Inside Game: Embodying Resilience and Resistance through Capoeira

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By Paula Joanne Lynn Weber
Regina, Saskatchewan

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Paula Joanne Lynn Weber, candidate for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, has presented a Support Paper titled, *Inside Game: Embodying Resilience and Resistance Through Capoeira* for the Exhibition titled *Inside Game*, in an oral examination held on July 3, 2018. The following committee members have found the Support Paper acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Janelle Joseph, University of Toronto

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Charity Marsh, Department of Film

Co-Supervisor: *Dr. Rebecca Caines, Department of Theatre

Committee Member: Dr. Helen Pridmore, Department of Music

Committee Member: Dr. Megan Smith, Creative Technology

Chair of Defense: Dr. Darlene Juschka, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies

*via SKYPE*
Abstract

This critical support paper outlines a background, as well as the theoretical and methodological considerations for my thesis performance, *Inside Game*. The title is taken from a common phrase used in capoeira as a creative, Brazilian martial art, and resistance form: one needs to have a good "inside game" by not backing away from one's opponent, but instead by staying as physically close to them as possible. I borrowed this phrase to represent a capoeira value along with a reference to the 'inside game' of my own thoughts and personal history represented in this project. Capoeira provides the movement, musical, and ideological influence of this project, while I, as a CODA (Child Of Deaf Adults) share my personal history, that is, how I've come to interact with, embrace, and story tell through capoeira. The performance piece itself includes four sections, or movements guided by thematic material ("Relational Power", "Conflict without Submission/Resolution", "Self Knowledge/Celebration", and "Joy in Conflict"), bookended by two poems in American Sign Language.

I have found capoeira to be a useful vehicle for my personal explorations. In this MFA project I am identifying myself as a Western woman who practices capoeira, as capoeira is not native to my home country of Canada. Furthermore, I am identify myself as a white, cisgendered woman in my study. I also use the term, CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), to define my identity, as this shapes my view of and relationship to capoeira. It is through this lens that I have fallen in love with capoeira and allowed it to change me.

This paper engages with post-structuralism and postcolonialism, specifically Foucault's articulation of power relations, along with feminist expansions on these ideas, and "Borderland Theory", as developed by Anzaldua (1987). These theoretical considerations are then applied to capoeira ideologies and ways of knowing, (specifically
the capoeira concept of *malícia* and how these concepts aid in the understanding and expression of marginalization and gendered violence experienced amongst Western women. This project explores what it personally means to be powerful on an individual level, and yet continue to be powerless in a society that treats femininity as "less than". This project also engages with my own struggle with sexual assault, marginalization through being a CODA, my white privilege, and the messiness of intersectionality. This project explores living with, and not ‘solving’ oppressive and traumatic experiences. My hope is that this project will provide an example of how to engage with societal ideologies on a personal level, and in doing so, shed light on the deep-rooted effects of trauma perpetuated by oppressive societal structures present in North America.
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Inside Game: Embodying Female Resilience through Capoeira

Introduction

With support from my developing network of female solidarity and resistance, I have developed this MFA project and engagement paper, in order to focus on the personal journey, I have taken as a sexual assault survivor, and how my experience of creating a resistant body is connected to those with similar experiences. I also explore my own fragmented way of self-expression, communication through verbal and nonverbal forms, and how wrestling with this material helped me to create my MFA performance. In order to do this, I employ mixed methods. I use improvisation in both capoeira and dance, and electronic music to further expand upon my themes. I also employ feminist expansions on Foucault as well as Anzaldúa’s Borderlands theory to explore and support my thematic material, which I will introduce later.

Inside Game focuses on my personal narrative, supported by data from my interviews I conducted with my fellow capoeiristas along with material from our classes, rodas, and improvisations among collaborators during rehearsals for my performance. I created an interdisciplinary performance with capoeira and improvised dance movements, music, poetry, American Sign Language (ASL) and projections. I chose this combination of artistic forms because I found that they allowed me to fully articulate my personal narrative in relation to capoeira. I have worked closely with two coaches from Flux School of Human Movement: Ariane Desrosiers and Jennifer Hammer, as well as with two other dedicated capoeira members of Flux: Mathew Obrigewitsch and Dr. Jaime Williams.

The title Inside Game refers to a common phrase in capoeira; in order to play well, one must be able to stand their ground and weave themselves between moves
executed by their opponent’s body. Capoeiristas typically strive for a good inside game where they are constantly in close proximity with their fellow player. I’ve used this title because it is a common capoeira phrase that encapsulates the goals of my performance. First, I aim to tell my personal story of my connection to capoeira, my inner reflective self. Secondly, by performing this autoethnography, I am inserting myself into my audiences’ psyche. Thirdly, by exposing myself I am connecting my intimate story to others, particularly other victims of sexual assault and those who carry experiences of being ‘othered’. I am exploring the transformative nature of capoeira, as well as the problematic nature of my involvement in it.

Research Question

Within this paper I will explain why I, a white woman from Canada, chose to become involved so intimately in capoeira, an indigenous and foreign martial art, and how it has affected me deeply. As my body became spatially aware and confident in training, I wondered how this practice created such a resilience within me, who struggles with shyness. I ask: Why does capoeira give me such a sense of agency? Does capoeira foster the same resistance and resilience in others? How does capoeira provide a platform of resistance for people practicing outside of Brazil?

I argue that playing capoeira has enabled me to practice resistance as an indirect exchange of power, which is more congruent with my everyday experiences as a North American woman. I now view myself as a powerful person, even if I am in a situation or context that puts me in an unequal or disadvantaged position. I explore these themes using Anzaldua’s Borderlands Theory, which contextualizes intersectionalities and contradictions within personal identities. In the introduction to the fourth edition of *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* (2007), Cantú and Hurtado summarize:

...stigmatized social identities based on sexuality, gender, race, class, ethnicity, and physical ableness are not additive; they do not result in increased oppression
with an increased number of stigmatized group memberships. Instead, individuals’ various sources of oppression are conceptualized as intersecting in a variety of ways depending on the social context. (8)

I apply Borderlands theory to the paradox of being part of a privileged class and yet a survivor of gendered violence, of being a native English speaker with a Deaf mother, of becoming powerful within a traditionally gendered masculine artform.

Situating Myself

Until recently, I discounted the fact that I am a Child Of Deaf Adults (CODA). Within the past year I have explored the connection between being a part of the Deaf community and capoeira which has amplified a feeling of being at home in both worlds. Both cultures demand a repertoire of facial expressions, skill in physical coordination, use of visual space, and movement. There are notable differences in movement as ASL does not require handstands or a degree of physical danger. Yet there are similarities in the requirements for communication such location, movement, duration, and handshapes which I consider to be similar to movements within capoeira (Baker and Cokely). Most importantly in both Deaf and capoeira cultures, eye contact is essential. (Michele Friedner and Annelies Kusters). However, in my daily experiences outside of my childhood upbringing and family home, I find eye contact to be non-essential. As a child, the second I stopped looking into my mother’s eyes, the conversation was over, and I was chastised for my rudeness. In capoeira, a lack of eye contact is not only disrespectful, but deadly. In both cases, the interactions cannot take place without eye contact, where in the regular hearing world eye contact is optional. Professor of Deaf Studies Dirksen Bauman summarizes what is known as calls Deaf-gain through essential eye contact within the Deaf community.
Eye contact really deserves our examination. If we look at how Deaf people use eye contact to maximize human potential for eye use, including cognitive processing and social engagement throughout their lives. For hearing people it’s a different story. If we look, on the metro, for example, the hearing perspective of serial conversation and the lack of eye gaze, where we don’t have to meet each other’s’ gaze for a conversation. But it’s actually far healthier to engage in conversation with eye gaze shared, it’s a healthier perspective which is brought to us by understanding how Deaf people use it. And so then we can then learn, as hearing people, how to increase human connection and human interaction, human social and cognitive domains by how Deaf people do this. So we have to contrast this hearing loss by what is gained by being Deaf, Deaf-Gain. (“On becoming hearing”)

To participate in Deaf culture and capoeira, eye contact is necessary for any interaction to occur. Therein lies the difference between my experience in the Deaf and hearing worlds; in the hearing world, eye contact is optional, or considered ‘good form’ for hearing people, whereas for the Deaf it is a lifeline. When one is playing capoeira, eye contact is that same lifeline - to avoid being injured, to play well, one cannot avoid eye contact. Therefore, the practice of eye contact gave me an immediate connection to ‘home’ as soon as I started playing. The necessity of both eye contact for both interaction in capoeira and in Deaf culture are unique from my experiences. I brought my Deaf-Gain into a new world, that of capoeira. My peers frequently mentioned how maintaining eye contact was one of the hardest things for an emerging capoeirista to achieve. Hearing people’s cultural disdain for eye contact in contrast to one of my childhood habits, guided me to reflect on my life as a CODA.
In the last 10 years, scholarship has emerged on the unique experiences of CODAs, which includes having hearing people refer to us CODAS as the parents of our own Deaf parents, being stuck as interpreters, and not belonging fully to either hearing or deaf communities. These experiences are all discussed in Robert Hofmeister’s book chapter “Border crossings by Hearing Children of Deaf Parents” (2008). He outlines the prejudices against Deaf people that CODAs deal with at a young age, that is, being taught by Deaf people that Hearing people are not to be trusted. At the same time, CODAs are taught that the Deaf are less competent than the Hearing. (3405) I can think of several instances where this statement was true during my childhood. In my early childhood, I had a Deaf babysitter, and was part of a vibrant Deaf community. This community began its decline in 1990, a year before I was born, and was quite dissipated by the time I reached the age of six. For this reason, my mother had to move from Saskatoon to North Battleford to gain employment. Still, my early childhood, along with intermittent exasperated conversations with my mother about the chronic lack of ASL interpreters, or insufficient access to language, enforced the idea that Hearing people were quite cruel. At the same time, I would be asked bizarre questions by strangers about how it was possible I could read and write so well with a Deaf mother or comments like “She seems rather capable, how Deaf she is really?” Hoffmeister concludes:

The Deaf have an idea of home, be it...a Deaf community, a Deaf club etc. CODAs have found the concept of home to be elusive. It turns out, I think, that our concept of home is the house and the family we construct ourselves...It is possible that the CODA Annual Conference has established this place in our lives. There has never been any place a CODA can go in order to understand these situations. This is why we are survivors. We
have done this all growing up, essentially on our own. We can all be proud of this. We have accomplished lives with and without the support of the Deaf or the Hearing (3836).

