what they saw by performing it, exploring their own and their partner’s movements as 
they go. Performing the technique can be a process through which partners ask each other and 
themselves how the technique is supposed to go. Sometimes this questioning is done verbally, as 
in: “what is the attack?” “shomen” (strike to the top of the head). Most often this questioning and 
answering is not verbal: one asks if a movement is correct by doing that movement and seeing 
what happens. Though most of the practice is silent partners sometimes give each other 
reminders or feedback by verbalizing (in the midst of movement) “hips,” (meaning move your 
hips) “yes,” (meaning that feels correct) “tenkan,” (meaning turn your body) or “don’t back up.” 
Occasionally pairs stop to discuss something in sentences, but verbal discussion is more 
frequently limited to the bare minimum of words (if any) needed to convey an idea.

Pairs continue in this manner, performing the techniques in sets of four (or two if their 
group has three people), and switching between uke (attacker) and nage (thrower) roles until the
teacher claps his/her hands. The teacher then demonstrates the same technique or a different technique. S/he may re-demonstrate the movement elements that s/he had previously emphasized if enough students did not get it. S/he also might emphasize different elements of the same technique by showing students to move in slightly different relation to each other. Nage might be asked to get further behind uke, or alter the timing of their movement, or sink lower into their own center while performing the technique. Or the teacher might show elements of the uke’s role, how to move in a way that maintains their safety, how to give a thorough and energetic attack, or how to roll with nage’s response to their attack. Or the teacher might demonstrate another technique altogether.

Each technique is very difficult for even the most gifted kinesthetic learners and athletes. Moving a pinky finger or one’s neck just a fraction of an inch can make all the difference in whether a technique works or not. Similarly, where you are looking, what body part you are most aware of, and whether you are breathing out or in can all have a major impact on whether a technique works or not. This contributes to a workout that is both physically and mentally grueling. The mind/body difficulty of aikido, in combination with its ritualization, invites students to enter a meditative state.77

Somewhere around 30 to 40 minutes into class, sometimes sooner, sometimes later, communication patterns shift. Verbal, worded cues between partners become much less frequent.

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Students increasingly vocalize through grunts, laughter, and “sound effects,” or communicate non-vocally via sighs and different breathing patterns. Pairs start having difficulty counting their rounds of 4 and will perform a technique 6, 8, or an unknown number of times before switching roles. Sometimes they ask each other “was that 4?” Even the teacher sometimes seems to be affected by this difficulty with language. A teacher whose verbal cues had previously been very specific and synched up with the actions s/he was demonstrating may mis-name body parts, saying foot when she shows something with her hand, or vice versa. Many teachers cease offering the names of techniques or appear to struggle to recall the names of techniques.

As an external observer I noticed that this point in class featured marked shifts in communicational patterns. As a participant observer I know that my subjective experience of this shift in consciousness can best be described as a period of induced synesthesia between physical and philosophical ways of knowing. As a scholar of histories of consciousness I am fascinated by the social implications of this epistemological shift. (These are discussed further in Chapter 7.)

At this point, linguistic consciousness is no longer the dominant mode of information processing. The class has shifted to an embodied epistemology. How one knows, how one interprets information, how one determines whether knowledge is valid or not become increasingly dependent on whether or not one can feel. Not everyone shifts at the same time, not everyone is aware of this shift, and sometimes it doesn’t happen at all. But when it does class gets intense. And beautiful. And powerful beyond what seems possible. This is embodied consciousness.

The class plays with this embodied consciousness, performing choreographies that Ueshiba designed to demonstrate nonviolent conflict resolution, until the teacher notices that it is almost time for class to end. S/he then claps his/her hands and demonstrates (most frequently, but not always) a move called suwariwaza kokyuho, which means seated breath throw. Students
kneel facing each other; uke grabs nage’s wrists and tries to hold them down. Nage “throws” uke to one side and then the other, repeats 4 times, and then the partners switch roles. After a few rotations the teacher again claps his/her hands to signal the end of class.

Students bow to their partner and thank them. They then straighten their uniforms (which are often quite disheveled at this point) and kneel in a line. Like at the beginning of the class, the teacher kneels in front of the students as they all face the shomen. They offer a formal bow. The teacher turns to the students and says “domo arigato, gozaimasu,” to which the students reply “domo arigato gozaimasu,” meaning “thank you very much.”

Students are then asked to form a circle, and everyone moves to sit in a semi-circle around the shomen. The teacher again bows and says, in English, “thank you very much,” to which the students respond with another “thank you very much.” The teacher asks if there are any announcements and students raise their hand if they would like to inform everyone of an upcoming event. After everyone who wishes to has spoken, the teacher bows and says “thank your partners.” Everyone in the circle bows to each other and says “thank you.” Then each student personally approaches each other student with whom s/he has trained and offers either a kneeling or standing bow, while saying their name and thanking them again, as in “Kristy, thank you very much.” After this round of “thank you’s” students leave the mat, turning to offer a final standing bow towards the shomen before stepping off the mat onto the regular floor.

Students then disperse and do a number of things. Some students return to the mat to continue training. Some may get a drink of water. They may chat with classmates or do a caretaking chore like sweeping or cleaning the windows (misogi). Students wearing hakamas remove and fold them. Students finally change back into their street clothes, and go about their days.
Discussion: Embodied Consciousness and Performativity as Sources of Personal Agency

During aikido classes, students’ workouts contain ritualistic elements that contribute to a perceptual shift towards embodied consciousness. The dojos at which I conducted observations practiced aikido as a form of moving meditation. Classes are conducted mostly silently. Much of the speaking that does occur during classes is in Japanese. But the vocabulary that is used would not be considered proper Japanese, but a hybrid dialect heavily shaped by Ueshiba’s neologisms. This linguistic difference, along with special clothing (dogi and hakama), and special ways of moving through the practice space (bowing when entering or exiting the mat, for example), make the aikido dojo a place where students use ritual to access embodied states of consciousness.

The realm of embodied consciousness is related to what cultural theorists describe as performative.78 Philosopher Judith Butler has used this concept to shake up many core assumptions about how people interact with the environments into which they have been born. The concept of the performative is a play on the idea of performance. Butler proposes that individuals’ expressions of their gender is less a matter of biology than is commonly thought. Instead, it is a matter of individual performance in relation to a social norm. She asserts that personal agency can be found in creative performativity.

Butler asserts that females act like girls or women not because they have vaginas or estrogen, but because they have been trained from birth that they are (or ought to be) cute and pretty. Similarly, males act like boys or men not because of their penises and testosterone, but because they have been trained from birth to act big and strong. Even when individual parents are supportive of children’s self-expressions, wider society places significant sanctions (ranging from teasing to beatings and lynchings) on individuals who do not pass as a member of the

gender to which the doctor interpellated them at birth (or earlier in the age of the sonogram).

Individuals’ girlness or boyness, their everyday expressions of cuteness or toughness, can come to seem natural over years of social training and subtle negotiations. Butler proposes that rather than a natural expression of girlness or boyness, individuals’ gender expressions are elaborate performances that they learn (often unconsciously) in order to avoid sanctions and attain privilege. Sex (maleness or femaleness) is a matter of biology. Gender (masculinity or femininity) is a matter of performativity.

There is a subtle but important difference between performance and performativity. A performance has a connotation of a one-time spectacular (as in - relating to spectacle) event that is practiced and put on for an audience in a situation very different from the everyday norm. Performative, by contrast, refers to something that is built up over time, similarly practiced but put on for an audience that does not perceive itself as audiencing a special event. A performative expression masquerades as a norm, and does so consistently enough that its’ audience perceives it as a norm. The way Butler would describe normal everyday gender expressions as performances questions the difference between the spectacular, the everyday, and the real.

One example that shows the difference might be a frat boy who dresses as a woman for Halloween. The way he usually does his gender is performative, the cumulative effect of numerous daily performances; which includes the interesting exception of his one-off performance of femininity on Halloween (which is what we would normally label a "performance"). So performativity is built up over time out of many performances, mostly the ones that seem "natural", as opposed to consciously performed (though the consciously performed can serve as exceptions that highlight the rule). Importantly, there's a subtle irony in
the way Butler uses these terms - it has the effect of stimulating questions about what's natural and what's socially constructed.\textsuperscript{79}

In Butler’s influential chapter about drag shows and Jenny Livingston’s film \textit{Paris is Burning}, it is really important and often overlooked that the thing that really caught Butler's attention was the kinship networks that were created by queers and drag queens. Her intrigue began with a fascination of these instances in which people put on performances of gender identities different from their interpellated gender identities. This intrigue quickly turns its gaze back towards the performers’ everyday lives, and a negotiation of social context that is academically fascinating. Many drag queens that she observed lived together in houses where they created new kinds of family units. In a queer-negative social space the act of creating alternate family units - other than those based on reproductive heterosexuality - was paramount. So, the baby queens came into a world where they received a gender identification and a set of (unspoken) rules about how to use it. Then they started questioning those rules. Then the questioners found each other and played around with the rules of gender through their performances. Sooner than later their questioning of the rules spilled over beyond drag shows to the other social institutions that are built upon society's gender assumptions - first there was the family, then there was the law and medical science. Where the queens and queers in the film \textit{Paris is Burning} question the seemingly fixed Truths of gender by engaging gender with a difference, Butler’s discussion of the film amplifies this Truth-questioning by engaging language with a difference.

The concept of performativity links the personal and the political. Butler's scholarship plays with ideas in anthropology, psychology, and linguistics. She looks at connections between

the shape of wider society, the personal self, and language. Her wordplay demonstrates the truth of the phrase "either you use your words or your words use you." Language shapes the categories through which people usually perceive their worlds. In order to understand (most of\textsuperscript{80}) her writing one \textit{must} be very flexible in the way they think. That's because the way we think shapes reality. We don't just perceive the world through language - we create the world through language. (Or, language creates the world through us.) And "language" extends beyond the linguistic to all the signs and signifiers we employ in our nonlinguistic communications - our fashion, our body language, our performative selves, and our comportment.

There is an important connection between the way a personal subject (or self) relates to language and the shape that society takes. Exercising linguistic agency is difficult. Similarly, one doesn’t just go out and run a marathon- one has to train first. Understanding the words one uses is like a beginning workout. Looking at those words from a different perspective is like a few miles in a single day (reading Butler and going along with the restructuring of language that she requires of readers is kind of like this level of training). Using words (or, in aikido, embodied signification) to cocreate a new reality is the marathon, aka the performative.

Butler invites readers to begin their linguistic workout by reading essays that insist that readers reexamine meanings of words they thought they knew. Before I read her work, I thought I knew what a performance was. I thought I knew what gender was. I thought that my identity and my self were the same thing. Her writings changed my mind. But they did so in an interesting way. Her work invites readers into a space of linguistic uncertainty. I propose that it is this push to uncertainty that is most significant about her work, rather than a new set of definitions that are

\textsuperscript{80} For a notable exception, see Butler's chapter "Dehumanization via Indefinite Detention" in Danny Goldberg, Victor Goldberg and Robert Greenwald, \textit{It's a Free Country: Personal Freedom in America After September 11} (New York: RDV Books, 2002), 265-279.
treated as True. She changes the world by changing the way readers think. She changes the ways readers think by shaking up their relationship to language.\textsuperscript{81}

Butler achieves this shift by entering into language and bringing readers along for the ride. Aikido similarly seeks to achieve a shift in the way “readers” think by shaking up their relationships to language. But where Butler creates this shift by entering into language aikido creates the shift by stepping away from language. Aikido similarly shakes up many core assumptions by creating conditions that allow aikidoka to shift from linguistic consciousness to embodied consciousness. Where Butler questions Truths by engaging language with a difference, aikido questions Truths by engaging consciousness with a difference.

The shaken-up assumption around which I organize this dissertation relates to what it means to be powerful. This concept is of interest to both aikido and cultural studies. Placing these fields’ explorations of this concept into dialogue with each other brings out new articulations that may prove useful. The following chapter focuses specifically on the idea of power. Subsequent chapters consider the implications of a redefinition of power throughout interpersonal, structural, and political conflict resolution strategies.

CHAPTER 4: POWER

One major similarity between the lines of questioning pursued in American Cultural Studies courses and the material covered in aikido classes is the investigation of the concept of power. What is it? How does it circulate? Is it something one has or something that circulates amongst individuals, social groups, and institutions? What is the relationship between power and knowledge? Power and ways of knowing? Power and personal agency? Power and privilege? Power and performativity? This chapter focuses on participant’s responses to my inquiry “Tell me about power.”

Key themes that emerged from open and axial coding of interview and observation data included:

- Power as physically internal
- Power as opposed to violence or the ability to control
- Power as the ability to blend “in concert” and foster growth
- Power as Ki, or energy, and grounding

Discussing the first theme, Violet, who has been studying aikido for 11 years, asserted that aikido does entail an embodied redefinition of power. She described the difference between inner and outer kinds of power, and demonstrated these physically. When she began explaining this she extended her hand and gestured for me to grab her arm. She was a very strong woman. I could feel the strength of her forearm nearly exploding out of her skin. While I was holding her arm, she changed her comportment so that I felt her strength move from near her skin to near her bones. Physically, she altered the anatomical location of her strength from the outside of her forearm to the interior of her forearm.

Violet explained:
It’s been a whole retraining of my body and mind, emotional, mental self, to have this sense that power is internal, that *physically* it’s internal. It’s the internal muscles and Sensei teaches too, you can feel, [This was the point in the interview where Violet extended her hand and gestured for me to grab her arm. She comported so that her strength was located on the outer rings of her forearm and hand] I get tight on the outside.

So if you grab and I get tight, you can feel what I’m doing. But if I relax and extend into and move from my center, [and she did so while I was still holding her forearm] there’s a very different feel to that, to that power.

And then, the emotional power of being kind to yourself, and trusting, and learning to trust yourself. … And having that self confidence and having that be your power rather than, I feel like anger and frustration is this sort of external power, defensive power. But how do we break down those walls, yet have an interior core strength? You know, physically and mentally and emotionally. I think of that as power.

Violet’s ability to alter the physical feeling of her strength invokes a wide range of possible manifestations of power. She explained that she had learned that flexibility and precision of comportment through aikido. Learning this art entailed a long physical process of retraining and reexamining her understanding of power. She described and demonstrated two very different kinds of power: external and internal. Before studying aikido she primarily utilized external power, which she described as emanating physically from muscul arity and psychologically from anger and a need for control. As she learned aikido she moved towards internal power, which she described as emanating physically from her core\(^2\) and psychologically from self-assurance.

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\(^2\) The core, in aikido, is also called the hara. It is located approximately two inches below a person’s belly button, and is thought to be the center of a person’s body.
Mark, who has actively studied aikido for 8 years on top of another 10 years of intermittently studying karate and aikido, elaborated further on the link between power and anger:

I think anger is really powerful. I think that’s the default power position of our culture. In the movies when the underdog is going to triumph, they tap into anger to get through. And that’s a celebrated thing; you’re supposed to get mad. And then you can really lift that car off the child, or whatever it is, you know? I wish that wasn’t the default. I wish, because anger is like the dark side of the force! It’s like, so compelling and so easy and so, in the end, detrimental and destructive and dangerous. It makes you powerful but you give up so much. …

So um, for a while I couldn’t practice karate stuff in aikido. Like when one of the [aikido] instructors decided to do tae kwon do with us and we’d do front kicks. And when we were all up there doing front kicks I was going back into my karate self. And the place from which I drew power in karate was mostly anger. And I got very unhappy because I didn’t want to go there anymore. I’d already moved beyond that and I wanted to practice aikido, which to me meant going somewhere else to get your power.

Diane, a prolific feminist psychologist\(^83\) who has studied aikido for 5 years, also dislikes the way that our culture tends to relate power and violence:

Violence is a systemic strategy for imposing difference and maintaining power differentials. And if you associate power with ones group status, whether it’s male sex, or lighter skin, or able body, or certain youth, or certain social class status, the language you speak, then you use violence, of various sorts. Whether it the insidious violence of “poke

\(^{83}\) Describing her publication record, Diane said “I’ve written like 7 or 8 books, and 150 journal articles and book chapters.” When I checked her body of work on the internet, I found that she had also won some very prestigious
jokes” unquote, or the voicelessness of a beating, and everything in the continuum inbetween.

You maintain the social hierarchy. Violence keeps hierarchies in place. When you end violence, then power distributes more freely. So I think that aikido is really subversive because it says you can be very powerful and do no violence. And in fact, if you do violence you lose your power. When you do violence you lose your power.

And to present that to people who look at me with, “excuse me?” It’s like, the most powerless thing that a person can do is resort to violence. If we begin to teach that violence is powerlessness …

We have to develop cultural discourse about that, I think, that says that the greatest power comes from knowing what we feel, what we think and know, being about to form relationships that work for everybody, that nourish us all. So I don’t see it as an individual problem.

Kristy: More societal?

Diane: Societal I think manifested individually, manifested relationally, yeah.

Cassandra, who has studied aikido for 5 years, similarly associated powerlessness with violence:

I think that violence stems from the need for power. I think that it totally comes from a place of being so out of balance… They don’t understand that they’re out of balance and so they’re grasping for something maybe, trying to bring them into balance. Even though that’s not their thought process. So I think that violence is an expression of power and I think that the person doing the violence is really trying to, I think on a subconscious level...
they’re trying to fill some kind of a void that they have within themselves. But they’re not achieving that at all.

Carol, who has studied for 9 years, was the notable exception of this group. She stated: “Power, I think, is about who has the control in a given situation. Who or what has control in a situation.” She and other interviewees emphasized that redefining power is a long and difficult process. As the self-described youngest blackbelt in her dojo Carol is at the beginning of this process, which may explain the divergence of her conceptualization. The difference of her answer, in which she associated power with the ability to control, is important because it highlights aikidoka’s critiques of what they perceive to be more common understandings of power.

Study participants noted that our wider culture tends to associate power with anger and violence. They asserted that contrarily, what they learned from aikido is that power is more properly associated with an ability to foster growth and “act in concert.”

Power as the ability to act in concert is a concept articulated by philosopher Hannah Arendt and discussed by several participants in this study. I was introduced to this idea when I had an opportunity to speak with aikido scholar Jonathan Miller Lane. Lane was incredibly encouraging and helpful. When he learned that I was interested in looking at definitions of power he gave me excellent suggestions for points of convergence between aikido and cultural theory. He had clearly thought about these similarities, explaining that Arendt’s definition of power as the ability to act in concert was very similar to the kind of power used in aikido. To act in concert is to rise up to the occasion of interacting in the public realm. But far from a complacent acceptance and reification of the status quo, acting in concert holds a great deal of potential for
changing systems by working assertively and articulately with those systems. Lane uses this idea in his conceptualization of “loyal opposition,” in which students can be taught to engage productively and energetically in conflict in educational settings.

Mark, who had dialogued with Lane and clearly respected his work, invoked the idea of acting in concert and compared it to what it feels like physically when he is doing aikido well:

In my aikido practice when I feel like I’m really powerful it’s when I’ve done the unexpected thing that causes my partner to become as light as a feather. And they’re giggling as they fly through the air. And I’ve just somehow managed with no effort to touch them somehow.

I think that what I’m doing is tapping into true aiki power that feels - it’s so different from physical power in that it feels effortless and it’s fleeting and instantaneous. And yet it’s some fundamental connection that you have with someone else. When you touch it you know you’ve touched something that’s very powerful. And maybe the two of you are working in cooperation with each other and that’s why it’s effortless. […]

So for me power, to contradict what I said earlier, it’s a lot like love. I mean, so basically when I feel most powerful, and you’re kind of working in concert with the other person, that feeling of your two souls winding around in the universe, that’s like love. Arendt’s description of acting in concert as coming forth to participate in the realm of public interactions is also echoed by Cassandra. She notes that part of what makes Sensei a powerful woman is her ability to engage students in the public life of the school in a way that encourages them to increase their personal sense of power and agency:

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85 Jonathan Whitney Miller-Lane, "Facilitating Disagreement in Classroom Discussion" (Ph.D., University of Washington), 198.
Oftentimes I think that power comes from intellect. Because the people with the intellectual capacity to create situations can control how the power is distributed or not distributed. Depending on, depending if it’s a group of people and there’s somebody in charge they can control the situation so that they can delegate power so that it’s a cohesive group. Or they can control power and have power over the group. So the first thing that came to mind was more of that intellectual level of power…

Sensei has this greater awareness of everything and then she is really good at delegating out things to people. Which is another thing that’s really good and it kind of gets back to that power thing. Where clearly she is a very powerful woman, but she doesn’t abuse that power at all. And she uses it to foster this great community, if anything. And she empowers people by giving people responsibility.

And that’s another part of the community aspect of it that’s so amazing is the whole misogi, you know? And it starts off really basic with sweeping and cleaning at what not. But kind of like the deeper your commitment to the community, the more you’re, the way I look at is that the more that you’re sort of empowered with responsibility to the community.

So it’s not like, other places where it’s like, you have to do this, or you have to do that. And it’s like: “would you please do this?” And it feels like an honor, to me at least, it feels like an honor when I’m asked to do something out of the ordinary misogi wise. And I think it creates that type of situation where it creates these situations for people to rise up to their own power. Which is, which is a real gift - to create an opportunity for somebody to step into their own power. And I think that is a huge thing that doesn’t

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86 Literally “purification,” in this usage misogi refers to the practice of helping to clean and maintain the dojo space. All dojo students are expected to pitch in to help clean the dojo.
happen probably in most people’s work places, where it’s this total, like, you know, power over situation, with the boss and people. So to create it in such a way that you’re empowering people and making them want to rise to the occasion. I mean what a concept is that?!? Amazing! [Laughs].

Cassandra draws a distinction between “power over” and “power with,” noting that “power with” has a more generative, creative feel to it. M similarly described an experience of “power with,” relating it to surfing natural forces and flexibly maintaining dynamic tension:

    Well, I think for me, what power is, is finding where nature already has the force already there, and learning how to surf it. Learning how to minimize effort and taking advantage of what is already naturally occurring. … I don’t think about having power, or wanting power that much. But what I do want to have is one that’s involved with harmonizing natural forces or, human nature, or things that are already natural. …

    I think [peace] means having a lot of flexibility and a lot of ability to adjust oneself. It also means not giving up your power either. It can’t be that either, so it’s really a dynamic tension that’s involved.

Mark echoed M’s association of power and the dynamic tension of peacefulness:

    Peace is the absence of conflict. Peace is the absence of violence. Peace is a place of great power. And therefore peace, it’s not nothingness, lying there at peace. I don’t want peace to be like that anyway.

    This active, yet peaceful sense of “power with” is physically expressed by blending. Violet notes that while this blending can be very peaceful and feel like just taking a walk with Sensei, blending can also be very forceful:
Drop that sense that you need to control everything. And when you drop that need to control, and just be, you suddenly have 1000 choices. When you’re trying to control somebody you have very few choices of what’s going to happen.

It was amazing at [this last seminar to which she had travelled], Sensei was just walking. And he would just walk and move with, with the person so that there was no conflict in what was happening. ... And it could be very gentle; it could also be extremely powerful.

He did some, he showed some moves. Sometimes moves have to be nearly lethal. But understanding that that’s ok in life. I mean, there are times. If somebody’s grabbing my children, if I feel the need that I have to be lethal, I might do that. You know, understanding there are occasions in life where that has to happen.

Sometimes [our Sensei’s Sensei] Sensei talks about wrathful compassion. Versus idiot compassion. [Laughs.] Idiot compassion where the “oh always taking care of everybody making sure everybody is all right!” [Here Violet wrings her hands and adopts the comportment of a doormat in a traditionally feminine “walk all over me, please!” pose]. She doesn’t quite say it that way, this is my [trails off]. But there are maybe some times in life when a certain amount of power is necessary, for the compassion for the whole situation, not just you. You have to consider the whole situation.

Tess Sensei notes that although the physical expression of this sense of “power with” can feel very peaceful to the person performing aikido the recipient can also feel as though they have been bounced to the floor. The student in the following quote was “bounced” because of his own momentum running into a grounded Sensei. Tess, who has studied aikido for 30 years, relates grounding in aikido to grounding in electrical theory. She cites grounding as the reason why the kind of power studied in aikido can feel like running into a brick wall while feeling harmonious
to the practitioner. When she talks about grounding as an aikido practice she explains that this is what makes even very small people unmovable. Tess asserts that grounding is closely related to one’s belief that one can do it.

On Sunday class we’re doing the ikkyo. [I was working with the new guy who is kind of pushy] and um, I can’t remember what he did, but all of a sudden, he decided he was going to take it away from me. [laughs] … And I just completely went with it and just bounced him. I mean he just bounced on the floor!

And he laughed. And Lee laughed. And it was a good time. But you know, I wasn’t sure. It’s like “I need to do this, but… ok.” You know? Cause it could just as easily have been him getting you know, furious. “Why did you do that to me?” Well I didn’t really do it. I just, [laughs], let you feel what you were doing. Cause I’m not strong enough to do that to you, you know? Maybe in his mind it’s like I’m a really powerful woman cause I bounced him off the mat and it’s like, no.

