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"I Don't Overburden the Women [But] I Don't Make It Easy for Them". How Martial Arts May Transform Relations Between Men and Women?

The following article is focused on the intersexual sparrings in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. The article reveals the results of the ethnographic research conducted from 2016 to 2019 in one Brazilian jiu-jitsu club in Warsaw, Poland. For the purposes of confronting women, male practitioners created a separate style of fighting, which included limiting physical advantages (such as strength or body weight) and significantly less oriented towards rivalry. The development of such a style, prevents from turning the intersexual sparrings into the ritual acts of "male domination". It is related with the new idea of male identity. However, occasionally the manifestations of hegemonic masculinity appeared: when women were close to defat men or had a discernible advantage during sparring session.

Keywords: Brazilian jiu-jitsu, ethnography of martial arts, gender, intersex sparring, masculinity

Introduction

I would like to begin this article by recalling the description of a sparring fight, carried out during one Brazilian jiu-jitsu training session[2]. I fought a light and few years younger girl. At one point I covered her with my body; she tried to break free but was unable to do so. Apart from keeping her under me, I did not

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[2] In Brazilian jiu-jitsu, the emphasis has been based on what is known as ground fighting: the lying down position. Strikes are forbidden, defeating the opponent can be done by applying leverages (on arms, legs, wrists) or choke them (with arms as well as legs). Brazilian jiu-jitsu has been present in Poland since the mid-1990s, although the sport originated in the early 20th century in Brazil. The Gracie family is considered to be its founders, whose members have spread the sport around the world.

do anything. This is how the entire sparring session passed, after which my opponent, angered, accused me of "getting down" on her. That reprimand stuck with me – from that point on, when sparring with women, I tried to be more mobile and not press them down with my body weight and my strength. The argument of the person was an expression of anger, but also a form of sensitising to the principles, prevailing in the club, an opportunity to reproduce a certain vision of a sparring fight. Through her words, my opponent became a kind of guardian of the pattern of sparring between men and women practised at the club. All men very often submit those patterns.

The aim of this paper is to present how the relationship between men and women was shaped in the Brazilian jiu-jitsu club in which I conducted field research for several years, in order to describe the manifestation of a specific gender role for men, to zoom in on the nuances of engagement in sparring fights from the aspect of conditioning, related to gender. The issue under consideration links biological sex (which is determined by the properties of the body: mostly its size) with gender – associated with specific codes of behaviour, identity, and the image of the social world of ground fightening. The adopted analytical perspective is, I believe, typical of an anthropology focused on gender identities and the relations between genders as well as gender identities reproduced and transformed in given social and cultural worlds (see Hryciuk, Kościańska 2007). On the other hand, this text falls within the ethnography of sports and martial arts, which is quite popular in the West, but still little present in Poland[3]. It is a field of knowledge that cuts across such areas as sociology or the anthropology of sport and physical culture sciences. The field of interest of this ethnography remains, among other things, the bodily practices involved in training in specific sports or martial arts, what happens in the social worlds in which trainings take place, how activities affect the collective and individual identities of the trainees, and the undertaken social actions[4]. As Marcin Darmas points out, a boxing club is not just a place to simply acquire fighting skills:

> The gym constitutes also a school of morality [...] it is a forge of discipline, of group bonds, where respect for others is demanded to the same extent as for oneself [...] the training room is a vector for the de-trivialisation of everyday life, where the routine of daily behaviour allows for transforming the body and mind (Darmas 2019: 102).

[3] It is possible to recall the work of Marcin Darmas (2019) or Katarzyna Kolbowska (2010), based on research in the environments of boxers and capoeira dancers respectively.

[4] An overview of works published in the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century that are located in the field of sports and martial arts ethnography, can be found in a cross-sectional article by Raúl García and Dale Spencer (2013). A detailed list, including more recent publications (up to 2019), can be found in George Jennings (2019).

