

**THROWING LIKE A GIRL: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXAMINATION OF AGENTS OF  
SOCIALIZATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORT**

By

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## ABSTRACT

Sport has traditionally served as a venue in which masculine traits are favored over feminine ones. In society in general, men are expected to be strong, aggressive and confident while women are seen as more fragile, weak and docile. These expectations are reflected in the expectations of men and women in the sporting realm. The purpose of this paper is to examine the social construction of gender and how it applies to women in sport. This thesis looks at the social construction of gender in sport as a way of excluding women from participating fully. It also examines two key agents of socialization, physical education and the media, which perpetuate gendered ideals and contribute to how women and girls understand their gender in respect to sport. Themes of sexualization, trivialization, gender roles and stereotypes and under-representation of women athletes in the media are recurring and important to recognize when looking to affect change and make sport a more welcoming place for girls and women. A content analysis was conducted of the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* throughout a two week period to examine how these themes were carried out in the mainstream media and how they are reproduced in the two sites of socialization. It was found that in order to get more girls and women involved in physical activity and sport, increased coverage of women's sports as well as a variety of sports are important to showcase what types of activities are available to them. Attention needs to be paid to the performance of the female athlete rather than her appearance or personal life in order to avoid trivialization. Also, changing the narrative surrounding the concept of femininity and what a woman is capable of is crucial in changing the attitudes surrounding women in sport. Addressing this issue early in schools is key in achieving more acceptance for women in sport.

Thesis Supervisor: Tracy Penny Light (PhD.)

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## Introduction

*“I think sports gave me the first place where this awkward girl could feel comfortable in my own skin. I think that’s true for a lot of women—sports gives you a part of your life where you can work at something and you look in the mirror and you like that person.”*-Teri McKeever, 2012.

McKeever is the first woman to serve as the head coach of the USA Swimming team.(queenster.com).

“Throwing like a girl” is a phrase which has echoed across school yards for generations. But what does “throwing like a girl” look like? Why does it elicit a negative connotation? This is just one of the many phrases used to describe women's participation in sport. There are many factors which contribute to simple phrases, gestures and treatment that help to define the attitudes that surround women and girls in sport. Traditionally, femininity has been invented and maintained by patriarchal<sup>1</sup> beliefs about what it means to be a woman. Before the 19th century, the family was organized so that the man was the head of the house and had the legal right to command the total obedience of his wife (Ruggles, 2015, p. 1797). In the eyes of the law, his wife was his legal property allowing him to exert total control over her. Patriarchal tradition set women up to be placed in a subordinated position in society. Along with that, historic ideals of femininity also maintained the image of women as docile and nurturing compared to men. The traditional framework of femininity hinges on the idea that men and women are "naturally different"; inherently men are rational, strong and aggressive and women are emotional, weak and docile (Enloe, 2017). Historically, sport has been a site which maintains social and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> In sociology, patriarchy refers to a society that is dominated by men (Roy, 2001, p. 117). Sociologist Sylvia Walby argues that there are six interacting social structures and practices in which men dominate and exploit women. They are; "family household, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality and cultural institutions" (Thorpe, 2015, p. 98).

structures that value masculine traits over feminine ones (Roessner & Whiteside, 2016, p. 584). Sport has served as a way to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and has since been heavily guarded by boys and men (Cooky, 2009, p. 260). “Hegemony” refers to the ideals which are perpetuated socially and institutionally (MacDonald, 2014, p. 97). The concept of hegemonic masculinity<sup>2</sup> therefore suggests that an “ideology of gender relations involving the production, negotiation, and reproduction of male domination over women and other men” is normal and a part of what it means to be a man (MacDonald, 2014, p. 97). To reject vulnerability and all things feminine and embody roughness, aggression, strength and confidence are the rules that men are therefore expected to follow. Expectations for women, on the other hand, are the opposite and include being docile, weak and reserved. In the world of sport, these characteristics are not valued and importance is placed on stereotypical masculine traits. Women are therefore greeted with resistance when trying to break through into more physically active spheres that defy what society has deemed to be feminine.

Social constructionism argues that the concept of gender is socially created and maintained through institutions such as politics, law, medicine and religion (Marlene, 1994, p. 286). Gender has been created with rigid boundaries in which femininity and masculinity cannot stray outside of their traditional borders without reaction from others. Along with the belief that there are strict boundaries between what it means to be a man or a woman, there is a belief in western society that innate biological dispositions are said to be naturally occurring in males and females that make men more strong and aggressive and women more caring and fragile (Enloe,

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<sup>2</sup> Hegemonic masculinity is a sociological concept attributed to the work of R.W. Connell. Hegemonic masculinity is a power system that ranks "male" men above those who display "feminine" traits. In any one society at any time, different forms of masculinity are organized into a hierarchy. The ideal version of masculinity (the hegemonic form) will be the one in which others will be judged against. In Western society, hegemonic masculinity is related to power, aggression and violence (Thorpe, 2015, p. 88).

2017, p. 42). Social constructionists do acknowledge that there are differences between men and women biologically. They argue that the social differences between men and women are socially and historically created and vary from one society to another (Roy, 2001, p. 111). In sport, social construction serves as a way in which to exclude women from participating in this male-guarded domain. The arena of sport works to maintain hegemonic masculinity and rejects women who defy gender norms while performing their respective sport or activity. Hegemony is perpetuated through ideals in society, therefore a woman athlete like a rugby player, who is rejecting the norms of femininity by being aggressive and tough may be ostracized and trivialized for not acting in accordance to gender rules. Much of the time, as is pointed out in the section on social construction of sport, women athletes are given more attention when they are deemed conventionally attractive; the focus is instead on their appearance rather than their ability (Weber & Carini, 2013, p. 201). The social construction of gender serves as an important framework for exploring women in sport. This thesis explores the manner in which girls and women are socialized and the backlash they face in sporting environments.

As agents of socialization, schools and specifically physical education classrooms as well as the media serve as strong influences on the maintenance and perpetuation of gendered ideals and how girls and women understand sport. Daily socialization occurs in schools, making it an extremely influential venue in which children take on dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity through interactions with peer and teachers. Physical education classes have tremendous influence on children and how they understand healthy habits and fundamental skills that they can carry out throughout their lifespan. Physical education also represents the large scale issues which are present in the sports world, such as hierarchal gender norms, thin and sexualized ideals and beliefs about what it means to be feminine.

Physical education is highlighted for its role as an agent of socialization as well as for the importance it can have in the lives of girls as they age. Positive experiences in sport not only lead to physical health benefits but also a feeling of connection to the community, a sense of belonging and feelings of empowerment (Bailey et al., p. 2). With the high level of social influence physical education has, it remains under-prioritized and under-valued in schools. The attitudes of society in regards to women in sport are reflected in physical education classrooms. As children develop, they become aware of what it means to be male or female. As a girl ages and becomes aware of gendered ideals, she becomes more and more likely to drop out of physical education due to feelings of self-consciousness, boy-centered curriculum and changing interests (Usher et al., 2016, p. 927). With the amount of time children spend in school, it serves as a prime location to implement healthy habits regarding physical activity as well as a venue in which to teach children about gendered stereotypes to help change the dominant narrative surrounding women in sport.