So take Kate for example. She’s fairly young and she believes in grounding, she believes she can do it. And she’s never been told that you can’t ground when you’re lying down. I mean I never taught her this, but it’s like, why not, right? So, one day her mother tries to get her out of bed. You’ve seen Kate, she weighs, what, 65 pounds? She doesn’t weigh anything! [laughs] And you should talk to [her mother] Susan. You can not get [Kate] out of bed if she grounds, and doesn’t want to leave the bed.

I’m thinking, you know, good luck Susan when she’s a teenager and she doesn’t want to get up! You know, and I have to tell Susan, I didn’t teach her that. She just made this logical conclusion: if you can do it vertically, why can’t you do it horizontally? And it’s like, form follows thought, because she really has the belief system. And it makes
sense, you know, if I was going to get zapped with electricity it wouldn’t really matter if I was standing up or lying down. It would still want to go through me to the ground.

So, uh, yeah, so that’s a thing I like about working with children is they don’t have any sense of, they can’t, in a lot of ways. If you tell them they can do it they absolutely believe you; they haven’t learned not to believe that yet. As adults we learn that. Because we do things, we don’t have success, and then that gets fostered. And so a lot of times in aikido we’re unlearning all the stuff we’ve been told about how powerful we are or how not powerful we are, you know? We’re all very powerful beings, you know, and we just aren’t, aren’t given that. And um, grounding is just one way to do it.

Lilly also talks about grounding as power. Her example emphasizes the psychological effects of the qualities of grounding.

I’ve heard stories of situations where O--- Sensei, O---, are you familiar with that name? …Very diminutive fellow. He just looks like someone you’d want to be your granddad. Ah but, incredibly powerful. You get thrown by that man and you’re flying. And there’s no forcefulness to it. He’s just so deeply grounded. Ah, but there’s a story about him.

He worked at a paper factory was his profession, he was a working man. And some guy went nuts one day and was attacking people and threatening people with a knife. And most people were of course getting out of the way because that’s the sensible thing to do. But O--- talked him out of it. Got him to give him the knife.

And when someone told me that story, I thought: of course! He has such a gentleness and non-threatening spirit. And yet there’s also a connection, an ability to connect and direct people gently enough that they’ll do what makes more sense.
And so I think that’s part of the art of peace\textsuperscript{87} is having this maturity and sensibility that in the midst of that kind of a storm. Because I mean good grief! Someone pointing a knife at you! To be able to walk up to them and say “you know, you want to give that to me. You don’t want to do this.” And have it happen!

And I’ve heard other stories of similar things. Have that ability to just completely defuse a situation that could be very dangerous.

The energetic effects of grounding are described physically and electronically by Tess and psychologically by Lilly. Energetic effects are a major site of investigation in aikido. The “ki” of aikido is often translated as energy. This is also the “ki” of reiki and the chi or qi of tai chi.\textsuperscript{88}

Teena describes watching Sensei throw ki:

So I guess there’s that, and the other thing that comes to mind is like, ki. Like in some ways when I see sensei as being really powerful is when she’s throwing lots of ki. It’s almost like you can see it; lighting bolts!

And when you’re taking ukemi you’re dead before you got there. Like as soon as you had the intent to strike, “I’m dead already what’s the point?” Oh yeah, I have to carry through “as if.” But I know I’m dead already. And oh, I’m dead again. You’re dead three or four times before you actually go down. There’s kind of that sense of power, which for me was a really new experience.

As far as like my mom did that to some degree, but it was different, it was more kind of mental, it wasn’t so easy to see. Where with sensei, you can really see it clearly. Mark also explained that harmonizing ki, or energy, is an approach to power that allows high-level aikido practitioners to perform physical tasks that appear impossible. Mark struggles with a

\textsuperscript{87} Aikido is sometimes called the “art of peace” by its practitioners.

\textsuperscript{88} Interestingly, these words are echoed in the “gy” of the English “energy” as well as in the “ki” of “kinetic.”
tension between his personal, palpable experience of ki and his understanding of what could be real:

[Ueshiba] wanted to follow a way whereby the universe’s ki and one’s own ki fit together and harmonize. And that’s where you get the great power to disappear, or throw people without touching them, or all these miracles that presumably happened when he fought. And some of his students are far enough along on their path that they actually are doing some of these miracles too.

My teacher in Japan is currently studying how to throw people without touching them. And it’s very difficult to understand because it’s so far beyond what I, what I feel. But he’s developed a core of students that are so sensitive that they can feel it and they react to it. And so the practice is a communication more than being zapped with a death ray or something. I think it’s much more of, you know, this is proof that you can communicate from 30 feet away the same thing that I can communicate by touching you. And in doing that communication you can become ever more conscious of every energy around you and therefore be in a much better position to defend yourself against a physical attack. Such a low thing as a physical attack.

So in that way I’m satisfied, I’ve talked myself into not you know, weaving this as being bunk or something, hocus pocus. And my teacher in Japan is aware that it looks like hocus pocus. He’s like, “this looks like fake. I know. It looks fake.” But, it’s, something is happening. Something is. And for sure like when he’ll get a group of us in a scrum. You know, like in rugby where you like kind of all put your arms around each other and are like a group huddle, and one of you will have their arm kind of in an arm wrestling posture and he’ll touch that one person. And then somehow when he’s doing it, it feels different. He moves the whole group, versus when one of us tries. And when we
do it we try and, try to project something, and they’ll move maybe a little bit. But the power goes beyond just he’s the teacher and we’re supposed to do this. Because actually you can feel the difference. So there’s something going on.

Tess Sensei, who has studied for 30 years, also noted that ki energy is quite palpable, but doesn’t fit into many people’s belief structures. She describes reconciling the ki of aikido with an accepted scientific theory: electrical theory.

The part that’s really important to aikido is that electrical current behaves very much the same way that ki energy, my understanding of ki energy, works. When they talk in aikido about grounding, it’s very - an electrical circuit is always seeking ground, you know?

And um, I know more about direct current than I do AC. I mean I can do wiring in a house, but I don’t understand it as well. When I was taking electrical theory in school, it had to do with cars, and that’s all direct current, which is a lot simpler.

You know, it’s a little, it’s going from one to the other, just trying to find that balance of positive and negative. And that’s what you have with magnets, you know, and generators. As you spin the magnet, it creates an electrical current with the wires. The electrons want to flow. So basically what you’re doing in direct current, probably ac as well, is you’re just giving them a path to follow. Even the electrons, electrons want to go from A to B and you’re giving them a path to follow, you know, and they use wires. And in aikido, we’re doing the same things.

Somebody is giving you maybe kinetic force, and you’re guiding it and redirecting it. And being in a gravity environment, ultimately it’s seeking ground. And that’s where the falling comes in. So to me it’s like there’s no difference. Are you using a wire to point out the path? Are you just using the line of force to point out a path, you know? And you’re using, you’re using what is there.
You know energy, I mean the basic thing about energy is that it can’t be created or destroyed, it can only be changed. You know? That’s what we’re doing in aikido. And a lot of times, we’re not really changing it a lot. Not as much as, you know, like we’re changing something to turn a light on, which is a much bigger change, you know? We’re just redirecting it, we’re just having it go in a slightly different direction.

Kristy: Ok, so our bodies have electrical forces and currents, and the earth has electric forces and currents and magnetic fields...

Tess: uh huh, magnetic fields create electricity. … You know, we’re bioelectrical engines. Like when you’re, your nerves, you get impulses from your nerves, those are electrical impulses. You get electrical impulses in the brain. You get too many electrical impulses in the brain then you have seizures, you know? It’s that kind of thing. It’s how we work. …

That’s why for me reading the stuff about the electrical theory was so helpful because here’s this real concrete; everybody agrees this is how this works. And it’s like, it wasn’t any different than all the other stuff that people, you know like my sister with: “that’s impossible, that’s a bunch of garbage.” It’s like well, if you believe in electrical theory, if you believe that you turn a light switch and the light comes on, then um, all the rest of this is, for me there wasn’t any difference. I had this accepted theory that I could use as a reference. And so for me, it made all the rest of it concrete. But.

I think we’re told a lot of stuff that we can’t do because it’s sort of, well there’s a lot of fear that people have. If you really have a lot of power you have to take a lot of ownership in your piece in making the world work; well, or not well. You have to do that.

But um, a lot of things that we, that they thought were impossible, they’re doing now. They thought the world was flat for a long time and they realized that wasn’t it.
They thought we were the center of the Universe and to not think that you would be killed. And as we learn, or re-learn, or let ourselves be open to other pieces of information, it’s like, the idea of sticking pins in people and having them get healed, acupuncture, was a totally insane idea. And now there’s a lot of Western doctors that actually prescribe that because they realize they’re not exactly sure how it works, but it works. Well, I don’t know exactly, the exact theory of it. But if you’re following the same theory of basic electricity, it’s like, you’re putting in a bunch of lightening rods, you know, and you’re drawing in electricity to certain nerve points.

Power in Feminist Theory

The preceding series of interview excerpts articulates an understanding of power that participants felt was a radical departure from the norm. Research participants explained that mainstream culture [in the United States of America] conceptualizes power as the ability to dominate, to control, to manipulate, and to oppress. Conversely, they had re-learned a very different understanding of what it means to be powerful. Aikidoka asserted that to be powerful is to be self-assured. To be powerful is to be able to blend and act “in concert,” to change things through creative engagement. To be powerful means that one can foster growth. And power, in aikido, is also ki. An entry point to understanding ki is electrical energy. Though one wouldn’t jump to accuse many Japanese martial art forms of feminism, the redefinition of power is an interesting and unexpected point of similarity between aikido and feminist theory.

Feminist theory, too, contends that mainstream understandings of power are misunderstandings.\textsuperscript{89} A notable trio of articulations of various kinds of power include the articles "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh, "Uses of the Erotic:
The Erotic as Power" by Audre Lorde, and “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” by Adrienne Rich. “White Privilege” renames a common perception of power (the ability to get what one wants, comfortably, when one wants it) as “privilege” and calls it out as the flip-side of oppression. “Uses of the Erotic” proposes an alternate source of power: “this internal requirement toward excellence” that Lorde names the Erotic. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” discusses relationships between gender and different kinds of power. In this thought provoking essay Rich associates power-over with maleness while power-with is associated with femaleness.

Where Rich articulates a description of male power and female power I articulate a description of power-over and power-with. Upon considering these elucidations on the topic of power, I propose that the problem with white supremacist capitalist patriarchy is not white men of privilege per se. Rather, it is the ideology of power to which they subscribe. This is a nuance of feminist theory that is easily lost.

In social constructionist feminist theory, it’s not the penis and testosterone that pose the problem; it’s the folk-philosophy, or memetic habits of oppression that pose the problem! That’s why women can behave just as poorly as men, people of color can replicate the assumptions of racism, and queers can perpetuate oppressive social norms regarding appropriate embodiment. Conversely, that’s why people in positions of privilege can divest themselves of the ruinous pathologies of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. I’ve found it important to study ways in

89 Articulations of power in feminist theory are worthy of far more elaboration than we have space for in this chapter. One could compose an edited volume on the subject. An exhaustive compilation and analysis of these commentaries is not the goal of this chapter, though.
which people can change their memetic habits. People can change their minds. Since reality is socially constructed we can change reality by changing the way we think.

The following list shows divergent implications of two understandings of what it means to be powerful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oppressive Power / Power Over</th>
<th>Generative Power / Power With</th>
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<tr>
<td>When ambitious</td>
<td>Conquers</td>
<td>Creates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When disempowered</td>
<td>Takes it out on whomever is lower on the totem pole</td>
<td>Formulates new plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When puzzled</td>
<td>Kicks ass first, asks questions later</td>
<td>Investigates / Collaborates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When raging</td>
<td>Bombs</td>
<td>Births</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally Agriculture</td>
<td>Geographically Remote</td>
<td>Local Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monoculture</td>
<td>Polyculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Goods</td>
<td>Cheap Plastic Stuff from WalMart</td>
<td>Remixed / Locally Produced Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Transportation</td>
<td>Gas/Diesel Vehicles</td>
<td>Bike, Veggie-based Fuels, Wind, Sun, Harmonic Resonance</td>
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I find Ueshiba’s artwork to be fascinating because I feel it resonating with these observations. When I play and watch aikido I feel that one goal of the art is to change the way that participants think. By learning to process information somatically, or by feeling, aikido students open themselves to a redefinition of core concepts.

One consequence of the somatic redefinition of concepts like power is the undermining of systems that are based on more common definitions of power. Where power-over is the foundational assumption of the colonial systems of racist capitalist patriarchal militarism, the memetic validation and transmission of power-with undermines colonialism. When aikido students learn the difference between pushing and pulling their partners and developing a connection that shapes their and their partners’ movement, they feel the nuanced differences
between power-over and power-with. When new aikido students operate from an assumption of power-over they engage with their partners by pushing and pulling, trying to make their partners move in a particular way. As they learn to embody power-with they engage their training partners through a new set of tactics.

In the final quotes of the first section of this chapter Tess, Lilly, Teena, and Mark all invoke a sense of struggling to reconcile that which they have somatically felt to be possible with what they have conceptually thought (and been socialized to believe) to be possible. Their analyses point to a mental space that is opened by the bizarre experience of being thrown to the floor by a kind of power that one had not previously thought could possibly exist. Once this space of possibility is opened up, new patterns of thought and behavior become possible.

The following chapter explores various tactics of conflict engagement that have been adopted by the aikido practitioners in this study. These tactics of conflict resolution emanate from the redefinition of power described here.
Aikido choreographies explore physical expressions of non-violent conflict resolution. I wondered – does the physical practice that happens inside the dojo affect the ways in which aikido students engage in conflict in their lives outside the dojo? In order to gain information about this I asked research participants to “tell me about a time when you used something you learned in aikido to resolve a conflict in your life outside the dojo.”

Participants told me many stories about this topic. To begin analyzing this interview data I gathered each participants’ immediate response to this prompt. I then read through the interview transcripts and field notes to find additional descriptions of conflicts that were offered by participants. I then worked through the process of open and axial coding with this transcript (as discussed in chapter 2). I used this process to refine my coding list numerous times. Then one day I was preparing to further clarify my codes. As part of this process I read over the list of codes that I had already compiled. This time something new happened. I noticed that my list of codes read as though it was a set of instructions about what one would do during a “round” of aikido.

The practical application of the art was resonating with the physical practice of the art. This resonation let me know that this was the correct coding scheme. This alignment between the physical content of the sporting practice and the self-reported practical application would provide a solid structure with which to highlight key aspects of participants’ approaches to conflict resolution. Using this coding technique I had distilled the martial art into a super-brief list of conflict resolution strategies that had both physical and wider applications.

This task was far more difficult than one would assume. It is nearly impossible to compose a comprehensible description of the art. Aikido is much easier to feel than talk about. Part of the reason that it is so difficult to process aikido through linguistic consciousness is linguistic consciousness’s linearity. Although the description that I am about to offer implies a
temporal linearity, the steps that I am about to describe do not happen one after another. In
deliberations, the steps that I am about to describe do not happen one after another. In
physical practice one attempts to perform all of these steps during the entire course of action. Of
course this is nearly impossible because it is too complicated. But like a musician learns to hear
many different “voices” within a symphony, an aikidoka strives to perform each of these tasks
simultaneously.

Aikido emphasizes the following as conflict resolution strategies:

- Maintaining awareness of one’s environment
- Adjusting one’s posture: centering and breathing
- Tenkan (turning) and Irimi (entering)
- Ukemi: Accessing a wide range of reactions when it is one’s turn to be thrown

This list is a very basic description of the core elements of the steps that practitioners
would take to complete an aikido choreography. Different choreographies, like ikkyo (nikkyo,
sankyo, yankyo), irimi nage, tenchi nage, and kokyu nage, all consist of various combinations of
these tactics. In this chapter, I will discuss participants’ self-reported practical applications of
these tactics. Aikido ideally combines each of these steps simultaneously. Many of the stories
that participants shared with me contained elements of several of these themes. In some cases the
juxtaposition of more than one theme was an important element of the story. Consequently it is
difficult to place any given story under a single heading corresponding to a single tactic of
conflict resolution. Translating embodied consciousness into a form of linguistic communication
is messy. One aspect of non-violent conflict resolution that was emphasized by aikidoka who
participated in this study was awareness of one’s environment.

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91 For an excellent description of these choreographies, see Adele Westbrook and Oscar Ratti, *Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere; an Illustrated Introduction*, 1st ed. (Rutland, Vt.: C. E. Tuttle Co, 1970), 375.
Maintaining awareness of one’s environment

At the beginning of an aikido choreography a pair of students faces each other and stand about three feet apart from one another. Their feet are separated as though they had paused in the middle of a step towards each other. They stand in this posture with 50-70% of their weight on their front foot. Before moving through a choreography students frequently pause for an instant of variable length. During this pause, they take stock of their surroundings.

Interview participants discussed several instances in which their awareness of their environments became useful in conflicts in their daily lives. While this awareness did not always prevent conflicts, it aided aikidoka in maneuvering in a way that minimized damage. This aspect of conflict resolution highlights situations in which a conflict does not necessarily involve another person or malicious intent. Rather, conflict can be a matter of colliding trajectories. Sam, one participant in this study, explained a practical application of awareness of his environment:

I’m a tug boat captain. So what I do is handle tugs and land barges. And landing barges,… you have to be really tuned to what’s going on in the environment around you in order to do it successfully. You can approach it by going, ok today the wind’s over here, current’s over here, my barge is over here, and the dock is here. And you can intellectually figure out how you want to go in there, and your approach and all that stuff, which is a good place to start.

But where the aikido comes in is that as you are going through that plan, to do it well you have to adjust. You essentially are having to have the barge adjust to the energy that’s going around it. And you have to be tuned-in to the gust of wind that comes from a slightly direction, or the fact that the barge has more momentum going that you anticipated, or there’s a current that you didn’t anticipate. Anything like that. So there’s an awareness level that you or I use that’s directly related to aikido.
Sam relates the environmental awareness “that’s directly related to aikido” to an ability to adjust to unexpected momentums and currents. This example of a practical application of an aikido skill is notable in its depersonalization and non-maliciousness of potential conflict. The actors in this drama: a barge, a gust of wind, and an unanticipated current are all non-sentient environmental factors. This is notable because one interesting thing that one learns from aikido is that a conflict is a matter of colliding trajectories and does not necessarily have to involve malicious intent. This separation of conflict and aggression (or the intent to harm) allows aikido students to deal with problems by looking for solutions rather than getting sucked into arguments about how the “current that you didn’t anticipate” shouldn’t be there. The current is there. And yet you’re not simply at its mercy.

This point is cooberated by Teena, who discussed using aikido skills during a snowboarding accident and potential kayaking accident.

I went snow boarding, and it was really heavy wet snow. And I went to make a turn. And I was trying to turn uphill of a little tree. It was a very little tree. And – cause the snow was so hard I couldn’t get the tail to come around enough to sharpen the turn. And I just went straight into the tree. And this is my front leg so I hit the tree just like that. Broke my femur…

In a sense this is also an aikido story because I very distinctly heard sensei in my mind as this was happening. You know these moments are so long before something like that happens when imminent doom- ok, could die. Might be, going to die in a few seconds. And I could hear sensei in my head saying “you don’t want this to be a dead stop. You want the line to carry through, like a roll. You want the line to carry through.”

So as I was coming into the tree, and my feet were below the tree and the rest of my body was above the tree from the knee- just the thigh up. I was just like ok, I’m not
going to get this part on that side, so somehow I got to get that part on this side. And so right as I- before I contacted I think, and this is the way I remember it, I pulled up on my snow board. So I pulled my feet up out of the snow. So that when I hit I spun instead of having my legs stuck, you know, and back wrapping. Yeah, or I wouldn’t be having this conversation.

So I spun around and landed on the other side and my femoral artery was occluded. Which is like, if you have a hit to an artery its response is to constrict, and it was occluded by the broken bone. So the doctor’s told me really, I was this close. Any more pressure and the artery would have been torn instead of occluded and I would have bled out in like 20 minutes. Femoral artery is one of the biggest arteries in your body. So yeah, I was very lucky to survive.

To us it becomes very second nature. I went on a river trip and my [aikido] friend and I were in one of those inflatable kayaks…. We were coming in beside the boat as it was coming up on this little rocky little out cropping. And … there wasn’t enough room for everything.

And so the guy who was rowing the boat, so he just pressed the ores down so the ores would go up. And K--- and I just relaxed. Perfect instinct for us. Atemi [strike, usually meaning punch, in this instance a rock] coming at the head, you lay down. And so we laid down. And we came out the other side and the girls in the other boat were just like “wow!” They just thought that was so impressive that we knew to do that. And we were just like, we didn’t even really think about it. Normal reaction.

So on some level one of the arguments for training is just being more aware of your own space. So it’s an interesting level of, kind of awareness of your body, awareness of space.
The impersonal approach to conflict demonstrated in Sam’s and Teena’s stories carries over into conflicts that include a human being as another potentially dangerous element in an environment. Just as a barge, a tree, and a rock are potentially dangerous trajectories to be avoided through awareness of one’s environment, people (particularly excessively disturbed or aggressive ones) can be reacted to as though they are merely another trajectory in the environment. M told me one story that involved a conflict with a human and then immediately told another story involving a conflict with gravity:

Well, in one case in a physical situation, someone was trying to grab me. And at the time I’d just been out of aikido for a couple of years. And I did a very very simple thing. I didn’t do a technique so much as I just spun.

I think once I fell off a bike, and I rolled instead of falling in a heap. Yeah I think probably in many physical ways, I’ve used it.

M’s casualness of spinning in reaction to someone trying to grab him, nonchalantly followed by his rolling in response to a bicycle accident, carries the impersonal feeling of seeing aggressive humans as one of many potentially dangerous trajectories around which one can move well. Awareness of one’s environment comes to include awareness of human and sentient elements within one’s environment.

Seeing humans as trajectories, Deborah discussed working as an anger management counselor. She relates aikido’s redirection of trajectories to an ability to work with abusive people to change patterns of violence. She told me about a time when she was meeting with a client who entered a state of “deep attack” during a session. Having never considered this possibility, she had non-consciously placed clients between herself and the door. She uses this incident to discuss aikido’s emphasis on interacting with conflict on the level of “the field.” This
environmental awareness of “the field,” asserts Deborah, allows one to adjust to dangerous trajectories. Deborah explained:

In the early 80’s I was with family anger management. I did eight or nine intakes a day with people who were in treatment because they were abusive to somebody. So five days a week, 8 hours a day, listening to stories of people who were doing treatment as opposed to jail time. Or treatment and jail time. And over and over again, 90% of the time, the people who were most violent were people who experienced great violence enacted upon them.

Kristy: So it kind of becomes a cycle?

Deborah: Absolutely, yeah. And that’s of course what aikido training’s all [about],… is the cycle of violence. If you can stop the cycle- if you could change a pattern- and I think aikido is potentially very capable of changing life long patterns, you know? I think that if you can do something over and over and over and over and over again, to see spots where the repetitiveness is so ingrained, if you can even see it, you can potentially reroute it....

[Working in anger management] was a really deep learning period. Because doing intakes like that you can begin to find a deeper sense of center in relationship to what it is you are looking at, you know? And so there were some pretty troubled people. Like one person- I learned things like: never have your chair be farther away from the door that theirs.

Kristy: Oh my goodness! Now I see the set up of your office - and you could get out of here faster than I could, couldn’t you?

Deborah: Well, yeah, I don’t even think about it here. But there, if your chair was there, and my chair was here, and you have a multiple personality, and right in front of me
your facial characteristics change, the sound of your voice changes, and the pump of your tissue increases by a half an inch - right in front of me! And you know that I’m under deep attack, and I’m on the 10th floor, and the windows right there, and they’re in front of the door, you know you’ve made a mistake.

And so I managed to sort of say, [in a whisper] “oh god, I’m just sick and I will be right back.” Go out the door, and call 911. I mean, but, those are the type of things that make you special aware. I think again, aikido in the deepest sense teaches you about the field. It teaches you to be really aware of not just what’s going on with you and me, but what’s going on behind me, and in front of me, and to the side, and to the side, and to kind of just hear, and sense, and smell everything around so that I’m much more attuned to my world.

And if there is something I can adjust to it, as opposed to be victim of it. Right? And in that case, after that incident I never - I mean, I rearranged the furniture and I knew that was a potential. You know? Where as before that moment, I never imagined myself in that position.

While Deborah finds aikido to be very useful in relating to “the field” over which one has a modicum of control (her office) the emphasis on awareness of space is applicable to unfamiliar circumstances as well, as discussed by the tugboat captain and the aikidoka/snowboarder who minimized serious sporting accidents by moving well in relation to the tree and rock with which she almost fatally collided. This awareness of space is an important aspect of the conflict resolution skills taught through aikido choreographies. Knowing where one’s body is in relation to various aspects of one’s environment allows one to move well in relation to those trajectories. Learning not to collide with the trajectories of both non-sentient entities (the barge, the tree, the rock, and the bicycle in the above stories) and sentient entities (the mpd-client) requires a
heightened and impersonal awareness of one’s environment. Another one of aikido’s strategies for conflict resolution includes maintaining good posture.

Adjusting one’s posture: Centering and breathing

In aikido class students attempt to energize their bodies through practices called centering (feeling the center of one’s gravity), which is often achieved with breathing techniques. Before even beginning an aikido exchange by offering the first strike both partners take a moment to attend to their own bodies. They find that the stance from which they first engage that conflict has an impact on how that conflict plays out. When one has good balance and posture to begin with they are able to react more appropriately.