Before reading this, I did not think of myself as a survivor; in my mind it would be too cruel to call my childhood with a Deaf single mother as something I survived. To think like this is to dismiss Hoffmeister’s praise of the resilience of CODAs. This resilience is similar to the resilience found in the history and continuation of capoeira narratives as well as within Borderlands Theory. Anzaldúa states: “A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.” (25) This is consistent with my experience as a CODA with an elusive sense of home (Hoffmeister).

I was recently confronted with a new experience that made me reconsider my connection with marginalization, and to think deeply about my personal journey of being a surviving CODA. In February of 2017 I attended Sound Off Festival, a festival specializing in Deaf theatre. I had a very strong reaction to an opera called Songs My Mother Never Sang to Me. It was about growing up as a CODA. I did not realize how much of my childhood had never been represented in media until seeing this performance. I cried when the main character, a hearing boy, fell off the kitchen counter. His injury prevented him from getting off the floor and naturally he cried for his mother’s help. She did not come. I have the exact same memory of falling off a kitchen counter and my mother not coming to my aid. Until I saw this represented, I had not truly grasped how much of my childhood experience is atypical from children with hearing parents. Thus, I suggest that being a part of a marginalized community has forged my emotional connection with capoeira.
Capoeira demands spatial awareness, eye contact, and observational skills. These are all skills I developed as a CODA. Both capoeira and the Deaf community communicate through a common physical language, and there is a built-in expectation in both to communicate by any means necessary. My capoeira mestre (Portuguese for “Master”), Amir Solsky (Mestre Parafina) is from Israel, speaks multiple languages, and sings in Portuguese because it is a requirement of capoeira. At his batizado (initiation to become a mestre) in May of 2016, multilingual capoeiristas often served as casual interpreters; there was an expectation that communication was always possible; just the means would change, whether it be through language, or game play or music. This notion of communication resonated with my CODA experience. For instance, the importance of making the interaction and communication successful is what Deaf scholar Mara Green terms “moral orientation”. (2014) She argues that this desire for communication is “...embedded in deaf notions and practices of sameness and experienced as both good and right”. (460) Crasborn and Hiddinga expand upon this notion by stating “Our point is that deaf people make greater use of different modalities in their communication and thus manage greater communicative repertoires.” (63, “Paradox of International Sign” in It's a Small World: International Deaf spaces and encounters, 2015) This is a value I have learned from the Deaf community and adopted through my life. When seeing the same moral orientation practiced in a physical way with capoeira, I immediately connected with the gestures, physical movements, and rhythms used both in and outside of the roda as effective methods of communication.

My experiences of sexual assault and harassment is not central to my thesis performance, yet the experience of having survived comprise one of many reasons I am attracted to the roda, or the circle in which capoeira is played. In the roda, I am an observer, a leader, a follower; every role I’ve played in my survival process is represented here. I am a victim, a survivor, a spokesperson, and a cautious defender.
The roda is led by the capoeira mestre (master) who plays the berimbau and leads the singing. There are two capoeiristas playing the jogo (game) in the circle and the rest of the capoeiristas form the outside of the circle. These active audience members sing and clap in response to the mestre. The capoeiristas are able to change roles quickly during the roda; playing various percussion instruments, moving in the centre, and singing on the outside. Capoeiristas are therefore required to be interdisciplinary artists. I find this interdisciplinarity helpful in combining and switching between the roles of being a CODA, an artist, and a survivor. Role switching is also helpful in exploring the messiness of the layers present in my project. As a survivor of assault, I’ve personally experienced that there is no tidy resolution to these events in my life. As the roda is treated as a metaphor for life in capoeira, I find the unresolved tension and conflict on display in the jogo (game) deeply connected to my memories and present-day thoughts surrounding trauma. My resonance with the roda is heightened by the sense of agency I experience as a capoeirista; something that was missing during my assault. As a capoeirista I am able to use my body in a physically aggressive, playful, and expressive way. Capoeira words such as Axe (good energy) and malandragem (playing through deceit) describe the state of powerless yet resilient people.

Unfortunately, I am not a confrontational person. There must be a way of asserting oneself without a change in personality. How can I be strong without reverting to masculine stereotypes? How can I stand up for myself when I do not like arguing (sometimes even when being ‘assertive’ dictates an argument). How do I navigate my sense of helplessness?

My Approach to Capoeira
I train with a small female led capoeira group, which is unique in the world of capoeira. Although our mestre is male, he resides in LA, California while we train at Flux School of Human Movement in Regina, Saskatchewan. This distance restricts our ability to attend batizados (or events where belts or cords are given out) so our group contains only what qualifies as a 'novice' level despite our intensive training. We continue to practice music, including the traditional capoeira instruments (Berimbau, antíbue etc) as well as practice our improvisation skills within the art itself. I possess a Bachelor of Music and received extensive ballet training as a child, all which have contributed to my ability to learn capoeira. I believe that our unique position of being in a female-led capoeira community provides an opportunity to explore what capoeira means to this group of western women. Capoeira has been a way to equip myself with tools for making myself physically stronger and mentally resilient. There are many ways to improve strength and build confidence available to the average North American. Any variation of martial arts training, CrossFit, or weight training have countless testimonies to how each of these has boosted confidence for numerous individuals. Capoeira appealed to me over all of these because the whole practice is created by and for the oppressed, the powerless, and teaches mental tactics for living with powerlessness. Much like Theatre of The Oppressed, From Brazil’s Augusto Boal, I found that capoeira is a methodology for understanding conflict. In order to explore this further, I interviewed other capoeiristas and how they interacted with capoeira (1977). My hope is that this project is relevant beyond my own personal narrative, and to demonstrate the potential for storytelling within capoeira beyond its often romanticized origins in Brazil (Talmon-Chvaicer).

As a new student to capoeira, I looked to my mestre to explain practical movements and rhythm patterns, but also his teaching philosophy and personal ethnography as a capoeirista. He often emphasized the concept of balança. This is directly translated to the word balance in English, but for a capoeirista it means to be in
constant shift in one’s body; to be ready for anything. As capoeira’s nature is to be adaptable, to change, to grow, and to resist, I am exploring what this means for me, and how I relate to others in my capoeira community and my community at large. Several of my interviewees stated that capoeira gave them a sense of belonging when they felt like they did not ‘fit’. My mestre Amir admitted that as a young person he was not into sports in high school and felt like he was unable to fit in the athletic world. He is now one of the largest capoeira names in Israel, and a celebrity trainer in LA. I relate to Amir’s description of feeling ‘unable to fit’. After the interview, I reflected upon why I might relate to feeling like an outsider, while enjoying many social advantages associated with being white and middle class.

One of the first things that I found attractive about capoeira was *malícia* or *malandragem*. Anthropologist Margaret Wilson gives an excellent description of this capoeira concept:

> ... it is the ability to make a situation appear one way when it is actually another, to laugh when one is hurt, pretend one is in pain when one is not; the ability to unbalance the emotions of others while giving away nothing of oneself. In the *roda* of capoeira angola, much of the strategy revolves around the players' attempts to deceive each other, feint one move when they intend another, offer a handshake that masks an intended attack, tease other players as a way to confuse them. (26)

This is what I had been looking for, the ability to not change my vulnerability, but to disguise it. I find the concept of *malícia* is representative of how women are sometimes forced to communicate within patriarchal culture. *Malandragem* is the most important concept in capoeira; without *malandragem*, it is not capoeira, only movements strung together. Capoeira researcher Merell explains:
The slaves in Brazil developed *malicia* into a carefully honed instrument by means of which to generate subversive acts against their masters. *Malicia* became their way of coping with life, a way of life, the heart and soul which is found in capoeira. (279)

*Malandragem* is a form of trickery; a way of securing one’s opponent into security and then turning the tables when least expected. This is evident in several capoeira postures and kicks. The *chocerina*, for example, literally refers to the defecating position, yet this posture can easily be turned into a *bencao* or “blessing” kick. (Lewis). The kick is allegedly named after slaves being ‘blessed’ with a kick or harsh treatment even on Sundays. This ‘trickster’ mentality is imperative to capoeira’s improvisational form. The novice *capoeirista* learns kick and escape sequences; however, once the *capoeirista* is in the ring, it is up to her how to use the tricks to defeat her opponent. In a game of capoeira, there is a steady flow of movement until there is not. The players are evenly matched until they are not. The constant re-inventing, unstable practice of capoeira directly embodies improvisation in other art forms; the jazz saxophonist is constantly playing the notes not heard in the chord progression, theatrical improvisers’ success relies on transforming their performance space. One of my interviewees explains their experience with improvisation:

> You have to see the big picture of your training, you have to really learn all these crazy things, but you have to gauge. Going back and forth, solid then suck at it. You this kinda way I play with my own mind. So, every situation is a little different. You have your own responsibility and your own process. (Capoeira interview, 2016)

I’ve experienced the joy and frustration of improvising in a similar way in multiple disciplines.
Although the concept of *Malandragem* is not ingrained into these arts as it is in capoeira, all are committing a form of trickery. Furthermore, capoeira is centered around the idea of conflict without submission – a good game is a good conversation and not necessarily having a clear winner. Anzaldúa writes of the contradictions of being a woman and living in within Mexican and Western societal expectations of women to be subservient to men.

We do not engage fully. We do not make full use of our faculties. We abnegate. And there in front of us is the crossroads and choice: to feel a victim where someone else is in control and therefore responsible and to blame (being a victim and transferring the blame on culture, mother, father, ex-lover, friend, absolves me of responsibility), or to feel strong, and, for the most part, in control. (43)

This is a choice the powerless must make, to let things ‘be as they are’ or to have a sense of control over one’s body, mind, financial situation, career, etc. Creating *Inside Game* encouraged me to wrestle with being a victim, yet belonging to one of the wealthiest classes in the world. Women who experience sexism on a regular basis will hopefully find *malicia* more relatable than a project that aims to ‘solve’ oppression. My purpose here is to demonstrate how these experiences of discrimination affect our self-image/knowledge, our lives as a whole, and our relationship to others.

**My Environment and Discourses**

“...and my new basement will be so big, I’m making it into a gym!”

“That’s a great idea!” I replied, gripping my coffee.
“Yeah, no more [coed gyms]. It’s terrible”.

“What do you mean terrible?” my dad interjected.