The other main site of socialization that will be examined is the media. The media has a large scale macro<sup>3</sup> level influence on every day life and therefore plays a role in the types of images and narratives girls absorb in regards to their gender and what it means to be a woman in sport. The social construction of gender in sport is present in this medium and serves as way in which stereotypical feminine and masculine ideals are further cemented into the way that society operates. Themes of sexualization, trivialization and under-representation of women athletes in the media are recurring and important to recognize when looking to affect change and make sport a more welcoming place for girls and women.

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<sup>3</sup> Macrosociology or the macro level is the analysis of social systems and populations on a large scale (dictionary.com).

## **My Research**

My primary research illustrates many key arguments presented throughout the thesis and allows for further understanding of the representation of female athletes and female sports in a more concrete manner. I conducted a content analysis of two major Canadian national newspapers, the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail*. Throughout the literature, five themes stood out as key issues which surround women in sport. The five themes are: underrepresentation, sexualization, sport as male-dominated, gender roles and stereotypes and the construction of gender. During the reading of the sports sections, examples of those themes were coded and examined. Specific examples were drawn from the newspapers and discussed in the discussion section of the paper as to how they contributed or in some cases went against the themes drawn from the literature. Under-representation of women and sports as a male-dominated domain stand out as overwhelmingly prevalent and as a key theme that affects the manner in which girls take in these messages and internalize them.

The manner in which girls are socialized creates barriers that prevent them from participating in sport and physical activity. Every day, women in sport have to overcome challenges imposed on them by society in order to take part in all areas of the sports world. This thesis examines the social construction of gender and how it is applied to sports, the media and its coverage of women in sport as well as physical education in order to answer the question: How do socio-cultural attitudes affect girls' participation in physical activity and how do we open up more opportunities to girls and women in sport? Two key sites of socialization are identified as having a large impact on the way in which girls learn about gendered ideals and then take on those ideals and apply them to themselves. The five themes that stood out throughout the review of the literature were coded and used in a content analysis of two major

Canadian newspapers, the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* in order to explore how these themes are reproduced in the media daily and how this is reflected in the socio-cultural attitudes present in the two identified sites of socialization. Those two newspapers in particular were chosen for their popularity and widespread distribution across Canada.<sup>4</sup> This thesis argues that in order to get more girls and women involved in physical activity and sport, the type of coverage devoted to women's sports needs to be focused on the athletes and their performance, not on their personal lives or appearance. Increased coverage is of extreme importance to showcase all the types of sports available to girls and all the different types of body shapes and people that exist who are taking part in these activities. Changing the narrative that surrounds what it means to be feminine and what women can do is crucial in shifting the attitudes toward women in sport. Addressing these issues early and in schools will go a long way in changing the manner in which all children are socialized.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> National Post circulation numbers-186, 108 papers circulated weekly  
Globe and Mail circulation numbers-336, 487 papers circulated weekly (Wikipedia).

<sup>5</sup> I recognize that this issue can be looked at through intersectionality and addressing race and class issues surrounding sport. However, during my research race and class did not come up much. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis I chose to look specifically at gender in sport.

## **Chapter 1-Social Construction of Gender**

### **Introduction**

For most people, gender is something that is integrated into daily routine and not thought about all that much. It is an assumption that is taken for granted and hardly questioned, just blindly followed as everyday influences around us dictate how we act in accordance to our gender. The pervasiveness of gender in our society is so taken for granted that we just assume it is bred into our genes (Lorber, 1991, p.112). We reproduce gender normative ideals every day without realizing it through the manner in which we dress, talk and carry ourselves. Often, gender signs and signals go unnoticed unless there is a deliberate disruption in how they are reproduced or if they are missing entirely. For example, a man wearing a full face of makeup would cause most of us to take pause and realize that his appearance deviates from the masculine norm. Many of us would notice a man caring for his children, doing cooking and cleaning or a woman covered in dirt and oil fixing the engine of a car and think that this was unusual. This chapter will draw on the theoretical ways of understanding the social construction of gender that are integrated into daily socialization.

### **Social Constructionism & History of Gendered Ideals**

Gender as a social process creates differences in the traditional definition of “man” and “woman” that we take for granted and adhere to everyday. Gendered interactions are embedded into the institutions of family, sexuality, work and many other institutions (Lorber & Farrell, 1991, p. 114). Throughout their lives people learn what is expected of them through gendered interactions. The idealized family reinforces heterosexuality, a nurturing mother and a father who is a provider. Gender is used as a system in which to stratify people. Activities that men engage

in are therefore regarded more highly than the activities women do in a gender stratified system (Lorber & Farrell, 1991, p. 115). But where do these gendered institutions come from? Many early thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Freud and Parsons drew from their own works in sociology and capitalism, psychoanalysis and structural functionalism in order to explain it. Marx's work focused largely on capitalism<sup>6</sup> and explained society as a system of power relations in which every kind of transaction is inherently exploitative (Tong, 2009, p. 98). In terms of gender stratification and Marxism, it is believed that society's mode and forces of production generate a social structure. This system reinforces itself and produces social life. Women were therefore stratified and maintain this stratification by being economically dependent on men through capitalist and patriarchal society. Engels looked at Marx's work and explained the family and how material conditions as a result of capitalism have affected the organization of the family and its relations. Engels wrote of the origins of family and private property and believed that family lines used to be traced through the mother. Women had economic power as they produced most of the goods such as bedding, clothing, cookware and tools (Tong, 2009, p. 104). However, as production outside of the home during the Industrial Revolution became more important than the production inside the home, the sexual division of labour between men and women took on new social meaning (Tong, 2009, p. 105). This era saw the concentration of wealth in the hands of the head of the household, a man's wealth was now passed down through heirs (Wiltgen, 1979, p. 364). Therefore, women were no longer seen as productive and only valued for their ability to reproduce heirs. Her sexuality now needed to be controlled as well. Men's power over women hinges on the fact that men control private property and rule because of their economic power.

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<sup>6</sup> Capitalism is an exchange relationship in which the owners pay the workers in exchange for a wage. Marx argued that capitalism is a constant workplace struggle in which the employer (the bourgeoisie) takes advantage of the worker (the proletariat) in numerous ways.



This leaves women as male property. In the home, women are the proletariat and men are the capitalists. The woman produces value for the man and capitalism in the form of unpaid household labour and reproducing and socializing the next generation. In the Marxist viewpoint, household work is not considered work, making women invisible in the Marxist division of labour and economically dependent on men or the state (Lorber, 2012, p. 23).

Historical perspectives on the psychology of gender development help to provide insight into the dominant beliefs about gender, how these ideals have shifted and how they are still present today. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud created a new psychoanalytic theory claiming that “boys must reject their mothers and deny the feminine in themselves in order to become men.” According to Freud, as boys develop, “the major goal is the achievement of personal masculine identification with their father and sense of secure masculine self, achieved through the superego and the disparagement of women” (Lorber & Farrell, 1991, p. 115). Freud's description of the family helped to center sex-role development around the notion that a mother had feminine virtues of nurturance and love and a father had masculine rules of strength and discipline (Fagot et al., 2000, p. 65). His theory was less focused on socialization and more on the belief that biological traits inherently determined how boys and girls acted out their gender. This theory is very much embedded into beliefs today and will be present later when discussing the social construction of the biology of what it means to be male and female.