Sam discussed adjusting his posture by centering. He explained that aikido taught him the importance of:

Remaining centered in one’s self and having not just a physical good posture but a figurative good posture, and projecting that type of postural energy no matter what’s going on. But it's sort of a daily practice, it changes. It’s very much in sync with what ever I’m doing in the dojo. And I find that they are very complimentary. That if I’m struggling outside the dojo, sometimes in the dojo – I’ll discover this thing and go, oh yeah, if I just have better posture it clarifies things.

This emphasis on posture described by Sam was echoed by Lilly’s discussion of the importance of her posture as she was working as a social worker and as a massage therapist.

I’ve never been attacked and hopefully I never will be. And actually that is the other part of the reason that I got into [aikido] was the notion that - I mean I’m not a very big person. I don’t have any delusions that I can go out there and start kicking butt.

However, I think sometimes when you do a martial art, when you have that kind of a practice it gives you more of a sense of space around you. So that people won’t
necessarily screw with you. And I think that I already had some of those tendencies anyway. Because as a social worker downtown, it’s not like you could go creeping around with some timid personality. I had to [gestures big]. I wasn’t swaggering around like John Wayne or anything, but you had to have a presence about you.

Aikido helps with that kind of stuff. The ability to project yourself. Because again as a small woman, and [a massage therapist], I at times, you know, did calls into hotels to people, business people coming through who want a massage. And I try to be exceedingly smart about it. I mean I dressed so very professional and boring that no one would ever misinterpret why I was there. And also to have that personality, not a big bombastic, but professional and expansive. So there’s no room for somebody to get in where I don’t want them, if that makes sense.

Aikido’s postural adjustment, encouraging students to check in with their selves before completing a choreography or engaging in a conflict, is sometimes achieved through breathing techniques. One participant described using breathing techniques to become centered after coming across a loved one who was attempting to commit suicide. Understandably shaken, this student used the aikido and karate skills of breathing, centering, and calming:

Sue, several years ago, attempted suicide. And I came home and I found her overdosed in the bed. And in that moment where I needed to decide what to do, and I won’t go into the details about why that was so complicated, but it was time to make a decision and act. And my mind was just racing with different thoughts. Crazy thoughts. Of: call 911? Don’t call 911? Do this? Do that? Do that? Just rattling off all these alternatives trying to figure out what to do? What would be the right action? What would be the right action? And my mind just – it wouldn’t shut up.
So I immediately used a technique that I learned both in karate, but also in aikido, of breathing to get myself back centered. And once I did that, you know, I made the right calls and she’s alive today and doing well. It was all good. But in that moment I really had to use that type of training to get myself to calm down.

It’s the same thing that happens when you’re sparing in karate. Particularly in karate, when, you know, people are trying to hit you. You just - things are just happening, and you have to be kind of the, what I call the eye of the storm. Calm eye of the storm. And aikido helped me quite a bit with that. And I’m sure indirectly, Sue, because I did something that – I took the appropriate action, let’s put it that way.

This participant’s use of breathing to get centered and calm enough to make appropriate decisions is an interesting way to apply martial arts skills to conflicts in life outside the dojo. Beginning the physical practice of aikido choreographies by adjusting one’s posture helps students to learn that the stance from which one addresses conflict is important. Teena’s discussion of learning to adopt an expansive comportment despite her small size is a subtle and less dramatic example of this aikido skill:

Aikido gives us tools for dealing with that kind of stuff. Like going through [a breakup], a lot of what I had to do with myself was, ok, don’t be small. Which is kind of my tendency is to be small and timid and quite. Just be, you know - [comports expansive]. … So the practice is to really let myself be open, and be big, and run my energy in all directions, and not cave in.

So I use that everywhere. At work when I have conflict with someone I get to notice, am I doing my habitual thing? Which is to get small and sort of brush it away. And pretend like it’s not a big deal. “Whatever.” Or am I really holding my ground and just being like, well, ok, we can agree to disagree. So cultivating that I think is really
important to me. And that’s a big part of why I’ve stayed. Cause I see the value in noticing the way you are with things. And I think really, on some level it’s therapy. Cause in therapy you notice your habitual reactions, or whatever your particular exit is for situations. And then you get to look at that and say: well, if I was going to be more responsible to my self, or more responsible to the other person, or the situation, what would that look like?

Cause for some people it’s about beating on the other person. For me it’s about beating on myself, or making myself small. … Just trying to really focus on maintaining my center, and noticing how easily my habit is to just give my center up to somebody else. Kind of with the feeling that that was a way to resolve conflict. Cause with my mom there was never any winning. The only option was to give up whatever you had and whatever you say, that’s fine. That was the only option. So it’s interesting to me now trying to undo that. And aikido shows me the places where I do that.

Where Teena went through a learning process to allow herself to be large where she habitually engages conflict from a deflated stance, Sam has learned to allow himself to be less assertive and direct where he habitually engages conflict too intensely. Where Teena has worked to allow herself to be less habitually passive, Sam has found aikido useful in his efforts to not be overly aggressive:

I’m what I would call a linear type person, that’s my default. Which is I like things to be organized, go in a straight line. Which is a good thing, but it can get out of balance. …Like many people my default mechanism is if somebody pushes me my first reaction is to push them back twice as hard and to not give ground. And while that can be a good thing, again, there are times when it’s not such a good thing. So I was looking at aikido
for a number of reasons. One was because they’re much more circular in the way they accommodate other people, and situations….

And then the other was to be able to help me find what I call a rheostat between hard confrontation, which I’m very good at, and the other one which is total passivity. And trying to find that spot in between where you can use, you can use things appropriately. And that was very difficult for me until I went to aikido because it was either like, I’m hands off or, or I’m in and were in it until death do us part. And so you’re looking for that middle ground, and that’s why I was attracted to aikido.

Tenkan (Turning) and Irimi (Entering)

During a round of an aikido choreography, after students take stock of their environment and adjust their posture they begin moving with a combination of tenkan and irimi. To tenkan is to turn with a conflict, while to irimi is to enter a conflict. Various aikido choreographies consist of different combinations of these two movements. Tenkan can be described as not fighting by turning and blending with one’s “opponent.” Irimi can be described as entering with measured assertiveness. The combination of the two results in adding a little energy to the direction in which one’s “opponent” is already travelling, which offsets their balance. Jo, who had a very irimi (or sharp and fiery) personality, told me a story about physically learning to tenkan when a large partner clamped down on her wrist and she had a difficult time turning in relation to this partner:

Interestingly, once one blends with one’s “opponent,” that trajectory is no longer in opposition with one’s own; the relationship becomes one of harmony rather than opposition. Another difficulty of translating the embodied practice of aikido to a linguistic description is that the semantics of aikido become very complicated. Within aikido, students are given the linguistic space to explore these bizarre relationships by the abstinence from using English on the mat. The word “uke” (which is explored later in this chapter) leaves more room for a reconceptualized relationship within conflict than “opponent.”
I had this experience really early on where my aikido where- this was at my first dojo in Vermont and – this really big guy came and clamped down on my wrist and I was like, “you’re going to break my wrist.”

And he’s like, “well, then tenkan.”

And I’m like, “no sorry I don’t think you understand, but you’re grinding the bones in my wrist.” And it hurt so much, that it doesn’t really hurt.

And he’s like, “well, tenkan.” And I’m like, ok let’s try this again. “You’re breaking my…” [comports difficulty speaking] you know? And he’s like, “tenkan!” And finally I was like, ok. And I had to relax enough, and had to focus enough, and I actually I found out that I could tenkan.

And the metaphor has always stuck with me, in that, when you get between a rock and a hard place, or hard uke [training partner] there’s always a thin line. And sometimes I hate it when the universe puts me in those positions but aikido gives me an appreciation for that.

Jo’s experience of this training partner marks tenkan, or turning, as one reaction that can work when one has no other options. Jo could not fight with her uke. She couldn’t reason with him. And the way he “clamped down” and was “grinding the bones in [her] wrist” placed her in enough danger that she had to get out somehow. Barring all other possibilities she learned that with enough quality breath and relaxation she could make the turn that would allow her to escape the situation by going with, rather than fighting against, her uke’s unreasonableness. And in learning from the process Jo transmutes this very difficult situation into an ultimately beneficial (though temporarily uncomfortable) situation. Counter-intuitively, not fighting became the only viable and effective way to fight. Mark similarly discussed the effectiveness of not fighting:

Let’s see. I’ve never been in a fight since I started aikido.
Kristy: Why do you think that is?

Mark: Well, probably I’m more mature and I don’t get myself into trouble. But I remember very clearly the last time I was in a fight and how good it felt to pound the crap out of somebody. You know, coming from that really angry place? It was very cathartic. I loved it. But at the same time I felt extremely horrible and guilty and this is not the path I want to go on and- I was more than a little scared of what kind of came out of me. I really tapped into some old anger. And the voice that came, I was shouting at the time, and the sound of my own voice was alien to me. It didn’t - I sounded like a different person.

But I probably needed it. I was pretty bottled up or something. But that was when I was in college. And since then I’ve never been in a situation where I felt you know at all really in danger.

So I can’t say that you know, aikido has been so useful in that I defended myself against multiple attackers ‘cause that’s not what happens. I think for me aikido practice is so much more valuable to addressing one’s sense of balance and center in all encounters. So that someone in your face you know, yelling at you or something, that you realize that you’ve practiced dealing with that in a metaphoric way every day on the mat for thousands of times. And you realize that you’re not going to fall down dead then and there if you don’t yell back or you know, block or something.

And that actually, most of the time - to be sure there are times when you need to be very very on your toes, you can’t be all like accepting of, you know. There is definitely a place for instantaneous, decisive relation to some things. But I think that is like a small sliver of the whole picture and you don’t have to worry about that small sliver from the
beginning. I think that will come if you diligently follow the rest of it, which is to basically to disarm attackers with peaceful action rather than violent action.

Mark’s choice to consciously work on finding a healthy outlet for his aggressive tendencies is an interestingly compassionate approach to conflict resolution. Deborah similarly emphasizes the effectiveness of compassion. But where Mark discusses compassion from the perspective of an aggressor, Deborah discusses the utility of compassion from the perspective of a potential victim. She describes a time when she was nearly kidnapped. She convinced her kidnapper to release her and attributes this successful resolution to her ability to “blend with his pain.”

Probably the best example of using aikido in my life came about 10 years ago when I was coming out of a therapy session. I had forgotten to turn my lights off in my car so my battery was dead. And I had to teach aikido class, and I needed to figure out a way to get a jump. And so I knew there was a gas station around that part so I tried to thumb a ride down so that I could go ahead and get some help.

So this man picked me up and it became clear to me within the first minute or so in the car that he was not very happy with the world. And he started out sort out um, complaining about life. And then complaining about his wife, and then quickly accelerated within a two minute period to raging about his situation. His wife was leaving him, she’s taking the children, and there was a lot of language that was- that he was sending at me.

And he passed the gas station. And I said this is where I get out. You know? Thank you very much for the ride. And he wouldn’t let me out. And so it accelerated into an entirely different level where he began to curse me and to accuse me of hurting him, that he was going to hurt me back. He was pretty- must have been at least 200 pounds, so he was a big man.
I mean, I’m sure I could have out run him, but I’m in a car, it’s running, and there’s an angry man at the wheel. So, I thought I could put my finger on his carotid artery. Well that would be kind of crummy because he’s got the steering wheel. I could open up the door, and slip out, that would hurt! At thirty miles an hour! 35, 40?

So I thought, well, lets see if I can turn?... And I just kept saying to him, I swallowed my terror and said “I’m so sorry for your pain. I’m really not the one you want to be hurting.”

And I just repeated that over and over and over.

Then my center
around

and at some point about 3, 3 1/2 miles down the road, he said “get out, cunt!”

Pulled over and let me out.

And walked a mile or two. I knocked on a few doors. And I finally found somebody who finally gave me a ride to the gas station. But I really think that my ability to calm down and try to blend with his pain saved my life.

I think that’s the fundamental power the practice affords. I had a woman, a roommate back at [college] in an internship program that was murdered in a really similar circumstance. And boy, when I was in that I car! [pause] I just- Allison’s face just came to me. And it was just like - sit up! And recognize what the implications here are. Don’t-you know, don’t underestimate it. Don’t overestimate it. Just try to see exactly what it is in this moment. And keep it cool.

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93 This artery carries oxygenated blood to the brain. Disrupting the flow of blood through this artery causes a person to temporarily lose consciousness. When they regain consciousness their short-term memory is temporarily wiped out. This is a very effective response to an attacker because it temporarily negates their ability to continue that attack, giving a momentary “head start” at evading that attacker. But in this instance it would have resulted in a car crash.
Deborah Sensei had been studying aikido for 30 years and was very deeply grounded. Her success with evading this attacker by “blending with his pain” when she was not physically capable of fighting with him is another manifestation of tenkan. Similarly, Jo also had an experience during which she evaded a potentially dangerous conflict by engaging her aggressor with assertive compassion:

In a physical way, the closest thing I’ve ever gotten to it was about a year after starting, I was working with kids in psychological crisis. And there was a 17 year old boy, pretty big. And kids only came to see us if they tried to hurt themselves or hurt somebody else, that was really the two reasons they came. And so he was in the category of hurt other people, and had sent people to the hospital. He had a pretty big anger management problem. And he had good cause to be angry, but poorly directed.

And so this was a really great place to work. It was a four bed unit, non-locked, which was nice. And the rule was that they couldn’t have cigarettes until they had cleaned up their room. And so it was morning, and I was seated kind of like where we are now, there was a wall, here’s my back, here he is, and he didn’t want to clean up his room. And I was like, “you gotta clean up your room before you get your cigarettes.” And he was like, “you fucking bitch, give me a fucking cigarette right now!”

And I’m like engaging him and then there’s this other bubble happening in my head going, “I’m going to the hospital, and this is going to hurt. He’s probably not going to do serious damage before somebody peels him off of me, but this is really not going to be pleasant.”

For a thorough discussion of “sleeper chokes” see Wendy Gunther’s discussion at http://www.aikiweb.com/techniques/gunther1.html.
And then out of nowhere in the back of my head I hear this voice: “do tenkan.” And I’m like, “you’re right! I am a fucking bitch. In fact, it’s in my contract, be a bitch to Josh.”

And he just didn’t know how to cope with me agreeing with him. Cause he was so used to adults saying “don’t use that language, don’t yell, don’t!” You know? And that just escalates the situation. And although it never got to a physical confrontation, like it was seconds from getting that way, you know? And he really didn’t know how to respond with me just agreeing. Bullies - seeing his perspective. So he kind of walked away cause I wasn’t getting- you know it’s kind of that limp arm exercise where somebody grabs your arm and you just don’t tighten back and it’s just not very interesting to have a fight if the other persons not fighting back. At which point I stood up and I knew we were going to do round two but it was- there was no one cornered. So, [aikido is useful for] little things like that.

Tactically agreeing with one’s aggressor is an interesting way to approach a conflict because it usually confuses an aggressor. This confusion dissipates the aggressor’s aggression. Teena describes using a similar tactic in a much more mundane and chronic conflict with a co-worker:

Well I have one story that I tell all the time, and this is something that happened at work. I’d say six years ago. I have this woman that I work with that is just the petty tyrant in my life. She just, we just really rub each other the wrong way.

The way this thing went down was: I’m a cake decorator. And so at the end of each day whoever is the last one decorating is in charge of kind of cleaning that area. And so on one particular day I was the last one there, and I was kind of running out of time. I was trying to finish some cakes I had going, and I was running out of time to clean up. But I really wanted to finish what I had going. So I asked the boss, could this other gal,
who was at that time working in another part of the bakery, but knows our area and
knows where things go and stuff, could she do my clean up so that I could finish up these
cakes that I was working on? And he was like, “oh, ok.” So I finished my cakes and did a
little bit of the clean up, and left thinking that she would come and finish.

And the next morning I come in and this gal that I work with, who I have issues
with, is just pissed off. She’s pissed. And I’m like “So what’s going on?” And she’s like,
“well this place is a mess! There’s dirty spoons in the icing, and this didn’t get wiped
down, and that didn’t get wiped down.” And I got feeling a little overwhelmed about her,
and I explained to her that well, you know, I was running a little short, and I thought that
K--- would be able to come and clean up and she knows where things go.

As it turned out actually the boss had had what we call the clean up guy, who
doesn’t know where anything goes or how or what our routine is, to do it. And so it was a
really half assed, so to speak, kind of clean up. And so she was mad at me saying that
“you should have saved yourself enough time, and you always run yourself late!” Blah
blah blah, just practically yelling at me.

And so I said, “ok, so what can I do now to make it better?” And in my mind it
was tenkan, cause irimi doesn’t work with her. So in my mind I went tenkan. And I was
looking at what she was seeing and saying ok, so, what can I do now to make it better?

And she took a few moments. And she got these couple of spoons out of the icing
from the day before. And she hands me these spoons and she’s like, “wash these spoons.”
And I go to the sink and I wash the spoons, and I come back. And she’s being really quiet
and she’s just working, and I start working. And I’m waiting for the other shoe to drop.

And about 15 minutes goes by and she goes, “ok feel better now. I guess
sometimes I just have to vent.” And I was like, [shrugs shoulders]. Cause previous to that
she’d have been mad at me for three days. It would have taken days for this to blow over. And it really just was, I had to wash two spoons. So, that’s kind of the big story that I tell.

Throughout these stories aikidoka describe conflicts in their daily lives that they approached with a combination of tenkan, or turning, and irimi, or entering. To tenkan is to turn with a conflict. Doing so entails temporarily giving up the position one was holding in order to move with ones sparring partner. One result of this movement is that it allows an aikidoka to see the other person’s perspective. To irimi is to enter into a conflict. Without a little tenkan, engaging irimi would be like getting in the other person’s face. With tenkan, irimi becomes an agreement that the other person is not expecting. It adds a little energy into the direction in which the other person is already flowing, which offsets their balance. Aikido studies this combination physically. Too, participants in this study reported several instances in which they used aikido skills psychologically so that conflicts did not get to a point of physical fighting.

Throughout the stories in the previous section aikidoka emphasize tenkan, or turning. One thing that I fear may not be conveyed through the written form of these stories is the irimi of the bodies who were telling the stories. Sitting across from them during interviews I was struck by how very sharp each of these participants appeared. One could almost see the quality of their attention. They continuously entered their environments with their perceptiveness, even as their bodies simply sat drinking a cup of tea. This sharpness of attention is one aspect of irimi that provides the backdrop for their stories about tenkan. Although irimi went largely unspoken in most of the stories they told the irimi quality of attention was physically present in their storytelling. But because it was not solidified in their words it did not make it into the transcripts. One of the challenges of translating this embodied art into linguistic communication is the reinsertion of the backdrop of irimi to participants’ discussions of tenkan.
Tenkan and irimi are emphasized in the role of nage, or one who is attacked. The one who begins the choreography by attacking nage is called uke. Within the choreography the uke, or attacker, always loses by being pinned or thrown at the end. This structure of the game emphasizes the larger philosophical point that aggression causes one to lose one’s balance. (Remember that Ueshiba developed the game aikido as a performative intervention in militaristic aggression.94) Nevertheless, ukemi, or the role of attacker, is also a complex part of this art.

Ukemi: Accessing a wide range of reactions

Tess Sensei explains the roles of nage (who “throws” the aggressor) and uke (who plays the role of aggressor and is thrown or pinned at the conclusion of the choreography):

I see nage as being a tour guide. Sensei used to describe [the choreography] irimi nage as a tour of the room. You want to be in the lead, you want to be guiding them. So, you’re in there side by side with them. You’re going: ok, there’s this wall, and this wall, and the ceiling and the floor. You know, as a tour guide.... There’s the front door, and the dressing rooms, the ceiling and the floor. So nage really shouldn’t be doing a lot more than that. They shouldn’t be adding a lot to the situation. They should be just sort of guiding what’s going on, kind of to its conclusion, one conclusion, which is not what uke wants.

You know uke has a certain intent, and there’s redirecting it to a different intent, but it’s just really guiding and redirecting. It shouldn’t be an imposition. That’s why I think I can work well with the toddlers, because I’m not trying to make them do anything. You can’t make a two year old do something they don’t want to do. That is not going to happen. They’re all about the protest.

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94 Choreographies are arranged around a basic premise of physical conflict. Aikido has developed into other arts that remove the narrative of conflict while retaining the study of balance of bodies in relation to one another. One
But you can get them to do what you want by redirecting them. Like if you really want them to do rolls and they just are not into rolls, well, you can do it by example and they’ll follow you. You can make it look real fun. You can do all these different things that end up getting them to do that.

And a lot of times when I’m nage, I want to make the technique be exactly what the person wants to do. You know? You want this! Of course you want this! Let’s go get that, together! So that’s what I see as nage.

Now uke, uke has the harder job because they have to start off as having one intent, try to continue that conversation, follow the attack of the conversation as it changes and ultimately as everything comes back on them, they have to suddenly aiki and harmonize with their own energy and be able to roll. They have a much harder job.

So uke literally means to receive. When we talk about ukemi, uke doesn’t mean attacker, it means receiving. Ukemi is the art of receiving because it’s the idea of whatever you’re putting out is coming back to you.

Once or twice a year we’ll do a whole weekend just on uke. So Saturday was dedicated to attacking. How do you start the conversation? And then Saturday night, Sunday morning were geared toward: how do you follow? So once you’ve done your attack, how do you continue in an effective way?

Here’s the next part of the conversation. You have to continue. You can’t just go: hey you! The person is ready to have a conversation with you now. You have to continue the conversation. So we would do Saturday night, and then pick it up Sunday morning...

example is the modern dance form Contact Improvisation. See Cynthia Jean Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 258.
And then the end of Sunday is dedicated to the end of the conversation, where the thing is coming back to you, now you have to fall. So we started off Sunday just with falling by ourselves... Here’s more appropriate ways you can get up either backward or forward. And, you know, wherever people have been in the class, elevate them. Give them the next piece of what they need to do with the ukemi.

And then the very end of the day,…what I sometimes do is reversal techniques. Where the attacker ends up becoming the thrower. And the only way to do that is the whole time you’re connecting with the person is to relax. If you’re just thinking about attacking you’ll miss the place where they’re open. You’ll miss that opportunity. So uke has a hard job. Because they have to be mindful of all these different things. And be safe. You know, that balance of being safe and giving your partner something real is hard. Really hard.

Uke, then, begins the “conversation” by coming in with an attack and then follows nage’s response to that attack. They have to balance between giving their partners something real to work with and keeping themselves safe. Many beginning students have to confront their own rigidity by learning to perform the uke role. If a choreography begins with a punch to the stomach a beginning student will make a punching movement and then freeze. But when they freeze there is no momentum. Nage has nothing to work with. And since nage is no longer being attacked, there is no reason for nage to continue to respond, and so the choreography falls flat. Slowly, the beginning student learns that s/he is supposed to carry through rather than freezing after the opening punch. Then slowly the student learns that s/he needs to “listen to” or follow nage’s response to the opening punch. The student learns to engage the conversation rather than adopting a stance of rigidity.
Violet, a particularly expressive interview participant, relates this skill in the role of uke to her role as a mother:

I also found Aikido an incredibly useful tool for raising children.

Kristy: How so? I don’t have any kids.

Violet: Do your homework [with a very firm, almost aggressive physical and vocal comportment, wagging pointer finger at me].

Kristy: Ahhh! (half-joking expression of fearful surprise)

Violet: Or; how can I help you do your homework? [moves her arms through an irimi nage opening entrance].

Kristy: Ooooh, I like #2 better.

Violet: Yeah! Exactly. You know. The frustration of all the things you’re doing as a parent and learning how to - you know, “I don’t like the way you” [angry teenager]; “mom” [sing-song sarcastic] “I don’t want to” [angry teenager]. You know, so how do I deal with that, or, “Your rules are stupid”; “mom” [sing-song sarcastic].

How not to react with “I don’t care if you think my rules are stupid, they’re my rules and you’re going to do it.” [with aggressive, angry screwed up face].

The desire occasionally, although we don’t like to admit it as a parent, [gestures for wringing her kids’ necks and shaking them] I’m going to throttle you! [gesturing of wringing necks] but I’m not going to [gesture of forcing herself to remove her hands from the neck she is wringing]. Oh, I’m going to go to the dojo.

“Oh, sweetheart, how can I help you?”

Um, there’s a couple of times in my life where I could really practice with that. One of the children, is just, [sighs]. Having a child say “I really feel this way.” And being able to say, “oh,” and being very patient. And then, letting them figure out: but if I do
that, this will happen. So maybe it’ll be better if I did that instead. “Oh, yeah.” No, rather than making a comment every time like “Well I think it would be wrong for you to do that because X,” you know?

Letting, having the patience to let them figure out what’s really appropriate for them, which maybe in the long run is what you thought was appropriate. But it doesn’t come in like this authoritarian “you shall do… because I’m the parent.” [authoritarian comportment] Occasionally of course with small children, you have to do that, absolutely. To pull them out of the road, to pull their hand out of the hot stove, whatever. But um, there are so many more times in life where if you’re, if you can maintain your center and your patience, and let them learn to figure it out, they will. And trust that they will. And that’s pretty powerful, to me. So.