“Oh pretty much every time I go there someone will say something rude or inappropriate.”

replied my mom’s Education intern. She’s the same age as me. We are out with my parents for coffee, celebrating the end of her internship.

“Oh I know!” I exclaim.

“Why don’t you just report it? That’s bizarre, who does that?” said my dad.

“Everyone. And sometimes it’s hard to identify where a whispered threat comes from, and they’ll deny it if you go after them”.

“Yeah there’s just no point,” My peer agreed. “It’s easier for me to just work out in my basement.”

The numerous accounts of gendered and racist violence all deserve to be shared by those involved, and if possible, empathized with by their audiences. I am telling my story, one of many. Harmful interactions are not limited to gyms but are engrained in daily interactions and media. In 2017, the purpose of the #metoo campaign on Twitter was to show the magnitude of sexual assault and harassment. Until the #metoo campaign, and the 2017 celebrity (undeservedly named) “Witch Hunt” of sexual aggressors, most women speaking out against violence were dismissed as “feminazis”.

Since my sexual assaults took place nearly ten years ago, I did not have access to the voices of other women to encourage me to come forward; I was too afraid.

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1 This term refers to the recent ‘outings’ of sexual predators in powerful positions, most notably Harvey Weinstein, Hollywood mogul.
I started capoeira because I hated going to my old gym, where even my rapist, a year later, thought it was a fun pastime to talk to me while I was using the squat rack, not to mention the amount of times I have been asked by other men if I ‘needed a spotter’. I gave up, and I joined Flux School of Human Movement, a women-owned gym whose head coach had just begun teaching introductory capoeira classes. However, as Oprah said in her 2018 Golden Globe acceptance speech, that sexual predators’ “time is up”. Recently, victims have found their collective voice, using social media as an effective way to communicate their stories.

Literature Review

I argue that among western, female capoeiristas, capoeira can function as a tool for sustaining resilience and resistance against oppression. Research concerning capoeira is a new area of research, most notably in Laurence Robitaille’s doctoral thesis Capoeira as a Resource: Multiple uses of culture under conditions of Transnational Neoliberalism. Other contributions include Willson’s article, “Designs of Deception: Concepts of Consciousness, Spirituality and Survival in Capoeira Angola in Salvador, Brazil.” Chung’s book chapter, “Theatre of the oppressed as a Martial Art”, Joseph’s. “The practice of capoeira: diasporic black culture in Canada” Burt’s article, “Transcending Traditional Group Work: Using the Brazilian Martial Art of Capoeira as a Clinical Therapeutic Group for Culturally Diverse Adolescents”. Both articles focus on the therapeutic potential for capoeira. Burt argues for capoeira as an effective tool for anger

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2 This offer, typically made by men to ‘assist’ women while weight lifting, is a veiled excuse to touch/and or get close to a weightlifter. I have had this ‘assistance’ offered to me multiple times while weightlifting at commercial gyms.

3 The #timesup campaign, led by celebrities Oprah and Emma Watson, is a reference to Oprah’s speech as well as a campaign against sexual violence.
management, while Chung's writing is focused on individuals' experiences of survival.

Jason Stanyek has numerous publications on the topic of how Brazilian ideas, such as *malicia* and Brazilians' reputation as improvisers, have made their mark on North American culture. This includes using capoeira as a way to symbolize an exotic 'other'. Furthermore, there are two comprehensive histories of capoeira widely used in North America. The earlier text is Lewis’s *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (1992) and more recently *The Hidden History of Capoeira: A collision of cultures in the Brazilian battle dance* (2008) by Talmon-Chvaicer.

These texts, in some way or another identify and explore the ability of capoeira to create personal resilience, with the exception of Chung, and Joseph who use it within the realm of community and arts-based research. Chung’s research is specific to Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed and combining the physical practice of martial arts in general; he never mentions capoeira specifically. Chung concludes:

TO [Theatre of the Oppressed] as a martial art is true to Augusto Boal's practice, but it emphasizes expanding kinesthetic and proprioceptive exploration to encompass intention and energy. My work emphasizes demechanization and integrates exercises from the martial arts, which allows spect-actors to explore situations of physical conflict through Image and Forum Theatre. With practice, participants gain awareness and insight they can apply every moment. TO as a martial art affirms that coercion, control, and domination are ultimately self-defeating. It is an experience of how genuine power comes from connection to the earth, to our minds and bodies, and to each other. When we are able to reach toward each other in solidarity, we are able to "liberate ourselves and our oppressors". (150)
I agree with Chung that martial arts have the ability to teach us about our physical connection with the earth and our surroundings through our own bodies. In the rehearsals and improvisation sessions leading up to this project, I wanted to play with the idea of not cooperating with improvisation, something that is usually discouraged among improvisors. One of the ideas we used was an uncooperative contact improvisation, which is performed in Movement 2: “Relational power” of Inside Game. This was challenging, but with practice Dr. Williams and I created a way of improvisation that included the body weight transfer and constant touching of contact improv and the option of enforcing one’s will upon, or surprising, one’s partner. Through these improvisation sessions I was able to physically explore "... how genuine power comes from connection to the earth, to our minds and bodies, and to each other" (Chung). By including this game in my performance, I am discovering how the narrative and date in my project interacts with my body. Throughout his book chapter, Chung explains the precautions necessary to create work based on personal trauma, such as having another actor take place of the protagonist and using experienced actors. I understand and appreciate the difficulty within creating work based on personal trauma. Chung acted responsibly in enabling participants to create distance from their memories by allowing a different actor to portray the original protagonist. Through Inside Game, I reach a level of specificity because I committed to retelling my own story. As I am both subject/researcher, I am able and willing to tell my own story in a way that does not put others at risk.

Robitaille does contribute important personal experiences throughout her doctoral thesis; specifically in the introduction, her first chapter, and her conclusion. She

\footnote{A dance form of improvisation where two partners must move while always touching see \textit{Taken by surprise: a dance improvisation Reader ed. Albright, Ann Cooper.; Gere, David.}}
also emphasizes that the social norms present in North America allows female capoeiristas to participate in an otherwise male-dominated sport (239). Stanyeck writes of “Brazilianess” as a cultural export; from the Mazda ‘Zoom Zoom’ campaign to Latin Jazz, “Brazilianess” has a desirable cool factor (4). This research is important in providing a context for American-Brazilian cultural exchange. I am fully aware that without the growth, and marketability of Brazil’s ‘go with the flow’ or improvisatory cultural ‘coolness’, I would not be able to study capoeira in Canada. I am able to study capoeira because of the Flux School of Human Movement which is dedicated to integrating multiple movement practices (capoeira, parkour, gymnastics etc.) as part of a holistic approach to movement. Without access to a school such as Flux, I would have never been introduced to capoeira.

Robitaille, Stanyeck, and Wilson all write of about the cultural context of capoeira and how capoeira has developed into a global practice. Robitaille writes of her journey of becoming an advanced capoeirista, traveling to Brazil on several occasions and following mestres closely. Stanyeck is an expert in Brazilian music and culture. While “Brazilianess” is complex in and of itself (Stanyeck, “A thread that connects worlds, 5) there are always nuances to cultural exchange on public, personal and political levels. My focus is on the inner transformative power of capoeira. I hope to build upon the existing cultural research to create an intimate inner portrait. They all agree that capoeira is exhilarating physically and has the capacity to deeply impact one’s personal journey, but none of them include an analysis or fuller understanding of how this is done. Chung provides his version of how, but does not explore malicia, ginga, and music. I am uniquely situated as an arts-based researcher to create a work that is specific to capoeira.
Theoretical Frameworks

My project opposes Western epistemology which extols the use of reason and binaries and which has been used to "other" oppressed cultures\(^5\). I argue that the concept of *malicia* or dark play (Schechner, 2015) that typically comes out of oppressed cultures is similar to how women are sometimes forced to communicate within patriarchal culture. My personal experiences with marginalization and trauma is never 'finished', rather, it is simply lived with. My purpose here is to demonstrate how these experiences of discrimination affect my self-image/knowledge, our lives as a whole, and our relationship to others.

Specifically, I am using feminists’ expansions on Foucault's body as subject, and how power is used to regulate the body. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that the body is political, that:

\[\text{... power relations have an immediate hold upon \{the body\}; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjugation; the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (25)}\]

I found these ideas to be useful and challenging as I am using physical movement as the main vehicle of my performance. Economic and social realities have marked my female body, as something to be dominated. Using capoeira is a problematic vehicle; how do I

\(^5\) There is a vast base of research on this, beginning with Said's Orientalism. Both Robitille and Stanyeck write about the binaries present in North America that effectively "other" Brazil.
showcase resistance in an art form that is historically patriarchal? How can I learn capoeira in a way that is culturally responsive and respectful? Training capoeira movements is a way of marking and defining my body with an evolving history. Capoeira is a practice of resistance through physical mastery as well as deception which underscores Foucault's subjective body as a site for resilience and resistance. My project uses different elements of my past (ASL/CODA experiences, trauma) which mark my body and creates a narrative through the movement vocabulary of capoeira. Mclaren summarizes Foucault's idea as the body as a primary source of knowledge and subjectivity:

The body for Foucault is more than the locus of subjectivity; it is the very condition of subjectivity. For Foucault, consciousness and subjectivity are not separable from the body. In fact, in Discipline and Punish, Foucault claims that power operates on the body to produce the soul, and the concepts of psyche, subjectivity, personality, and consciousness. Yet he states that these concepts are no less real for having been produced by power. (84)

My body is the subject for my work; my body is part of my consciousness, a collection of the history I have experienced in the world and an instrument for expressing those experiences. This is how my soul, according to Foucault, is produced.

Mclaren articulates Foucault's rejection of the dualism of the mind and the body and explores how this is useful for feminists. She gives a succinct list of similarities between Foucault and feminist ideologies. "Foucault and feminism on the issue of the body: both reject mind/body dualism, both view the body as a site of political struggle, and both view the body as central to subjectivity" (82). Mclaren argues that because much of Foucault's work is centered around the body as a source of knowledge, it can
be useful for feminist theory. Furthermore, Foucault rejects the universal subject just as feminists do. McLaren acknowledges feminists’ critiques of the idea of decentralized subject (the mind by stating that expanding on a holistic approach with the whole person (including knowledge of the body) may in fact be useful in furthering feminist viewpoints. As the body is a central part in my thesis project, I agree with McLaren in furthering research beyond humanist dualism.