Some publications focus on the principles and patterns of behaviour developed in sports clubs and training venues as well as on themes related to the ideological underpinnings of training, for example, the use of sports and martial arts activities to promote nationalistic ideas (Cohen 2009), religious concepts, or concrete masculinity patterns absorbed by those who train (Darmas 2019; Wacquant 2004, 2005). The latent function of the classes thus becomes the worldview processing of the participants. In this perspective, sports clubs become particular "worlds of sense" (Cohen 2009: 156), working out the definitions of various events that take place in such places and imposing certain obligations on the practitioners – towards themselves and others. Therefore, a given sports or martial arts club can organise the social relationships between trainees and have an impact on the manner of perceiving various aspects of training.

Martial arts and gender

Sport has been described by many scholars as a sphere of male dominance, a field for shaping distinct male identities, reproducing rules and codes of behaviour that should be assimilated by men (Sheard, Dunning 1973; Bryson 1987). One researcher, conducting an overview of the English-language source literature, notes that contact sports and martial arts have a specific cultural image: "they embody typical masculine traits of aggression, violence, and the cult of strength" (Kluczyńska 2010: 94)[5]. Therefore, training in sports and martial arts constitutes an opportunity for men to internalise and express certain cultural values. Boxing clubs, for example, have been described as totally masculine social worlds in which secondary socialisation of practising individuals took place: fitting into a certain model of gender identities (Wacquant 2004, 2005; Darmas 2019). Boxing turned out to be a cultural island within which patriarchal, masculine identities, linked to expressions of aggression and strength, could operate (Matthews 2015), the last stand where men could learn masculine values (Darmas 2019). The type of wrestling practised in Turkey can be considered from a similar perspective – it combined strands of national identity as well as a specific image of "traditional" masculinity, based on physical strength and fighting ability (Fabian 2020). This constitutes an example of how a particular sport, which could not be participated by women, produced a man endowed with valued qualities of body and character.

[5] Obviously, this concerns the qualities considered masculine and symbolically attributed to (fighting) men.

Over time, the image emerging from the source literature became more nuanced. Some authors included the participation of women in sports and martial arts and have underlined the emphasis that has been placed on relatively harmonious conditions for joint training, integrating men and women, avoiding competition between the sexes, building comfortable training conditions for both sexes (Channon, Jennings 2013; Channon 2014; Green 2015). A study analysing the changes taking place in British karate clubs pointed to shifting away from brutality and violence towards more subtle body work, an element of artistry, less involvement of physical force – also protecting women from overly aggressive men (MacLean 2020). This can be linked to cultural transformations of masculinity patterns, a gradual shift away from a masculine identity with its immanent element being the subordination of the female to the male (sustaining and expressing the cultural primacy of the male over the female), the emergence of different patterns that also model the relationships between men themselves (Anderson 2015). Collaboration and partnership are to emerge in relations between men and women, reflecting and marking cultural and social change (Arcimowicz 2014: 14). Situated in the feminist mainstream is a publication that examines the nuances of women's participation in martial arts activities, presenting in turn that women can acquire identities as "warriors" transcending the gender roles and identities traditionally ascribed to women (Channon, Matthews 2015). Martial arts were framed in the referenced study as a tool of female emancipation, making the gendered "I" so significantly imprinted on the sphere of men an d women interactions. In this case, training in sports or martial arts may have functioned as an aspect of the "techniques of the self" (Foucault 2000) practised by women – forming the identities of strong, capable individuals.

The undertaken analysis of the relationship between men and women in one Brazilian jiu-jitsu club covers a specific time context in which male roles and identities are being remodelled, but also in which one can observe the clear effects of the emancipation of women, creating new identities, playing increasingly subjective roles in many areas: when women's voices, demands, and discourses transcend the cultural margins, are no longer assigned to positions considered culturally and socially subordinated and dominated (cf. Hooks 2008; cf. Arcimowicz 2014). My studies concerning the practice of Brazilian jiu-jitsu show that a sports club may be perceived as a laboratory for studying the social change that is taking place – forming new relationships between men and women as well as forming and maintaining new patterns of gender identities.