Tess relates the physical practice of aikido to the skill of conducting artful conversations. Violet discusses the application of the uke role to her role as a mother. These stories share an emphasis on maintaining a wide range of possible reactions.

Discussion

The resolution tactics that students learned through the physical choreographies of aikido were applicable to many different kinds of conflicts facing students outside of the dojo space. Some of these were physical in nature, but many of these conflicts occurred on the level of conversations. The major steps of conflict resolution included:

- Maintaining awareness of one’s environment
- Adjusting one’s posture by centering and breathing
- Tenkan (turning) and Irimi (entering)
- Ukemi: Accessing a wide range of reactions
These approaches to self-defense are notable in their wide applicability. Where “self-defense” commonly invokes mental images of 2 hour seminars in which women (attempt to) learn how to defend themselves against strangers who attack them on the street, martial arts like aikido involve a much more sophisticated engagement with the phenomenon of conflict.

Aikido does teach students how to defend themselves against a stranger who attacks them on the street but the totality of the practice is much more comprehensive. How can one take care on oneself in more complicated situations? How can one protect oneself from their co-workers’ unreasonableness? Their own aggressive tendencies? Their families’ dysfunctional social patterns? Subtle, subtle violences that are so pernicious because most people do not recognize them as violences.

But hold up, Kristy. Something isn’t sitting right here. Look at this from a feminist perspective.

So, what aikido is saying, and what you’re replicating as an ideal, is that people can engage conflict non-violently by being aware of their environment, checking their selves, not fighting by tenkan (turning and blending with their opponents) and irimi (entering, largely with their perception), and accessing a wide range of potential reactions. Aren’t you placing an awful lot of responsibility on nage, or she who is attacked? And what is this “don’t fight” stuff? You’re going to suggest, as a feminist, that people not fight? If that’s what you think then you’d better give up this writing thing and get your ass back in the kitchen, toss away your shoes, and get pregnant so you can spend the rest of your life cooking and cleaning for some man who has the legal right to beat you. Because if you weren’t the beneficiary of a
VERY long line of feminists who fought their tushes off to give you the chance to write this dissertation, that’s exactly where you’d be.

Well, you raise some important points. There is something a little problematic here and I appreciate your noticing it. Let’s discuss this.

I carry a lot of assumptions because of the chance circumstances of my life. I was born in the United States of America after our legal and social systems had been transformed by all kinds of feminist interventions. I was raised to take it for granted that even though I have a vagina I can vote, own property, engage in paid employment, and have sex when, where, and how I want to without having to sew a scarlet “A” on my dress. I’ve been interpellated as white so people assume, and I’ve unconsciously learned to assume with them, that I am to be treated with a degree of dignity that unfortunately is not commonly afforded to people of color. Although I was born into a working class family I was also born into a society with so much ambient wealth that a basic living standard is assumed to include a level of medical care, education, housing and food that would be a huge improvement elsewhere on the globe. Being born when and where I was born I also assume that everyone understands that a victim of rape, child abuse, or battering should never, EVER be blamed for their own victimization.

I have learned, though, that not everyone shares this assumption. And so I cannot leave it unstated. That being said, what I hope to convey about aikido’s admonition to “not fight” is more complicated than it may appear. By focusing so much on the role of nage, or how one might respond to an attack, what I’ve written could be interpreted as a complacent blaming of victims. Especially given that this writing is likely to be read by an audience that has been socialized to blame victims for their own victimization. Blaming the victim logic goes like this: “If people have so many options and they are victimized anyway then it’s kind of their fault for not
choosing a path other than victimhood.” To state this very clearly: I recognize that this is an interpretation that readers may impose on what I’ve written. However, it is absolutely not a meaning that I condone, agree with, or hope to convey through my writing.

This is yet another reason why it might not be a good idea to try to convey aikido through linguistic communication. Readers can’t feel the bodies of the women and men who shared this knowledge with me. They can’t feel the profound compassion that coursed through their beings. If they could they would understand the fine line between blaming the victim and introducing tools that help prevent victimization. And indeed, ignoring these tools, not recognizing that nage has options or sharing those options once they are found, kind of perpetuates victimization. Keep in mind that aikidoka are a self-selecting group in a very specific environment.

Too, remember who Ueshiba was and the circumstances in which he was working. He was a respected martial arts teacher in the thick of the Japanese military. That’s the group that kidnapped war victims and used them as Comfort Women, or sex slaves, as a matter of policy. He tried to talk his colleagues out of engaging in World War II, failed, and watched as the United States of America deployed atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Aikido was the art that he sent to both Japanese military personnel and America. He was working largely with aggressors (who thought of themselves as innocent victims). His challenge was to show that one could engage in conflict effectively without becoming aggressively violent. In that context the “don’t fight” thing makes more sense.

Well, speak to this. I think you have a story to tell that might make this clear. Tell them about Omar and Mark.

I’d rather not.

Do it. That’s why you know aikido and feminism can work together, isn’t it? Because of what you know in your own flesh?
How about I write a book about avoidance strategies instead? Oh look, there’s a dirty dish in the sink! And I haven’t vacuumed in days!

Kristy. Write it. I WILL sprain your ankle again.

I hate you. But you’re right. Ok, here goes.

[Trigger alert - I’m about to tell a story about attempted rape. Jump to the next chapter if you don’t want to read it.]

So I do see the problem with suggesting “not fighting” as a conflict resolution strategy, especially in the context of a work of feminist theory! But I also know for a FACT that there is something really valuable here. I have a story that demonstrates this and clarifies what I mean when I replicate aikido’s admonition to “not fight.” [Big breath in and out.]

To my knowledge, I’ve never been raped. But that’s not because dudes haven’t tried. Like many young women I have been the intended victim of sexual assault. Actually, I am a really interesting case study in relation to the practical application of aikido techniques to common gender violence assaults such as rape. I’ve been subjected to two separate rape attempts – one before I had even heard of aikido and one after about six months of intensive aikido study.

In an important sense, my reactions to these two instances were exactly the same. They fit the pattern of acquaintance rape exactly: they both happened on my turf (the first time was in my office, the second time in my home) and were perpetrated by men I knew (I had previously gone to dinner with one, and had had sex with the other). The men came to me and made unwanted sexual advances. I told them to leave. They didn’t. I told them again, they again failed to leave. I told them a third time to leave, and they failed to leave a third time. Then I picked up a blade (the first time it was a pair of scissors, the second time it was a kitchen knife) and told the dude I’d stab him if he didn’t leave. In both instances, the dude tried to make a flirtatious joke, and I held my ground. Once the dude realized that I really would stab him, he left.
In another sense, there was an important difference between these two instances. In the second instance, aikido brought the rapist back to me about three years after the attempted rape. I walked into my dojo one day, and he was there: all suited up, waiting for class to begin.

I went straight to the locker room and had a panic attack. I breathed. I centered. I grounded. I calmed. Another student came in asked me what was wrong. I explained that I had had to threaten that guy with a knife to get him out of my house. (True to the pattern of acquaintance rape, even then, three years after, I did not call him a rapist.95)

My dojo mate did something amazing at that point and asked me what I wanted to happen.

I thought so deep and hard in what must have been just 30 seconds – I think I aged 10 years. I felt a history of patriarchy that ran back to the law code of Hammurabi, in which rape was a property offense akin to vandalism and punishable by a fine that would have to be paid to the father of the raped female.96 I felt the world over, in which women are routinely treated like objects with no wills of their own. And I felt him and me on the cutting edge of that reality. This was not abstract history; this was my flesh, right here, right now. Momma Earth, what do I do? If this is something we can’t change I’d do best to hide from it. If this is something we can change, who’s going to do it if not me? Reality check – I’m safe here. My dojo mates have my back. And I felt a surge of herstory come up through the ground, the energy of women who had fought before me, and I knew this moment was bigger than just me. And I asked myself a question: can aikido change this young man’s behavior? I don’t know, but I choose hope.

I answered my dojo mates: let’s do aikido. I got dressed and I got real, real calm. Class started with a warm-up. The teacher demonstrated a choreography. A dear friend who was much

older and an accomplished judo student nabbed me for the first “round.” He checked my balance, felt my mind, and asked if I was ok. I said yes. He nodded to the teacher. The teacher demonstrated a second choreography. I nabbed the rapist to be my sparring partner and calmly, gently but firmly wiped the floor with his face. When it was my turn to be uke (receiver) I allowed him to pin and throw me, but he never got my balance and we both knew it. When it was my turn to be nage I was dead calm. I never crossed the line into aggression, but I did kick the living shit out of him for a good solid hour. Afterward I explained to him that I did not appreciate that I had to threaten to stab him to get him out of my house, and that he was never to impose himself on another woman like that. He looked me eye to eye and said “I understand.”

I learned something very important about kicking ass that day. I learned that I am far more effective when I do not get carried away with fear or anger. There is a strength that comes with passionate calmness. Reflecting on the incident, I learned too the importance of developing a community that could deal with gender violence in an appropriate fashion. In that dojo all the other students and the teacher were male. They deserve a lot of credit for how they handled the situation. Although they were all male and had had no formal feminist education they reacted in a way that was appropriately compassionate. They believed me when I told them that I had to threaten this man with a knife to get him out of my house. They understood that this was a big deal. They gave me the choice of what I wanted to happen. They formed a protective roda around me as they let me hold the rapist accountable. And for years prior, although none of us

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97 In capoira, a roda is a circle formed around a pair of fighters that kept watch for slave masters and police. In this instance, the roda was figurative. My dojo mates did not actually form a circle around us, but they were definitely paying attention in a protective way. See Barbara Browning, Samba : Resistance in Motion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 189.
would have ever guessed that things would have gone down that way, they helped me develop my aikido to a point where I was physically capable of grappling with the rapist.

The “not fighting” of aikido is very different from being a doormat. The “not fighting” of aikido would NEVER suggest that I just lie down and let some guy rape me. Rather, the “not fighting” of aikido is the little voice in the back of my head that reminds me, as I am being confronted by a rapist, “Look: this guy obviously doesn’t make good life choices. He probably has blood-borne pathogens to which you don’t want to be exposed. Plus, if you stab him, you’re going to end up cleaning it up. So try to get this guy out of here without stabbing him.” This is an important difference. “Not fighting” does not mean simply giving in. It means dealing with a conflict in a way that seeks effectiveness, rather than the gratification of aggression.

While aikido skills enable study participants to engage effectively with conflicts in their personal lives, they also enable participants to engage with structural and institutional conflicts. The next chapter discusses participants’ transformative engagements with the norms of gender violence that are commonly perpetuated in sporting environments.
CHAPTER 6: TRANSFORMING GENDER VIOLENCE IN SPORT:
COMMON SOCIAL PATTERNS AND CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS

What is violence?

How does it relate to gender and physicality?

How can we redirect cycles of violence, gender, and physicality?

Ambitious questions.

Participants in the current research study, who were all long-term students of woman-friendly aikido dojos, made several interesting points on this subject. First, gender violence is a complex social phenomena. It includes not only physical explosions of violence, but more banal and mundane forms as well. Participants discussed many examples of these, including: lack of support for women, the psychic violence of harassment, feminine non-assertiveness, masculine aggression, and the socio-economic framework of capitalist patriarchy. These complexities are important in contexts that often conceptualize gender violence in grossly oversimplified terms. The first half of this chapter will feature aikidokas’ discussion of gender violence as a social phenomena.

Second, taking this holistic perspective of gender violence into account, we can perform creative interventions designed to break social cycles of violence. Feminist theory exploring relationships between gender, violence, and sport identifies several aspects of gender violence in sport. For each of these aspects of potential gender violence in sport I collected at least one example of policy, leadership, philosophy, movement qualities, and/or game structure that replaced an aspect of likely gender violence with an equity-perpetuating behavior. The second half of this chapter contextualizes and describes creative interventions collected at aikido-related events.
Gender Violence Is Banal

As a group participants in this study articulated an understanding of gender violence as a dynamic continuum that ranged from explosive expressions (incidents in which participants were nearly raped/murdered/slaughtered in warfare) to quite banal expressions of gender violence. The intersections of gender and violence in study participants' lives were discussed most frequently in relation to the taken-for-granted behaviors prescribed subtly through the gender norms of contemporary mainstream United States culture. When the female and female-friendly martial artists talked about gender and violence they focused mostly on what one might call little things.

Lack of Support

For example, participants noticed that in our culture support is withheld from women in virtually every socio-cultural institution. Participants discussed lack of support for women throughout the family, medical institutions, educational institutions, and the criminal justice system.

Several female participants who were married to men and had children experienced difficulty finding room in their lives to participate in aikido. Because they devote so much time to the care of others, caring for their selves was often a conscious and difficult choice that required extra negotiations with their partners. This finding is consistent with the care-of-the-self ethic found in Castelnuovo and Guthrie’s study of a women-only karate dojo, in which many students felt that they had to make a deliberate choice to go to the dojo as a self-care activity. Similarly, one participant in the current study explained:

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My husband doesn’t do aikido. …So over the years, there’s a little bit of tension about “I’m going to the dojo sweetheart, see you later!” How do I balance this out? How do I make sure I’m home enough for the family? How do I do what I really really love?

No male aikido students mentioned having enough difficulty convincing their spouses to perform childcare that it consistently interfered with their ability to attend aikido classes. Although both dojos invited students to bring children and provided activities for children not participating in classes (eg. coloring books, blocks...), the dojos' child-friendly environments did not negate the wider social context in which women are still subjected to excessive demands for unpaid household and emotional labor.¹⁰⁰

The lack of support for women was also described in discussions of socio-cultural institutions other than the family. Women in this study discussed a general lack of concern for women and a lack of understanding of gender and sexuality issues that emanated from medical institutions, educational institutions, and the criminal justice system. Lilly, who had studied aikido for 12 years, considered several of these institutions:

I am currently in the throws of menopause. It’s hell. ... if this happened to men, there’d be so much research money. They would go to resorts and be pampered for the entire extent of the experience. They’d be paid money for it! I mean, it’s just ridiculous. We’re finally able to talk openly about it for women. But again, as a child I remember women being called hysterical, you know! ...

So many of these young people come into University, as I did, without enough sex ed. and understanding of why you have all these feelings, and that they’re chemical.

That’s what’s driving you - is your chemistry. Can you be smarter than your chemistry?

Sometimes yes, sometimes no. [Laughs.]

And then also dealing with, if people truly are putting stuff in each other’s drinks, that’s a violent crime... Is patriarchy ever going to get turned on it’s ear? It’s just gross.

It was within my time that victims did get hauled into court, rape victims, and they were treated like the perpetrators. And you’d think that these jackasses, you know?!? Do you have daughters? Do you have wives? Do you have sisters? Do you have any women that you give a shit about? How would you feel if it was your kid on the receiving end of that?

Aside from a general lack of support for women noted by Lilly, banal forms of gender violence frequently manifest as more of a threat than an actual eruption of violence.

*The Psychic Violence of Omnipresent Threats: Harassment*

Participants in this study described being subjected to sexual harassment on the street, at the beach, at work, in the University, and in numerous other locations. Sexual harassment is a kind of violence that is enacted primarily upon the psyche. It's goal is to preserve public spheres as male spaces by reminding women and non-dominant men that they are interlopers who had better watch their backs. Thus, harassment has a cumulative effect whereby the history of identity-based oppression in our patriarchal culture combines with a social context that is largely uncritical of gender oppression to create situations in which women are easily triggered into a recognition of their status as potential victims (as discussed in Chapter 2). It is this hailing of woman-as-potential-victim that forms the core of the psychic effect of sexual harassment. It
doesn't often cause bruises. Rather, it causes unnecessary expenditure of time and psychic energy,¹⁰¹ and a perception of self as weaker than the self really is.

Interestingly, participants’ discussions revealed a fuzziness of the line between normal-but-exuberant expressions of masculinity¹⁰² and sexual harassment. One massage therapist described negotiating the possibility of harassment in professional contexts:

I had a client, haven’t seen him now in almost a year, and god love him, he’s just a wonderful man but when he left I think I was kind of ready for him to leave. … Besides being a mountainous person, he had a mountainous personality. ... I think he used his overbearingness in a certain ways. And because I have a pretty big personality myself we made it ok for a couple of years. ...

This therapist negotiated a continuity of behaviors in which it is not always easy to determine whether a man’s overbearingness indicates an intention to assault a person or whether he has just been taught to take up a lot of space and speak loudly because that is how we teach men to comport in this culture. Regardless of intention, though, time and psychic energy was expended in attending to possibilities of sexual harassment and potential assault.¹⁰³ Social norms create men who are apt to express inappropriately dominating behaviors. Social norms also contribute to the creation of women who are socialized into certain ideas about a woman's place.

¹⁰² Contrary to Gallop, I feel that it is very possible for females to sexually harass people regardless of the lack of a social context that is extremely conducive to women as a class having extraordinary control over people’s professional and social lives. But in my interview data there was no mention of incidents in which females engaged in behaviors that I would describe as sexually harassing. As such, the pronouns in this section reflect my participants' descriptions of sexual harassment, not my theoretical understanding of the phenomenon. In my understanding, it would be appropriate and perhaps more accurate to replace “masculinity” in this sentence with “hegemonic subjectivity.”
¹⁰³ The continuum of gender behaviors where sexual harassment is a pernicious possibility caused by gender norms that encourage male aggression and female passivity is corroborated by research with incarcerated rapists. Researchers spoke with rapists in that study who, in many cases, though they had used weapons, threats, and violence to obtain intercourse, did not feel that the sex that they had was outside the normal behavioral norms of heterosexual mating rituals. They admitted to holding a gun to her head as they had sex, but they felt that this did not constitute
Feminine Non-Assertiveness

Some participants in the current study (both male and female) discussed struggling against the gender roles prescribed to them:

I was born in the middle of the fifties, … and I was brought up with all those 1950’s mores about a woman’s place in society. Not so Victorian as it used to be, but still...

The social norms of gender are a significant point of concern for female martial artists. Meanings generally associated with femaleness are sometimes perceived as mutually incompatible with the meanings associated with sport, let alone “female inappropriate” sports such as martial arts. Women (and especially women of asian and white descent) in contemporary mainstream hegemonic United States culture are still taught to adhere to gender norms that prescribe less mobility, less vocality, less capacity for physical violence, and less competence than is socialized into males. While many people feel that this is the result of “natural” or “genetic” differences participants in this aikido subculture recognized socialization to play an important role in women's martial incompetence.

Often, yin/yang philosophies such as those discussed in martial arts like tai chi and aikido can inspire increased flexibility between gender norms. Maleness flows into femaleness and around again, as do expansion and contraction, as the tides ebb and flow, light relinquishes to

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107 Castelnuovo and Guthrie, Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the Amazon within, 181.
darkness relinquishes to light, as the wind caresses the rocks, and mountains fall into the sea, eventually. Within a cosmology of perpetual change an individual can find space to choose behaviors and performances other than those into which one was interpellated.

But in other contexts Yin/Yang philosophy can be just another way of asserting the philosophically inaccurate and just plain inartful sexism of militaristic patriarchies.

Yang : male : fire : heaven ; Yin : female : water : earth

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Yin/Yang flows into Cartesian Dualism and around again. And the result can be a reification, albeit a transcultural reification, of the same-old same-old gender norms wherein males are socialized to be excessively aggressive while females are socialized to be excessively passive. Female passivity shares a similarity with a form of banal gender violence that is most frequently enacted against men in a militaristic culture, what one participant called the “Male Warrior Complex.”

Masculine Aggression

Several participants in this study were either actively working as psychotherapists or had worked as psychotherapists. Each of these mentioned working with trauma survivors. While they all worked with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) they worked with very different kinds of patients. One prolific feminist psychologist who participated in this study, who has written several books and articles and is recognized as a leader in the psychology of trauma, explained to me:

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There’s a small group of us, who all know each other, who created [the idea of PTSD] in working with the Vietnam veterans, working with sexual abuse survivors, working with battered women, working with disaster survivors. … And it is extraordinarily powerful work to do.

This participant mentioned how surprised she was, as a young graduate student, to find that the survivors of sexual abuse with whom she had been working described psychological symptoms that were very similar to those experienced by veterans returning from war. Although it made perfect sense when she explained it the idea that the effects of gender violence could be similar regardless of whether one was forced into a position of passivity (as in sexual harassment and abuse) or a position of aggressiveness (as in military conscription) had never occurred to me.

But when I started listening for it I found that participants had corroborated this, as male and some female students discussed their experiences as active and/or conscientiously inactive military personnel. More subtly profound than even their thick descriptions of PTSD (which were horrific) was what I have come to understand as a gender inversion of the psychic violence of sexual harassment. One participant called this the “Male Warrior Complex.” Particularly in a militaristic culture men are socialized into a paradigm that attempts to hail them as participants in nationalistic violence (where sexual harassment similarly hails women as potential victims).

M, who had studied aikido steadily for the previous nine years and had dabbled in it in college, told me:

I missed the draft by maybe six months; I think they stopped the draft just before my 18th birthday... I feel like on some level it’s been imprinted the male - either the male environment, or the male psyche, or whatever… For a lot of men, there’s a lot of – an expectation that they will have to risk their lives in war. ...
And I think in aikido you get to play with that. Sometimes you get triggered in to that. … For me it was definitely an imprint. And I’m not- I never wanted to go to the army. But it’s definitely been a big imprint that I have to deal with.

The multi-layered damage of the psychic violence caused by the socialized association of masculinity and military aggression is described by Tess Sensei, who had studied for 30 years:

There’s so many guys that I talk to that, it’s just odd to me but they, um, they don’t want to lose. And they have this sense of what losing is. What it is to be a man. You know, and to choose not to break somebody’s nose is not being a man.

And that’s, I mean that’s what war is about. … But then they go over and they end up killing women and children and things happen in war that they’re just not prepared for, you know?

That’s why we have a lot of really damaged individuals coming home. Not just physically damaged, mentally damaged. … And they don’t deprogram them when they come back. Cause then they’d have to admit that they programmed them. They’ve gone through “basic training” you know? [Laughs] We’re going to “un-basic train” you? [Laughs] I don’t think so. They don’t give them any help, they won’t admit that most of these guys have [PTSD], and women. They won’t spend the money on it.

Violence against men is an organizing principle of militaristic patriarchy and must be considered in a discussion of gender violence (just as circumcision must be considered in a discussion of genital mutilation).

**Socioeconomic Framework of Capitalist Patriarchy**

Similarly, many different kinds of violence were described as functions of capitalist patriarchy. Diane, another participant in the current study, explained that to get rid of gender violence, we need to get rid of capitalist patriarchy:
Let’s overthrow patriarchy! Because, I think the reason why we have sexual abuse of children and sexual assault is the commodification of women’s and children’s bodies. And in order to commodify women’s and children’s bodies you need capitalist patriarchy. … We need to stop treating children as possessions of their parents. We need to have strong support for women’s full employment and their child care. Because part of why sometimes women stay with men who they aren’t quite sure what they are doing with their kids … is because they don’t have the financial means with which to leave. Part of why moms beat their kids up is because they have no support. And so, capitalist patriarchy is bad for all human beings.

… There are some things that are hard wired in us by our sex, but very little. Very very little. And we emphasize them as a culture, and fetishize them. … We are so attached to this notion of sex difference because it upholds polarity. … There are biological differences. Men on the average are taller than women. Men on the average are more muscular the women. In a pre-industrial society that was more meaningful. We are not a pre-industrial society. …

…I’m mean, you saw me train with J--- today, he’s a foot taller than I am, you know, he’s a second degree black belt. He’s been training for years. He’s strong.

I’m 55 years, I’m shorter than he is, I’ve been training for five years, and I’m not strong. If I get out of his way, and out of my way, and accept reality and just stand in my center, he’ll fall down. And he does! And he does!

If I try to struggle with him, I’m dead. I’m gone. Because he is bigger than I am.

And patriarchy teaches this transitive despair that says: “We’re bigger than you are. You can’t do anything. Give up. Go watch TV. Go get drunk. Go, you know, go to NASCAR races, go do something to numb yourself.”
And people say: “You’re right. You can’t struggle. You can’t fight.”

Well - don’t fight! Step off the line! Let it run past you and fall down! Notice that you are more powerful than it ever thought you were, or than you ever thought you were… Because I believe that you cannot fight patriarchy, you subvert patriarchy. You step off the line.

Practical ways I do that in my own life, besides constantly having discussions with myself about ‘leave it. leave it. let it go.’ include the work I do as a therapist. Because I refuse to accept that people are permanently damaged. The creation of my clinic, because I refuse to accept that we can’t get really good mental health services to people who are poor.

Having a joyful life because the culture would like me to be not joyful.

Challenging the places inside myself that have been taught to hate me for being who I am. And not struggling with them and saying “hmmn, that’s interesting... who are you helping by believing that?” And doing that with everyone around me that I know. Being conscious and intentional about as many things as I can be in my life. And not being too hard on myself about what I’m not. Because another way to feel bad about yourself and patriarchy is to fail to undermine it sufficiently.

The complexity of these perspectives is important because gender violence is often conceptualized in grossly oversimplified terms.

