



THE FEMINIST BODY AS ENGENDERED SPACE

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Fifty self-identified feminists, half of whom were ITAA members, participated in this study. As part of a larger research project, this paper reports on findings related to the participants' reflection on how their feminist perspective intersected with their bodies and how that interaction was expressed in terms of body image, appearance, and gender norms.

Photoelicitation, the method used in this study, involves using photos as a guiding frame for in-depth interviews, which lasted up to two hours in length. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and subjected to thematic and content analysis.

Many themes emerged from the data. In this paper, we focus on one of the notable themes that developed as we analyzed the interview transcripts, that of female bodies and gendered space. Several salient themes emerged including power, (in)visibility, vulnerability, body size, and weight. For each of the participants in this study, these themes were mediated through an engendered cultural lens, a lens through which the participants examined what it means to be female in a patriarchal society. Further, the participants found that these issues were complicated by claiming a feminist identity. The issues revolved then around creating a feminist space through body image within the context of a patriarchal culture.

The delineation of strategies of living in contradiction adds to the literature by broadening our understanding, not only of feminist meanings of bodyspace but of negotiation and resistance through the body.