Study site and interviewees

The club in which I trained and (at the same time) conducted my research has been in operation for more than a decade, thus being one of the longest functioning clubs in the capital city, with a strong team of athletes, regularly winning medals in Brazilian jiu-jitsu competitions (including those of international rank), and at the same time with a fairly large group of people training in a casual manner and a relatively high attendance at individual classes (even over 20 people at a single training session). The area I chose comprised the material site of regular gatherings of those practising the aforementioned martial art, the field of bodily practices, and the interaction of people indulging in these practices (Cohen 2009: 154; Amit 2000: 6; cf. Jakubowska 2009: 147–148; Wacquant 2004, 2005). I chose a significant point on the map of Polish clubs teaching Brazilian jiu-jitsu, a place with a certain tradition and reputation, well known among people interested in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Additionally, the relatively long duration of the club's operation (since 2012) may have been conducive to establishing certain social practices, as well as developing lasting habits and patterns of behaviour.

Training took place in the evenings: in fact, the club began working at 6 o'clock in the afternoon, when the advanced group started classes. Sometimes training ended at 10 in the evening (Monday), sometimes at 8 in the evening (Friday). Training took place earlier only on Saturdays: there were sparring sessions at 10am (and for a period of time at 11am), open to any club member, regardless of level. Such a schedule meant that a given space for only a few hours during the day, with the influx of practitioners and the formal start of training (classes for each group were held at a specific time, lasting either an hour or an hour and a half – depending on the day), could become a field of ethnographic exploration (Dalsgaard 2013: 215); during the remaining time, being a form of non-field[6]: a space barren to an ethnographer interested in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, as it was occupied by a completely different institution that organised completely different classes for a different human collective. I carried out the research for the dissertation from October 2016 to September 2019. This particular time frame was somewhat forced: at the end of August 2019, the club ceased to operate in its current location and moved to a different space – becoming part of a multi-purpose sports complex, a commercial structure that offered training not only in terms of Brazilian jiu-jitsu, but also taking

[6] A non-terrain is something fundamentally different from a "non-place", a concept introduced to the social sciences by Marc Augé. Non-terrain refers to a place in the physical and cultural sense, but one that loses the characteristics and properties of anthropologically perceived terrain: a space in which events and processes meaningful to the anthropologist take place and that need to be included into the field notes (Hastrup 2006: 92–95; cf. Rakowski 2013).

advantage of a gym or classes in other martial arts and was oriented towards a much wider range of potential customers interested in physical activity.

Representatives of the middle class constituted the majority of the interviewees – if higher education and white-collar jobs can be regarded as elementary markers of belonging to this social class[7] (as declared by my interviewees). The group included a significant number of people employed as well-educated professionals – however, there were no people, occupying director and managerial positions, people who could be clearly assigned to the upper class (cf. Gdula, Sadura 2012). Therefore, the interviewees were distinguished by a certain economic and educational capital and the social position they held or aspired to. The middle class is described as fractionated and heterogeneous (Sadura 2012). However, out of necessity I must avoid this kind of nuance – the data pool collected is too small to further divide interviewees into subgroups and fractions. Moreover, assigning individuals to a class can be considered a form of essentialism, which I would also like to avoid.

The positive meaning of physical activity and the daily experienced imperative to train, if only occasionally, one sport or another is supposed to be typical for members of this social class (Olko 2018). As well as a significant number of social practices and activities directed at maintaining a healthy and good-looking body, activities situated in the field of the **healthism** ideology (Borowiec, Lignowska 2012; Olko 2018). In my opinion, the middle class is particularly prone to spending economic capital on keeping the body healthy and fit, but also making those efforts socially recognizable. **Healthism** ideology become, thus, one of the elements of the public image of the middle-class representatives.

It should be emphasised that the interviewees were predominantly male, which resulted from the composition of the training community, in which the majority were male. I am absolutely positive that the women I interviewed would have been inclined to be more frank if the questions were asked by a female anthropologist. I believe they would have been more open about issues relating to corporeality – female and male bodies, their own limitations or emotions arising in situations of fighting with men. I have not managed to avoid a male-centric perspective: this results from the fact that I myself am a (heterosexual) male, and the publication is also based on my bodily experiences and observations I made.