Gender Violence is Complex

The breadth of these descriptions of banal forms of gender violence emphasizes the point that gender violence is complex. Ivy recognized the influence of socialized gender norms in her discussion of “Model Mugging,” which was one kind of self-defense class that was popular in the 1980’s. When second-wave feminists gained their footing, some of them sought out self-
defense training. The self-defense training that was available to women in the U.S. at that time varied greatly in quality. It was not (and, as my data shows, still is not easy) for women to train in martial arts dojos (though fairly, it is not easy for anyone to train in these places). And many martial arts subscribe to philosophies that are highly compatible with doctrines of masculine superiority, which make them particularly un-friendly to female participants.

“Model Mugging” is one example of a far more accessible but much lower quality version of self-defense taught during short (2-3 hour-long) seminars. Participants learned things like how to throw a punch without getting a boxer's fracture, how to execute a hip-throw on someone who attacks them from behind, and how, if they're jogging in the park late at night and a stranger jumps out from behind the bushes, they should yell “fire” because people just don’t respond to cries for “help.”

I have to admit here that as an aikidoka and a feminist cultural studies scholar I have trouble describing these seminars respectfully. I grit my teeth, breath deeply, and acknowledge: they're better than nothing. But they are completely inappropriate for most of the forms of gender violence that actually happen.

Previous research indicates that most instances of explosive gender violence occur in the victim's home (or on her home turf, her home, work, or school) and/or is perpetrated by someone whom the victim knows and with whom they are socially/economically entangled. This is contrary to most people's conceptions of (prosecutable) gender violence, which is exemplified by attacks launched in public by a stranger.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, this is the same model that is most frequently employed in many short self-defense seminars.

Participants in this study expand this understanding of gender violence exponentially. One direction in which they expand this understanding of gender violence is through a critique of short self-defense seminars. Deborah Sensei critiques an example of this approach to self-defense called “model mugging.” This critique is framed by the reality that it is launched by a woman who has spent 30 years studying a fairly elite martial art, in which it is generally asserted that any student needs to put in about 10 years of study before gaining fundamental competencies. While she notes that people thought that she was elitist for not liking the 2-hour seminar approach to self-defense, she concisely articulates several reasons why a short self-defense seminar might not be appropriate. Particularly where women are taught their entire lives not to have confidence to grapple it is difficult to overcome that wider social training over the course of a two-hour seminar. Deborah Sensei told me:

> We had had many conversations about the inaneness of the two hour self defense class where they teach women to pop eyes out, and kick the groin and stuff. You know, like, *but what if you miss?* And you know also, in *two hours*? How could you possibly teach somebody the confidence to do that?! So model mugging, of course, was a part of our arena at that time. And we both had a real struggle with the point of model mugging.

Many people felt that I was elitist for not liking it.

Instead of Model Mugging’s inappropriately over-simplified understanding of how violence functions in society, which necessarily leads to over-simplified response tactics, aikido participants understood violence to resonate through society in complex ways. Even where gender violence takes explosive physical forms it is often in a context far more complicated than an exchange with a stranger on the street. In that situation it might work to execute a hip throw

and run away while blowing a whistle (assuming that one can manage to execute these complicated maneuvers while in a panic state, which is unlikely). But in many cases, an instance of immediate physical violence is just the tip of the iceberg.

Sam, who had studied aikido for 4 years and karate for 18 years, explained:

This is the reason why I’m sensitive to that whole thing, cause [my partner], you know, was abused as a child.

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and they-

and the worst part of it wasn’t the physical part, although that was bad enough. It was the emotional part... It just absolutely astounds me how that pebble thrown in the pond of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse has this ripple effect, which affects - it's just incredible. It’s affected me, our son, our friends, sisters - and all cause of one, you know, “man.”

...But yeah, it’s just, its, it’s almost like a - it’s the tragic secret that our society just does not want to voice. Even if you’re remotely connected to it you realize how pervasive it is. It's astounding. Especially for US. We're supposed to be an enlightened culture. You know, it’s not like we have women going around and their little veils and all that, and stone them to death for adultery. But in many ways, we do the same thing. Just not with physical stones.

Sam’s understanding of the results of child abuse is notable in the ability to recognize the “ripple effect” of damages that manifest decades later through people who were not even alive when the

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initial abuse occurred. This is a very holistic perspective on the phenomenon of abuse. Even where gender violence does erupt into explosive forms, these are more complex than one might initially think, creating a ripple-effect that reaches far beyond the individual people involved.

Relationships between Gender, Violence, and Sport

Study participants engaged their agency within the realms of their sporting environments to transform their social contexts into ones that did not passively support oppressive gender norms. Several cultural theorists have explored ways that ideas about gender, violence, and sporting cultures form feedback loops and/or create interference amongst one another.\(^{111}\) Sport, and especially the elite center of men’s sport, can function as a haven for gender violence.\(^{112}\) The representational and socio-cultural center of sport creates and maintains cultural norms that are particularly conducive to gender violence. The precise discursive mechanisms through which sport, gender, and violence reinforce one another are described by Michael Messner. Building on the work of other masculinity theorists, he describes ways in which mainstream sport creates a male-centered\(^{113}\) social environment. The social processes through which this is achieved is described as the Triad of Men’s Violence. The Triad of Men's Violence in Sport features 1. men’s violence against women, 2. men’s violence against other men, and 3. athlete’s violence against themselves. This triad of violence is supported by several social norms, including 4. homophobic and misogynist talk, 5. the group practice of voyeuring, 6. the suppression of


\(^{112}\) Messner, *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports*, 239.

empathy towards others, and 7. the enabling of some men’s sexual violence by a “culture of silence” in the community.\textsuperscript{114}

Messner's theoretical work explores the intersections of gender, violence, and sport. This line of inquiry has also been employed by scholars focusing on women's sport.\textsuperscript{115} Observations of health-compromising behaviors in elite female athletes delineated numerous ways in which gender norms help to create a social context that encourages female athletes to enact violence against themselves and one another. Similarly, scholars have examined other patterns of abusive and exploitative sporting contexts.\textsuperscript{116} The current study explores a sporting culture where participants are not separated by their gender; women and men practice together. Adjusting these theories about the intersections between gender, violence, and bodily norms to fit my analysis of a heterosocial sporting context, I combined and reconceptualized Messner, Waldron, and Krane's theories. Considering the subcultural norms described by these theorists and considering the subcultural norms that I observed during fieldwork, the categories of behaviors that I see as highly relevant in a consideration of gender violence in sport were increasingly clarified into a Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport. This matrix includes several facets, including:

- Hierarchical Establishment
- Binaristic Opposition Between Two Sexes
- Violence against Self

\textsuperscript{114} Messner, \textit{Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports}, 239 31-32.
• Homophobic Talk
• Misogynist Talk
• Voyeuring
• Suppression of Empathy
• Culture of Silence that Enables GV

Each facet of gender violence consists of behaviors and attitudes that, though they can manifest in innumerable forms, at their core share common goals of maintaining social divisions through a gender system featuring binaristic opposition and hierarchical ordering of individuals based on their sex/gender (perceived) characteristics.

Feminist sport theory indicates that I will observe something interesting if I look at my ethnographic data through this series of lenses. Indeed for each of these facets of gender violence, I observed practices through which study participants deconstructed behaviors that enabled gender violence. Within their home realms, their dojos, participants found ways to engage in actions that blocked each facet of the matrix gender violence in sport. In each deconstruction violence-perpetuating behaviors were cuntblocked by equity-perpetuating behaviors. The remainder of this chapter will consist of descriptions of ways that study participants deconstructed each facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence.

Choosing to present this data in this way runs the risk of painting an overly optimistic portrait of the social climates at aikido dojos. In many ways, the aikido dojos that I have seen throughout the United States of America are utopic spaces. But at the same time many dojos are not. And within a single dojo it would be possible to observe both violence-perpetuating behaviors and equity-perpetuating behaviors and sometimes a little tricky to place a single

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117 Each of these facets will be explained more thoroughly in the section of this paper describing the deconstruction of that facet of gender violence.
behavior cleanly into one or the other category. I would be remiss as an ethnographer and cultural theorist if I did not note that throughout the many years and many places that I have researched aikido communities I have met a few meatheads and creeps. Most of the aikidoka I have met and gravitated towards have been beautiful and inspiring manifestations of humanity. Too, I have seen aikido sensei’s and students sometimes participate in behaviors consistent with each of the facets of the matrix of gender violence. There are big differences between aikido schools. Some are more sophisticated in their understanding of what it means to be non-violent than others. And each school sometimes includes students who really do have a lot to learn. This is my big disclaimer, which I would decorate with flashing lights if I could: just because a martial arts school says “Aikido” on the sign does not mean that the school, leadership, and students consistently practice and achieve non-violence. Similar to any learning process, missteps and misunderstandings are an important aspect of aikido’s investigation of non-violent conflict resolution.

I am choosing to focus my analysis on equity-perpetuating behaviors, though, because the equity-perpetuating behaviors are more interesting. There are really only so many ways to call someone a “fag” or “pussy” to intimate that they are in danger of being marginalized from the social center of a sporting context. But feminist martial artists' responses to these kinds of behaviors are fascinating in their creativity.

In the spirit of celebrating the equity-perpetuating deconstructions of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport I offer a few snapshots of ways that study participants intervened in each facet of gender-violence-perpetuating behaviors.

Transforming Hierarchical Establishment

Gazing through the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport the first facet that comes into focus is Hierarchical Establishment. In studies of male-centered sporting environments this
category of behaviors has been described as Violence Against Men.\textsuperscript{118} But looking closely at the behaviors described, what is really at stake is the creation of a social hierarchy. This is the violence through which members of a male-centered social group establish their pecking order. Waldron's study of hazing behaviors similarly found that inter-team violence often had the social function of initiating athletes into the team's hierarchical order.\textsuperscript{119}

A careful consideration of the social effects of hierarchy is particularly well suited to analysis of martial arts because these sporting spaces tend to feature prominent hierarchical ranking of students. Some arts (such as some tai kwon do) even go so far as to require all students to bow anytime a blackbelt (advanced) student enters a room.

Ikegami's sociological analysis of aesthetic networks (which would include groups such as dojos) in Tokugawa Japan showed that rigid hierarchical ordering of students created a fascinating social effect in that specific time and place. The rigid hierarchy within an aesthetic network had the effect of creating social bubbles where the rigid social hierarchy of the wider Tokugawa-Japanese society was temporarily canceled out. These social spaces are called mu-en, or places of no relation. Places of no relation allowed artists to engage in cross-caste interactions, and sometimes even to travel through areas where travel was illegal. Thus, unique sociological formations enabled borderplay. The combination of a rigid hierarchy in the context of another wider rigid hierarchy had a democratizing effect that helped artists to navigate oppressive social conditions.\textsuperscript{120}

Taking the rigid hierarchy of an aesthetic network into a different wider social context, the social effects of that hierarchy might be altogether different. That is, in postmodern

\textsuperscript{118} Messner, \textit{Taking the Field : Women, Men, and Sports}, 239.
\textsuperscript{120} Eiko Ikegami, \textit{Bonds of Civility : Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture} (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 460.
transcultural alchemy, when cultural forms move from one context to another, any given form may remain (mostly) intact, though the meanings and effects of that form may change dramatically.\textsuperscript{121}

One practice through which participants in the current study deconstructed Hierarchical Establishment was by being very deliberate about how, where, and why they participated in aikido hierarchies. One participant described a lineage that had deliberately opted-out of the associational hierarchies in which they would otherwise participate. Carol told me about:

an independent dojo, which has another quality. [Sensei has] identified herself as a student of [her] Sensei, who is unaffiliated- and so she has remained unaffiliated. … And then [Sensei’s Sensei] ranked [some of her most advanced students into the] rank she's at- and that was a bold move. It was a very bold move is my impression. … She took a stand.

These senseis' choices to not participate in aikido's associational hierarchies indicate a very deliberate relationship to Hierarchical Establishment. Interestingly, the senseis in this lineage have been offered rank advancement in a prominent association, but choose to remain unaffiliated at a lower rank. However, I do know that within the lineage described by this study participant students who have been practicing for under a couple of decades are ranked hierarchically. This has a very practical function in that normal operating disputes are settled by deferring to whoever has more experience.

Participants transformed their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of gender violence by deconstructing Hierarchical

Establishment. Advancing in a given hierarchy can be seductive but may not always be the wisest option.

*Transforming Binaristic Opposition Between Two Sexes*

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is Binaristic Opposition Between Two Sexes. Messner described instances in which student-athletes and the adults surrounding them engaged in bizarrely compulsive attempts to convince themselves and everyone else of essentialist, perhaps fundamentalist, differences between women (girls) and men (boys).¹²²

In a telling vignette, the parents of a co-ed children's soccer league reinforced each other's beliefs that boys are “naturally” aggressive while girls are “naturally” passive. Parents commented to each other and praised children when they adhered to appropriate gender stereotypes. These parents failed to comment or notice, (and I suspect sometimes punished), instances in which boys cried or girls behaved aggressively.

Interestingly, this social construction of binaristic opposition between the sexes is maintained through a wide range of forms of sexual harassment. Messner opens his discussion with a banal example of a group of boys in a mixed-sex youths' soccer league. During a parade in which each team had constructed a float the boys reacted to their female peer's enjoyment of the parade by chasing the girls away from their Barbie float while screaming “No Barbie, No Barbie.” What is at stake for these boys and their parents, who looked on approvingly, is masculinity. The reason why they would expend such considerable energy to denounce Barbie and their female league-mates is an identification with (interpellation into) a maleness that identifies itself in opposition to femaleness. Messner continues to explore much harsher ways that male-centered athletes assert their difference from and superiority to females. Observed
forms of discursively related sexual abuse have been shown to include manifestations including
gang rape, voyeuring, and social sanctioning of some men's violence against some women
through a culture of silence.

One practice through which study participants deconstructed behaviors associated with
violently maintaining Binaristic Opposition Between Two Sexes related to the prohibition of
sexual harassment. In one dojo I visited a policy expressly prohibiting sexual harassment (and
other disrupting behaviors) was displayed in the area where students signed-in to classes. Other
dojos that I visited did not have a similar policy articulated in a written notice but featured
women instructors who clearly, through the ways that they moved and interacted professionally,
would not accept harassing behaviors of any kind.

Sexual Harassment is a deterrent for women who wish to participate in athletic
environments. Disallowing sexual harassing behaviors via policy, leadership, and/or social
norms positively impacts the business and social climate of any participatory sporting
environment. From a marketing perspective it makes perfect sense to overtly disallow any
behavior that has consistently been shown to dissuade over 1/2 of a participatory sporting
environment's potential client base. Beyond the economic implications of this policy, participants
were also intrigued by the social implications of overtly disallowing sexual harassment.

Discussing the gender implications of an environment in which sexual harassment was
disallowed, particularly in relation to youths, Diane explained:

You start by changing the whole cultural context. When little boys come in, having male
role models who teach them that this is how you talk about women, … you’re already
dead in the water. Cause then if you are defining masculinity as not girl, and defining

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masculinity as hate girl, and humiliate girl, and sexualize girl, then what are you going to
say to these boys? Well, stop being masculine? Stop being boy?!? If you’ve defined it this
way?

Disallowing sexual harassment is one way that participants transformed their subcultural norms
to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of gender violence
through exaggerated binaristic opposition between the sexes.

_Transforming Violence Against the Self_

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is Violence Against the Self.

This category of behaviors is characterized by athlete's willingness to engage in unhealthy
behaviors in the pursuit of their athletic goals.124

One practice through which study participants deconstructed this set of behaviors related
to what both dojos described as their #1 rule:

If it hurts, don’t do it!

Study participants perceived pain to be an indication that the body was being pushed too far.

Thus, in an act of respect to the body's profound knowledge they made a point to emphasize to
one another that they ought to respect their own and each other's physical (and emotional) limits.

An overt prohibition against pushing one’s body beyond its' limits is one way that participants
transformed their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to
the perpetuation of gender violence in the form of violence against the self.

123 Brackenridge et al., Driving Down Participation: Homophobic Bullying as a Deterrent to Doing Sport; Fasting,
Brackenridge and Sundgot Borgen, Sexual Harassment in and Outside Sport
Men, and Sports, 239; Waldron and Krane, Whatever it Takes: Health Compromising Behaviors in Female Athletes., 15.
Transforming Homophobic Talk

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is Homophobic Talk. This category of behaviors is characterized by various forms of insults based on denouncing the intended recipient as homosexual. Common examples include taunts such as “Queer!”; “Fag!” and/or “Suck my dick, pussy!” uttered in queer-negative contexts. One practice through which study participants deconstructed this set of behaviors related to a choreographic adaptation of aikido’s traditional weapons repertoire.

Ordinarily, aikido students learn to subdue and disarm opponents wielding wooden knives, swords, and staffs. In the dojos where I conducted fieldwork students also learned to subdue and disarm opponents wielding baseball bats. During dinner one night, one instructor explained to me that the reason why her school studied “baseball bat” was that a queer friend of hers had been gay-bashed with a baseball bat after emerging from a bar in the local gay district. After a period of mourning and healing this sensei interviewed her friend and his partner to get a better understanding of what had happened. Her friend didn’t remember anything, but his partner helped her to understand the attack. So she created a weapons form through which students learned to evade and disarm opponents wielding baseball bats. “Baseball Bat” was not taught in the overly aggressive manner of groups like Bash Back. Instead, Sensei taught this weapons form from a more grounded recognition that as much as everyone hopes that they will never encounter someone being beaten with a bat, the possibility is one factor of the social reality in which we live.

This is one way that participants transformed their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of gender violence. This choreographic

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125 See, for example, D. Schwartz, ”Queers Bash Back,” Gay Community News 24 (1990), 14-15. Bash Back is a movement calling for queers to incite violence against groups that have incited violence against peers.
innovation is one example of a community accountability strategy or act of bystander intervention that overtly intervenes in the normalization of Homophobic Talk and Action. In this use of the body as an instrument of discursive change, bodies that know the weapons form “baseball bat” (and who know why they know it) become far less likely to replicate social tendencies to construct insults around a vaguely negative conception of queerness.

**Transforming Misogynist Talk**

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is Misogynist Talk. This category of behaviors is characterized by the (often subtle) discursive construction of a fear of and hatred towards women. To call someone a “cunt,” “pussy,” or to indicate that they “throw like a girl” is somehow an insult.

One practice through which study participants deconstructed this set of behaviors occurred at a full-moon drum circle that was hosted by one study participant, Sol. This woman was incredible. She was 73 years old but looked and moved as though she were much younger. She sometimes appeared ancient and sometimes appeared girlish, with long silver hair down to her waste flickering in the iridescent moonlight. She was in the process of publishing an ethnography about female veteran’s experiences of sexual harassment and abuse in the United States Military. She hosted this drum circle on a Tuesday evening.

At 10 pm, everyone present put away their drums. One guest then led the group in a body percussion; instead of banging on drums we tapped on ourselves. She led us in a call and response chant in which we who were present and drumming, male and female and more, declared to the Universe:

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My body is a temple of love

My body is the body of a goddess

My body is the body of a woman

M m m I am what I am

We repeated this chant, clapping, slapping and tapping on our thighs, chests, and hands, affirming our divinity, over and over, probably for at least fifteen minutes, perhaps more like 45. The next day my vocal chords were happily sore, just like my quads after a solid workout. And stronger, certainly, in their refusal to succumb to the institutional voicelessness endemic in female subjects. Voicework like this is a spectacularly vibrational place in which the ideals of feminism and martial arts reinforce one another.

This is one way that participants transformed their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of misogynist talk. I could hardly imagine that after a night of chanting “my body is the body of a goddess,” study participants would be quite as likely to turn around and construct insults based on associating the person being insulted with femaleness.

Transforming Voyeuring

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is Voyeuring. This category of behaviors is characterized by the taking of visual pleasure in the sexualization of not-quite-consenting individuals. Messner described this behavior in relation to male athletes who arranged for their teammates to be able to watch them participate in sexual activities with un-, not-quite-consenting, and non-consenting females. Messner describes these acts of voyeuring as male

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128 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), 57-68.
bonding activities that served the sociological function of establishing a social hierarchy amongst boys and members of marginalized populations.

On a much more subtle level female athletes are often subjected to sporting environments that attempt to interpellate them as specifically sexualized humans. They are often encouraged to practice sport in outfits designed to be visually appealing rather than athletically functional. When represented in mainstream media female athletes tend to be represented in “heterosexual” images that highlight sex and beauty rather than athletic competence.\(^\text{130}\) This representational habitus is maintained despite athlete’s personal preferences. Research with female college athletes showed that when given artistic control of their own representation they created images far different than those seen in mainstream media. Female athletes chose instead to represent themselves in images that highlighted athletic competence and strength; almost no images focused on common “heterosexual” representational codes.\(^\text{131}\) Considering this research, overly skimpy sports uniforms may constitute a subtle form of voyeuristic sexual harassment.

In contrast, the unisex outfits that aikidoka are encouraged to wear are a useful interventions in practices of sexualized voyeuring. Practice outfits consist of a dogi (which is like a set of white or unbleached cotton pajamas) covered by a black or dark blue hakama, which is an item of ritualistic/professional/traditional Japanese garb.\(^\text{132}\) There is little enticement to visual pleasure\(^\text{133}\) in this outfit. This outfit makes a body look big regardless of its actual size. It isn’t going to be featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated because it wouldn’t be considered sexy in any visual sense of the term.

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\(^\text{131}\) V. Krane et al., "Power and Focus: Self-Representation of Female College Athletes," *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* 2, no. 2 (2010), 175-195.


\(^\text{133}\) Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 57-68.
However, this outfit does develop a sensual quality. After innumerable washings, it becomes quite soft. After years of floor work the knees slowly wear out into patches of light blue. The rough weave of the jacket exfoliates sweat-soaked skin after practice in the changing room. And the huge knot of the hakama, adding several inches in diameter to my center? Rendering me sensually substantial. Centered. Grounded. Midwestern solid. A Goddess to be reckoned with.

This is one way that participants transformed their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of voyeuring. Fostering a sensual, rather than visual experience of female physicality allowed aikidoka to develop a utilitarian rather than a voyeuristic relationship with their physicality.

*Transforming the Suppression of Empathy*

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is the Suppression of Empathy. In many ways, mainstream athletes are encouraged to suppress their empathetic consciousness through an adoption of a competitive ethos. One practice through which participants in the current study deconstructed this over-valuation of competition and under-valuation of empathy related to the revision of the rules of common childhood games.

Kid's classes in aikido are often taught primarily through games. Games are powerful teachers of philosophy. Teaching aikido to children through games creates a climate quite different from some other martial arts traditions whose kid's classes place more emphasis on kata drills. In kata drills children line up and execute punches and kicks in synch with an instructor's shouts. In order to impart martially applicable skills while avoiding any unnecessary scaring of children, aikido kid's classes focus on teaching children to move with correct alignment, in relation to chaos in their environment, and to fall in ways that do not result in physical injury.

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During one sensei’s kid's classes children participated in common childhood games including Poison in the Pond, Lions & Bunnies, and 5-6 versions of Tag. But as this sensei had explained to me, she had gone through and modified the rules of each of these games so that when a player is tagged they are not “out,” but they and all players simply switch to a different position within the game. Tess Sensei explained to me that she had done this specifically to remove the competitive suppression of empathy that results from children being taught to associate their “winning” with their friend’s “losing.” Discussing aikido kids' classes, Diane explained:

You need to be willing to intervene … I watch [Sensei’s] kids’ classes at the dojo, and these kids learn to touch each other respectfully. You don’t just grab someone’s wrist! You bow, which is the permission to touch. ... You learn that there is a ritual to this. That you can relate to each other’s bodies in very intense ways, but that you pay attention to the other person’s energy, to your own- to your readiness. If you aren’t there, you don’t go there. And these are kids, you know! You see these 8 year old kids wiggling around the mat, on Saturday mornings, but they are learning respectful relationships.

Revising the rule structures of common childhood games and teaching respectful relationships are ways that participants transformed their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of gender violence. By undermining the competitive ethos and creating a space in which children and adults are invited to relate to their physicality with careful attention, rather than intentions of domination, the aikido dojos observed in this research created spaces that were conducive to, rather than suppressive of empathy.

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135 Ernest Leroy Brown III, "The Efficacy of using the Game of Goe to Understand Patterns of East Asian Thinking" (Ph.D., California Institute of Integral Studies), 139.
Transforming the Culture of Silence that Enables Gender Violence

The next facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport is a Culture of Silence. Messner described the importance of a culture of silence in the social contexts surrounding the instances of gender violence in sport collected in his ethnographic research. Gender violence was maintained as a social norm as people on the periphery of instances of gender violence fail to speak up against it. This category of behaviors is characterized by a refusal to recognize and/or interfere with violence.

Messner describes an incident in which a group of male athletes kidnapped and gang-raped a girl in a school basement as several of their peers watched and cheered them on. During the rape some of the athletes’ peers left but neglected to say anything to try to stop the gang rape and refused to cooperate with prosecutors afterwards. As horrified as Messner was by the gang rape, he is especially interested in the role of the marginal characters who could have stopped it but didn't. The culture of silence surrounding the boys' violence creates a social environment in which other aggressors learn that they can rely on their peer's complicity.\textsuperscript{136}

Participants in the current study had one really interesting way of engaging this facet of the Matrix of Gender Violence in Sport. Both of the dojos where I conducted field work were silent dojos, meaning that during classes students are discouraged from speaking any more than is absolutely necessary. These dojos maintain a culture of silence so that students have an opportunity to step away from their linguistic consciousness and engage their bodily intelligences. One side effect of this deliberate culture of silence is the creation of a special kind of mental space. These aikido dojos created a culture of silence that invites deep contemplation. This is a culture of silence that nurtures the creative power of the ineffable.