Poststructuralism argues against the mind/body split – something that has been mapped on women’s bodies: male – rational, mind, female – emotional, body. Capoeira is a mixture of mental and physical prowess; one does not exist without the other. Through simultaneous participation, capoeira can demonstrate the rejection of this humanist dichotomy and illustrate a way of personal exploration that is not limited to either rationality or sensory experience. At the same time, capoeira is historically a male dominated and patriarchal martial art. In the development of this project, I was able to reject the patriarchal paradigm of capoeira as it is not essential to capoeira itself and because I learned capoeira outside of Brazil, and in a woman-centered group. Capoeira is not the only art form that has been reclaimed by women to produce their own narratives; hip-hop is a primary example. In her ethnographic fieldwork on Baffin Island, Marsh found woman and girls exploring their own voices within the traditionally masculine idiom of hip-hop. She observed young girls clamoring to take center stage at a community hip-hop performance:

Once on stage, however, the young girls moved to the front and the boys kept to the back. Not only did the young girls take center stage, but they were incorporating acrobatic break moves that are often gendered as masculine. From this example, there are a couple of things to note: first, although hip hop is often a genre that is gendered
masculine and dominated by men, these young children worked both within and against these stereotypes. While seated in the audience, the children respected the conventions played out, but once on stage they not only resisted the norms, but the young girls completely challenged them by moving to the front of the stage and performing acrobatic breakdance moves. Second, Lil Bear’s leadership of Kaiva and her own breakdance style, which consists of the more acrobatic, difficult, and strength demanding break moves, have obviously had an impact on what dance moves and styles are being taken up and by whom. She has become a role model for these young girls.

I have had a similar experience with resisting sexist tropes by practicing capoeira within a female led group as well as following a mestre who is outspoken about fighting sexism in rodas – even if, in my case, he advised me not to interact with capoeiristas he deemed ‘unsafe’ for me to interact with.

The female led group played a central role to the development of my ideas and relationships within my capoeira community from which I extracted data. My capoeira group is small - there are four of us who have successfully participated in a batizado (a capoeira initiation ceremony). In LA, where my mestre, Amir resides, we attended his batizado along with an international community of mestres. Amir warned us not to play with the other mestres, and that while sexism was discouraged in his school, not every mestre shared the same view. On this trip I did not have any outwardly shocking experiences; only a capoeira mestre inviting me to dance with him and standing too close for my Canadian standards, only being called “the beautiful Canadian girl” several times by one of my interviewees, that there was only one female mestre of the sixteen present. These subtle experiences of sexism were a signification of patriarchal capoeira
culture. I use ‘only’ with a sense of irony; I have been taught to shrug off such
interactions as normal when these minute actions are a part of subjecting and creating female. ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault, 25). Robitaille records several accounts of sexism while recording data from a large, international community. These experiences of course are not limited to capoeira; but I experience them regularly during my daily life. During my conversations with capoeiristas in L.A, I discovered there is a very strong anti-sexism movement amongst certain mestres (mine included). While ‘traditional’ misogynistic attitudes are rooted in other schools. Amir was very supportive of my project. I cannot assume; however, this is representative of capoeira instructors in general. I can only hope that female capoeiristas and male allies continue to encourage equity within the practice. I hope that by creating connections between different identities (cis woman, CODA, capoeirista) I encourage others to see the possibilities of different intersectionalities that can be displayed within capoeira.

Expanding upon Hoffmeister’s description of CODA’s having high level of commitment to home as residing primarily within themselves, Anzaldúa’s borderlands theory expands upon the idea of having multiple ‘identities’, but not fully belonging to any of them. I grew up in two worlds, one public, seemingly normal and a different way of behaving and communicating at home. I’ve never felt that one of these “lives” dominates or is more important than the other, and effectively I fully belong to neither of them. My life as a CODA has shaped my worldview, however I’ve never outwardly identified one until meeting other CODAs at the Sound Off Theatre festival last year. However, I’ve noticed that few people are attracted to the level of commitment required to learn capoeira. I have seen many people try it for a few weeks and stop coming once they realize that capoeira requires a mental shift and that is not just a form of physical exercise, I remember my mestre, Amir, telling me that capoeira is for people who ‘didn’t really fit’ anywhere else. Of course, this is a generalization, but the dedication required
for learning capoeira is quite extreme! Not only MUST one learn a new language, one
MUST also take up music as a part of their practice. This requires regular musical
practice and a certain level of dedication. For me, capoeira was a dedication to honoring
my whole self which contains oppositions in being culturally Deaf and hearing, a gender
that is viewed as strong and weak. I needed to play with these contradictions. For me,
capoeira is about performing myself musically, rather than performing according to
traditions established by women in Opera, Musical Theatre, and Art Song. By this I
mean no longer studying text, historical context, and story to create and portray a
character, but stripping away the influence of composers and librettists and rejecting the
Eurocentric ways in which white women dominate women of color. I have been trained in
and benefited from European performance and beauty standards (being white, skinny,
able-bodied) and this is a problematic element within my thesis project. I cannot be
‘simply me’ while at the same time, been encouraged through European pedagogy, to
think of myself as a ‘universal’ woman.

In the world of capoeira, I am an outsider, following the path of an Israeli *mestre*
who also does not possess a direct bloodline lineage to Brazil. I am ‘dominating’
capoeira as a white woman by being privileged to learn it. I will never have an
unproblematic relationship with capoeira. Despite learning to practice with freedom, love
and honor I do not share in the marginalization and suffering of people of color. I do
belong to my Deaf community and perform this in my capoeira practice. As an
indoctrinated member of the capoeira community, I will forever be a welcome and
unwelcome student.

I have found in capoeira the freedom to perform my CODA ways of
communication, and my gender, because capoeira is always evolving in that it is not
bound to become entrenched in performances of masculinity to exude strength.
Performances of masculinity may be present in capoeira, but I argue that they do not
have to be only performed by those belonging to the male gender. In capoeira I perform traditional masculine traits such as strength and a willingness to take up physical space. At the same time I am a woman, and do not believe these traits to be specifically male, but human. Anzaldúa writes of this struggle of contradicting selves in Borderlands. She searches through poetry, story, and academia. For her, Borderlands theory is not about stacking and ranking intersectionality, but to "...use the contradiction to one's advantage and rise above the negative assignation to develop a complex view of the social self." (2012) Anzaldúa writes of her own wrestling with her Mexican and American identities, her homosexuality, and Catholic upbringing. She writes of the 'shadow-beast' inside of her, the untamable female. An untamable female, in Anzaldúa Mexican-Catholic society, is undesirable and dangerous. She writes of the societal fear which places woman as close to nature – animal (39). In playing capoeira, allowing myself to assert my own will over others physically, was a pivotal experience to viewing myself as powerful, and yet, truly vulnerable. Improvisation was a way to play with and explore these dichotomies as it locked me "in the moment" – that is, hyper awareness. Anzaldúa writes:

Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a travesia, a crossing...if I escape conscious awareness, escape "knowing," I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. "Knowing is painful because after "it" happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before. (70)

There were several times throughout my research – usually when writing or private improvisation/choreography sessions, sometimes in a roda format where I would become too overwhelmed to continue. I would have an extreme emotional reaction to my
truths. The act of creating was painful. The roda can be a painful or joyful place depending on what is discovered.

The roda passes embodied knowledge between capoeiristas. This includes the Brazilian concepts of malicia (playing through deceit) or axe ('good energy'). In this way, capoeiristas learn and understand capoeira culture. The experiences of the roda are unique and specifically capoeira. No matter where a roda takes place, its rules create a space that insists on transference of bodily knowledge thereby creating a vehicle for my project. Through my performance I not only embody the concepts of resistance and resilience, but to transfer this knowledge to others. The multiple levels and roles of participation present in a capoeira roda encourage players to view and ‘try on’ different roles. A capoeirista must be a musician, and audience member, a martial artist, and an improviser. By learning and practicing these different perspectives, a capoeirista learns how to intimidate, and how to be intimidated, to play along and go against the grain, to respect authority and undermine it. Capoeira contains paradoxes for the player to wrestle with as they form their own sense of self and identity. Anzaldúa writes of her experiences in between cultures and how this is in a constant state of change and reinterpretation. She states:

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are it's inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal".

(25)

Capoeira is a practice for those who feel they don't "fit". This practice moves beyond dualism to holding and exploring paradox. As one of my interviewees explained:
For me, there’s nothing scarier than a room of people I don’t know. I put on that mask and it’s easier for me to relate to people. I go in the roda, I create this. Suddenly I don’t have a problem. Normally I do. In reality, I’m not so great at interacting. When I have the freedom to be me. It’s ok for you, it’s natural for you even though it’s not fucking natural.
(Capoeira interview, 2016)

The ambiguity described by this capoeirista is present in the physical game play. In the roda players stand in a circle while two people play the jogo or game in the middle. At one point in the circle there is a group of musicians, or bateria usually lead by the highest-ranking Mestre. Although the roda has a structured hierarchy (mestres are general in charge of who plays and who does not and less experienced players have little control of who they play) Within the game, power is constantly being traded between players. Furthermore, capoeira requires constant role switching. One must be a mover, musician, and spectator at any given time and this can change rapidly. These positions all hold various types of power in the roda. The bodies creating the outside of the circle can choose not to sing in response nor encourage the players. Musicians in the batteria can change the tempo, thus exerting control on the style of game. Players within the ring have a continuous physical dialogue with their partners.

On studying the effect globalization has had on the traditions present in the roda, Laurence Robitaille concludes: “the roda is a unique space in globalized capoeira because it operates according to its own logic, one that preserves and perpetuates a traditional knowledge through the practitioners’ bodies in motion” (312). While most times the roda can be a place of community building, the structure of the roda teaches one difficult lesson: no one is there to take care of you. In this way, it forces individuality
amongst the communal experience of singing and playing together. This notion of individual isolation within a group is explored by Anzaldúa, as she explains her experience of leaving her traditional family and culture behind in order to live authentically.