[7] I am aware that the two indicated aspects do not exhaust the question of the class affiliation of the interviewees. My interviewees were predominantly university graduates doing white-collar jobs: engineers, an IT specialist, an art gallery worker, an employee of a state-owned financial institution, and a police officer (psychology graduate). Students of the following courses also attended the training sessions: medicine, physiotherapy, management, and a high school student who, after I finished my research, started studying Spanish language and culture. However, I did not provide the interviewed people with questionnaires to fill in, which would clearly allow them to be assigned to a particular social class.

However, even with these kinds of limitations, it is possible to define some aspects of the relationship between men and women from the club[8].

How did men fight women?

As noted by sport and body sociologist Honorata Jakubowska, martial arts constitute one area of competition in which the separation of men and women is strictly enforced. This is to be motivated mainly by cultural considerations:

> The arguments against this include most often men's greater strength, contact ability, and the fear of hurting a woman [...]. However, in the vast majority of cases they [women – KG] are protected from direct competition with men due to the belief, on the one hand, that a stronger man could hurt a woman and, on the other hand, that as a gentleman he could not hurt and, in the case of boxing, simply beat a woman. Protectionism is the result of a belief that women are the weaker sex and must be protected against male, physical domination (Jakubowska 2014: 223–224).

This is to be the reality of professional sport. However, co-education constitutes the norm in many sports and martial arts trained in a casual manner: a great number of activities bring together both men and women (although it does happen that a given martial arts class is attended, for example, only by men, which constitutes a social, informal act of "gender colonisation" of particular activities)[9]. I have observed such coeducation in recreational aikido, judo or krav maga classes I have attended over the last ten years. This is also mentioned by other authors conducting research in communities of martial arts practitioners (see Channon, Jennings 2013; Channon 2014; Green 2015). At the Brazilian jiu-jitsu club where I had the opportunity to train, both men and women attended the classes. The latter were, as I mentioned, far fewer in number, but every man taking part in a ground fighting class occasionally faced a woman. Such a situation modified the rules for fighting, forcing a transformation of the practices of using (one's) own body.

The fact that women are fought under different rules was mentioned to me several times during the interviews. Rafał said that when sparring with women he reorganises his fighting style in the following way:

[8] In the course of the following argument, I will take advantage of information from open-ended interviews conducted at the club (throughout the entire research period I conducted 28 open-ended interviews and several much shorter interviews of a few minutes with people from the club), data from participant observation performed during training sessions and my own physical participation (see Samudra 2008; Wacquant 2004) in Brazilian jiu-jitsu training.

[9] For example, the wrestling classes I occasionally attended from 2020 onwards included virtually only men; the presence of women was sporadic.

> I don't put weight on them, I don't make it easy for them, I don't jerk them, of course, some of my techniques, like the sweeps that I like, I do them, the backsteps I like I do berimbolo [form of technique – KG], the ones I have the possibility to use, I try, nothing changes really, I just don't use my body weight, I try to fight from the bottom. For example, if it is a lighter girl because I try a sweep or something, on a little lighter person it is easier for me just... to try during a fight with a girl some sweeps which are not my best side. I try but I don't press them.

Rafał's minimisation of the importance of weight and strength factors was accompanied by creating conditions that were left to the woman during the fight. Fighting a woman did not fit, however, into the mode of intense competition. It required a different approach to the fight – developing a cultural formula for playing it out, which was both a formula for building gender relations and, I believe, for constructing the gendered identity of the man involved in the fight. This identity was linked to a cultural set of responsibilities and rules of conduct in the relationship with the woman, in the case under consideration concealing a certain subtle patriarchalism – geared towards setting a pattern of conduct for oneself, but also for the woman in the struggle.

Another interviewee emphasised that "my weight also predestines me to [...] easily hurt someone. At least I think so. I definitely fight differently with girls. I try to move more, not base on my strength at all" [Piotr]. The awareness of one's own qualities created attentiveness to the health of others and thus removed the danger of causing injury to those training with him. There was an underlying element of concern for other, smaller and slimmer people. For this interviewee, fighting a woman meant a shift to a different register of operating the body – it created a different demand for the "presence" and activity of male physicality. However, the male body remained a potentially dangerous body, of which my interlocutor was well aware.