\textsuperscript{136} Messner, \textit{Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports}, 239.
This is quite different in quality from the culture of silence described by Messner. If we consider it carefully the culture of silence of a communities' complicity in athlete's sexual violence is not exactly a culture of silence. It is more a culture of white noise, incessant chit chat, TV, radio, distraction, distraction, distraction.

Stepping onto an aikido mat

Shaking off linguistic consciousness

Engaging the body's intelligence

through movements with so much information about the

nature of domination

We find space to consider our collective 'aestheticization of violence.' A recent ethnographic study of aikido explored ways that aikido students created a collective social memory in which differential power relations are maintained partly through students enactments of symbolic violence. In some ways, aikido's symbolic violence is conducive to a misrecognition of social violence. Participants in the current study shared a rich and complex understanding of how violence functions, I have also encountered aikido students who neglect to fully engage reflexive introspection.

Many aikido communities create an expectation that students learn to engage in "loyal opposition." That is, students are expected to engage assertively with the structures in which they participate. Critical thinking and engagement are upheld as ideals to which students ought to

138 Jonathan Whitney Miller-Lane, "Facilitating Disagreement in Classroom Discussion" (Ph.D., University of Washington), 198. See also K. Tan, "Peaceful Warriors: Bodies of Culture, History and Power in the Practice of Aikido in Canada" (Ph.D., University of Alberta (Canada)), 402.
aspire. This valuation of transcultural and loyally oppositional philosophical investigations facilitates the writing of aikido's history against the grain.\textsuperscript{139}

Ueshiba’s biographies are all written from slightly different perspectives. They highlight different aspects of his life. In order to contextualize the martial art aikido I offer some details from the life and times of Morihei Ueshiba.\textsuperscript{140}

As I do so I should acknowledge that my social position has an influence on my perspective on the story of Ueshiba’s life. I am writing 40 years after Ueshiba’s death, with the benefit of both general hindsight and academic hindsight. I have had the relatively rare privilege of studying aikido while conducting graduate coursework in an interdisciplinary department that allowed me to take courses that examined the global consequences of imperial militarism. I was very lucky to be in an interdisciplinary program that would allow me to take graduate coursework in Asian Historiography, Organic Intellectuals, Art History, Feminist Theory and Performance Studies. I tell this story differently than someone with a different education would. I am speaking from a very specifically historically situated social position. From where I stand the biography of the founder of aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, provides an inspiring example of refusing to corroborate with militarism. From my perspective it makes sense to intersperse the


biographical details of Ueshiba’s life with various historical facts that are pertinent to the philosophy and social context his martial art.

I must note, however, that many practitioners describe the history of this art without problematizing (and sometimes without acknowledging) Japan's nefarious militarism. Many aikidoka (and other martial artists) discuss the heroism of the Japanese military tradition without ever mentioning or seeming to acknowledge the grossness of many of Japan's military techniques, which have included military policies of kidnapping “comfort women” and the use of rape as a military strategy. As a feminist decolonial scholar I frequently chaffed at examples of the misrecognition and aestheticization of violence in aikido’s collective social memory. Here, I offer a portrait of Ueshiba that I feel places Ueshiba’s biography into his social context. This rendition lays a stage for a recognition of his agency to resist militarism by engaging militarism with a difference.

As a youth Ueshiba was a well educated son of upper middle class parents. He joined the military in 1903, at the age of 20, and fought the Russo-Japanese War. In 1907, at the age of 24, Ueshiba returned from the war and entered a period of solitude and depression while living in his parents’ house. His father hired a famous judo teacher to tutor Ueshiba. This appears to have helped him return to a more functional state of mind. He continued to study various martial arts forms for the rest of his life.

In 1912, at the age of 29, Ueshiba led a colonizing expedition to the northern island of Hokkaido. The Japanese government commissioned this expedition in order to gain additional

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142 Gleason, The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido, 203; Ueshiba, Budo: Teachings of the Founder of Aikidō, 131
farmland and to protect the island from Russian occupation by occupying it themselves. Ueshiba’s biographers mention Hokkaido briefly, focusing on the Shinto and martial arts training in which he engaged while there. Hokkaido is described as a vacant wilderness, much as America is commonly described as a vacant wilderness prior to the arrival of Columbus. The people who are indigenous to Hokkaido are called Ainu.

Ainu girls and women were one of the ethnic groups kidnapped and forced to serve as “comfort women” or sex slaves for the Japanese military during World War II. Although Japan denies this and suppresses information about it, representations of this use of rape as a military strategy still makes its’ way into discourse. I recall one presentation I saw in a graduate Feminist Theory class, in which a colleague from Korea explained to us about “comfort women,” who were young girls that were systematically kidnapped from China, Korea, and Hokkaido and deployed amongst Japanese troops as “military appropriations” for use as sex slaves. Another particularly poetic recognition of the comfort women of Hokkaido is featured in the graphic novel Kabuki. Mack embeds a moment of historical witnessing in the beginning of his story about a fictional Japanese spy. The spy is the daughter of a comfort woman and a general. Mack’s artistic rendition respectfully nods to and mourns Hokkaido’s comfort women. I read this page and realize, putting 2 and 2 together, that the human being who inspired the character represented in the graphic novel would have been kidnapped via the roads and infrastructure built by Ueshiba.

In 1927 Ueshiba moved to Tokyo and opened Honbu Dojo in 1930. Life in Japan and Tokyo at this period was shaped by increasing war preparations. Ueshiba spent these years developing his dojo. During this period he taught students who would go on to develop styles of

144 Saotome, Aikido and the Harmony of Nature, 251.
aikido that are noticeable sharper and harder than the styles of aikido to which I am attracted. The current study depicts a “lineage” that was influenced by Ueshiba’s later teachings.

In 1937 Japanese General Iwane Matsui led his troops into the battle that would come to be known as the “Rape of Nanking.” The Tokyo Tribunal (the equivalent of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal) found that during the first month of Japanese occupation of the Chinese city of Nanking at least 20,000 cases of rape were perpetrated against Chinese civilian girls and women. Military personnel had not only been instructed to commit these rapes, they were also trained not to discuss such actions when they returned to Japan. Still, like the kidnapping of comfort women, the Rape of Nanking was too big of an atrocity to be forgotten, although people have tried. General Matsui was sentenced to be hanged by the Tokyo Tribunal in 1946.146

In 1938, Ueshiba secretly consulted with Shigeo Tanahashi, a war planner with the Japanese military, in an attempt to prevent Japan from entering WWII. At this time, speaking up against or conspiring against the war was punishable by arrest, torture, or death.147 During this period Ueshiba became increasingly anti-militaristic. In 1942 Ueshiba and his family moved to Iwama in Ibaraki Prefecture and lived in a converted barn.148 The significance of this move is easily overlooked. Given the militaristic context of Japan in 1942 Ueshiba would have been expected to continue teaching martial arts to new military personnel. His choice not to do so would have required several active decisions and a great deal of effort. This would not have been a casual decision. He opted out.

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In 1945 the United States of America dropped nuclear weapons on Japan. On August 6 and August 8, 1945, the slow burning hatred of Auschwitz et al., which people tried so hard not to see (and sadly, succeeded), was echoed in the hellish incineration of the earth and sky of the areas we call Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The world over, human beings were forced to take stock of our violence. It had finally gotten so apocalyptic that we decided to stop. For a while. (Except that really, we didn’t.)

Sitting alone at night, reading about Ueshiba and feeling his art, looking for inspiration to intervene in my own culture's nefarious militarism, I have often wondered what Ueshiba thought about all this. What would it be like to be the preeminent martial artist in Japan during WWII, the elite of the elite, and face the problem of figuring out what the heck to do with the apocalyptic hole that had been detonated throughout his countryside?

He was highly critical of the nationalistic violence with which he was surrounded. His choice to go to Iwama during WWII shows that. And yet, putting A, B, and C together, Ueshiba's colonizing activities in Hokkaido would have built the infrastructure that was used to kidnap the Hokkaido comfort women. And certainly many of his students did not and do not pay much attention to Ueshiba's anti-militarism, anti-domination, and anti-pushing. Though teachers consistently admonish: move from your center, not your shoulder! His efforts have probably perpetuated just as much violence as they have resolved. The intricacies and contradictions of any good artists' life and work set one's mind spinning. And Ueshiba, my kindred spirit, played for high stakes.

As a scholar who has gone native and come back again, allow me to get a little autoethnographic for a moment and offer a conjecture for which I can offer no citations, but of which I am certain. This is the stuff of dreams and bodily intuition. In aikido these hold epistemological weight, though in academia they don’t. But here goes.
Here's what I think: I think Ueshiba knew about the comfort women. Not while he was building the roads that were used to kidnap them, but at some point he realized. And I think he was disgusted. That's not what he went to Hokkaido for. He went with good intentions. He was going to help build an agricultural infrastructure that would feed his fellow countrymen. That and studying esoteric Shinto were the focus of his daily life. And I suspect that he may have been friends with some of the Ainu.

And I think he wants me to articulate this. He, or more properly, Aikido, wants me to stand up and say – dudes – not cool. Not cool for the military to do it, not cool for us to ignore it, and not cool to fail to speak up. I dream of Ueshiba sitting quietly and saying softly:

Yeah – there is a lot to be learned about honor and what it means to be an enlightened being from aikido, which is derived from Japanese military traditions. And one of the ways to learn those things is to develop the spine and awareness to learn from my mistakes. Japan's military personnel, like all imperial military personnel, have done things that are so far from honorable that it would make your head spin. And they will continue to do so until we develop the ability to solve our conflicts with grounded cooperation. Which is more beautiful and sensual anyway.

That's why he's been following me around for all these decades. I think that's his basic point.

Maybe it's not true. Maybe I've just spent way too much time dashing between the library and the dojo and graduate school has got me a bit off in the head. Maybe I'm taking a bit much poetic liberty. And maybe I'm right. My goal has never been to tell you the Truth. My goal is to give you something interesting to think about. Supporting the interruption of Cultures of Silence that Support Some Men's Violence Against Women is one way that participants transformed
their subcultural norms to create a sporting environment that was less conducive to the perpetuation of gender violence.

Anti-Conclusion: “That's one way it could look”

During fieldwork I noticed that one aikido instructor frequently repeated the phrase “That's one way it could look.” She said this to emphasize the fact that each choreography that she showed was necessarily an artificial imposition. She explained to students that in actual execution any of the moves she was showing would manifest uniquely in relation to any given specific context. Every ikkyo is different. Every response ought to be appropriate in relation to its’ specific time, position, place, and degree.

This chapter delineates several equity-perpetuating behaviors that I observed in aikido dojos. I share these practices in the hopes of inspiring scholars and sport-practitioners to consider ways that they can deconstruct gender violence in their home realms. Aikido is a relatively avant-garde movement practice. Behavioral interventions that work very well in an aikido context may not be directly applicable to a football or soccer context. It is my hope though, that considering practices that are quite different from mainstream, hegemonic norms will provide an opportunity to make those norms a little strange. Queer them, if you will. Which places us in a better position to consciously choose what subjectivities we would like to embody, rather than passively perpetuating the behaviors and systems of thought that we inherited.

The equity-perpetuating behaviors listed in this paper spanned many different aspects of sporting environments. Interventions were conducted at the levels of policy, leadership, philosophy, movement qualities, and game structure. Imagining these levels of sport with fresh eyes I am inspired by my research participants' examples of ways in which we really do have quite a bit of agency to interfere with systems of domination. We can choose not to pass it on. It
is within our power as sport practitioners and creative movers to redefine relationships between sport, gender, and violence.
CHAPTER 7: LINKING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL:
EMBODIED CONSCIOUSNESS AS EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTERVENTION

The point of this dissertation is that embodied consciousness can work as an epistemological intervention for Cartesian Dualism. This chapter will describe the discursive alchemy through which aikido uses embodied consciousness to perform this function. As we saw in Chapter 3, which described a typical aikido workout, students undergo a shift away from linguistic consciousness towards embodied consciousness.

As I watched aikido, I saw that about midway through most aikido classes there was a marked shift in communication patterns. Verbal communication falls away as students cease speaking to each other via words, and instead communicate through grunts, sighs, and sound effects. They begin to have difficulty counting their rounds of four attempts at a choreography before switching roles. Even teachers begin to mis-name body parts that they had previously described very clearly and sometimes appear to forget the names of the moves they are showing.

As I practiced aikido, I recognized this communicational shift as an induced synesthesia between physical and philosophical ways of knowing. Linguistic consciousness ceases to be the dominant mode of information processing. Instead, how one knows, how one interprets information, how one determines whether knowledge is valid or not become increasingly dependent on whether or not one can feel.

Considering the martial art aikido through the academic lenses of third-world feminist cultural studies, I explore aikido as a counter-cultural practice that poses an epistemological challenge to the logics of empire. Epistemology is the study of how people know what they know, or how knowledge is legitimated. An epistemological challenge can inquire into systems of knowledge production by proposing alternative ways of knowing. This chapter will map out this process by revisiting Chela Sandoval’s description of the processes of signification,
reification, and various modes of oppositional consciousness. This chapter explains how aikido’s valuation of embodied consciousness can resonate through intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural, and political aspects of an aikidoka’s modes of engaging conflict. This explanation will begin with a theoretical model of signification.

Signification

Cultural theorists examine ways that patterns of human thought shape human behavior, which in turn shapes social institutions. Rules of language lend rules to social interactions, thereby defining what symbols make sense, what actors can exist in a society, and what actions are acceptable. Thinking about the structure of thinking and inquiring after how meaning is made in the human mind has resulted in a series of ruptures in philosophical thought about who counts as human at different times and why.

One linguistic process through which human minds make and communicate meaning is the process of signification. The process of signification involves three discreet elements of meaning: the signifier, the signified, and the sign. To consider the subtle distinctions between signifier, signified, and sign one might think of a glass of water. A glass of water contains three distinct elements: the glass, the water, and the combination of those elements – the glass of water. All three things are different. But in common usage when one asks for a glass of water, the elements are perceived as a single unit. Figure 1 combines Sandoval's rendering of the process of signification with the example of the discreet elements of a glass of water.

Signification is a common pattern of communication that subdues the (otherwise infinite) possibilities of thought. Signification relies on a conflation of the meaning of a message with the form through which that message is conveyed. This conflation of form and content obscures the discreet elements of communication in a way that separates a speaker from that which s/he speaks. This separation, or alienation, causes the creators of meaning to forget that they are the ones who constructed that meaning.

Reification

Speakers (and listeners) lose sight of their ability to shape/sculpt/influence the world that is created through their communications because they forget that they create meaning in the act of communication. Through reification, human beings become more thing-like as they perceive the products of human activity to exist independently of human action.¹⁵⁴

Thus, humans forget that social institutions are constructed and constrained through their interactions. Instead, many perceive that social institutions are created by something outside of

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human interaction. Some may attribute the source of this construction to be Nature; others may attribute it to God. Others may interpret it as simply and transparently the way things are, always have been and always will be (henceforth Nature/God/The-way-things-are). The result is that the creative powers of communication are subdued. Signification is a pattern of linguistic consciousness that creates a sense that people’s communications are transparent reflections of that which is True in the world, rather than co-creations of socially situated truths.\textsuperscript{155}

The conflation of the signifier (the glass) and the signified (the water) into a single element, the sign (the glass of water), is a foundational element of the alienation of perception from that which it perceives. Non-oppositional human perception is ordinarily unable to differentiate between the discreet elements of the process of signification. This mode of perception instead perceives the link between signifier, signified, and sign to be simply the naked truth of how it is, always has been, and always will be; or, to emanate from Nature/God/The-way-things-are. Where this link is naturalized (or essentialized) the range of infinite possibility of human expression becomes reduced to the patterns that have already been laid out before us.\textsuperscript{156}

The process of signification already tends to remove utterances from their historically specific contexts and attribute them to Nature/God/The-way-things-are. When the alienated signs that are produced through this first layer of signification are in turn used in the creation of new (further decontextualized) meanings, the original alienation of the process of signification becomes amplified into alienated alienation, or reification.

Sandoval refers to this process as ideology. I label it as ideological reification in order to call attention to the way that the original alienation of signification is compounded into alienated

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
alienation, or reification.\textsuperscript{157} Figure 2 modifies Sandoval’s rendering of ideology\textsuperscript{158} and shows what happens when this first layer of signification is stripped of its historical context and used as the foundation for yet another layer of signification.

Figure 2: Reification of Signification

\begin{align*}
\text{Signifier (Sr)} & \leftrightarrow \text{Signified (Sd)} \\
& \text{Sign (S)}
\end{align*}

Cartesian Dualism

The linguistic functioning of the process of signification and reification can be illustrated by consideration of the micro-phenomenon of a glass of water. The philosophical and social relevance of signification can be illustrated by consideration of the macro-phenomenon of Cartesian Dualism.

Cartesian Dualism holds that the mind is separate from and superior to the body. This practical metaphysics associates the mind with culture, maleness, and whiteness. Conversely, the

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{158} Sandoval, \textit{Methodology of the Oppressed}, 240, 94.
\end{footnotes}
body is associated with nature, femaleness, and darkness. Within this belief system women and people of color are perceived as inherently closer to nature (and by implication farther from culture), and therefore particularly well-suited to various kinds of undervalued and undercompensated labor. Cartesian Dualism has become the foundational binaristic and hierarchal system of thought that has been used to validate the oppression and colonization of women and people of color.\footnote{159}

Exploring the history and contemporary implications of the mind/body split in Western perceptual habits, Bordo proposes: “mind/body dualism is no mere philosophical position, to be defended or dispensed with by clever argument. Rather, it is a \textit{practical} metaphysics that has been deployed and socially embodied in medicine, law, literary and artistic representations, the psychological construction of the self, interpersonal relationships, popular culture, and advertisements – a metaphysics which will be deconstructed only through concrete transformation of the institutions and practices that sustain it.”\footnote{160} Figure 3 lists the dualistic oppositions implied through the folk-philosophy\footnote{161} of Cartesian Dualism.

\textbf{Figure 3: Cartesian Dualism}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Mind & Culture & Maleness & Whiteness \\
\hline
Body & Nature & Femaleness & Darkness \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\footnotetext{159}{Susan Bordo, \textit{Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 361.}

\footnotetext{160}{Ibid., 13-14, emphasis in original.}

\footnotetext{161}{Des Cartes appears to have intended his philosophical process to provide people with tools that they could use to question the tyranny of religious institutions over human thought. However, his work has been co-opted in the creation of a folk-philosophy that has functioned to replace the tyranny of thought that he meant to displace. Jorge Fernandes described Cartesian Dualism as a folk-philosophy, as opposed to academic philosophy. Folk-philosophy consists of commonly held beliefs about the nature of things. This is contrary to academic philosophy, which is the art of subjecting ideas to rigorous questioning and careful consideration. Too, the mind/body split precedes Des Cartes’ manifestations of it, as Bordo’s excellent exposition demonstrates. I refer to this discursive construct as Cartesian Dualism, though, in keeping with common descriptions of this series of ideas.}
Signification of Cartesian Dualism

Cartesian Dualism can manifest in a large array of communications. When it functions as the signified (the content, the water) it can be held by any number of signifiers (the form, the glass) to create a dizzying array of signs (naturalized form of expression, the glass of water). Looking at the process of communication in this way reveals that sexist and/or racist utterances are a manifestation of Cartesian Dualism. However, it is important to note that communicators who engage in this signification would not perceive it as such. Instead of understanding the subtle relationship between sexist and/or racist utterances and Cartesian Dualism, because of the alienation inherent in the process of signification, they would perceive their utterances as transparent observations of the world around them. Instead of perceiving themselves as creating sexism and/or racism, communicators would perceive themselves as observing the Truth of the inferiority of women and/or people of color.

When a sexist and/or racist utterance is perceived as an observation of the ways things are, rather than an interested construction that helps to maintain social relations of domination, there is yet another step in the alchemy of meaning. The original sexist and/or racist utterance becomes stripped of its specific social/historical context as this utterance becomes associated with similar expressions. This is how the process of signification leads to institutionally reified forms of hierarchical valuations of identity categories. Barthes likens this process to theft of meaning: a sign becomes ideology when it is robbed of its historical and cultural specificity and used as a support for new expressions of similarly interested constructions. ¹⁶²

When considered in relation to Cartesian Dualism this reification takes sexism and/or racism from the level of utterances exchanged among individuals to the level of institutions.

¹⁶² Barthes, Mythologies, 158; Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks [Peau noire, masques blancs.] (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 232.; Sandoval, Methodology of the Oppressed, 240.
Alienation of signification can occur at many levels of perception and communication. It can shape understanding of single words, of stories that people in a culture tell themselves, and then of institutions that are created through the social milieu created through those stories. When naturalized, this set of beliefs validates structural racism and sexism.

When Cartesian Dualism fills communications about people of color it can manifest as signs (naturalized statements) about how their inherent closeness to nature (and implied distance from culture or complicated thought processes) makes people of color so good at physical labor. When Cartesian Dualism fills communications about women it can manifest as signs (naturalized statements) about how women’s closeness to the body renders them particularly [and exclusively] well-suited to the tasks related to bearing and rearing children. While these signs frequently appear as positive statements about the proclivities and talents of people of color and women they carry implications that support oppressive divisions of labor.163

Where Cartesian Dualism asserts that people of color are good at physical labor, there is a latent implication that white people’s mental labor should be supported by the physical labor of people of color. Where women are perceived as particularly well-suited to the labors associated with rearing children, this ideology holds that men should not be expected to contribute to the work of raising children. This set of assertions becomes especially oppressive when it is used to naturalize the exclusive association of whiteness and maleness with higher-order thought processes. Slavery (and the contemporary relegation of agricultural labor to “illegal aliens” or human beings who are not granted citizenship status in the communities that they feed) becomes acceptable because it is in line with the “natural” order of things. Sexism (and the confinement of women to domestic, unpaid, underpaid and undervalued labor) becomes similarly “natural.” And

the situated knowledges of all non-white-males become something less than knowledge. Figure 4 expands on Figure 1 to show Cartesian Dualism functioning as the signified (water), which is capable of filling many signifiers (glasses), to create infinite potential manifestations of sexist/racist signs (glasses of water).

Figure 4: Signification of Cartesian Dualism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Any Form of Intelligence</th>
<th>Cartesian Dualism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signifier (Sr)</td>
<td>Signified (Sd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Glass</td>
<td>The Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sexist/Racist Communications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign (S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Glass of Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reification of Cartesian Dualism

One might imagine the institutions that are built by those who are awarded privilege by the signification of Cartesian Dualism. While people of color are relegated to physical labor and women are relegated to reproductive labor, women of color are expected to do both and then some, white males (as well as those who can pass as white males and their token exception minorities) are left to engage in socially valued mental labor. So when culture develops institutions where intellectual labor is transmitted and created the knowledge systems of non-white-men are “naturally” excluded. The knowledge that is valued within these institutions
comes to further support the signification of Cartesian Dualism without recognizing it as such. This is an incredibly subtle process and often functions without detection.

I collected one interesting example of this process during graduate school. I completed my graduate coursework in an interdisciplinary program that was very flexible. This allowed me to build a solid academic foundation from which to conduct this study. I took courses from the History, Philosophy, Theatre, English, Ethnic Studies, and several other departments and gained a broad perspective from which to view aikido. In addition to this graduate coursework I also audited Tai Chi (a martial art of Chinese origins) for about 6 semesters. However, none of my martial arts classes counted towards my degrees (though I did get to take Tai Chi for free as a perk of the graduate assistantship). At this University one can receive academic credit for Tai Chi at the undergraduate level but only for two credit hours per semester.

It always struck me as odd that I could take a three-credit graduate course in a subject like literary psychoanalysis (which I enjoyed thoroughly), but a course in Tai Chi (which is a 2000 year-old knowledge system and equally profound) could not be counted as knowledge at a level any higher than a 2-credit undergraduate Phys-Ed course. But considering the political economy of Tai Chi as a knowledge system this inequitable credit attribution makes sense. Tai Chi is a non-European philosophical system and therefore devalued in the Eurocentric academy. Each semester it was taught by a woman, and after the initial class consisted of approximately 95% female students, and therefore devalued in the sexist academy. Too, Tai Chi is taught through embodied consciousness and therefore devalued in the phallogocentric academy. As such, it didn't quite count as legitimate knowledge (though it saved my life and inspired my scholarship).

Theoretically, this inequitable legitimation of non-Eurocentric-MaleCentered knowledge systems should not be possible in this day and age. In 1972, the U.S. Government passed a series of education amendments, including Title IX, which declared that any educational institution
receiving Federal funding cannot discriminate based on sex. This legislation was based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which included a provision stating that educational institutions receiving Federal funding cannot discriminate based on race/ethnicity.\textsuperscript{164} And yet the inequitable legitimation of knowledge attribution is still there, codified so clearly in the 2-undergraduate-credit limit.