The father of structural functionalism, Talcott Parsons focused his work on the family as a social structure which helped to keep society stable (Parsons & Bales, 1956, p.9). A functional family was a nuclear one, comprised of a heterosexual couple and at least two children. The husband-father, as the primary breadwinner, is the instrumental leader of the family (Parsons &

Bales, 1956, p. 12). The wife-mother balances out her husband by taking on a more expressive role, according to Parsons, in which she is responsible for housework and childrearing. He believed that the function of the family was to socialize children so they become functioning members of society as well as "the stabilization of adult personalities of the population of the society" (Parsons & Bales, 1956, p. 16). The function of the family is therefore inherently gendered but seen as necessary for the overall functioning of society. In terms of childhood socialization, Parsons expanded on this idea of the family, arguing that children learn to be male or female by playing the roles that are reciprocal to the roles of their family members (Fagot et al., 2000, p. 66). Parsons introduced the concept "learn by doing" which suggests that, as children develop, they act out their prescribed gender roles based on the roles they witness being carried out in the home (Fagot et al., 2000, p.67). Today, constant daily exposure to these ideals through institutions such as school, family and the media, which children spend a significant amount of time in and around, are incredibly influential in shaping how they view themselves in the world.

These theories stem from the patriarchal beliefs in society that were present before, during and after the Industrial Revolution. Patriarchal traditions before the 19th century saw families organized with the male being the household head, controlling the means of production, their wives, children, slaves and servants (Ruggles, 2015, p. 1797). A man had the right to exert his power over his wife and children through means of corporal punishment; the wife was legally her husband's property and therefore was under his total control (Ruggles, 2015, p. 1797). As Enloe (2017) notes, patriarchy is highly adaptable because of its ability to be modernized (p. 42). It is a "dynamic web of particular ideas and relationships" (Enloe, 2017, p. 42). This notion became apparent as society moved away from farming as a way of subsistence and into the

Industrial Revolution and wage labour and into the modern era. At the turn of the twentieth century, breadwinner families became the norm, with the men leaving the house in order to earn a wage or salary while the women remained at home to tend to the housework (Ruggles, 2015, p. 1803). This empowered men yet left women economically and socially dependent on their husbands. The ongoing belief that it was a “man's world” was clear in a 1959 article in the *New York Mirror* that described interviews in which men claimed that women should be spanked in order to “enforce discipline” and to “teach [women] who is boss” (Ruggles, 2015, p. 1803). Although women have entered the paid work force at huge rates since the end of World War II, patriarchal beliefs about the appropriate roles of women are still transmitted through generations, leaving the dominant view of man as the breadwinner and woman the homemaker (Hiller & Baudin, 2016). As women increasingly took part in the work force, financial independence allowed women to marry later or not at all. Reproductive rights and birth control afforded them the ability to plan when they wished to have children, also providing them more independence and ability to further their careers before starting a family (Ruggles, 2015). However, traditional gender ideals mentioned earlier, remained. As these developments throughout human history have shifted because of demographic and technological changes, so too have the definitions of the appropriate roles of men and women. Women are no longer the property of their husbands and they have been afforded more formal rights when it comes to voting and land ownership etc. While there are more and more women entering the work force, it is still expected that a woman will be a mother first. The opposite is still expected of men even though more and more fathers are becoming stay at home dads. Is it therefore possible that slowly, the social definitions of what it means to be man or a woman are shifting? Or no matter how these definitions shift, is it human nature to believe that women are meant to be submissive and men are meant to be dominant?

## **Biological Perspectives in Social Constructionism**

Biological perspectives argue that women are innately predisposed to be more soft and caring while men are innately predisposed to be more aggressive and strong. This is the dominant view of western society and as a result, patriarchal beliefs are reinforced and taught to us through everyday actions and practices. Biological determinism maintains that the present state of societies is due to the biological nature of the human species; human behaviour is innate and determined by biology not by outside cultural forces (Sociobiology Study Group of Science for the People, 1976, p. 182). Meaning, significance and value are placed on biological traits and the value assigned to those traits varies historically and culturally. Ascribed biological differences therefore have consequences in how people are stratified. Patriarchal attitudes in western society are embedded in what we deem “worthy, good, attractive” as well as what we find “unworthy, bad, distasteful” (Enloe, 2017). They also help to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity<sup>7</sup>. These beliefs and values support each other, which helps give patriarchy its staying power. A strong value of patriarchy is the idea that women and men are “naturally different”; inherently men are rational and women are emotional (Enloe, 2017). Fixed gendered categories based on biological traits of each sex help to define what is attractive and acceptable from a patriarchal perspective. Social constructionism encourages us to question whether or not the binary categories of “man” and “woman” are natural occurring. Gender binary is a term which involves acknowledging that there are two distinct genders and uses masculinity and femininity as a classification system. Gender binary is a westernized term because western society acknowledges two distinct genders based on the biological fact that

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<sup>7</sup> Emphasized femininity is a term attributed to the work of R.W. Connell. Emphasized femininity is femininity which acts in compliance of the subordination associated with patriarchy and is orientated around accommodating the desires of men (Schippers, 2007, p. 87).

there are only two sexes. Each gender serves as a strict code in which “masculinity” and “femininity” are inscribed (Kitzinger, 1999, p. 493). When gendered categories are defined based on biological traits, some social constructionists use irony to address the idea of separating people based on physical traits. They ask if we should separate people based on physical traits like their height or whether or not they have earlobes (Burr, p.3). This perspective argues that knowledge is produced via social processes and through interactions in daily life. According to Glenn (1995), the concept of gender provides an overarching rubric when looking at the definitions of manhood and womanhood and the relationship between men and women in historical, cultural and situational contexts (p.5). According to the normative boundaries established by the construction of gender, males are strong, physical and aggressive and women are fragile, docile and weak. This lends itself to the beliefs about gender and sport. These oppositional boundaries reinforce the biological construction of gender and creates highly contrasting expectations when it comes to physical performance (Ross & Shiner, 2008, p.43). This theme is an important one which will be addressed throughout the thesis while looking at physical education classes and the media as sites of socialization as well as in the analysis of the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail*. The styles of athletic participation which are expected from men and women vary greatly. Ross & Shiner found through their research, that sports for women that were deemed socially acceptable were aesthetically pleasing and artistic in nature. It was also found that people preferred a spatial barrier between women athletes, meaning that there was no physical aggression or contact during the performed activity. For men, bodily contact, physical force and attempts to subdue an opponent were acceptable for men and therefore unacceptable for women (2008, p. 43). When challenging these gender ideals based on biology, the way in which we are socialized to believe that members of each gender must act a

certain way must be brought to the forefront. Do women act passive because they do not have the biological capacity to be dominant? Or is it due to the backlash they would face socially if they were to do so? It is important to think critically about gender and the manner in which we perpetuate ideas about how members of every gender should behave especially in the context of reproducing these values and imprinting them on children.