Sometimes stories were told about properly dosing an offensive attitude and the muscle power put into the fight – when the fight was carried out with a woman. When I asked my friend from the club, Mateusz, if he fights women differently to men, he suggested that "it's certainly lighter and I try to be careful where I put my hands". When I asked what he meant by "lighter" he replied as follows:

> Less force, less aggressively.
> **But not completely without force?**
> No, of course not. The force should be there.

The reluctance of men to fight sparring matches with women on the same terms as with other men is a theme that appears in the research of Alex Channon and George Jennings (2013) and is associated with certain cultural barriers (men should not hurt women) experienced by men. However, the aforementioned authors also

pointed out that while men initially limited their use of force against women, after some time they broke through the psychological and cultural barrier and were ready to exchange regular blows with women during sparring fights (Channon 2014: 595–596). The cited study shows that certain codes and patterns of (masculine) behaviour can only seemingly have a status of permanence and inviolability – they can be subject to far-reaching transformations and grassroots remodelling. In the case of men training in the club, the cultural barrier factor may also have played a role, but I believe that developing a particular way of fighting with women was fundamentally rooted in recognising women's preferences, listening to their expectations, and intersecting male and female horizons concerning practising Brazilian jiu-jitsu. It was not about paternalism, but about cooperation, a kind of responsiveness, manifested in a peculiar way the male body works. Therefore, the discussed variety of masculinity can be described as "responsive masculinity", shaped as a result of the needs expressed by the women training at the club. "Responsive masculinity" is a non-dominant, but "dialectical" masculinity not apodictic, but cooperative (see Arcimowicz 2014: 14; Kluczyńska 2021). The male body could not become a smaller, physically weaker, lighter. However, it was able to, and should, imitate this kind of body, partially and for a period of time "losing" some of its seemingly immanent properties. By fine-tuning the workings of their bodies, men learned to respond to women's needs and demands.

Ultimately, what did the women expect from their male sparring partners? According to Samanta's opinion, the outcome of a fight was to be determined by the difference in knowledge resources: a man should not develop an advantage (over a woman) by physical force. When I asked another practitioner, Anna, what sparring between a woman and a man should look like, my interviewee replied briefly: "so that they don't use force [with me]". Yet another club member, unknown to me by name, emphasised that a man should not use too much force when sparring with her, but that he should also not overdo it with the gentle treatment of a woman's body. Therefore, men were expected to take special care and express sensitivity in order to be able to fit in with the cultural expectations of women – to fight in a way that would be accepted by the female members of the club. Zuzanna trained in the ground together with her partner, who held a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. The interviewee told me that she was irritated when her partner fought her, engaging his full strength and skills, but she was really angry when she was patronised and treated with too much gentleness. As she put it:

> It's not a surprise that I'm losing to him, like there's also a big gap between us in terms of skills, which I understand... the conflict consists in the basis of the fighting attitude itself, so if I felt, for example, that he was too aggressive towards me or vice versa or completely disregarded me, which makes me even more angry, because it's like I also

> work very hard and I don't want anyone to disregard me, because I really [push] a huge amount of sweat, blood, limbs, everything into this mat...

Protectionism negated the particular sacrifice "of the body" that Zuzanna made during the classes she took. Therefore, fights between men and women became an art of careful and appropriate engagement of the physical parameters and skills possessed by men, as their actions shaped women's perception of the fight. The men had to face a task that was more difficult than it might appear at first glance – even though the recalled accounts show that men did, nevertheless, sometimes treat the fighting women in a patronising, unaccepting manner (I believe, however, that such moments were immediately recognized by the women).