To separate from my culture (as from my family) I had to feel competent enough on the outside and secure enough inside to live life on my own. Yet leaving home I did not lose touch with my origins because lo mexicano is my system. I am turtle, wherever I go I carry “home” on my back.” (43)

By the nature of its practice, capoeira forces the player to carry their "home" on their back. My experiences, my shy personality and my confidence, are all on display when I play capoeira. When I participate in a roda within my own community, I am not afraid, even though I have been kicked and tossed around by capoeiristas twice my size. I know that no one is actively trying to hurt me. For my project, I am using capoeira concepts and relating them to my own experiences, and how my personal history and bodily knowledge can be performed in the roda and how these experiences shape my soul/body/mind or how these experiences allow me to bypass the dualism between body and mind. In this way I travel through three locations, male dominated (the roda outside of my atypical capoeira group) deaf spaces, and female spaces (including my women-led capoeira group).
Research Methodology

The methodologies I employ throughout my research are critical ethnography, and primarily, performative auto-ethnography. As I hope that the study of capoeira in an arts-based setting will bring about some level of social change, I researched several different types of ethnography, and I found *Interpretive Autoethnography* by Denzin addresses the methods I am using in my project. Denzin writes about combining both the researcher and the interviewee’s narrative. He clarifies:

> Readers might be privy to the interviewer’s reflections on her own story as she hears and/or tells the participant’s story. The interviewer’s account might involve telling what brought her to this research in the first place and how this knowledge of the self or topic is used to understand what the interviewee says...Including the subjective and emotional reflections of the researcher adds context to the story being told about participants. (62).

I found that Denzin gave a succinct analysis of the potential as well as problems with performative autoethnography. I worked extensively with my supervisor Charity Marsh in crafting my interview questions to suit the interdisciplinary nature of this project. I am performing both ethnography and autoethnography inside my artworks *Inside Game* is arts based research which blends together data, fiction and poetry (Leavy).

My interviewees came from my own capoeira group in Regina and students of Capoeira L.A (Amir’s School) who attended his *batizado* in Santa Monica. Amir teaches capoeira *regional* as well as *Contemporâ*. After walking into the crowded gym shared by

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6 *Regional* style was created by the infamous mestre Bimba, who is credited with gentrifying capoeira. *Contemporâ* refers to a style that developed in the 1970’s, blending together capoeira, Brazilian Ju Jitsu, acrobatics, and various other movement practices.
a kickboxing group, Capoeira L.A and students of Mestre Batata (Amir’s Mentor), I asked Amir if I could make an announcement to the group to ask for volunteer interviewees. He obliged but warned me not to spend time alone with advanced players and mestres, as most of them were womanizers according to him. Following Amir’s advice, I conducted four interviews with the ‘younger’ - or rather North American students from Capoeira L.A. There were two men and two women, none of whom were from Brazil. This greatly affected my data. Two students were intermediate students (blue) and two had novice belts (green/yellow). The interviewees from Regina were the performers involved in my project. Those interviews were optional; however, all members of my team participated because of our pre-existing friendships and community bonds.

In L.A, I attended three days of workshops; one day of training at the batizado and two days of training with Amir. I’ve attended three intensive workshops at Flux with Amir over the past three years. In Regina, we have two one-hour training sessions a week. In L.A it was required to wear traditional capoeira uniforms (belt, school shirt, white pants); however, in Regina this was not required as many Flux members did not have a belt and were doing capoeira as a part of a more general movement practice alongside parkour, gymnastics, Olympic weightlifting, as this is a part of the training philosophy at Flux. Training at Flux and adopting a generalist attitude to movement highly influenced my work. The rehearsals for Inside Game took place at Flux; during regular capoeira practices as well as scheduled rehearsal times.

The goal of these interviews was to aid my understanding in situating myself as a privileged capoeirista: how did other privileged (white, middle class) North Americans interact with capoeira? How does this differ from my own experience? From Amir’s? Following Amir’s suggestion of not interviewing Brazilian mestres limited my ability to
hear from traditional *mestres*, which is a detriment to this study. My continued fear of sexual revictimization limited my data on this very topic. This fear also kept me from being receptive to cultural differences in communication and personal boundaries. For example, my North American cultural upbringing has taught me to value physical personal space, which is not the norm for capoeira spaces or Brazilian culture. I want to explore more how my white privilege and experiences of marginalization as a sexual assault survivor and CODA intersect with studying capoeira.

At his *batizado* in June 2017, Amir gave a speech after the *roda*. He emphasized humility, and that he had a lot more to learn. He thanked Mestre Batata specifically as well as the other *mestres* for attending the *Batizado*. Amir also spoke about how much the sport itself had impacted his life: “I want to thank capoeira for guiding my life, for so many adventures, opening my eyes to so many things, It being one of the first things that really made sense to me. Providing me with infinite room for growth and to express myself in my different life phases.” What Amir said about self-expression was something that nearly every capoeirista I interviewed mentioned in one way or another, this is a central theme within my project, *Inside Game*.

Finally, I am using critical performance ethnography as it requires an equalization of the relationship between researchers and subjects, or rather they work together as co-researchers (*Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, 149). While creating choreography, Ariane commented “Paula, shouldn’t you be the center here?” indicating, to me, and everyone present, that I am the leader and the central subject of this performance. I interpret capoeira texts and interviews from capoeiristas and members of the artistic community using physical movements, that is performative autoethnography (Spry, 710). As I created this piece with two female coaches, one friend, and a female professor at the U of R, it was difficult for me to give direction to people whom I typically take direction from. This group of authoritative women with higher level capoeira and
personal training credentials facilitated a role reversal during the creation of this project, which is an atypical action not only for capoeira leaders, but for people who hold authoritative positions in general.

Intertextuality

Since I am working in several different mediums, I am relying on intertextuality to tie together the layers of data present in my project. Lather explains the search for ethnography that goes beyond the narrative of the self and can have a broader social impact. Lather explains that in the late 1980’s there was a push for a ‘messier’ way of displaying data through fragments of journal entries, interviews, poetry etc. (Lather, 617). She draws on Foucault and Derrida to ponder what this means for feminist-based research. She asks,

Given such historical sedimentations, how might one look for places where things begin to shift via practices that exceed our warrants of the present sense of the possible? In such a place what might feminist knowledge look like that work within and against identity categories, visibility politics, and the romance of voice? How might such projects enact a way to use the ruins of correspondence theories of language as a fruitful site for doing and reporting feminist ethnography in ways that attend to the complexity of our desire for “realist tales” of women’s experiences?” (606).

Her chapter explores these problems with the resolve that they are not immediately resolvable. Similarly, my project combines movement, music, and text to narrate my experience and analyze my interviewees’ experiences. I explore a type of narration through multifaceted means and provide a response to Lather’s questions. I mentioned previously that capoeira is about coping or living through experiences of marginalization. This coping does not result in desired and immediate solutions but prepares one to live
through problems. I believe that capoeira is an ideal vehicle for the messy "realist tales" of women's lives (Lather).

Performance Methods

Improvisation

I struggled with the elements of improvisation versus the need for choreography during the creation of the ethnographic performance. In my project I wanted to include the improvisational nature of capoeira, but also insert landmarks of my own narrative at the same time. I have decided to use a mixture of set choreography and 'enabling constraints' or rules for improvised sections. Improvisation has a large role in the choreography. I prepared for this through coursework specifically dedicated to improvisation; Dr. Rebecca Caines' course on interdisciplinary improvisation as well as an independent study with Dr. Helen Pridmore focusing on vocal improvisation, where I experimented with movement and vocal improvisation together. I studied several texts centered around improvisation and performative autoethnography: Rzewski's "Little Bangs: A Nihilist Theory of Improvisation" (1999), Albright's *Taken by Surprise: a Dance Improvisation Reader* (2003) and Caines, Seibel and Kenny's research project regarding community art making, which they wrote about in ""Going Fragile": Exploring Place through Community-Based Art Practices" (2014). I found Kent De Spain's *Landscape of the Now: A topography of Movement Improvisation* (2014) to be particularly helpful in creating a movement practice and experiencing the "flow" of improvisation. There is something intangible and undeniably profound that happens during improvisation that entire books cannot describe. It is a form of abstract communication that may only be
experienced. De Spain writes of the difficulty in seeking and explaining these experiences.

...the more you try to define and delineate the edges of all the things in your world, the smaller those openings become until you can no longer sense this invisible dance. You have to try without trying...You need to have faith in the power and presence of something you cannot completely grasp. And with language like that we are clearly in The realm of the gods" (89).

During this time, I most definitely felt a freedom I had never known before, and I felt encouraged to continue to push my own limits as well as find interesting ways to combine movement, capoeira and music, as is evident in my performance. I also found Caines and Heble’s The Improvisation Studies Reader: Spontaneous acts integral in conceptualizing my work, which I will go into detail about later.

Of the five performers, I and another performer are dancers who have done choreography before. We all have distinct ways of moving and I wanted to play to those strengths. In our practices together, I would usually give a prompt to improvise with, and we would ‘find’ the choreography within those improvisations. It was a balancing act of pushing outside of comfort zones, as well as keeping trust established within the group. I am the weakest mover in the group; I’ve been stepped on, tossed around, and kicked multiple times by my team (unintentionally of course). Not only did I feel physically fragile, but emotionally fragile as well. We were creating MY art, based on MY personal traumatic experiences. Without the pre-established trust within the group, I would not have been able to complete this project. Mattin (as quoted in Caines et.al.) describes “going fragile”, which resonates with my improvisatory experiences on this project.

To be open, receptive, and exposed to the dangers of making improvised music, means
exposing yourself to unwanted situations that could break the foundations of your own security. As a player you will bring yourself into situations that ask for total demand. No vision of what could happen is able to bring light into that precise moment. Once you are out, there is no way back; you cannot regret what you have done. You must engage in questioning your own security, see it as a constriction. You are aware and scared, as if you were in a dark corridor. Now you are starting to realize that what you thought of as walls existed only in your imagination. (33)

I began this project by being a director/prompt giver only, until someone would gently say “Maybe you should be in this scene now”. Gentle statements like these reminded me that as my voice making statements about my personal life was playing over our Bluetooth speaker, I was safe. None of my team knows the details of my past, and none of them have asked. It was through years of close friendship I was able to attain this gentle, guiding acceptance of my team which enabled me to continue the work.

Musical Portraiture

The musical elements essential to capoeira are linked to my ethnomethodology. Capoeira music is played by the bateria (literally meaning drum kit) and led by capoeira’s primary instrument, the berimbau. The secondary instruments are all percussive and very few are pitched (antibaque or conga drum, agogo or cowbell, pandeiro or tambourine to name a few) and the berimbau only plays 2 pitches. This allows the soloist, who is also the lead berimbau player as well as the chorus, a high level of vocal freedom. Art researcher Patricia Leavy argues that music is an underutilized artistic medium in arts-based research (132). She explains Terry Jenoure’s new musical methods:
The first, which she refers to as *musical portraiture*, is the process of coding data using musical structures, with the result being *sonic narratives* she likens to ‘jazz riffs’. The latter method, *performance collage*, refers to the process of musically encoding and writing up data culminating in a musical performance” (133).