### **Gender as Performance**

Culturally, gender socialization is an important part of broader socialization that teaches young children what it means to be either male or female. The social construction of gender cannot be understood without examining the environmental input and socialization pressures in which children grow up and are exposed (Fagot et al., 2000, p. 65). At an early age, the strongest socialization agents for children are family, peers and caregivers. From the moment a child is born they are wrapped in a pink or blue blanket, dressed in bows and dresses or pants and caps. They are brought home to rooms painted pink with ballerinas or blue with sports motifs on the walls. Parents do not want to be asked constantly whether their baby is a boy or a girl so they are dressed and adorned in a way which makes it obvious to those around them (Lorber, 1991, p. 112) (Butler, 1988). Right away, they are treated differently from peers of the opposite sex based on their gender markers and respond to this treatment by feeling and acting differently. As children grow up the toys provided to them in the forms of trucks and dolls imply that boys are meant to perform mechanical physical work while girls are supposed to perform domestic caring duties. Over and over again children are bombarded with messages about how the world divides people based on gender. Simple things such as men's and women's washrooms, boy's and girl's clothing and gender specific toys are just a few of the ways in which children become aware of and take in gendered practices. These practices reflect gender ideologies which children will be

exposed to throughout their lifespan (Chang et al., 2017, p.1272). Reproducing gender involves collective practices by society in institutional organizations, group interactions, language and day-to-day negotiations that dictate what it means to be male or female (Marecek & Arcuri, 1995, p. 3). Gender binary systems place an expectation that the biological sex of an individual will line up with their gender, and they will act in accordance with the socially constructed ideals of what it means to be a woman or a man. As a society, how we interact with one another through gendered language and how we act in accordance to these norms reproduces the stereotypes of each gender. For example, we may treat a man and a woman who are crying differently because one is expected to be stoic and strong while the other emotional and empathetic. In order to reproduce gender, these practices are embedded into every aspect of culture.

Feminist scholar Judith Butler looks at gender as a performative act in many of her works. Her ideas constitute the notion that gender identity is a “stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1988, p. 526). The body is regulated through gestures, movements and enactments that adhere to the conception of gender. A person performs their gender in a deliberate way with “strategic aim in maintaining gender in its binary frame” that helps to strengthen social laws and project them onto others. The act that one performs has been determined before birth; often a baby is born into a role with the stage already set for them to be labeled based on sex. They are then expected to carry out this performance. These acts are of course, very different from the ones you would see on stage at a play. Butler points out that seeing a transvestite on stage “can compel pleasure and applause” because there is an awareness that this is a theatrical act, making it less real (Butler, 1988, p.526). However seeing a transvestite in public like on the bus for example, can elicit anger and violence in some because this situation does not take place within a

theatrical venue and there is no way of separating it from reality (Butler, 1988, p.527). Butler's work is controversial yet groundbreaking as she questions the distinction between sex (the corporeal makeup of our bodies) and gender (the social meaning given to our bodies). She draws upon the example of the transvestite to show that “gender reality is performative” it is “only as real as it is performed.” (Butler, 1988, p.527). Specific traits that are related to each gender are performative and therefore are not correlated to biological sex. Men and women are both capable of being nurturing, however a mother must perform this trait because it is expected of her based on traits assigned to her gender.

These perspectives offer important insight going forward as they illustrate how the power of the dominant discourse in society can help shape what we have come to expect being a man or a woman should look and be performed. Social constructionism, biology and gender as performance all help to add to the conversation throughout this thesis which examines how these perspectives serve as strong agents of socialization and affect the entrance of women into the historically male dominated sporting realm.



## **Chapter 2-Social Construction of Femininity in Sport**

This chapter expands on the previous one by exploring femininity in sport. Historical influences are examined for their continued role in maintaining beliefs about gender and sport today. Social ideals surrounding stereotypical paradigms around women's bodies, behaviour and gendered expectations are examined throughout to explore how women must navigate the conflicts that arise as they try to enter the male dominated space that is sport. This will be considered through examining various ways that the social construction of gender influences the manner that women are portrayed, accepted, and feel in regards to sport participation.

Along with the construction of gender and gender roles, there is also much meaning that has been ascribed to both men and women's bodies. The meaning given to women's bodies has long been policed, regulated and scrutinized. These gendered practices see women as docile and fragile and men as aggressive and physical and do not welcome those who break outside of these norms. Men and women who do not exhibit these traits face exclusion and may be ostracized by the larger society as they are seen as deviant. In sport and physical activity however, women defy the prescribed roles of their gender by performing movements and actions that are often physical, tough, aggressive and require strength and stamina. It was initially thought in the early 1900s that girls were not biologically suited for athletics, that there was a risk associated with exertion, and that negative impacts on their reproductive organs could result (Lumpkin, 1987, p. 3). Women's bodies were deemed delicate and susceptible to injury and therefore incapable of sport achievement (Lumpkin, 1987, p. 3). This has been proven to be untrue yet the notion that women's bodies are more weak still remains in everyday beliefs and conversations. The mindset that women are weak is problematic and closes off possibilities for women. It also inhibits society from having the belief that women are able to be strong physical beings. In westernized

mainstream society, thinness and delicate and lady-like features are also perceived to be attractive and idealized. The views of women's bodies, how they perform gender and what is deemed attractive and desirable can also shift over time. Adams (2005), claims that writings from the 1890s state that a passive, docile body was valued in the dominant discourse in society; women were unable to complete laborious and physical tasks. However, over a period of time, norms have been challenged and cultural scripts have been changed. Today, an ideal woman has traits which are seen as desirable and also masculine such as "self-control, determination, cool, emotional discipline and mastery" (Adams, 2005, p. 20). These characteristics are more comprised of a woman's personality and how she acts rather than of her physical appearance and body, however. Women must still have the ideal figure, with long toned limbs and lengthy flowing hair. Washington and Economides note (2016), "the female athletic body was and remains suspicious because of its apparent masculinization and its position as a border case that challenges the normalized feminine and masculine body" (2016, p. 147). Figure 1 is an example from pop-culture which celebrates and perpetuates hyperfemininity while figure 2 exemplifies the body of a female athlete and how her body contradicts those ideals. The first is of pop star Ariana Grande performing, she is skinny with long hair and appears to be conforming to feminized standards of beauty. The other photo is of track athlete Priscilla Lopes Schliep who is also performing her sport. However, her body defies the normalized feminine body as it is visibly muscular and powerful. When entering the sporting realm, women must break through this masculinized area of society while also maintaining their femininity; something which can be difficult to do.

Sport is a male-dominated area of society that reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes while strengthening hegemonic masculinity which legitimizes male's dominant

position in society. At the same time, it excludes those who do not fit into this ideal. However, historical perspectives can aid in understanding how these traditional viewpoints are still present and how they influence society's biases today. Also, it is important to examine what efforts and achievements have been made in order to increase women's participation in sport in order to see how far we have come and what work is left to be done in order to change the discourse surrounding physical activity and sport and having more women and girls participate.