Observing boxing sparring at one club in Chicago, the sociologist Loïc Wacquant noticed that when the fight was carried out between people of unequal physical qualities or levels of advancement, a kind of *equilibrium* was sought: so that the fight was neither too intense nor too gentle (Wacquant 2004: 81). Body work was modelled in relation to the opponent's level of advancement. I believe that something similar occurred in many cases of women's sparring fights with men at the Brazilian jiu-jitsu club: the men's body work had to situate itself within a framework that was set by the expectations and needs of the women, and required a fine-tuning of the opponents. The work of the male body involved remodelling the space of competition – it was a duty, imposed on men by women, although, a duty willingly fulfilled. The sparring between men and women was becoming a sphere for manifesting masculinity open to the needs and expectations of women, resulting from an adaptation of male behaviour to a specific social context, co-created also by womens' demands. "Male dominance" was something from which one (usually) tried to distance oneself. Brazilian jiu-jitsu, trained at the studied club, was a space of relatively harmonious coexistence, with a generally accepted belief in the physical superiority of men over women, rather than an area of conflict or competition between the sexes. The aim was to avoid (female) skills being overwhelmed by (male) physicality (Jakubowska 2014: 224; cf. Channon 2014: 597). The male superiority in the physical sphere was not ignored, but it was sought to practically invalidate, or perhaps better said, suspend this superiority (as much as possible) in a socially acceptable way. This shaped the space for effective learning by women – ensuring that they could freely build their skills and enjoy practicing Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

Manifestations of hegemonic masculinity

During interviews two female members of the club talked about situations in which, during a sparring session, there had an advantage – in such a situation the fighting

style of the men changed meaningly. According to Karolina's account: "it happens [that] that guys told me "cool, cool, cool, we'll fight in a right way", but when the girl is supposed to gain points, took good position or finish them, then all of a sudden [the man] turns on the force and [aims to] knock her off brutally". If the previously indicated courtesy on the part of men, manifested during sparring fights with women, is distinguished in the world of sports and martial arts (Channon 2014; Channon, Jennings 2013), the quoted statement indicates the boundary of this courtesy (in relation to sparring in Brazilian jiu-jitsu at the studied club): the woman could fight for victory, but she could not come close to the point where her advantage over the man would be marked. Brutality was a form of male resistance to the raising skill of women. As Pierre Bourdieu wrote: "femininity threatening masculinity reinforces vigilance, leading, paradoxically, to over-involvement" (2004: 56), in the analysed context – engagement in fighting a woman, outlining the informal framework that the woman was not allowed to cross. Another club member, Małgorzata, emphasised that the very fact of sparring with a woman made the body work of some of the men visible in a unique motivation that filled the interviewee with horror and could be perceived as a desire to put "male dominance" into practice:

> There are a couple of smaller ones [men at the club] that I am actually afraid of. They know that even if we are proportionally similarly built and they just seem to get so amped up on straight away that they can't lose to me and for [it] not to happen, they have to go to their physical limits.

Such behaviour may have been implied by similar body sizes: as if, in the men's perspective, this alone approximates the possibility of defeat in a sparring match with a woman. Such a turn of events was unacceptable to some men. Admittedly, there were also club members suggesting that a victory, earned in a fight with them by a woman, would not pose a great emotional or identity problem for them[10]. However, the situations evoked in Karolina's and Małgorzata's accounts demonstrate that occasionally in men's behaviour it is possible to identify the desire to gain advantage over women at all costs, to dominate them ruthlessly – which can be considered as manifestations of "hegemonic masculinity", according

[10] This was emphasised, for example, by my friend from the club, Mateusz, suggesting that the differences between men and women are now diminishing: both in the sports space and in other areas of social life. Consequently, certain physical attributes (like strength) are no longer the domain of one gender: "No, I don't know, if someone is better, or bigger, and so on, is able to win. Well, that's great, right? Today the division between men and women is so small when it comes to life, when it comes to sport, that... pff. But no, I don't have a problem. There are strong chicks, there are strong dudes, and it's cool. Some diversity". Mateusz was inclined to appreciate rather than depreciate such an image of the modern world (in which the feminine equals the masculine). It is a vision of a relatively egalitarian world (in terms of possessing certain physical attributes and therefore the implied outcomes of intersex competition).