The musical portraiture method is already being used in capoeira music. Musical ideas can be heard in the improvisatory playing of the *bateria* as well as the singing of the entire *roda*. I have translated the interviews, conversations, and accounts of personal experiences into musical ideas within my thesis. While arguably musical portraiture could be also simply called composition, I find this term reflects upon incorporating my interview data into music, which I found to be a different process than writing music that begins from an auditory standpoint. I have also shortened Kesha and Gaga’s pop anthems (“Woman” by Kesha Sebert and “Diamond Heart” by Stefani Germanotta) as well as excerpts from capoeira songs into sonic narratives to complement the themes of my project highlighting personal histories against the social constructs in which they occur.

Due to the intertextuality present within *Inside Game*, my project is heavily influenced by capoeira, but it does not carry all of the historical, social, and cultural practices of the traditional art form. There are multiple reasons for this. First, I learned capoeira in a unique setting at Flux School of Human Movement, and the school’s philosophy and my extended training there outside of practicing capoeira heavily influenced and supported my movement practice. Second, I will never be a traditional *capoeirista*; my practice will never be Brazilian, and my experience will always come from a place of privilege which is also intersected with belonging to the marginalized Deaf community and being a survivor of sexual assault. Thirdly, this is a performance
piece and was never intended to strictly follow a traditional capoeira *roda* with a full *bateria*, a *lahadina*, or a technical *Jogo*.

### Developing the Work

#### The Making of *Inside Game*

The themes in my project explore the relationship between vulnerability and resilience, which are central to my research questions. As I outlined above, my research questions are - why does capoeira give me such a sense of agency? Can capoeira foster the same resistance and resilience in others? These questions are addressed within *Inside Game*, which exposes the relationship between hidden vulnerability and resilience. The practice of 'escaping' rather than blocking, of changing direction rather than assaulting are part of a regular capoeira practice, and I have included this in my choreography. I highlight this vulnerability in performing a failed cartwheel, fall, and call out for my mother, who does not come because she cannot hear me. I am not physically weak in this scenario, but emotionally wounded. In other moments I am tossed like a rag doll, in others I am doing the tossing. Capoeira teaches how to hide vulnerabilities and use hidden strengths. This is a major theme in my project.

My thesis project is a deeply personal exploration of selected themes derived from interview data. I've labeled these themes in my project as "New experiences", "Joy

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7 The group of musicians playing traditional capoeira instruments throughout the *roda*
8 A traditional capoeira improvisatory singing practice
9 Translation: game
in Conflict”, “Relational Power”, “Unresolved Conflict”, and “Self Knowledge”, which I will describe in further detail later. These themes are expressed in a performance piece that combines capoeira, dance, music, American Sign Language poetry and text from interviews. The text is projected simultaneously with music and movement. This arrangement also makes the interview material more accessible to the Deaf community. I've chosen these methods because they explain my own personal connection to capoeira as well as provide more clarity into the inner workings of a roda and how it connects to individual expression within the capoeira idiom. In order to reveal narratives through capoeira, my project explores specific and personally relevant themes, which are the title movements in my project (Relational Power, Unresolved Conflict, Self knowledge, and Joy in Conflict). These themes are tied together through several notions of the capoeira traditions and mentalities, mainly that capoeira has a distinct relationship with the concept of vulnerability as it is a martial art focused on creating vulnerabilities, and that capoeira works closely with the element of surprise as a tactic. By showing my personal relationship with vulnerability and resilience within the personal narrative I have created with this project, I highlight the ways in which capoeira is embodied resilience; this is translated in the movements of practitioners and simultaneous participants (spectators, players, musicians, singers). My project shows how this resilience affects me. I used choice selections from interviews with five other capoeiristas to create a script. That script is used to create choreography incorporating features of capoeira. The resulting performance provides a methodology for exploring unresolved conflicts. My personal narrative of marginalization and oppression as a western woman will be central along with supporting narratives from my fellow capoeiristas.

My project is a series of four choreographed pieces centered around interviews gathered from capoeiristas. These pieces (movements) will be performed with five
capoeiristas (including myself) from Regina. The work will be introduced by a poem performed in American Sign Language, that I have created with support from my mother, a Deaf adult and pre-recorded. My script includes findings from my interviews as well as my own. They are embedded in my music tracks for my performance as well as projected in the space.

Introductory Movement

The purpose of this ASL poem is to provide a personal context for why I am drawn to capoeira, as well as provide another layer of physical performance to the work. I first wrote the poem in English, and then translated it into ASL with the help of my mother, Joanne Weber, a prominent figure of the Deaf community and an expert in ASL poetry. We soon discovered that there was no official sign for capoeira other than to finger spell the word. We created a sign based on the *ginga* (the most basic capoeira movement, meaning ‘flow’ or ‘constant motion’) and created a visual rhyme with the ASL motion for two people looking back and forth at one another. This rhyme makes the connection between capoeira and ASL for me: constant eye contact. For a capoeirista, eye contact is a crucial way of ensuring one’s safety by reading the other player. In ASL, there can be no communication without eye contact; the conversation is dead. Without eye contact, both practices, that is, ASL and capoeira are impossible.

The four movements are based upon the themes that I’ve found within interview data and my practice and as an improviser, musician, and a capoeirista. These themes are “New experiences”, “Joy in Conflict”, “Relational Power”, “Unresolved Conflict”, and “Self Knowledge”. Within these movements, I have chosen interview quotes (recorded verbatim), physical movements, and music to explore the themes within the context of my personal narrative of trauma and resilience. I am doing this to showcase capoeira’s capability for representing and exploring the ‘messiness’ of living with trauma. The *roda*
is seen as a metaphor for life by capoeiristas. The *roda* is a place to practice being alone as a player yet working together with the group. It is about being vulnerable and yet strong. Capoeira is an improvisation practice that truly emulates these ideas.

Improvisation in general has the power to play with dichotomies. In his opening statements on “Improvised listening”, George Lipsitz writes of the Watts rebellion in LA in 1965 and jazz musician’s Johnny Otis’ reaction. Otis was reminded of a gospel song “Listen to the Lambs”, a prayer for divine intervention. “Otis thought ‘they wouldn’t listen to the lambs...the lambs cried and finally one day the lambs turned into lions” (9). Lipstiz continues to write of improvisation as an alternative way to explore and meditate upon conflict.

Afro-diasporic cultural production teaches its practitioners to engage in improvisation in order to discern the hidden possibilities disguised in proximate appearances. A jazz musician has to listen carefully, to recognize not only what the music being played *is* but also, what it *could be*, to listen for the prophetic foreshadowing in even the simplest phrase. Improvisational art questions surface appearances. (10)

Although I am by no means a prolific jazz musician, I have trained in jazz as a part of my musical education, and one of the reasons I studied music in university is because of an explosive improvised musical solo I performed at my high school jazz concert. It was my first experience of being “in the zone”, an addictive high for all improvisors. Capoeira, along with improvisation across disciplines, is centered around observing what *could be* as Lipsitz states. My project is a summary of what realizations came from improvisation and capoeira, that is, the ‘could be’ transformed into a reality. My thesis performance is a
summary of my personal growth and resilience in the face of trauma. The themes explore distinct parts of my journey.

Movement 1

The first theme in my project is relational power, which I chose for several reasons. I believe the text derived from interview data is an effective way to introduce the audience to the several layers of conflict explored in the piece as a whole: my problematic relationship with my mother, my sexual assault, and my struggle with being physically weak. Secondly, it is the longest piece and has the most musical contrast. By including both capoeira songs and pop music along with my own compositions, the sections that are musically sparse become interspersed with more dense sections. This allows me to choreograph in a cohesive manner to introduce the four other capoeiristas in my group. The musical contrasts highlight the layers of conflict in the piece. For instance, there are several similarities between power relations amongst capoeiristas in the roda and life as a CODA. For example, there is a hierarchy, but within this hierarchy, there are also many opportunities to flip the rankings on its head. If I am playing with my mestre in the roda, or a player of a higher rank, most likely I will not be able to gain physical prowess over these opponents. However, as Robitaille and Lewis have observed, there are several instances where a novice has taken down or caused a higher-ranking player to fall, usually met with roars of good-natured laughter from the crowd. In capoeira, there are always opportunities for a subversion of authority; even between teachers and students.

Another layer of conflict I often experience is that of being a CODA. CODAs are often treated as the parents of their parents; acting as interpreters for their parents or asked to make decisions for them. As a child, I regularly ordered for my mother at restaurants, most notably drive-thrus. I recall distinctly the feeling of knowing I,
theoretically, could order anything I wanted, even though I never strayed from my mother’s instructions. I also recall ‘talking back’ to my mother when she disciplined me, only after her back was turned and the conversation was ‘over’. I felt powerful when I could yell disagreements right at a parent, even if she couldn’t hear me.