This incredibly subtle process of racist/sexist knowledge attribution is similar to what commonly happens when one questions why, for example, white males consistently earn more money than white females, who earn more than black males, who earn more than black females.\textsuperscript{165} The alienated and reified system of signification of Cartesian Dualism is ever-present with explanations that seem so comfortably familiar. “Don’t white men have more education? Women have to take time off of work to have babies. Men of color are really good at athletics and music, so maybe they prefer those to managerial work” (and so on and so forth ad infinitum). What is significant about these exchanges is that despite their sociological falseness, these expressions of Cartesian Dualism are varied enough and alienated enough that people who have a stake in this belief system (even when it is against their interests to do so) are able to convince themselves of the naturalness and universal truth these statements. The wage differential, then, is explained away as anything \textit{but} an institutionalized form of sexism and racism transmuted into classism.

Sandoval clarifies: “the language of the dominating classes is ideology and depoliticized, where the “de” is an active prefix, referring to a complicated activity of consciousness that undergirds the operation of the social world, fixes its forms of hierarchy and power, while undoing its connections to history. This language, it must be understood, aims at “eternalizing”

the hierarchies of the dominant order. Those who are socially privileged (or who hope to attain increasing social privilege) have a remarkable ability to resist conscious interpretation of many communications. They hide the structures of their domination even from themselves.

Figure 5 expands on Figure 4 to reveal the structure of this domination. This figure demonstrates the link between the signification of Cartesian Dualism into Racist/Sexist signs and the reification of that level of signification into structural/institutional racism/sexism.

**Figure 5: Structural/Institutional Reification of Racist/Sexist Signification**

Despite the depolitical naturalization of the process of signification this process is also inherently unstable on several counts. People identifying with positions that are not privileged by

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165 Policy Matters Ohio, "The State of Working Ohio," Policy Matters Ohio,
the process and who have a utilitarian relationship to the objects of signification have access to
tools of consciousness that denaturalize signification.\textsuperscript{167} Those meanings that are linguistically
deferred through signification have a persistent tendency to reassert themselves, thereby
destabilizing the categories through which discourse is structured.\textsuperscript{168}

Those who are relegated to devalued positions within Cartesian Dualism’s hierarchy and
those whose experienced subjectivity is not recognized by Cartesian Dualism’s hierarchy can
have a proclivity for decoding common patterns of signification. Academics have referred to this
proclivity with several names. Sandoval describes it as one of the foundational capacities of
differential consciousness.\textsuperscript{169} In describing this aspect of differential consciousness she explains
that this same ability has been referred to as la facultad by Gloria Anzaldúa,\textsuperscript{170} signifying’ by
Henry Louis Gates Jr.,\textsuperscript{171} and semiology by Roland Barthes.\textsuperscript{172}

A differential reading of a communication (whether a word, a story, an image, or an
institutional organization) denaturalizes the signification of that communication. It calls attention
to the discreet elements of the signified (the meaning that is being conveyed), the signifier (the
form through which the meaning is conveyed), and the sign (the combination of the meaning and
the form into a naturalized unit of meaning).\textsuperscript{173}

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\textsuperscript{166} Sandoval, \textit{Methodology of the Oppressed}, 240, 108.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in \textit{A Postmodern Reader},
\textsuperscript{169} Sandoval, \textit{Methodology of the Oppressed}, 240.
\textsuperscript{170} Gloria Anzaldúa, \textit{Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera}, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), 203.
328. See also Henry Louis Gates, \textit{The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism} (New
\textsuperscript{172} Roland Barthes, \textit{Elements of Semiology}. (London: Cape, 1967), 112.
\textsuperscript{173} But any individual exists at the intersection of numerous systems of difference and can be simultaneously
privileged in relation to one axis of difference and disenfranchised in relation to another axis of difference. See
Patricia Hill Collins, \textit{Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment}, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009; 2000), 357. So a utilitarian relationship to one axis of difference, which
Differential Consciousness is a process of denaturalizing signification. The categories through which discourse is constructed are troubled by that which does not fit into those categories. Since a given language is a finite system which attempts to render comprehensible an infinite universe, language excludes totalization. The gap between the signified and the signifier persistently unsettles the naturalization of the sign. In figures 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 this gap is indicated with the symbol $\leftrightarrow$. This is the location of what Derrida calls différance: “The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified.”¹⁷⁴ Thus the process of signification always involves a certain putting off of meaning. The deferral of meaning perpetually present in the process of signification and the radical tension between possible interpretations ensure that meaning is perpetually unsettled, even as it is naturalized.

Derrida perceived a rupture and a redoubling that occurred when “the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought.”¹⁷⁵ The political efficacy of Derrida’s différance lies in its respect of the potential of that which lies beyond and in between signification. It unsettles or deceners that which is by recognizing that which is in the process of becoming. It plays at the sites of emergence of new forms, where contact between previously distinct entities invites a reconceptualization of the Other and of the self. In relation to Cartesian Dualism this différance undermines the naturalization of devaluation of that identity category, does not necessarily carry over into the denaturalization of the devaluation of another identity category. In fact, it can have the opposite effect. When people who occupy identity categories that are devalued within the hierarchical ordering of Cartesian Dualism attempt to “level up” within that system there is a strong tendency for them to do so by emphasizing & legitimating the devaluation of another identity category. So within the bizarre logic of hierarchical advancement those who are disenfranchised by CD can simultaneously exert tactics of consciousness that denaturalize the devaluation of identity categories to which they belong, while attempting to naturalize the devaluation of other identity categories.

¹⁷⁴ Derrida, Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences, 584.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
is embodied by all of the people who do not comply with the categorical purity that is assumed by Cartesian Dualism (which means most people).

This deconstruction, which isn’t so much a special method or conscious choice as an evolution in meaning that is fuelled by creative entropy that occurs constantly with varying degrees of subtlety, extends to social symbolic systems from linguistic symbolic systems. The linguistic space of différance having opened the possibility for radical shifts in meaning, and this space found in the linguistic symbolic system having pointed to a similar space in the social symbolic system, the social symbolic system will benefit from a radical opening of the meaning of humanity. Figure 6 expands on Figure 3 to show some of the subject positions that operate between and beyond the categorical dualisms assumed by Cartesian Dualism.

Figure 6: Categorical Instability of Cartesian Dualism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>↔</th>
<th>Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maleness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Femaleness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed/Transracial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chela Sandoval outlines several modes of consciousness that have deconstructive effects. Practitioners of differential consciousness can harness and amplify the creative entropy of deconstruction by hijacking the process of ideology and turning it against itself through meta-ideologizing. This tactic allows conscious subjectivities to take back the meaning that is robbed through signification. Sandoval offers meta-ideology as a particularly effective linguistic

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176 Ibid.
178 Sandoval, Methodology of the Oppressed, 240.
technology that can be used in the denaturalization of ideology. Considering the theft of meaning that occurs in the shift from signification to ideological reification, Sandoval inquires “Because ideology ‘robs’ one of something, why not rob ideology?... This self-conscious production of another level of signification parasitically based on the level of dominant ideology serves to either display the original dominant ideology as naïve – and no longer natural – or to reveal, transform, or disempower its signification in some other way.” Working with the ideological forces that are already at play, meta-ideology opposes dominant ideology by reappropriating and redirecting its’ line of trajectory, and adding a little bit of energy to the always-already occurring creative entropy of deconstruction.

While Sandoval describes several methods of oppositional and transformational consciousness, the remainder of this chapter will focus on three ways of active engagement with meanings that would be otherwise reified. Meta-ideological reappropriation, or the taking back of reified words, is a process through which old words can be filled with new meanings. Neologisms are new words that are created in order to hold new meanings. Finally, epistemological interventions feature new ways of knowing, which can be used to allow a re-examination of transformational meanings.

*Meta-ideological Reappropriation: New Meanings for Old Words*

One linguistic example of oppositional consciousness could include the re-appropriation of words that have been used to discredit disenfranchised peoples. Words such as queer, whore, nigger, bitch, and countless others are commonly used against members of disenfranchised populations. But members of those populations are able to reappropriate those terms by using them amongst themselves, and giving them different meanings. The word queer, for example, actually carries very different meanings depending on whether it is uttered in a queer-negative or

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179 Ibid., 109-110.
queer-positive context. Although it may be the same word in one sense the different meaning makes it a completely different kind of utterance, if we are able to differentiate between the subtle elements of signifier and signified. This linguistic transmutation functions as a kind of psychological talisman against intimidation. When one re-creates the word queer as a sign of recognition and association within a group of queer and queer-supportive people the word queer ceases to function as well as an insult. However, people who unreflexively occupy the privileged side of Othering dichotomies (or who are invested in the “Truth” of hierarchical organizations of identity categories) are ordinarily unable to perceive the workings of this linguistic alchemy. This is why people who have never been called nigger in an insulting way have difficulty understanding why African Americans would call each other niggers or the difference inherent in intragroup utilization of such hailings. It is the utilitarian relationship to such insults that allows colonized people to carry out this rather sophisticated re-formation of those insults.

A more performative example of the technology of meta-ideology could relate to the constriction of women’s sexuality through the Madonna/whore dichotomy. Where women are socially legitimated through proper management of their sexuality they are socially required to expend quite a lot of energy on their sexual reputation. Social pre-occupation with women’s sexuality has the effect of unofficially excluding them from participation in public life. Because they have to spend so much energy negotiating their reputation and appearance they have less energy to attend to education, career, and political service. This ensures that policy making positions are occupied by people who are privileged not to have to negotiate this dichotomy (in this case, men). One example of a meta-ideological approach to deconstructing this oppressive communicational structure includes the theatrical performances of the
singer/dancer Madonna. Her performative occupation of both of these categories (via the name Madonna juxtaposed with sexually explicit performances) has meta-ideologically robbed the ideology that has robbed women of the ability to embrace their sexuality.

In both of these examples, the taking back of words used as insult, and Madonna’s performative deconstruction of the Madonna/whore dichotomy, we can see the functioning of meta-ideology as a process. It would be woefully inaccurate to propose that some people’s embracing of the word queer has actually stopped the use of the word as an insult. Instead it changes the context to slightly reduce the effectiveness of that insult. Despite this intervention people are still gay-bashed and subjected to racism. Similarly, Madonna’s art has not destroyed patriarchal control of women’s sexuality; it just opened up a little extra room in which women are better able to embrace their sexuality. These meta-ideological tactics are best understood as one of many tools that contribute to social change.

**Neologisms: New Words for New Meanings**

Language shapes the categories through which people usually perceive their worlds. Within linguistic consciousness it is difficult to think thoughts for which one has no vocabulary. Similarly it is extremely difficult to communicate new thoughts clearly. Even if one is able to say a new thought using the words one has inherited one cannot be sure that their interlocutor grasps the new meaning. Regardless of what a speaker says a listener is likely to be enmeshed in linguistic patterns that preclude the new thought. While a speaker may say a new thought a listener may not hear anything new or interesting.

One way of circumventing this dilemma is through the creation of new words. When a listener hears a word with which she is unfamiliar, she is presented with an opportunity to stop,
think, and perhaps wonder: what meaning will she give to that word? Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of philosopher Judith Butler’s concept of performativity. Recall that this neologism is a play on the seemingly commonplace concept of a performance. But where one commonly thinks of a performance as a spectacular event like a Broadway musical, the idea of performativity refers to the everyday performance created by normal people, where all the world is a stage whether individual actors recognize it as such or not. This seemingly simple shift in meaning indicated by a slightly new word has the effect of unsettling socially-inherited ideas. In inviting readers to reexamine meanings of words they thought they knew Butler changes the world by changing the way readers think. She changes the ways readers think by shaking up their relationship to language.

We don't just perceive the world through language - we create the world through language. (Or, more commonly, language creates the world through us.) "Language" extends beyond the linguistic to all the signs and signifiers we employ in our nonlinguistic communications - our fashion, our body language, our performative selves, and our comportment. Butler achieves radical shifts in meaning by entering into language and bringing readers along for the ride. Aikido similarly seeks to achieve a shift in the way “readers” think by shaking up their relationships to language. But where Butler creates this shift by entering into language aikido creates the shift by stepping away from language. By creating conditions that allow aikidoka to shift from linguistic consciousness to embodied consciousness aikido similarly shakes up many core assumptions. This is yet another way of harnessing the creative entropy of deconstruction.

Epistemological Interventions: New Ways of Knowing Meanings

In the first layer of signification the signifier takes the form of a word, or a small unit of meaning. This form, the word, is filled by meaning to allow for communication. But when Barthes’ observations about the processes of linguistic communication are considered through the prism of Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences\textsuperscript{182} the signifier could take the form of a small unit of meaning in relation to any kind of intelligence. In relation to musical intelligence the signifier would be a musical phrase, which can be performed to hold any given number of musical meanings. In relation to mathematical intelligence the signifier could be a numerical sequence. And in relation to kinesthetic intelligence, the mode of knowledge that is most applicable to the subject of the current study, the signifier could be any small unit of meaning. These include forms such as a choreography or an aspect of comportment. This epistemologically fluid approach to signification plays with the possibility that what is usually referred to as the unconscious, the hallmark of psychological and psychoanalytic approaches, may not be so much unconscious as it is non-phallogocentrically conscious. Figure 2 lists various forms of signifiers corresponding to intelligences described by Gardner.

Figure 7: Multiple Intelligences and their Signifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intelligence</th>
<th>Form of Signifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>Musical Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily-Kinesthetic</td>
<td>Choreography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical-Mathematical</td>
<td>Numerical Sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial</td>
<td>Element of Interior Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Gesture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One way that aikido works is by using embodied consciousness to induce epistemological flexibility. This increases participants’ access to different ways of knowing, thereby creating transformative deconstructions of foundational concepts. Increased fluency in embodied consciousness provided an epistemological base from which this art achieves a rupture and restructuring of important nodes in linguistic consciousness. In other words the physical and philosophical choreographies of the martial art aikido are designed to facilitate peace in the world by facilitating more peaceful conflict resolution strategies in individual participants’ personal skill sets. Aikido is a performative and psychoanalytic process whereby a shift towards embodied epistemology sustains a transformation in analytic categorization, thereby altering conflict resolution strategies. Becoming fluent in different ways of knowing, or epistemologies, helped research participants to achieve a deconstruction, or performative redefinition, of the concept of power. Figure 8 shows meta-ideology’s theory-uprising, which is accomplished through a form of differential consciousness that turns ideology back on itself.
Figure 8: Meta-ideology as a Liberatory Practice

- Cartesian Dualism
- Reified Cartesian Dualism
- The Experiential Real
In Figure 8 we see the processes of signification and reification as outlined in figures 1, 2, 4, and 5. The signified content fills a form to create a communicated meaning. This meaning then becomes stripped of historical specificity and undergoes another round of signification into increasingly naturalized communicated meanings. Throughout this chapter we have used the example of Cartesian Dualism to demonstrate the ways meanings can develop from the level of personal thoughts shared by an individual to a highly alienated idea that is attributed to nature/God/the-way-things-are. That meaning can then act as a foundational belief that guides the creation of social institutions. Cartesian Dualism is an ideal example because it is the root cause of many of the problems that concern decolonial feminist theorists. Too, it is an ideal example for this study because the martial art aikido functions through embodied consciousness, a way of knowing that is disavowed by Cartesian Dualism's binaristic and hierarchical attributions of knowledge.

In Figure 8 Cartesian Dualism's trajectory of meaning encounters a third level of meaning, that which is communicated through the physical form (or signifier) aikido. This figure is a modified version of Sandoval's rendering of the process of meta-ideology. The artform aikido brings its participants into contact with a meaning that can be described as The Experiential Real. This is the immediate physical reality of a corporeal body. There is quite a lot of knowledge to be experienced here. This is where the body is the mind.

As a way of knowing that has been delegitimized through Cartesian Dualism’s binaries and hierarchies of knowledge attribution, embodied knowing potentially holds (r)evolutionary meanings. In conducting this ethnographic study, I have collected and shared some of these meanings. Key among these: participants in this study expressed an understanding of the idea of
power as generative (as opposed to an idea of power as oppressive.) This valuation of generative power emanated through participants’ conflict resolution strategies. The feeling of dealing with conflict by asking “let’s see what we can get to develop” is qualitatively different from a feeling of “let’s see what we can squash.” This generative approach to conflict echoed through several levels of conflict in aikido students’ lives. These include intrapersonal conflicts (conflicts within oneself), interpersonal conflicts (conflicts with family, friends, coworkers and neighbors), and structural conflicts (conflicts between genders that shape social relations).

While conducting this ethnography I saw people who blew me away with the maturity, effectiveness, and sophistication of their conflict resolution strategies. This could be attributed to several variables. This study population consisted of long-term students of a martial art that overtly emphasizes non-violent conflict resolution. So the content of their study is a significant variable in relation to the study results.

A leading question has been posed to me: what is the significance of the female leadership in the dojos you observed? Because I went out of my way to conduct observations at schools where the owner/head instructor was female one might suppose that female leadership was a major factor in study participants’ adoption of conflict resolution strategies. Certainly female leadership was one of the things about these schools that caught my attention. Too, though, recall that the thing that clinched my desire to conduct observations at these schools was that one of the teachers in this lineage stuck up for a student she didn’t even know when his teacher had behaved in a manner calling for an intervention (as discussed in Chapter 2). So even more attractive than an unusual configuration of gender roles was an enactment of standing up and speaking out. One thing I was curious about even at that early stage was why, of all the people who could have told that teacher to chill out, why was it the female one who did it? There

were also other relevant identity factors at play in that situation; femaleness was one of several interesting ones. But it raises the question: what is the relationship between gender and willingness/ability to intervene? My data is inconclusive on this point.

Why were participants in this study able to provide such complex and balanced descriptions (and manifestations) of conflict resolution? Is it because of sex? No, because then all females would behave maturely in the midst of conflict, and they don't. Is it because gender norms ensure that girls and women “play nice?” No, girls and women can be quite mean within gender norms, and those norms create a pressure to always appear friendly that is not psychologically healthy. Is it because of education and relative class privilege? I doubt it because I've met several well-educated and/or wealthy people who don't engage in conflict effectively. Is it because of feminist leanings? No, because most of the participants in this study didn't overtly identify (to the researcher) as feminist. Too, I've known self-identified feminists who have behaved very poorly. Is it because of aikido? I can't agree to that either because (as discussed in Ch 6) I've seen aikido teachers engage in a variety of inappropriately dominating and manipulative behaviors. I can't even suggest that it is simply because of the engagement of bodily consciousness even though I feel that this form of consciousness is the keystone of aikido’s effectiveness. But this consciousness alone cannot explain the shift in participants’ conflict resolution strategies. All athletes (including dancers, yogis, and other athletes we don’t normally describe as athletes) routinely engage embodied consciousness. But all athletes do not demonstrate sophisticated conflict resolution skills. Is it because I am relying on self-reported data and people are likely to cast themselves in a positive light? Yes, but that’s not a full explanation either because I’m working with observations as well and grounding the self-

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184 Sensei is a unique individual in many ways but articulating that uniqueness would risk compromising the confidentiality of study participants.
reported data in a 4 year period of preliminary research. I will point out that I have made a methodological choice to emphasize that which brings me hope. But what I’m emphasizing was there long before I chose to study it.

Participants in this study were able to provide such complex and balanced descriptions (and manifestations) of conflict resolution because of the combination of these factors. Engaging embodied consciousness with the expressed intention of studying physical conflict non-violently allows aikido students to adopt new strategies. Being a female or relating respectfully to females in a misogynist culture allows a student to see violence functioning both overtly and in all its social subtlety. It provides an opportunity for practice. Subjecting oneself to an environment in which the owner/head instructor is female allows a student (whether female or male) to encounter their own internalized misogyny. And in encountering it: see it, struggle with it, and deal with it consciously.

This study has collected a series of ideas about how conflicts can be approached. These ideas are distinctly different from the organizing ideas of hegemonic imperialism. Study participants were able to develop and maintain counter-cultural ideas about conflict resolution because they had first learned these ideas in their bodies. Studying in female-led dojos surely helped but the most relevant variable I see is epistemological. Changing the way they knew allowed study participants to think radically different thoughts.
CHAPTER 8: IN REVIEW AND AS INSPIRATION

To review, this dissertation has been a conversation with long-term students of the martial art aikido. The martial art aikido is a physical exploration of non-violent conflict resolution. This dissertation is based on observations and interviews at two schools where female head instructors taught aikido to co-educational student bodies. This unique study population contributed interesting thoughts about the nature of conflict and possibilities of creative engagement.

This dissertation is organized around participants’ understanding of power as generative rather than oppressive. They learn this aspect of power physically in aikido classes as they grapple with each other. The physical intensity of an aikido class allows students to enter an embodied way of knowing, from which they are able to shake up what they know and make room for new ideas.

Study participants reported that aikido had supported their redefinitions of the idea of power. This redefinition resonated through several spheres of participants’ lives. Participants’ interviews showed that they actively disagreed with what they perceived as more common perceptions of power: the ability to obtain the objects of one’s desire through domination or violence. Rather, they asserted, power is:

- physically internal
- the ability to be grounded and centered
- the ability to direct and re-direct energy
- the ability to maintain awareness of one’s self and environment
- the ability to cultivate growth

The conceptualization of power-with, rather than power-over echoes feminist conceptions of power and negates the hegemonic conflation of power with control.
Their sense of generative power resonated interpersonally through participants’ self-reported conflict resolution strategies. Participants discussed a repertoire of conflict resolution strategies including:

- maintaining awareness of one’s environment, including the physical environment as well as the human environment, and one’s distance (ma’ai) from potentially dangerous elements within one’s environment
- adjusting one’s posture, through practices called centering and grounding, and allowing oneself to adopt a large yet receptive comportment
- not fighting by turning (tenkan) and blending with one’s “opponent” while entering (irimi) the conflict with measured assertiveness, adding a little energy to the direction in which one’s “opponent” is already travelling
- and maintaining a capacity for a wide range of reactions when it is one’s turn to be thrown (ukemi).

This repertoire of conflict resolution strategies is also applicable to a more complex structural phenomena: gender violence. Participants had a complex understanding of both gross and subtle forms of gender violence. They also reported employing varied responses to gender violence as a wider social phenomenon. Participants proactively addressed the potential for gender violence within their own dojos. Each dojo had specific practices, policies and procedures that moved towards counteracting the prevalence of gender violence in larger society.

Chapter 7 explores the psychoanalytic causes and effects of bodily consciousness as an epistemological challenge to colonialism. This chapter described colonialism as a reified resonance of Cartesian Dualism. The folk philosophy called Cartesian Dualism holds that the mind is separate from and superior to the body and implies that all things associated with the body need not be respected. The binaristic and hierarchical organization of body and mind
becomes reified through processes of signification and amplified into institutional expressions of sexism and racism, or white supremacist capitalist patriarchy [WSCP]. But where this specifically oriented form of colonialism necessitates an obfuscation of non-phallogocentric ways of knowing, bodily consciousness can work to undermine the epistemological frameworks of Imperialism. This is because it functions as an embodied meta-ideological deconstruction, one of several (r)evolutionary tactics discussed in decolonial feminist theory.

This dissertation considers Aikido’s reverberations through the intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural, and political aspects of students’ lives through the lens of decolonial feminist theory. In the current chapter I will offer concluding thoughts about aikido’s alternative approaches to violence. Considering the basic approach to conflict resolution discussed in this dissertation, this chapter is a meditation on the application of aikido philosophy to a practical deconstruction of the social institutions of contemporary American imperialism.

The realm of the body is one realm at which individuals can engage in social change. It may not immediately look like working out is a productive engagement of social change. It is, after all, a leisure activity engaged primarily by people with disposable time and income. And there is something odd about white people adorning the dress and aesthetic norms of cultures that they have colonized. But there is something particularly useful about aikido’s engagement of bodily consciousness as a transcultural peacebuilding activity. Particularly in a social context featuring significant somatophobia and resultant consignment of women, natives, and others to the body, exploring the intelligence of the body opens possibilities. Grounded in the persistent here and now of the feeling of one’s physical reality, one comes into a utilitarian relationship with agency.

This is not to say that the realm of the body is the only, or even the best realm in which to engage social change. Certainly it should not replace interventions in legal, academic, medical,
mediated, or other realms. In fact one attractive quality of embodied consciousness is its ability to support and tease out relationships with other kinds of interventions. I found the body to be a useful site of investigation because a significant reverberation can be achieved with an embodied philosophical shift. I hope that this dissertation conveys that reverberation. It’s energizing.

Aikido is only one way that people disrupt imperialism by disrupting interpellated bodily comportment. There are tons of ways of disrupting imperialist comportment. The bodily comportment of imperialist projects calls for certain behaviors from certain kinds of bodies. Imperialism tells itself a story about why it has to exist. A series of tropes create social norms that become bodily practices over time. The basic memetic formula for white supremacist capitalist patriarchy is:

- An aggressive masculinity is required to protect an inept femininity.
- Whiteness is under attack by a dark and mysterious other.

These tropes, reified forms of Cartesian Dualism, are acted out in innumerable manifestations. Too, they can be disrupted via innumerable manifestations.