to a perspective outlined by Australian researcher Raewyn Connell (Skoczylas 2011; Connell, Messerschmidt 2005). In the studied case, "hegemonic masculinity" constitutes a body practice that reinforces the image of martial arts training as an area in which a woman will not be able to gain an advantage over a man. This shows that certain patriarchal beliefs shape men's reactions and behaviour towards women. I believe that the idea of suffering defeat at the hands of a woman may have been regarded by some of the men training at the club as something culturally and socially undesirable, something to be avoided, at all costs. Brutality became a tool for controlling women and the progress they made in mastering Brazilian jiu-jitsu, but above all – a form of maintaining a certain cultural order in which a woman could not achieve victory over a man in hand-to-hand combat. However, the very noticing of such situations by women and the critical tone that accompanied their discussion were, in my opinion, a form of disagreement with male domination, a disagreement expressed not only on a discursive level. The story I recalled at the beginning exemplified the practice of a social resistance from the women. There were more such activities. During one class, I saw that Magda suddenly stopped the fight – leaving her male sparring partner alone (and somewhat confused) on the mat. She later explained to me that her opponent was pushing her neck very hard with his hands, causing it to hurt. Resigning to participate in the sparring constituted an expressive act of blocking male dominance (achieved through physical force). In this way, men who fought too violently could be excluded from joint training. If hand-to-hand combat training resulted in occasional manifestations of male dominance, there were also expressive acts of resistance on the part of women: these were ways of disciplining the men, sensitising them to the club's rules and proper body practices. Attempts of male dominance did not go unpunished.

Summary: What happened between men and women?

A variety of socio-cultural contexts can work in favour of forming diverse gender roles and regulate relations between women and men. Social sciences track the manifestations and transformations of gender patterns and identities in many areas of social life: education, medicine, work, recreation. Sports and martial arts clubs are just one of the spaces in which relationships between men and women are built and transformed. However, it is a special area where physical contact and confrontations between trainers of both sexes take place – which may create conditions forming new patterns of masculinity and femininity as well as articulating specific needs and regulating interpersonal interactions. The research I conducted shows that martial arts training can be associated with specific, ambiguous expressions and manifestations of gender identities, implying specific ways of using

the body (cf. Mauss 1973) by men, and also social relations between men and women. On the one hand, I can reject the view that sport can be categorically regarded as an area for creating and reproducing competitively oriented and dominantly (*vis-à-vis* women) expressive masculine identities. Sports clubs are no longer "men's worlds" where women are not allowed to enter. On the contrary – women are full-fledged participants, accepted by men and able to shape joint training. At the same time, in contrast to Alex Channon's research among people training sports and martial arts (2014), I believe that the differences between men and women did not disappear in the course of training together. They were constantly present in the interactions taking place and shaped the gender identity of men training Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

The interviews conducted with club members and the observations made by me, result in a conclusion about the considerable openness of the men to women's demands, a willingness to adopt the considered area of body practices according to women's needs. I believe that, to some extent, this reflects the scale of the changes in gender relations that can be observed in contemporary society (at least in some areas): the emphasis on egalitarianism between the sexes and the openness of men to female discourses (cf. Arcimowicz 2014), but also the power and significance of women's demands, which were able to have an impact on men's behaviour and practices. The female voice is currently not coming from an area of cultural margin, but from a space occupied equally with men and intentionally constructed by women.

However, on the other hand, it would be difficult to conclude that the elements of "hegemonic masculinity", which are supposed to be inscribed in the world of sport and reproduced through sport, have completely disappeared among the surveyed men. Manifestations of this masculinity appeared in concretised moments that were well remembered by the women – when the men experienced, or were able to experience, a woman's superiority during the sparring. "Hegemonic masculinity" formed a kind of residuum of bodily practices, manifested irregularly and therefore sometimes difficult to grasp, but – from the perspective of the men involved in the sparring sessions – performing an important psychological and identity function. It is possible to interpret this state of affairs through the concept of "hybrid masculinity". It emphasises the shifting of men between the vectors of domination and egalitarianism, power and cooperation, hierarchy and emancipation, which, as a result, serves to maintain elements of patriarchalism in society (Kluczyńska 2021). However, I believe that many situations and cases I described reflected a positive social change in relations between men and women. Men's practices marked a departure from patriarchalism. Hence the framing of the described social actions using the concept of "responsive masculinity". At the studied Brazilian jiu-jitsu club, "hegemonic masculinity" was sometimes difficult to eradicate (and this eradication can be considered an important aspect of normalising social relations between

men and women, but also in groups made up of men alone), even though it was overshadowed by cooperative practices and interventions related to the care of the female body and the sense of comfort of the women training Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

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