These experiences of subversive power from engaging in capoeira and being a CODA are seen in the choreography of this movement, as well as the data in the soundtrack. The music in this piece combines traditional capoeira music with North American pop music. The two traditional pieces I chose are sung in my own rodas at Regina. “A maré ta cheia ioio” is a lighthearted song about the movements of the ocean tide, which is a part of the constant shift of power relationships I represent through the choreography. I chose this recording in particular because the lead singer is female. The second is a remixed recording of a capoeira/Brazilian crossover song entitled “Magalenha”, the name of a single mother the singer is praising. I chose this song to bridge the musical gap between the traditional “A maré ta cheia ioio” and Kesha’s pop anthem “Woman” as well as pay homage to my mother who raised me as a single parent. I chose to include Kesha as she is a female artist who recently demonstrated resilience in her legal battle against her old producer and former abuser. My goal with these samples is to show the myriad of ways power can be used, fought for, won, and lost. The songs I used for this section are all produced by people who have experienced racial marginalization,-single parenthood, or by being sexually assaulted. I cannot fully understand all the recording artists’ individual stories because I have not lived them, but I interact, and wrestle with them. I make space for these stories because they are important to the history of capoeira, and of being human. I learn from these stories and let them take the stage in my performance.
Movement 2

My second theme is “Unresolved Conflict”. I’ve chosen to perform this as a solo to draw attention to the introspective and personal nature of the text. I used layers of distortion in my composition along with repetition in the text to portray the lingering of traumatic experience. My movements are slow, angular, and abstract to complement the audio. This movement is inspired by what Richard Schechner calls “Dark Play”. I find this concept to be akin to capoeira’s *malangndram* or *malicia*. *Malicia* is a *capoeirista*’s mental weapon; it is tricking your opponent into thinking they are safe, that you are their friend, and then surprising them. *Malicia* is a mentality typical of the oppressed. There are many capoeira songs that praise the slave deceiving his master who doesn’t even know he is the butt of the slave’s joke. Schechner’s dark play “...occurs when contradicting realities coexist, each seemingly capable or cancelling each other out, as in the double cross....” *(392)*. Schechner emphasizes the enjoyment and god-like role one applies while playing or improvising. Capoeira’s *malangndram* does not share this joy, but rather its focus is on righting wrongs, or a personal form of justice. As I mentioned previously, I engaged in dark play as a CODA by disagreeing with my mother behind her back. This is the way a *capoeirista* fights; in secret. This movement reflects the privacy and secrecy in the distortion of my voice, the ambivalence and static in the music. In this secret space I ponder my own wounds, and ‘play’ with them.

Movement 3

In “Self Knowledge” I marry capoeira with popular music once again, this time using Lady Gaga, another artist who has shared her story of physical abuse with the world. The album “Joanne” is Gaga’s middle name, also the name of her aunt who died at the age of nineteen and also suffered sexual abuse. The album is reflective in nature, and a deviation from Gaga’s usual pop style. I pair it with a single voice that sings one
line of the capoeira song “aieou” - “Vem criança vem jogar” (come child, come to play). I wanted this singing to be in the background, representing the inner voices one must listen to to become self-aware. This movement begins with four women keeping eye contact while performing a *ginga* while staying connected with the forearms. This is not a normal capoeira *ginga* as players use their arms for balance and to facilitate inversions rather than touching their partner; this is a vulnerable *ginga*. I chose to do this to show the physical ways of knowing present in both capoeira and ASL. Both require eye contact out of necessity; one could be physically harmed in the *roda* if one is not watching their partner. Similarly, an ASL conversation cannot occur without eye contact because so much grammar is present in the face. Looking away terminates the communication. Both capoeira and ASL require a spatial awareness; for instance, ASL signs change tenses when situated in different places on the body. The choreography in this piece explores the consequences of conflicting angles, levels, and ideas through movements where the dancers “cooperate” with one another or “conflict” with one another. These four separate bodies represent disagreeing ideas, thoughts, and knowledge within one’s consciousness of pain and playfulness.

Movement 4

“Joy in Conflict” summarizes the pride one feels in wrestling with adversity and living with a new-found confidence. Improvisation, and being a CODA are the most ironic moments-representing what I have come to call “fun failure”. There have been so many moments, most notably when one of my friends cartwheeled and fell on my head during a *roda*, where my first response was to laugh. The blow to my head was significantly painful, but once I realized nothing was physically wrong, I laughed at my lack of spatial awareness at letting the encounter occur in the first place. This moment was caught on film and soon became a referenced joke (one I participated in) of how awkwardly I had
moved. Similarly, my mother used to sing me to sleep, completely out of tune. I used to love her lullabies until I studied music and remembered that her singing was actually horrendous. My mom and I joke about this regularly. The script emphasizes the enjoyment it comes from practicing *malicia*, as well as an underlying, darker description of trauma. I’ve chosen to distort this part of the text. By creating a lack of clarity, I hope to express the idea that deep routed personal experiences are always ‘just below the surface’ even if they are not a featured part of the topic at hand. The choreography actually includes one full minute of improvisation between four capoeiristas, to induce a type of hastiness, playfulness, and sometimes awkwardness.

Concluding Movement

The final movement is a short solo conclusion. I stand alone and give my sign name. Sign names are an ASL placeholder for an individual; they usually include a person’s initials incorporated with another sign or gesture that is associated with that person. A sign name, for example, might have both hands using crossed fingers handshape, and a circular motion spiraling down from both ears to signify her red ringlets falling at the side of her head. In this final scene, I traverse the performance space, pausing to give my sign name in different areas of the stage. I’ve chosen to keep this last movement silent, as it mirrors the silence of the sign language poem at the beginning. I am traversing the space to portray the notion of border crossing, or Anzaldúa’s Borderlands theory. CODAs are always border crossers, as they travel between hearing to Deaf culture. Anzaldúa argues that

.... Individuals (primarily women) who are exposed to multiple social worlds, as defined by cultures, languages, social classes, sexualities, nation states, and colonization,
develop the agility to navigate and change monocultural and monolingual conceptions of social reality. Within Borderlands Theory, oppressions are not ranked nor are they conceptualized as static; rather they are recognized as fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on the context (7)

In using Anzaldúa’s Borderlands theory in my work, I am creating a fluid identity as a CODA, a woman, a sexual assault survivor, and a capoeirista. I am performing all of these identities while performing myself; in doing so, I give the audience my name. This includes both the CODA and hearing parts of me. Using the “P” handshape is the English initial beginning my name, moving outward from my heart is the Deaf part of me, and the movement between spaces and the signs is my capoeira identity.

The performance space was the sound studio at the University of Regina, as seen in the performance video and the image here (Figure 1). The entrance to the room enabled the audience to be situated in the first half of the room, and the performance area was the farthest half of the room (see figure 2). Two projectors were used; the first larger projector showed the sign language video on the back wall of the performance space, while the second projector, only used in "Unresolved Conflict" projected text onto the floor while my body moved in and out of the projected text. Two speakers were positioned on either side of the room, directed towards the audience. I chose the sound studio for practical reasons: I was given direct access to the space, which easily facilitated rehearsal times. Secondly, the projector and speaker set up was best suited to my needs. The audience for this performance was friends, family, colleagues, as well as the general public. Inside Game was performed as a part of the University of Regina’s “Equity Week” - an event focused on promoting social awareness for minority groups on campus.
Figure 1.
Figure 2.
Conclusion

Ultimately, my performance is a self-portrait, that is, a representation of “the personal is political”. In my piece I am emulating the instability of the oppressed, and how that affects my personal narrative. I have provided a lifelike self-portrait exposing instability, vulnerability through specific displays of subjugation, failure, oppression, and resilience.

My thesis explores communication roadblocks and issues. My life is scattered with multiple languages; fragmented ASL, bits and pieces of French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Latin, Portuguese (just to name a few of the languages I’ve sung in). Capoeira has not only helped me reclaim agency in my body but use it to tell my own story. I cannot force people to change their hearts, minds, and behavioral patterns to suit what the university outlines as safe behavior. There are ‘safe spaces’ on campus for this reason. Learning and practicing capoeira, for me, has taught me how to respond to unsafe spaces, such as my old gym. This isn’t limited to side streets and dimly lit alleys. The roda or circle, is a capoeirista’s metaphor for life: some days everyone gets along, but that does not mean it is always so. The hardest lesson I’ve had to learn is that no one playing has a responsibility to ensure your safety, or enjoyment of the game. Ironically, this is how a capoeirista learns that their smile and their ‘coolness’ is their greatest weapon. Delemont and Stephens give an example of this training in their account of a game in a roda:

The African Brazilian man crouching at the foot of the instrument is joined there by a young ‘white’ man, Mao, who crouches facing him. At a signal from the man on the main stringed instrument, the two players cartwheel into the center of the circle and begin to move at a fast pace in a triangular step (the ginga) in time to the music, facing each
other. The older man quickly begins to dominate the space, launching kicks at Mao, who escapes and dodges but is clearly fully extended by the need to evade the attacks. After about 45 s, a second student Mowgli slides into the ring and ‘buys the game’. The first young man retreats into the circled spectators, taking his place next to the older woman, with a huge grin on his face. She pats his shoulder and says, ‘Great Game’. Mao smiles broadly and says he is exhausted but adds firmly ‘that's why you train – so you can face them.’ (Stephens, Neil, and Sara Delamont. “Roda Boa, Roda Boa: Legitimate peripheral participation in diasporic capoeira.” 114).

This is the training I had been missing for most of my life that enables me to know I have power and I have agency. There is a difference between this engagement with capoeira and ignoring catcallers. I have had similar experiences with the “show must go on” mentality of the performing arts, of singing while terrified, fooling the audience into thinking I, the performer, am completely relaxed and in control. The difference is, the performance space or roda is a type of protection. The audience has agreed that the performer is “in control” by giving their attention to that performer. Even in a casual setting, an audience member talking through music is still allowing the performer command of the space.

Capoeira enabled me to unlearn my classical singing training. Capoeira gave me a different relationship to my voice and my body; I was no longer thinking about how to be ‘correct’, but, how to move and sing in relation to other people. In capoeira, the “audience” can jump into your game at any time. The music could stop. Singers could imply you are unworthy of their attention through their axé (energy). It is up to you, the player, to navigate, learn, and play for yourself, to know when it’s a good idea to try a new acrobatic move, be aggressive, laugh, or leave the game. If I were performing in a
concert hall or on a proscenium stage, my movements and voice were precisely choreographed and never strayed according to normative or traditional expectations. Connecting ASL and capoeira taught me how to read bodies, voices, and ultimately people by situating myself around, through, with, and amongst my audience.

As an educated, privileged, white cis-gendered woman, I thought I knew how to negotiate, empower myself, and remove myself from dangerous situations. However, I had never truly known fear until my sexual assault. Afterwards, I did not understand the gravity of personal strength and responsibility required for a survivor to regain a sense of themselves. Capoeira taught me how to physically, not just theoretically understand what oppression and violence affects the body, how to combat my physical instinct to freeze when confronted with danger, and to understand that I must implement social change alongside my fellow students. It is my responsibility to claim my own space on campus as well as create spaces for voices that are not mine, as Anzaldúa poetically describes: “the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal" (25). I will continue to speak, be silent, and move. Every individual will have their own way of interacting with gendered violence, and capoeira has given me a host of communication tools at my disposal.