For centuries sport has been a masculine institution that has helped men assert their privilege over women. There has been major backlash for those who have attempted to break into this heavily guarded boys club. For example, golf has a history of withholding membership to its clubs from women, only allowing men to participate. In 2014, after 260 years of being an institution, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews in Scotland allowed women to be members (Lewis, 2014). The second wave of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s wished for women to be able to enjoy the same rights and benefits of sport as male athletes while also being able to contest stereotypical images of the passive and incapable female body (Adams et al., 2005, p. 18). Title IX, passed in the United States in 1972, sought to equal the playing field when it came to sports at the post secondary level by eliminating exclusion from participating in sport due to lack of federal funding based on sex. Since its creation, girls participation in sport has increased more than 800% (Adams et al., 2005, p. 18). However, in the decades since its creation, Title IX has been accused many times of taking resources away from men's sports. In 2011, the university of Delaware cut the men's track and field program in order to comply with Title IX. The track team then filed a civil rights complaint arguing that the university is discriminating against male athletes (Thomas, 2011). Years later in 2015, the lawsuit was still ongoing. Mike Grieco, whose son was on the track team argued that there is not equal

opportunity for male athletes now with the cut of this program (Tresolini, 2015). Stories like this have created a villainous discourse surrounding Title IX in the media. This attitude contributes to the notion that sport is owned by men and that women have no business receiving resources or opportunities to participate. In this situation, historical perspectives intertwine with conflict theory from sociology. In conflict theory, those with wealth and power will do anything to keep it, including suppressing the poor and powerless (Fink, 2015, p. 336). Conflict theory teaches us that every aspect of social structure is conceptualized in terms of winners and losers (Simon, 2016, p. 2). In a stratified system of social structure, those at the top "seek to extend their own privilege while minimizing those of their competitors" (Simon, 2016, p. 3). This becomes clear when the attitudes surrounding women's sports is brought to light. While sport historians claim that girls participation in sport is up 800% since the installment of Title IX, the patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes in sport have not been dented (Adams, et al., 2005, p. 18). Historical and cultural influences maintain the notion of sex differences in this masculine domain and continue to influence physical activity at all levels (Verbrugge, 1997). In looking at history, it becomes clear that changing wide-spread cultural values in society is difficult, but not impossible, which is a hopeful note when tackling gender issues in sport.

Sport serves as an arena in which gender stereotypes and ideologies are heightened and hard to contest. This is why they remain important themes which are explored throughout the examination of socialization and throughout the primary research. It has long been a venue in which hegemonic masculinity is celebrated and any deviation from that norm is strongly rejected. Strict boundaries between genders can be seen through sport while cultural values are represented and socially constructed through this medium as well. As historical literature notes, the production of cultural norms and understandings have long been produced through sports

(Roessner & Whiteside, 2016, p. 584). To this day, physical activity is a contested terrain in which both real and symbolic boundaries allow for the exclusion of women, gays, lesbians and racial minorities from participating fully (Cooky, 2009, p.260). Cooky notes that dramatic changes in work, family and leisure in the twentieth century have become increasingly “feminized”. This has made resistance to women entering the sports world even stronger as it is seen as one of the last places in which hegemonic masculinity is reinforced and taught to boys (2009, p.260). Undoubtedly, sport reinforces power differentials between men and women. The term “female athlete” showcases the inconsistency between being both a female and an athlete (Ross & Shinen, 2008, p.42). This label serves as a paradox that is embedded into our cultural understanding of masculine traits being defined as superior to female ones. With the increased participation and achievement of women in sport, it is questionable as to why this paradox still exists. Ross & Shinen set out to interview elite athletes at the college level to learn how they view and contend with the “female athlete paradox” (2008, p.43). The researchers found that the women in this study recognized the dualism found in North American culture regarding women athletes however they felt that descriptors of normalized femininity did not align with their own feelings about their femininity. This led the athletes themselves to create their own definitions where they viewed themselves as both women and athletes. It was found that the athletes enjoyed both showcasing their physical power at times and their femininity at other times of their choosing. The authors therefore argue that portraying a powerful “girl” and looking like one on occasion may define what it means to be a woman athlete at this time. Hesitation to enter the sporting world by girls and women is therefore understandable; when one's sexuality, femininity and ability are questioned and critiqued at every turn, even when wanting to participate for fun and or health reasons may be limited. With an increase in opportunities and venues for girls to

participate in sport and physical activity, it is the attitudes society at large has towards those who do participate that has to change. Making physical activity a more inviting place for girls to participate is crucial in seeing rates of participation increase at the recreational level (Ross & Shiner, 2008).

As sport continues to promote stereotypical notions of femininity that limit girls' participation and feelings of belonging in a physical active sphere, it also reinforces ideals of hegemonic masculinity which can be problematic as boys develop and take in these messages. It is important to address this side of the sporting world to bring forward more issues of strict gender boundaries. Change can also be implemented from this perspective by altering how boys feel about their masculinity and changing their thoughts about girls and femininity as well. A lot of the time, sports teams serve as a site of primary socialization for boys and men (MacDonald, 2014, p. 96). This venue is where hypermasculinity and hegemonic masculinity are learned. This can lead to problematic behaviour and thinking of boys and male athletes and they grow up in this environment that forces them to be aggressive, stoic, competitive and show little emotion (p.97). As opposed to women, men are taught that they cannot be emotional or sensitive and must instead be physical and dominant. Because they are male, they are expected to enjoy the competitive and rough nature of sports like hockey and football. When we keep men on one side of the gender binary, we do not allow them to defy the gendered expectations placed upon them. Male sports and sports team also harbour harmful ideas about homophobia. By encouraging hegemonic masculinity, boys are steered away from acting in ways that are associated with femininity and homosexuality (Anderson, 2015, p. 365). Culturally, homosexuality is associated with the way a man acts, therefore boys will go to great lengths to prove they are not homosexual. Those who do not do so are ostracized and are often the target of homophobic

behaviour. This type of attitude towards masculinity in sport is not only harmful in the sense that it excludes women who wish to participate, but it also excludes men who do not fit within the stereotypical ideal of a manly aggressive man.

Along with perpetuating hegemonic beliefs about how men and women should act, sport has influence in maintaining the dominant ideals about how a feminine woman should look. It has been pointed out that an unhealthy relationship with physical fitness has been produced in our society which positions attractiveness high on the list of what a woman should be. Especially in professional sports, women who are deemed conventionally attractive receive more media attention and sponsorship. Tennis star Anna Kournikova who was famous for her sex appeal, made \$15 million in sponsorships despite never winning a major tournament (Dockterman, 2014). Summer and winter Olympian Lolo Jones has been accused of using her looks for fame. Jones points out that much of the time women athletes only receive attention once every four years during the Olympics so she has to use the sponsorship opportunities that arise to make a living. In both these cases, attention is paid more to the athletes' looks and bodies than their actual sporting performance. Promoting images of athletes who are deemed conventionally attractive in the media showcases one type of woman and can be limiting in how we interpret how women athletes can look. The distorted image of health that is portrayed in the media plays a large role in how we police women's bodies. An exercise program should be implemented in someone's life in order for them to be healthy and feel good. However, much of the time the goal is to look good and not necessarily feel good (Washington & Economides, 2016, p. 146). Many of the images which circulate and are used to define health are constraining and showcase only one type of body, which contributes to increased levels of body image dismorphia and disorders. With the immense contradictions between being feminine and being athletic, female athletes

must undertake the challenge of navigating this conflict. Many high profile female athletes are pushing back against this image and becoming champions of the body positive movement. Serena Williams, one of the best tennis players in the world, has taken to social media to showcase her strong and athletic body through a variety of pictures and by using the hash tag #StrongIsBeautiful (see figure 3).

