Aims. Researchers have typically focused on men who practice Mixed Martial Arts and their perception of hyper-masculinity. There is a lack of comparative work which examines women who practice MMA as a sport. This article aims to address this gap by exploring how women practice MMA as a sport and how they navigate their expression of hyper-masculinity. There is a lack of comparative work which examines women who practice MMA as a sport. This article aims to address this gap by exploring how women practice MMA as a sport and how they navigate their expression of hyper-masculinity.

The purpose of this study is to explore how gender is constructed and performed by women who engage in Mixed Martial Arts. MMA has historically been a male-dominated sport. Exceptions are made if a woman expresses masculinity by exaggerating the symbols and behaviors that typify and stigmatize male behavior. The aim of this study is to understand how women practice MMA and how they navigate their expression of hyper-masculinity.

**Methodology**

I approached this study using a “grounded approach” (Glaser and Strauss, 2008) defined as the discovery of data from theory.” A large portion of my research was on field research and on informal interviews where I am becoming a participant observer at various gyms. This allowed me to gain useful insights and understand the various perspectives of what it means to be a “female fighter.” I was able to use the gym as a location for in-depth data collection. Collecting various forms of sensory information as well as emotional and physical information made for a much more applicable and valid understanding of the experiences of women’s experiences. I conducted two formal semi-structured interviews with professional female fighters. Some common questions included:

1. What makes you want to become a fighter? Why do you fight?
2. What is the biggest challenge you have faced as a woman in the sport of MMA?
3. Are there any similarities between the challenges faced by male and female fighters in MMA?

**Results**

I also had experiences with being matched with other female fighters who expressed very feminine characteristics. In this scenario the direction was not in different directions. First I would be matched with a fighter who represented the ideal “feminine” fighter. This meant that she would not be aggressive, and would not engage in physical contact with her opponents. This continued until we would finally fight with a female fighter who was in the middle of the spectrum of women’s expression. This was a very interesting experience because it allowed me to see how female fighters would change their position on the chart from one to the other. This was significant because it provided insight into understanding women’s expectations, those that define being a woman and those that define being male. Women must learn to navigate, negotiate, and balance two sets of expectations, those that define being a woman and those that define being male. There is a lack of comparative work which examines women who practice MMA as a sport. This article aims to address this gap by exploring how women practice MMA and how they navigate their expression of hyper-masculinity.

**Conclusion and Further Study**

The first step of this study was to create a typology describing the three female fighter types. I selected well known professional female fighters to represent each type. I wanted to capture the physical characteristics, personality, and identity. The main focus is to explore how women navigate and perform “gender” in the patriarchal sub-culture of Mixed Martial Arts. It is important to note that women who practice MMA may change their position on the chart from one to the other. The main goal is to understand how women navigate and perform “gender” in the patriarchal sub-culture of Mixed Martial Arts. It is important to note that women who practice MMA may change their position on the chart from one to the other. The main goal is to understand how women navigate and perform “gender” in the patriarchal sub-culture of Mixed Martial Arts. It is important to note that women who practice MMA may change their position on the chart from one to the other. The main goal is to understand how women navigate and perform “gender” in the patriarchal sub-culture of Mixed Martial Arts. It is important to note that women who practice MMA may change their position on the chart from one to the other. The main goal is to understand how women navigate and perform “gender” in the patriarchal sub-culture of Mixed Martial Arts. It is important to note that women who practice MMA may change their position on the chart from one to the other. The main goal is to understand how women navigate and perform “gender” in the patriarchal sub-culture of Mixed Martial Arts. It is important to note that women who practice MMA may change their position on the chart from one to the other.