*Inside Game* is my journey with capoeira, being a survivor, and performing my history as a CODA. I learned to read not just words, but faces, and constantly shifting and situating bodies. Audience members (all women native to Canada) have relayed to me their own survival stories of sexual assault. One woman who came up to me with tears in her eyes after the performance. Creating *Inside Game* has lead me on a healing journey that has lead me from victimhood to be a survivor. This healing journey is one all survivors make. I’ve also reached a deeper understanding of what it means to be a CODA survivor. By
writing and performing in ASL I undertook on a deep healing journey with my mother and formed closer bonds with those in the Deaf community. I sign my name with pride, as it is a combination of the ‘P’ handshape, and the sign for expression, my hand in a tight fist moving outwards from my chest and opening as if I were offering a gift.

Appendix A – Verbatim script

This script includes verbatim quotes from my team, my mestre, and other capoeiristas I interviewed in Los Angeles. I have also included some of my own writing.

Relational Power
One of the things he got us to do is to sell something and then to do something else. I love that baiting...that really gets in my way sometimes.

This isn't something that comes naturally to me. It will take them 2 months to do things that it takes me eight months to do. Everybody else who’s at my level or beyond, they understand. That feeling of even when I’m like. God. Everyone before me go one maybe 2 mestres and I got 4. It was awful. I was stuck. I want to ball up on the floor. And at least half the people have been in the same place. I women who I don’t know, who was a yellow cord. Was like girl, you gotta get angry.

That’s the malandragem. I go in the roda, the crowd still gonna love me. I still won here. I can go in with a champion. He gonna fuck me up and people are still gonna love me. He doesn’t know how to behave in the roda, I do. I know how to play this shit up. I’ll be like the poor guy he doesn’t know these things. For this reality I’m gonna get the crowd cheer for me. This is my world.

I am angry. I’m angry that I spent my youth in fear. I was taught to always be polite, never to say no to my superiors. What if someone calls themselves superior even though they aren’t? I wasn’t equipped for that. Then he used my body for himself. It wasn’t mine anymore. It was a tool. My body is mine now, but I will never forget those who tried to take it away; these memories are in my veins, muscles, and blood.

Unresolved Conflict

It was really hard for me to even think of that mind body split. There was like this dissonance.

I want to have a conversation. I don’t think you can separate play from improvisation. You don’t know whether this is going to work. In both cases you are playing. You are
trying something crazy. In the future it’s not going to work. I don’t think you can have capoeira play that isn’t lively. The one that spoke to me, I think was dissonance.

Self knowledge

When you know it so well and you have such an affinity for it, you start to see pathways to things. You are thinking...you just go. When you go. You do things that if you thought about it, you wouldn’t be able to do.

But improvisation is a conversation between two people who both want to contribute to make something together, better. Because of the things in comedy is the problem of status. Novice improvisers create a status and the thing you have to really learn is that you really are equal of actors. You are both as actors equal. If you are playing a mestre who cares...they will make you look good.

it’s like working through a puzzle. And it feels like magic. And then you explain it It’s just like um, using this vocabulary we’ve built all these really basic movements. building them together and making sentences with those patterns.

Now when I play with you, I’m going to do something, you need to respond. Now you have 10 different ways to respond.

You have to see the big picture of your training, you have to really learn all these crazy things, but you have to gage. Going back and forth, solid then suck at it. You this kinda way I play with my own mind. So every situation is a little different. You have your own responsibility and your own process.

For me, there’s nothing scarier than a room of people I don’t know. I put on that mask and It’s easier for me to relate to people. I go in the roda, I create this..suddenly I don’t have a problem. Normally I do. In reality I’m not so great at interacting. When I have the freedom to be me. It’s ok for you, it’s natural for you even though it’s not fucking natural.

Joy in Conflict

It’s this perfect dance without skin to skin contact. And then there’s the other game on the opposite end of the spectrum. And I think about the history and how it’s developed these extremes.

We are very humble. That’s the malicia. They don’t care if you’re a green belt they don’t care if you’re a woman, some people are not so respectful. I’ll tell them you know, I hope you learn it the right way. If you catch me I’ll be happy for you. You can’t do that with everyone. I care about you. You have to understand the big picture. You see a master, don’t assume that he’s your friend. You cannot really assume. You should not assume.
You saw it. You know what I’m talking about. Honestly it doesn’t matter. Inside the roda you don’t know what’s going to happen. It’s wild. That’s for real it stays true to its nature.

Appendix B – Consent Form and interview questions
Project Title:
Improvisation and Capoeira

Researcher: Paula Weber, MAP, Graduate student, Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Regina, 306-501-6882, weber20p@uregina.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Charity Marsh, CRC, MAP, 306-541-5808 Charity.Marsh@uregina.ca, Rebecca Caines, MAP, Rebecca.Caines@uregina.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

● The purposes of these interviews are to gain a better understanding of individuals’ experiences while improvising within the discipline of capoeira. Capoeira is a community-based practice centered on the body and simultaneous participation of different bodily capabilities (singing, playing instruments, and movement) and can serve as a model for other interdisciplinary creative practices. By incorporating capoeira values and practices (interactive improvisation, switching disciplines, the practice of malícia or hidden motives) into their work, artists can gain a better understanding of cooperating in an interdisciplinary setting and (hopefully) find new non-traditional ways of communicating with their communities and audiences.

● This data will be used to inform the final thesis project, which combines capoeira with other disciplines. The data may also be used for any publishing or presentations directly related to this project.

Procedures:

● Participant will agree orally before setting up an interview time with the researcher. The subject will provide written consent immediately before the interview commences. Participants must be willing to commit up to two hours to the interview process. Interviews will be documented through audio recording, notes, and transcriptions by the researcher.

● Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Potential Risks:

● There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research

Potential Benefits:

● This thesis project will use performative autoethnography informed by the new materialist epistemology. I hope that this unusual form of communication will allow for personal and cultural truths to be discovered that may not necessarily be easily articulated in verbal or written forms. In using the active audience in the capoeira tradition, I hope
that the audience will not only influence the performance but also perhaps change the outcome.

**Confidentiality:**
- There are limits to anonymity due to the nature of group activities (e.g. focus groups): the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality. Limits due to context: individual participants could be identified because of the nature of the project, as well as interviewees relationship with the researcher. There are also limits due to selection: procedures for recruiting or selecting participants may compromise the confidentiality of participants (e.g. participants are referred to the study by a person outside the research team). Limits due to the nature of group activities: the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality. Furthermore, there are limits due to context: individual participants could be identified because of the nature or size of the sample or because of their relationship with the researcher. Finally, there are limits due to selection: procedures for recruiting or selecting participants may compromise the confidentiality of participants (e.g. participants are referred to the study by a person outside the research team).

**Storage of Data:**
- Data will be stored at the Interactive Media and Performance research labs in password protected files for five years.
- When the data no longer required, the data will be destroyed.

**Right to Withdraw:**
- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position [e.g. employment, class standing, access to services] or how you will be treated.
- Should you wish to withdraw at any time during the process, the data will be destroyed.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until January 30th 2017 at which results have been disseminated, and data has been pooled. After this date, it is possible that some results have been analyzed, written up and/or presented and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Follow up:**
- To obtain results from the study, please contact the University of Regina. You will also receive an invitation to witness the final thesis project.

**Questions or Concerns:**
- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the UofR Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (306-585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call collect.  OR

**SIGNED CONSENT**
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

______________________________      _______________________  __________________
Name of Participant                     Signature                          Date

__________________________________  _____________________________
Researcher’s Signature                 Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

______________________________      _______________________  __________________
Name of Participant                     Researcher’s Signature              Date
Interview Questions

1. How did you become involved in capoeira? Is there one element (movement, conflict, music, community building) that you enjoy above others?

2. Theatre improviser and director Bharucha describes this flow state as “...the very momentum and volition of the actors’ interactions seem to merge of their own accord” (221). Bharucha also describes what he calls the ‘communal unconscious’ and how it is exposed, at times in an undesirable way during a flow state (221). Do you consider improvisation to be a focal point of your practice? Have you ever experienced a ‘flow’ state? Can you expand on your experience?

3. Rebecca Caines has identified several agreed upon themes surrounding improvisation. These are listening, trust/risk, flow, dissonance, responsibility, liveness, surprise and hope. Are any of these themes related to your experience as a capoeirista? Can you give examples?

4. Is switching roles within within the roda difficult for you? Do you find you gain anything by being both a mover and a practitioner?

5. Is the history of capoeira significant to you?

6. Can you outline your knowledge of capoeira philosophies and if/how they affect your practice?

7. Playing is typically frowned upon in western societies according to Richard Schechner, a professor of performance studies. In his article Playing Schechner argues that play is vital to understanding our world. It is through play that the lines of reality, or quantifiable knowledge, and the subjective self are blurred. Is play important/relevant to you as a capoeirista?

8. In his book, Community Music In Theory and Practice, Lee Higgins concludes “I am prepared to say that music exerts a political force in the following two ways: (1) on a micro level, the relational interaction between individuals (music facilitator and participants) within the workshop environment, and (2) on a macro level, a challenge, and the raising of questions, to those who arbitrate funding for music, music organizations, and institutions that engage people in music making, teaching and learning” (167). Do you find this statement relevant to capoeira music practices? Can you give any examples of why you agree or disagree with this statement?

9. Improvisors often speak of experiencing the uncanny, or the unquantifiable. Have you ever had an experience like this with capoeira?

10. Is there anything else you think would be useful for me to know about your practice?
Appendix C– Pictures of the Rehearsal Process

Matt and Jen - creating some of the first sequences for "Relational Power"

December 2017
Jen, Jamie, and Arianne – Mapping out "Joy in Conflict"

January 2018
Paula, Jamie, Arianne & Jen – Rehearsing in the sound studio

March 2018
Appendix D - Rehearsal Project Videos

These unlisted youtube videos are samples from our rehearsal process.

Relational Power:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvSLnZ1GdUM
https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=tzs1WMqeY8w

Unresolved Conflict:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wr8vISfNIUM

Self Knowledge:

https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=k1rX6_kumBo

Joy in Conflict:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcwrM_mB9k
https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=Bl2WUSaQ19w
https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=D9P0TDvy63o

Full Performance:

https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=8Z8UK-kI53w
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wrK-SjX7Wk
Works Cited


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCuNYGk3oj8


http://nebula.wsimg.com/3792e6c08e7f0fa47d6017db712e921c?AccessKeyId=5EA6E03F0FB59A39EE99&disposition=0&alloworigin=1


Robitaille, Laurence. *Capoeira as a Resource: Multiple uses of culture under conditions of transnational Neoliberalism.* 2013 410. 
https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/29815