Other famous female athletes like Ronda Rousey, who is a female UFC fighter pushes back against people that think her body is too masculine. She does so by stating powerful messages like “there isn't one muscle in my body that isn't for a purpose” and is not afraid to show off her muscular body on her social media accounts (Beigelman, 2015). However, female athletes also feel like in order to counteract these masculine traits, they must over perform their sexuality and femininity outside of the sporting world in order to maintain a proper feminine image. Opportunities to be on the cover of magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* are limited for female athletes and when they are on the cover, they are often dressed and posed sexually. For example, ahead of the 2010 Olympics, Lindsey Vonn appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Instead of the picture being an action shot, she was in her ski gear and bent over. Many criticized this as being “sexualized” (Parry, 2011). The opportunity to pose on the cover of a magazine could serve as a way for female athletes to counter the masculine image which may be associated with them due to their sporting abilities. Consequently, it serves as a way for society to minimize women's athletic abilities and reinforces notions of sexualizing both females and female athletes (Weber & Carini, 2013, p. 201).

Examining the ways in which notions of gender are created and perpetuated is important in addressing the issues that arise because of it. The way in which society at large believes in and follows gender normative ideals has a huge impact in how children and young adults are



socialized to enact the gender that corresponds to their biological sex. The socially constructed meanings given to the body and the gender associated with it therefore trickles down into all facets of life, especially sports and physical activity. In a world where masculinity is associated with toughness, physicality and aggression, sports serve as the perfect domain in which to breed strict boundaries between men and women and ostracize and exclude those who blur the lines between traditional maleness and femaleness. Being aware of the construction of gender and the ways in which gender is socialized is crucial in combating dominant ideals which limit girls and women participating in sport and physical activity and creating an environment which will be welcoming for all.

### **Chapter 3-Physical Education**

The school is an important site for socializing children; at school they take in new information daily about the world, interact with peers and teachers and learn what it means to be female or male. The classroom is therefore a perfect location to instill important habits regarding physical activity and health. It is also a prime space for teaching children about gender and breaking free from gender normative roles and stereotypes. Physical Education is the first site of socialization examined in this thesis. It has an immense role in perpetuating the social ideals girls face in regard to gendered attitudes in sport. In this chapter, physical education's importance on the overall health of boys and girls while focusing specifically on girls and how they seek to benefit both physically and psychologically from this form of education is expanded. The influence of the attitudes of peers and teachers will also be examined to address girls' perceptions of physical activity and themselves as physically active beings. Drop out rates by female students will also be addressed in order to discuss what could be done in order to achieve higher rates of participation.

#### **Importance of Physical Education**

Since the Industrial Revolution, the invention of new technologies has enabled people to live more easily without needing to exert physical labour. Inventions such as that of the steam engine, train, car and truck made it easier to get around without exerting the body much. Inventions in the home such as the television, internet and hand held devices have lead to reduction in physical hardship in order to complete tasks for both work and for pleasure (Hallal et al., 2012, p. 247). This lead to a drop in physical activity levels worldwide with 31.1% of adults being inactive. As people get older, their levels of physical activity drop. The same study done by Hallal et al., has shown that 80% of boys and girls ages 13-15 years get fewer than 60

minutes of physical activity per day (2012, p. 247). Changing this statistic is essential for improving the overall health of the world. Therefore, physical education is crucially important for increasing children's daily activity levels as sedentary behaviours become more and more common. With the rate of childhood obesity on the rise in Canada, the need for children to remain in physical education and physical activity is crucial so that they do not suffer through immediate and long term health problems throughout their lifespan (Sinclair, 2015, p. 8). Not only does physical activity have the obvious major physical benefits to students of improving strength, aerobic fitness and bone density but there are a number of other benefits as well. For instance, there are a multitude of mental health and psychological benefits associated with physical activity. Usher cites physical activity as resulting in “better stress management, [alleviating] depression and anxiety, [strengthening] self-esteem, [enhancing] mood and [boosting] mental alertness” in children (Usher et al., 2016, p.926). Introducing physical activity into a child's life early on will help them develop healthy habits and set them up for living healthy lives into the future.

With the increase in inactivity in society today, the need for a comprehensive and quality physical education program is more important than ever. Physical Education as a class is not taken as seriously as traditional academic classes, is not allocated enough time and is therefore deemed less important. In Canada, there are no specific requirements for how much class time is dedicated to physical education, there are just recommended guidelines and no accountability measures in place to make sure that these guidelines are met. Kilborn et al., examined the Physical Education programs in all the Provinces across Canada and noticed that the recommended guidelines were low. In Newfoundland it was only recommended that students in grades 1 to 6 get 75 minutes a week (2016, p. 34). It is recommended a child this age perform

over an hour of physical activity each day however with the concern over sedentary lifestyles and obesity on the rise the danger of not meeting this recommendation on their own is high. Schools are positioned perfectly to create a space for children to exert themselves and foster healthy lifestyles. Multiple studies have shown that when physical activity time is increased, academic performance is heightened (Bailey et al., p.2) Guidelines for Physical Education time allocation relates to the marginalization of Physical Education as a subject; it continues to be pushed aside in favour of the more academic standardized courses which are seen as more valuable.

Furthermore, curricular aims must be clear and standardized to make sure that the goals and learning outcomes are being met. There is some discrepancy and misconception about the goal of Physical Education as an educational class. Ferkel et al., argue that children today have little experience in physically demanding environments and therefore do not overcome physical challenges that help them develop mental fortitude for difficult tasks, mental resiliency, physical fitness, self-confidence to succeed and a multitude of other benefits associated with overcoming physical challenges (2017, p. 225). They go on to argue that the current attitude to reduce Physical Education to “fun” may not lead to the adoption of physical fitness throughout the lifespan. The focus on Physical Education and the five national standards in the United States are; “(1) competency in movement, (2) [ability to] apply knowledge to movement and performance, (3) achieve[ment of] a health-enhancing level of PA and fitness, (4) engage[ment] in responsible personal and social behavior, and (5) [ability to] recognize the value of PA” will lead to appreciation, strengthened psychological and physical skills (Ferkel et al., 2017, p. 258). There is a discrepancy between the focus of the American curriculum and the Canadian one. The overall claims of physical education curricula across Canada, according to Kilborn et al., is that

the main objective is to promote and focus on health and active living (2016, p. 34). Upon specific examination of the learning outcomes, it was revealed that movement skills remain the focus. This is promoted by performance-driven and competitive games which have their use in childhood development but are not the most important objectives as stated by the aims of physical education curriculum (Kilborn et al., 2016, p. 34). Understandably, the confusion surrounding the goals of Physical Education remain. In order to create a balanced, healthy and active person for life, the curriculum need not address one aspect like physicality but a variety of aspects like the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual parts of a person. Revisiting the philosophy and outcomes of Physical Education and its curricula would serve as a means to make sure its aims are being achieved while standardizing its goals would allow for Physical Education programs to be taken seriously and receive the time they deserve in the school day.

### **Importance of Physical Education for Girls**

Girls stand to benefit from the physical benefits of physical activity such as cardiovascular fitness, physical strength and bone density mentioned previously. However, it is the psychological, social and self-esteem benefits that are of extreme importance for young girls to acquire as they develop. Positive experiences of social inclusion are related to experiences in physical activity and sports. Sports have the ability to bring people together from all different background and experiences. These platforms are incredibly valuable as they offer a sense of belonging and inclusion. They also provide an opportunity to develop social networks and social capital which can lead to a better sense of connection to the community (Bailey et al., p. 2). Strong feelings of self-esteem and empowerment are associated with sports participation. Developing a sense of ownership over one's body can lead to empowerment in sport and in other areas of life. Schools and Physical Education classes are therefore situated to make a huge

impact in the lives of girls, not only in terms of their overall physical health, but their mental health and feelings of confidence and empowerment in all areas of their lives. It becomes quite clear that the need for a comprehensive physical education curriculum that receives enough class time is just as valuable in the long run as any academic course offered in schools.

