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Becoming Strong Women:

Physicality, Femininity and the Pursuit of Power

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

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## Errata Sheet

Page 19, paragraph 2, line 4: Explanatory Note—the reference to gender as a recognizable “*structural force*” is used here to indicate a shift in some feminist views of “socialization” at the time from a psychological process to a socially determined role, such that “sex role socialization” was no longer accepted as solely a psychological construct.

p. 31, para. 2, line 2: “Neilsen et al.,” should be spelled “Nielsen et al.”

p. 31, para. 2, line 6: the verb “construct” should be “constructs”

p. 56, para. 1, line 6: endnote 21 should be numbered 21a (correction also required p. 329)

p. 64, para. 2, line 13: “An unproblematic agency...” should read “An unproblematic notion of agency in humanistic constructions of human nature and its exclusion in structural explanations for social identities is therefore contested in critical socio-cultural analyses.”

p. 65, para. 1, line 3: endnote 21 should be numbered 21b (correction also required p. 329)

p. 74, para. 3, line 3: “material, power effects” should be “material power effects”

p. 82, para. 1, line 10: “Theberge, 1997, p. p. 73” should be “Theberge, 1997, p. 73”

p. 85, para 2, line 5: “sk ill” should be “skill”

p. 85, para 2, line 13: the verb “reify” should be “reifies”

p. 92, para. 2, line 3: “not itself the subject of experience and” should be “not itself the subject of experience, and”

p. 111, para.2, line 1: “she did not know that” should read “she says that at the time she did not know that outdoor activities could have given her an alternative to playing sport”

p. 131, para. 1, line 3: “self-defense” should be spelled “self-defence”

p. 137, para. 2, line 3: the comma after “the private girls’ school” should be deleted and the comma after “which she attended from age 11” should be deleted

p. 141, para. 3, line 12: “self-defense” should be spelled “self-defence”

p. 142, para. 2, line 13: “that women’s physicality” should be “that woman’s physicality”

p. 142, para. 3, line 6: “marital arts training” should be “martial arts training”

p. 147, para.2, line 9: the citation “Henderson, 1996” should precede “Jordan, 1990, 1992”

p. 150, para. 1, lines 4-8: Explanatory Note—The subject of these two sentences is “the persistent emphasis on women’s difference as found in a shared and unquestionable feminine psyche” and thus “it” in the second sentence refers back to this “persistent emphasis.” Instead of “unquestionable feminine psyche,” I could have used the term “psychic structure.” When sexual difference is defined by a pre-determined *psychic* structure, I argue, there is little room for interpreting different women’s *bodily* experiences in new ways.

p. 161, para. 1, line 3: “emphasis added” should be deleted as there was no emphasis added

p. 169, para. 2, line 6: “suggestions not to be “so strong” ” should be “suggestions not to be ‘so strong’ ”

p. 179, para. 3, line 4: “their” refers to “the men’s” in the phrase “their constant performance of physical masculinity”

p. 190, para. 2, line 5: “the American camping movement and the British scouting movement foreshadowed” should read “the American camping movement, along with the British scouting movement, foreshadowed”

p. 192, para. 2, line 2: “is mediated by and *not* resisted in contemporary organized experiential learning contexts” should be “is mediated by, and *not* resisted in, contemporary experiential learning contexts”

p. 201, para. 1, line 3: “yea” should be spelled “yeah”

p. 208, para. 2, line 6: “especially has been a positive one” should read “especially when the day has been a positive one” to be the correct quote given verbatim by the research participant

p. 222, para. 1, line 6: “ (“enduring long physical hauls” (Jo, CC0330U:744-45);” should be “ (“enduring long physical hauls,” Jo, CC0330U:744-45);”

p. 222, para. 2, line 13: “you go sort it out.” should read “you go sort it out.’ ”

p. 235, para. 1, line 4: “These access internal processes” should read “Such policing accesses internal processes” and “because the operate through the physical” should be “because it operates through the physical.”

p. 237, para. 2, line 8: “and , if not contested” should be “and, if not contested”

p. 237, para. 3, line 4: “the project must new modes of physicality” should read “the project must examine new modes of physicality”

p. 239, para. 4, line 4: “orientation..” should be “orientation.”

Please note—page 253 follows page 254.

p.257, para. 1, line 3: “being a woman, “womanly wiles’ or whatever,” should be “being a woman, “womanly wiles” or whatever,”

p. 266, para. 2, line 6: “you know, ‘oh, how do I deal with this?’ (CC0336R:308-16).” should be “you know, ‘oh, how do I deal with this?’ ” (CC0336R:308-16).”

p. 271, para. 2, line 10: “quiet” should be “quite”

p. 290, para. 2, line 22: “had an affect on my performance” should be “had an effect on my performance” and line 23: “had an affect on my confidence” should be “had an effect on my confidence”

p. 310, para. 2, line 11: “do..” should be “do.”

p. 329: first Note 21 should be Note 21a and second Note 21 should be Note 21b

## Abstract

Women outdoor leaders are often told that they are too aggressive and strident and that they risk being too strong to be role models for their students. They experience competition, hostility, misogynist epithets and sexual advances, as well as coercion to prove themselves from their male students and colleagues. Many of these women report self-doubt and low confidence about their competence and that they do not advance in their careers because they take time to perfect their physical skills. Cultural feminist analyses recommend that activities for women ought not to require intense physical strength and women outdoor leaders should not be so competent that ordinary women cannot aspire to be like them. Prescriptions for all-women groups encourage non-competitive learning experiences which enhance the development of women's inner strengths and protect their psychological safety in the outdoors. Non-separatist remedies agree that women-only courses ensure women are not intimidated by men's physical superiority and argue that they should prepare women to re-enter mixed outdoor programmes with more confidence. These suggestions, however, do not account for the *relations of the physical* through which women and men socially and subjectively embody physicality. This project takes up corporeal feminism in order to examine in a group of women outdoor leaders their lived experiences of physicality and embodied identity and how these effect often contradictory gendered subjectivities. It responds to the literature by arguing that heterogendered norms are sustained when the performance of prowess is rejected as the 'male model.' In contrast, I argue that women in this study who embrace the 'hard, physical' as masculinity are allowing a non-normative bodily strength to reinscribe their feminine subjectivities. Other women who desire an "acceptable" femininity, whether "big and boisterous" or "staunch," are expanding the possibilities for gendered subjectivity. Strong women know what their bodies can do and often enthusiastically want others to experience this. Their physical prowess makes visible the social conditions through which normative femininity is inscribed as limited physical strength. When they reinscribe femininity with a lived power of strength, endurance and bodily control, they become more effective at challenging gender heteronormativity through alternative physicalities.

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This project has taken nine years to complete and I owe many people my gratitude for their assistance and influence on the work through this time. I must begin by acknowledging the two people who have provided constant and unfailing guidance from the start, this project's two supervisors, Dr. Allanah Ryan at Massey University and Professor Gregor McLennan at Bristol University, formerly at Massey University. Each took the role of Chief Supervisor in turn and each provided generous and careful attention to all aspects of the project and oftentimes incisive criticism of the work. It is due to Greg McLennan's strong suggestion that the project begin with field work that any breadth of relevance has been achieved. I have also benefited a great deal from Allanah Ryan's skill as she honed numerous drafts back to the analytical bones over the final two years. In addition, each met various turning points on my part with sustained optimism; many times Allanah Ryan proffered the exact solution to unanticipated obstacles and Greg McLennan was available for direction when it was needed most. Above all, their intellectual advice has been invaluable to my development as a social thinker. I am deeply grateful to them both.

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