Aikido and other forms of mindful movement like contact improvisation, nia, and tai chi undermine Cartesian Dualism by supporting a respectful relationship with the body. In a broader sense decolonial embodiment endeavors could take many practical forms. Eating local vegan food, deliberately choosing one’s sexuality and reproductive reality, “re-mixing” clothes and consumer goods rather than purchasing new and commuting consciously are just a few ways that individuals have been known to step away from the bodily roles prescribed to them by WSCP.

But focusing on the current study, the disruption of the bodily comportment of imperialist projects took the form of communities where the social expectation of a mantially inept white
femininity was proven to be bunk. While I was initially attracted to this blatant disregard of gender norms I developed a deeper appreciation for the flexibility of aikido’s repertoires of engagement. This art has been inspiring because it shows the participant herself as both aggressor and respondent, attacker and attacked, victimizer and victim. Too, aikido invites participants to play through ways that they can engage those roles artfully. As a being at the nexus of a complex web of interlocking identities and social positions I appreciate aikido’s understanding that one can be simultaneously privileged and exploited. Aikido has been instructive because it shows me where and how I can be more assertive, and where and how I should chill out. As I feel myself as a member of larger social groups I extrapolate this awareness.

As a member and ally of traditionally disenfranchised groups I feel that we can be more assertive in our protests against WSCP. As a member of a hegemonically colonial society I feel that we need to check ourselves. That is, sometimes we need to increase our assertiveness, and sometimes we need to decrease our aggression.

Increasing Assertiveness

As a member and ally of disenfranchised populations I suggest that Women’s and Gender Studies departments reconsider the usefulness of (high quality) manifestations of the “self-defense” concept. In conducting this dissertation I asserted that a concentrated examination of non-violent self-defense is a good idea (or at least worth several years of my life). I was puzzled that self-defense was not offered through the Women’s Studies department in which I taught, the Women’s Center at my University, or a number of other places where a young woman might go to learn these skills. When I started thinking on the topic and asking colleagues for their thoughts I realized that the idea of self-defense is rich with complexity and contradiction. The idea of a three-hour self-defense seminar became increasing infuriating as I realized the ineffectiveness of that learning environment to overcome lifetimes of socialization. And yet the wider social
context provides precious few tools to empower women and men to interfere with interpersonal aggression.

A three-hour seminar in Self-Defense is too short to impart a useful amount of knowledge. Ten years of study (aikido’s general recommendation for basic competency) is too slow a rate of transmission. While teaching Introduction to Women’s Studies as a graduate student I considered how one might teach a class in Self Protection. The University class structure of 3 hours per week for 15 weeks seems a happy medium between the brevity of many self-defense classes and the depth of a 10 year study of a somewhat esoteric martial art. But Self Protection is a daunting subject to teach. The course would have to be grounded in class discussions of feminist theory, with a strong emphasis on agency and hope. It would have to interpellate students carefully as a community working as a group on a complex problem (not as isolated potential victims). It would have to validate the personal and the political aspects of a community of learners. It would have to operate from a comprehensive view of gross and subtle manifestations of violence. It would have to focus on cultivating a social context that is less conducive to all forms of violence.

Skills imparted through feminist decolonial praxis and theory could be combined with observations made in martial arts like aikido to create a course exploring Academic Skills for Self-Protection. This course would help students develop skills such as documentation, critical analysis of violence, and assertive communication. These are vital because hip-throws are fun and effective when done properly but they are completely useless in the face of a daunting patriarchal bureaucracy. While I was contemplating this I was fortunate to be teaching in a department that granted instructors significant control over course content. Therefore I was able to incorporate several of these learning outcomes in an Introduction to Women’s Studies class. The mutable framework of Women’s Studies is highly conducive to the sharing of survival skills.
Throughout several class activities and assignments students learned to care for themselves as consumers, active citizens, and embodied individuals. Conditions contributing to negative body images were analyzed in group discussions. Students brainstormed together to form responses to situations in their lives – a lecherous boss, a friend in an abusive relationship, a fellow student who composed an anti-Take Back the Night editorial in the campus newspaper. Students learned the hows and whys of documentation as one student shared a series of letters that she wrote to a car dealer who (unsuccessfully) tried to rip her off. Class discussions illuminated readings that explored personal and political dimensions of gender, race, nation, and violence. Students contacted an elected representative to express their opinion about a public issue. They debated and enacted community accountability strategies. Toward the end of the semester the class even incorporated breathing exercises and other self-care activities.

I longed, though, for the more physical aspects of nonviolent conflict resolution that comprise the bulk of aikido classes. The idea of a course that would explore Kinesthetic Skills for Self-Protection played on my mind. Breathing, centering, and grounding are specifically physical skills. Taught from a feminist perspective, this kind of course could drop the problematic aspects self-defense (brevity and blaming the victim) and martial arts (Othering and Orientalism) but keep and focus on physical skills through which learners can investigate conflict and conflict resolution.

Decreasing Aggression

In addition to exploring safe reactions to potentially conflictual trajectories, a consideration of aikido in the context of feminist theory gravitates toward the potential of cessation of aggression. Jo, one participant in this study, shared some thoughts that seemed particularly well suited to the intellectual tasks that I hope that this dissertation accomplishes. This woman is a third-degree black belt and a Naturopathic physician who specializes in non-
pharmaceutical interventions for depression and eating disorders caused by childhood trauma.

Naturopathic physicians value treating illness with the least invasive methods possible. They will heal patients by working with several layers of a person’s experiences including a person’s social context, their exercise habits, their thought patterns, and their nutrition.

Jo was a very intense person. She was small but very energetic. She had bright, piercing blue eyes. I could see how this woman would be very intimidating to some people. But at the same time she was the nicest person; it was just the fact that she was so sharply present that made her kind of scary. We went to a Chinese restaurant and she told me several stories.

I grew up in a family of lawyers and my sense of conflict before I started aikido was ripping out people carotids. So. But, well, I just think that violence is quite complex, … As a child of lawyers, who grew up debating things, and going to college, and making girls cry because I didn’t understand that people didn’t verbally spar for the fun of it.

Someone would come in a go: “Well, I’m prochoice.” And I’m like: “Well I’m prolife.” Not that I was! You know? But if you’re going to make such a bold statement, I’m going to take the counterpoint. And I’m going to listen to your argument. Which, as a freshman, nobody was really good at putting together arguments. And I ripped it apart. And they would cry. And I was confused! We were just playing!

And when we don’t acknowledge the violent part of ourselves we don’t have control over it…. And I find that really violent. And I think the longer term ramifications on it is that we can go to a Gulf War and spend billions of dollars a day and be immune to that level of violence. Or we can have children nearly beaten to death and we will ignore it because we don’t want to go look at the actual violence that’s occurring. Because we are afraid of our own violence. And I find that highly problematic.
And so I just took my third degree blackbelt and I nearly injured a couple people because they are coming in hard and fast, and I’m responding hard and fast, and the edge of safety is so narrow. There wasn’t violence, but real injury could have occurred.

And it’s because of your willingness to walk into our fear, and refine the edges of skill of *uke* and skill of *nageship*, that we can actually engage in a high level of conflict and walk away safely. And unless you can control your fear in that high level of conflict, how are you ever going to sit down with a culture that has been at odds for millions of years? Or sit down in a family of generations that has perpetrated violence after violence, generation after generation, and really look at that? Really look at that? I don’t think it’s possible. So. Anyway.

Jo’s comment strikes a chord in my mind. I appreciate the statement that “as a child of lawyers” Jo had been raised in an environment with a very specific set of social norms. I profoundly respect her revelation that she had been socialized into a pattern of behaviors that other people found hurtful. The ability to notice this and to make an effort to change it seems like the key to performatively deconstructing colonialism from any of the nodes through which any given subjectivity is privileged.

And what is interesting about Jo’s observation is that she never tried to make the other girls in college cry. She was not trying to enact a ritual of domination. She did not have malicious intent. It was just that in the environment in which she grew up people were encouraged to interact with one another through social rituals that honed the skills that were useful for her primary socializers. As lawyers, her family taught her to debate very effectively.

But when she entered a new environment, where her interlocutors had been socialized into different habiti, the behaviors that solicited approval where she grew up were all of a sudden soliciting tears. They were the same behaviors – logic and debate – but in a different context.
And in this context she saw her behaviors to contain a violence that she made a conscious effort to study and cease perpetuating.

The observation that violence does not necessitate malicious intent is cogent. What one learns as uke is usually what one expresses as nage. That is, the way that one is treated is usually the way that one treats others. People tend to replicate the behaviors to which they have been exposed.

However, they can choose not to. But choosing not to is much more difficult.

In Women’s and Gender Studies’ attempts to understand interpersonal violence, it is a truism that battering is always a choice. Domestic violence is always the fault of the aggressor. Similarly, this dissertation’s reverberations between the personal, the political, the institutional, and the structural expand on this point to indicate more broadly that domination is always a choice. As a child of a hegemonically colonial society, I was trained to interact with the world through patterns of domination that I don’t even notice. But with enough concentration, center, and ground, I can choose to live otherwise. We don’t have to perpetuate the behaviors into which we have been socialized.

Choosing otherwise is difficult. Choosing to not perpetrate a violence is a very difficult task. It necessitates a very deep understanding of what that violence is, how it functions, how it is sustained, and how it is perceived. And a deep understanding of the discursive anatomy and physiology of a violence is still insufficient. Because these are living memes they cannot be stopped, only shaped. And shaping something is far more difficult than smashing it. But it is certainly not impossible.

In my mind, as I let the knowledge that study participants have shared with me play in my imagination, Jo’s statement “As a child of lawyers...” encourages me to leap into a consideration of myself “As a child of a hegemonically colonial society...”
As a Child of a Hegemonically Colonial Society…

I was trained to understand monetary denominations (reliance on capitalist exchange) rather than things like how lettuce grows (reliance on a cultivated friendship with Momma Earth) in state-mandated kindergarten.

I saw however many billion acts of violence on T.V. during my formative psychological years.

I learned to desire consumer goods without inquiring about the origins of a product or the labor conditions under which it was produced.

I have been trained to subconsciously associate negative personality qualities with non-white complexions, whether I like it or not.

Simultaneously, I have been trained to not notice the briefcase-bearing white men who are really responsible for the late capitalist ethical famine that plagues me and my fellow earthlings.

I am repeatedly shocked to see the degree to which people regard a request for more effective/creative national defense strategies as sacrilegious. As though fight or flight (rather than an artful combination of irimi-entering and tenkan-blending) are our only options, and flight makes one a pussy (regardless of the etymological respect due to the holy Cunt).

I was socialized into a normalization of violence that, having taken a decade out of my adult life to consider it, I realize is not normal.

As a child of a hegemonically colonial society I’m not supposed to notice or feel the effects of U.S. imperialism.

But I can choose otherwise.

I have learned that middle class white Americans like myself have been taught to feel that we do not engage in systems of oppression. Many hold, for example, that racism is not a problem
for which contemporary whites have any responsibility because they do not own slaves. People who assert this take pause when I respond by asking them whether they really believe that the shirt on their backs was produced through genuinely consensual labor relations. It is a sad reality that at any given moment people in the First World can reach out and touch an object that was produced through something akin to slavery. We don’t call it that anymore but the relationship is still real. Hegemonic colonialism encourages us not to feel into our relationships with the people whose labor supports our lifestyles. If we could feel the human costs of our consumer goods we would be far more likely to utilize the limited mobility of our privilege to find more consensual methods of sustenance.

I refuse to believe that if we were to take all of the resources that we currently devote to the maintenance of a standing army, and instead devoted those resources to programs that solved our national problems through locally-based creativity, rather than geographically remote domination, that “we” would somehow lose out. I refuse to believe that doing that is against our best interests. But as children of a hegemonically colonial society we have been socialized into patterns of domination and oppression. This socialization is so fundamental that we have a very difficult time shaking it up. We have been trained, like Pavlov’s dogs, to assume that to be powerful in the world means to be able to get what one wants when one wants it and not have to think about the consequences. This definition is held to be true and becomes the foundation for further assumptions that lock us into patterns of domination.

Aikido brings us back to page one. It asks us to look at this equation again from a different perspective. Dropping our linguistic socialization, we step into bodily consciousness. What we thought we knew comes into question as the way in which we knew it (linguistic consciousness) temporarily ceases to be the primary way of knowing (epistemology). This opens a space for new thoughts and new ways of doing things.
I have realized at several points throughout this dissertation process that the real research question that burns through my dreams is: how can we take out white supremacist capitalist patriarchy? Seriously. How can we shut the system down, and replace it with something more functional? And this is a really tricky question because the main problem with white supremacist patriarchy is that it relies on domination as a primary habit of consciousness. So it is not possible to dismantle that system through engagement of any kind of domination. Aikido intrigued me as a study topic because it cultivates a different kind of engagement: very assertive but very consciously non-violent.

But How?: Future Directions

Considering everything that I have learned about the movement and philosophy of aikido and the politics of Cultural Studies I notice that U.S. Imperialism is fueled by ridiculous energy choices. Therefore, my most useful next move along this line of inquiry will be to develop CoOperative EcoSolutions, a research collaborative focusing on viable alternatives to fossil-fuel based lifestyles. This collaborative provides research opportunities, workshops, technology, services, and consultations to support sustainability in personal transportation, food production and distribution, home and business infrastructural alignment, and consumer goods. We will develop and disseminate practical solutions to the infrastructural problems of colonial systems of energy usage. Creating viable alternatives to hegemonic economic systems will facilitate decolonization by combining philosophical clarity and practical transformation of colonial lifestyles. Colonial lifestyles are perpetuated when individuals pseudo-consciously acquiesce to systems of sustenance based on establishing *power over* mama Earth and her kids. Therefore, following the philosophical observations that I have made throughout the current study, my future work will investigate the mechanics of fueling my life by consciously gravitating towards methods of sustenance that draw *power with* mama Earth.
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June 10, 2008

TO: Kristy Canoe
American Culture Studies

FROM: Richard Rowlands
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H08D331GE7

TITLE: Embodiment and the Art of Peace

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of June 9, 2008, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on May 20, 2009. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (fax: 372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgsu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/Modifications:

C: Dr. Viki Krane

Research Category: EXPEDITED #7
Date
Dear Sensei,

My name is Kristy Ganoe. I am a Ph.D. student in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. I am writing you because I am hoping to complete my doctoral dissertation on the topic of Aikido. I have learned about your dojo during my preliminary research and am interested in exploring the possibility of conducting research at your school.

My doctoral dissertation will focus on relationships among physical empowerment, personal empowerment, and community empowerment. Toward this end, I hope to conduct research exploring how students of Aikido experience and understand their participation in the art.

My academic research interests include studying and writing about people who participate in sport, dance, other physical activities, as well as social activism. In my experience, these academic interests are deeply related to my embodied research activities, which include limited experience with Aikido, Tai Chi, and Yoga. Despite my inexperience, these arts have captured my attention, respect, and academic curiosity.

In designing my dissertation research project, I have been inspired by a couple of books with which you may be familiar. These are Barbara Browning’s *Samba: Resistance in Motion (Arts and Politics of the Everyday)*, and Cynthia Novack’s *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. I hope that this research study will result in a dissertation that is similar to these two books, but focused on Aikido. Although they describe different movement traditions, these books do not attempt to offer any how-to advice for practitioners. Rather, these books emphasize the social and cultural implications of the movement traditions that they explore.

Would you consider allowing me to complete some of my dissertation research at your dojo? I would like to spend 6 to 8 weeks this summer observing classes and conducting group and individual interviews with students and instructors at your school.

I will observe what goes on at the dojo in classes during your regularly scheduled class times for approximately 6-8 weeks. Before observing any classes, I will ask the instructor in charge if I may observe his/her classes. I also will ask each class participant if I may include observations about him/her in my research. I will refrain from recording any data about any student who does not wish to participate. With explicit instructor and student permission, I may take photographs, video recordings, or audio recordings of class activities. If I accidentally capture the image of anyone who does not explicitly give me written permission to photograph and/or videorecord them, I will destroy that photograph and refrain from using that section of video in any presentation of this research. Everyone’s participation in this study will be entirely voluntary. Each person will have several opportunities to decline to allow me to record information about them or decline to participate in any aspect of this study. Each aspect of this study is designed to
accommodate people in the environment who do not wish to participate. Finally, I will destroy any information recorded about any student who has not completed an informed consent form when I leave your dojo.

I will also invite your students to participate in group interviews where they will discuss what Aikido means to them. Finally, I hope to invite each instructor, and any student who wishes to do so, to complete an individual interview.

I would love to speak with you soon to answer any questions you have and further explore the possibility of including your dojo in my dissertation research. In about a week I will call you to answer any questions you may have and discuss this study.

Sincerely,

Kristy Ganoe
kganoe@bgsu.edu
(419) 213-0702
115 North Adams Street #1
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Project Title: Aikido: Embodying the Art of Peace

Principal Investigator: Kristy Ganoe, Graduate Student, American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University
(412) 897-4555, kganoe@bgsu.edu

I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University conducting my dissertation research on Aikido dojos. The purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of members of select Aikido dojos. The information gained from this study has the potential to inform research related to relationships among physical activity, personal empowerment, and community empowerment. Your participation may help scholars understand how education, art, and philosophy can contribute to peace and social justice. You may benefit from participation in this study by learning more about your dojo and how to better serve members of your dojo.

I plan to observe and interview members of the dojo. Their participation will be entirely voluntary. I will observe what goes on at the dojo in classes during your regularly scheduled class times for approximately 6-8 weeks. Before observing any classes, I will ask the instructor in charge if I may observe his/her classes. I also will ask each class participant if I may include observations about him/her in my research. I will refrain from recording any data about any student who does not wish to participate. With instructor and student permission, I may take photographs, video recordings, or audio recordings of class activities. If I accidentally capture the image of anyone who does not explicitly give me written permission to photograph and/or videorecord them, I will destroy that photograph and refrain from using that section of video in any presentation of this research.

I also will invite all adult members of the dojo to participate in group and individual interviews about their experiences as Aikidoka. These interviews will last approximately 90 minutes. I will tape-record and video-record the interviews and transcribe them at a later time. During interviews, participants may decline to answer any question. At any time, they may withdraw from the study without penalty. Their decision to participate or not is completely voluntary and will not affect their future relationship with Bowling Green State University or me.

The risks of participation in this study are minimal. All comments and identifying information revealed during the interview will be kept confidential. Only my advisor and I will hear the interview tapes or read the transcripts. All notes, audio recordings, video recordings, photographs and transcripts will be locked in a secure location. Any notes taken at the dojo will remain with me and be carefully safeguarded while I am collecting...
data. In all printed notes or transcripts, the dojo will not be identified by name and participants will be identified by a code name and any other identifying information will be coded or removed. All field notes, audio recordings, video recordings, photographs, and transcripts will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Your participation as the owner of the dojo is entirely voluntary and will not affect your or the dojo’s future relationship with Bowling Green State University or me. You can withdraw your permission for me to do research on the premises at any time.

If you have any questions, please ask them now. Additional questions or concerns about this study may be directed to myself, Kristy Ganoe (412-897-4555, kganoe@bgsu.edu), or my doctoral advisor Dr. Vikki Krane (419-372-2620, vkrane@bgsu.edu). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, hsrb@bgsu.edu). Please note that e-mail is not always secure.

Your signature below indicates your consent for me to observe the dojo and ask members to participate in interviews. After signing this form, you will be given a copy of it for your own records and use.

__________________________  _______________________
Signature                  Date

__________________________  _______________________
Printed Name                E-mail Address
Project Title: Aikido: Embodying the Art of Peace

Principal Investigator: Kristy Ganoce, Graduate Student, American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University (412-897-4555, kganoce@bgsu.edu)

I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University conducting my dissertation research on the topic of Aikido. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. This study seeks to document and consider a variety of ways in which students of Aikido experience and understand their participation in the martial art.

You have been invited here to participate in a conversation about the impact of Aikido in your lives on and off the mat. I have a list of topics and questions that I would like to discuss. But I would like you all to take a leading role in the direction of this conversation. I am interested in all of your opinions and perceptions. Please feel free to express yourself, even if you disagree with each other. Please also feel free to decline to answer any question. We will simply move onto the next person or question. Please feel free to talk to each other throughout the interview, but avoid interrupting each other. You can take notes on the scrap paper provided if there is something you would like to remember to come back to.

I anticipate that this interview will take approximately 90 minutes.

The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in your daily life. Your participation may help scholars understand how education, art, and philosophy can contribute to peace and social justice. You may contribute to knowledge about experiences of Aikido.

I will not use your real name in any printed transcripts, presentations, papers, or publications unless you give me express permission to do so. There is a slim possibility that someone familiar with the Aikido world who encounters the results of this research may be able to identify you if I quote you directly or describe your movement, regardless of the use of a pseudonym. Therefore I can not guarantee that your confidentiality will be maintained absolutely. I will refrain from intentionally revealing the identity of any participant who does not wish to be identified. All names or other identifying features will be coded in all writing about this research.
I will take precautions to protect your confidentiality in my field notes and transcripts. All descriptions and information will be recorded under pseudonyms. While conducting research, I will take care to maintain the security of all research materials. I will be sure not to leave journals, tapes, or cameras out where others could gain access to them. After I leave your dojo, my notes, transcripts, photographs, videotapes, and all other aspects of the ethnographic record will be kept in my home office and destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

Any information recorded about you (including field notes, photographs, and video recordings) will be used for academic purposes only. These may include but are not limited to chapters for my dissertation, academic presentations to classes or professional conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and books released by an academic press.

You do not have to participate in this research study. I will not feel offended or take it personally if you decide not to participate in this study. I understand that there are many reasons why someone would not want to participate in a study like this. You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time or decline to answer any question without affecting your relationship with me, Bowling Green State University, or your dojo.

Please be sensitive to the confidentiality of the other people in this interview and keep all information you hear during this interview confidential. I will be delighted if you have a conversation that results in sharing and generating useful ideas that you would like to explore further. But if you ever discuss any of these ideas outside of this interview session, please leave out any references to personal experiences or comments offered by your classmates. They may be willing to share information with you in this context that they may not wish to be disclosed to other people. So please be sensitive to the privacy of everyone in this interview.

After I have concluded my visit to your dojo, you are invited, but not required, to e-mail me with any further thoughts you have about any of the interview questions or any aspect of this research project. If I have a current and correct e-mail address for you when I am in the advanced stages of analyzing this data, I will send you a summary of my key findings. You will have an opportunity to read these findings and offer comments.

You have the right to have any questions about this study answered to your satisfaction before participating in the study. Additional questions or concerns about this study may be directed to myself, Kristy Ganoe (412-897-4555, kganoe@bgsu.edu), or my doctoral advisor Dr. Vikki Krane (419-372-2620, vkrane@bgsu.edu). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, hsrbo@bgsu.edu). Please note that e-mail is not always secure.
By completing and returning this form you are indicating that you have been informed about what is expected of you as a research participant in this study and that your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be provided with a copy of this form and should retain it for your records.

Print your Name

Date

Sign your Name

E-mail Address

Phone Number
Project Title: Aikido: Embodying the Art of Peace

Principal Investigator: Kristy Ganoe, Graduate Student, American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University (412-897-4555, kganoe@bgsu.edu)

I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University conducting my dissertation research on the topic of Aikido. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. This study seeks to document and consider a variety of ways in which students of Aikido experience and understand their participation in the martial art.

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I will not use your real name in any printed transcripts, presentations, papers, or publications unless you give me express permission to do so. There is a slim possibility that someone familiar with the Aikido world who encounters the results of this research may be able to identify you if I quote you directly or describe your movement, regardless of the use of a pseudonym. Therefore I can not guarantee that your confidentiality will be maintained absolutely. I will refrain from intentionally revealing the identity of any participant who does not wish to be identified. All names or other identifying features will be coded in all writing about this research.

I will take precautions to protect your confidentiality in my field notes and transcripts. All descriptions and information will be recorded under pseudonyms. While conducting research, I will take care to maintain the security of all research materials. I will be sure not to leave journals, tapes, or cameras out where others could gain access to them. After I leave your dojo, my notes, transcripts, photographs, videotapes, and all other aspects of the ethnographic record will be kept in my home office and destroyed at the conclusion of this study.
You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without affecting your relationship with me, Bowling Green State University, or your dojo.

After I have concluded my visit to your dojo, you are invited, but not required, to e-mail me with any further thoughts you have about any of the interview questions or any aspect of this research project. If I have a current and correct e-mail address for you when I am in the advanced stages of analyzing this data, I will send you a summary of my key findings. You will have an opportunity to read these findings and offer comments. Although I will take your comments very seriously I maintain the right and responsibility to determine the final composition of the write-up of this research.

Any information recorded about you (including field notes, photographs, and video recordings) will be used for academic purposes only. These may include but are not limited to chapters for my dissertation, academic presentations to classes or professional conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and books released by an academic press.

You have the right to have any questions about this study answered to your satisfaction before participating in the study. Additional questions or concerns about this study may be directed to myself, Kristy Ganoe (412-897-4555, kganoe@bgsu.edu), or my doctoral advisor Dr. Vikki Krane (419-372-2620, vkrane@bgsu.edu). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University (419-372-7716, hrsb@bgsu.edu). Please note that e-mail is not always secure.

By completing and returning this form you are indicating that you have been informed about what is expected of you as a research participant in this study and that your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be provided with a copy of this form and should retain it for your records.

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