### **Girls in Physical Education**

With all the benefits associated with Physical Education classes it is disappointing to note that the drop out rate for girls as they age is high. Numerous factors such as the curriculum, peer and teacher influence and the resulting perception and attitudes of girls in regard to Physical Education will be examined in order to address these drop out rates and find ways in which increased participation in PE can be achieved.

The concern over girls dropping out of physical education and physical activity has long been noted in Canada and many other westernized nations. The history of Physical Education relates highly to the social construction of the body and gender (Verbrugge, 1997, p. 276). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the approach to Physical Education saw much segregation, female focused activities and teachers which were also female. This corresponds with the dominant ideal of the time; women are physically inferior to men and require easier exercises that are less taxing. The early philosophies of Physical Education were rooted in sexual dualism and the perceived biological differences in male and female bodies. The social construction of women's bodies implied that they were biologically inferior to men and incapable of performing the same rigorous tasks. This notion is still embedded in society today and trickles down into youth's minds as they take in and are socialized by the messages which surround them. The culture of physical education classes has led to a 60% drop out rate during adolescence (Usher et al., 2016, p. 927). The reasons cited for this are lack of choice, body image issues, boy-centered

curriculum and changing interests (Usher et al., 2016, p. 927). Due to the amount of time spent in the school setting, schools are in a optimal position to promote physical activity amongst their students and especially amongst girls (Usher et al., 2016, p. 925). They are also a location that can to help children learn about physical activity as a gendered sphere. The school setting is a powerful venue in which to affect change by teaching boys and girls ways to alter the narrative surrounding sports and physical activity as male dominated spaces.

The school serves as a socialization agent which teaches children about society at large. As they come to terms with what it means to be female, girls may begin to underperform or shy away from physical activity. Physical Education is the only subject in school in which the body is put on display; if it is deemed an asset it is welcome, if not it is seen as a hindrance (Fagrell et al., 2012, p. 112). In co-educational classrooms, hierarchical gender norms show themselves as Physical Education is as an arena for the production of traditional gender roles. Peer influence from both boy and girl classmates keep gender norms intact and maintained through continuous gendered practices, interactions and performances (Hill, 2015, p. 667). Fagrell, Larsson and Redelius sought to examine Physical Education classrooms in Sweden and how gendered practices would reveal themselves as students played ball (2012, p. 103). The more dominating boys were found to be at the centre of the game while girls were found in the periphery. It became apparent that the boys were the most active in the game and had the most to say about how the game should be played. Even the less dominating boys participated on the fringes of the domination. Although they were marginalized during the game, they still participated enough to be considered a part of the dominant sex. On the other hand, the girls remained very much on the fringes of the game, with the less competent girls seeking to stay out of the action as much as possible (Fagrell et al., 2012, p. 113). The competent girls joined in although not fully as they

learn that it is natural for the dominant boys to take over the game. The competent girl must subordinate herself by staying out of the way and not dominating in order to fulfill her proper role in the gender hierarchy. Sport as a male dominated space is another theme which pops up throughout the exploration of the literature and one which will be explored during the analysis of the media.

### **Girls Perceptions/Attitudes Towards PE**

Looking at physical education in particular is interesting in that it represents on a small scale the gendered issues which are present in sport in a macro sense. Peer and teacher socialization play a large role in girl's participation rates as do the availability of time and space to perform physical activity and the importance placed on it by the school's curriculum. Thin and sexualized ideals are placed on girls while performing physical activity, presenting another issue which deters girls from participating in physical education classes. Concerns over appearance and body shape are said to begin in early adolescence; as puberty and body changes occur, self esteem drops and can result in poorer mental and physical health (Cribb & Haase, 2016, p. 107). School can be a place where a young girl can develop confidence and self-esteem through learning, mastery and developing friendships and relationships with classmates and teachers. Therefore, the influence of peers becomes increasingly important when it comes to body shame and physical education. Cribb and Haase provide support for the argument that inflated concerns of appearance and lower self-esteem in girls are present when members of the opposite sex are in attendance (2016, p.112). Peer pressure to conform to idealized concepts of beauty and thinness can also be overwhelming at adolescence and can lead to a disengagement from physical education if feelings of inadequacy and shame are present. Perceptions about gender norms and gender lines are formed during middle school. Constantinou et al note that perceptions about



what is deemed traditionally a male and female sport are beginning to change however, girls still doubt their ability in comparison to the boys in physical education settings (2009).

### **Teacher's Role**

Teachers play a large role in keeping girls engaged in Physical Education. Lack of proper training for teachers and not making physical education mandatory are significant reasons for the drop out rates amongst both boys and girls (Bailey, 2005, p. 74). As mentioned previously, many of the learning outcomes and activities presented in Physical Education classes are performance driven and competitive. The focus on skill development and competition is a deterrent to those who may not excel in sport at the same level as their classmates. This is problematic for all students and encourages only those who are more athletic to participate. It is especially concerning for girls who are already in a marginalized position as they enter the male-dominated sporting realm. Performance driven games make girls more vulnerable to feelings of self-consciousness and humiliation can be damaging to their confidence and desire to pursue physical activity further. Additionally, lack of proper training for teachers and not making physical education mandatory are significant reasons for the drop out rates amongst both boys and girls (Bailey, 2005, p. 74). This is a growing concern as the rate of female adolescent drop out from physical education once it is not a required course has been shown to be more likely than their male counterparts (Sinclair, 2015, p.6) In her study, Sinclair demonstrated that physical educators believed that young women form much of their self-identity and attitudes towards physical activity in middle school (2015, p. 54). Therefore, more positive experiences in physical education could lead to higher participation rates in physical activity throughout their lives (Sinclair, 2015, p. 54). Teachers are also positioned to motivate girls to participate fully in Physical Education. Amotivation is “a state of lacking any motivation to engage in an activity”

and “amotivation represents a complete lack of volition with respect to the target behavior” (Shen, 2015, p. 164). Shen conducted a study which looked at amotivation and teacher autonomy and support (2015, p. 170). In a physical education setting, students cannot perceive a relationship between their actions and outcomes of those actions and do not feel in control of their actions. The study showed that gender plays a role in the relationship between teacher autonomy support and amotivation in physical education. This means that students participate in physical education with motivation that has come from their particular social and cultural experiences. When teachers gave students high autonomous support to have a say in what activities they performed in Physical Education, girls perceived that the activities they were doing had value. Teachers should then create a supportive learning environment that increases motivation for girls to participate in physical education and helps them understand why physical education has meaning.

The presence of hierarchical gender norms taking place in physical education classes may go unnoticed because it seems so natural and part of everyday life. Therefore, it is extremely important for teachers to be aware of this taking place in their classrooms. Instructors must keep in mind the objectives of physical education and allow female students to feel as if they have control over what activities they do and push them to better themselves without comparing themselves to others. As Sinclair found, a “positive and safe community is needed for their female adolescents to feel like they can try and succeed, but also to try and fail in order to learn” (2015, p.55). Furthermore, a teacher that shows engagement and models the activity will showcase to their student that physical activity is important.

The gendered manner in which society is organized is doomed to show itself in the physical education setting. However, because this venue has such extreme influence as a site of

socialization, it can be an effective one in which to evoke a change in attitude towards girls and women's physical capabilities as well as the notion that boys and men must be dominant and aggressive. It is important to provide female students with an environment for learning in which they feel safe and free of judgment so that they may reap all the benefits both long and short term from being physically active beings.

## **Chapter 4-Media**

Today, the media plays an enormous role in how we view the world. Everyday we are bombarded with images that we take in both consciously and subconsciously that dictate what we buy, what is deemed acceptable and what we think about the world. Advertisements, music, television shows, magazines and news stories are just a few forms of media that people are exposed to daily. As the world becomes more and more interconnected through smart devices and free flowing information, the media is another important site of socialization that will be examined throughout this thesis.

The messages surrounding the construction of gender and the differences between genders is extremely prevalent when looking at it through the mass-media. Many of society's views of women are influenced by and derived from the media. In the forms of print, television radio etc, the images and messages we are privy to serve as strong influences on the ways in which we view the world. The social construction of gender can be further examined through the media and its portrayal of women in sports. Through all mediums of sports reporting, hegemonic masculinity is broadcasted as the norm (Godoy-Pressland, 2014, p. 595). As Creedon points out, gender is a social construction and as a result, men and women experience the world very differently (1994, p. 23). At the same time, everyone's experience of their own gender is different; nobody experiences the world the same way. Therefore, the images that are consumed by those taking in media are interpreted and internalized in different ways. Although interpretations may differ, largely the understanding remains the same; men are strong and aggressive, women are docile and fragile. As a result, societal norms, attitudes and cultural values at this large scale have trickled down into youth sport. This analysis of women in sport through the media touches on the overarching issue surrounding the exclusion of women in sport

and begins to demonstrate how this affects young girls as they are developing and becoming physically active beings. The overarching goal of this chapter is to explore the media and how it can influence society's views of women and women athletes as well as girls in sport. This will be discussed at length while also looking at the amount women's sports are covered, how they are covered and how women are depicted through this medium while also examining the importance that women's sports coverage has on impacting participation rates as well as the view of women in general.

As mentioned earlier, social constructionists view gender as a product of social forces placed upon us that dictate how people perform their gender in accordance to these influences. The view of the gendered body as socially constructed argues that biology does not dictate behaviour. However the overwhelming view of society informs us that our gender and resulting traits are based largely on biological sex differences. Sports media has always traditionally reinforced gender roles and the biological superiority of sportsmen while depicting sportswomen as second class athletes and citizens in comparison (Godoy-Pressland, 2014, p.296). This has tremendous influence on how society views not only women in general but also women in sport. It also has a significant influence on the number of girls and women who participate in sport as well as how they feel about themselves as sportswomen. Social construction influences on how we view women in sport as well as how women and girls feel about taking on sport and physical activity. Constructions perpetuated through the media of the body, the concept of femininity, and the sports world as male-dominated continue to impact the overall view of women in sport. Traits are ascribed to the body on the basis of physical appearance such as skin colour, fat, muscle tone, physical attractiveness etc. This acts like a script in which bodies are read, labeled and judged (Kirk, 2002, p. 81). On both sides, male and female, this script is present in the sports

world. Men are meant to be muscular and chiseled. Their performance on the field, pitch and ice is analyzed at length, and they are praised for their athletic achievement. However, the obsession over female athletes' bodies is the topic of focus and conversation as much of the time their bodies are put on display, discussed and analyzed before and above their athletic achievement (Trolan, 2013, p. 216).

Representation of female athletes in all forms of media is of extreme importance for the advancement of women in sport. The media is an influential source of socialization that broadcasts and re-transmits gender differences and gender ideologies into the world. Although some scholars believe that the media representation of women's sports is growing, the overall media representation, marketing and promotion of female sports is still enormously underrepresented today (Fink, 2015, p. 331). Underrepresentation serves as another way in which women are excluded from the sporting realm and is an important theme which will be examined in the primary research analysis of newspapers near the end of this thesis. It is widely known that in all forms of media, women's sports are largely underrepresented. When it comes to mega-events such as the Olympic Games, coverage between male and female athletes has begun to level out. However, day to day reporting of sportswomen's performance is largely underreported. In a study by Godoy-Pressland examining five British Sunday newspapers from 2008-2009, it was found that female sports received only 3.6% of all sports reporting coverage (2014, p.606). The lack of attention given to female athletes is often chalked up by producers and executives as a lack of interest for women's sports. They cite market demand and viewership levels as a reason for little sports coverage for women; they are giving viewers "what they want to see" (Godoy-Pressland, 2014, 336). However, this relationship is circular in nature; the trivialization and demeaning nature of women's sports coverage does not make people want to watch it. As a result

the decision makers are reacting to what the viewers would like to see. A change in the discourse and the opportunity to view women's sports could change the attitudes surrounding coverage of women's sports and viewership levels drastically. The media underrepresentation of women's sports is perhaps the most detrimental influence on young girls. The narratives surrounding women athletes cannot be changed unless a larger variety of the types of sports women participate in and the differences in body sizes, ethnicities and sexual orientations are displayed. How can an increase in girls in sport happen if they do not have role models to show them what is possible? To encourage them to pursue sport? To show them that women can be strong and muscular? To let them know that their label as “woman” is not the only thing that defines them?

It is difficult to talk solely about the amount of coverage female athletes receive without also touching on the manner in which they are reported. This section will outline the way in which women are framed as sexual beings first and as athletes second, keeping in mind that the theme of sexualization is one which will be touched on later in the primary research. It will also highlight the problematic nature of this narrative and how it affects the overall perception of women athletes and girls' participation in sports. As was noted previously, our society places appearance, body shape and perceived attractiveness in high regard. It also places high and almost unachievable standards of beauty on women and girls as they age and become aware of what it means to be considered beautiful and attractive. In the media in general, women are routinely sexualized presenting an idealized image to the world from which women and girls evaluate themselves and the women around them (Daniels, 2009, p. 400). The amount of coverage that women's sports receive is an issue and the manner in which these athletes are portrayed is also gravely problematic. When female athletes are depicted in the media they are often done so disparagingly, being judged first on their appearance and sexuality rather than their

athletic ability and achievement (Fink, 2015, p.333). A prime example of this is the continued discussion of tennis star Anna Kournikova's attractiveness, sexuality, love life and nightlife rather than her performance on the court. She is one of the most photographed female athletes of all time and is worth more money than any tennis star past or present, despite having never won a major tournament (Trolan, 2013, p. 220). The sexualization of women athletes relates to the previous chapter in the discussion of how thin and sexualized ideals lead to increased drop out rates in physical education classes by adolescent girls. Due to its prevalence as a recurring issue that surrounds women in sport, it is another theme addressed in the analysis of both the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail*. Success in sport does not equate to increased media attention on oneself in the world of women athletes. Daniels points out that the way in which women athletes are sexualized serves to reinforce patriarchal power and trivializes and devalues the strength and skill of women athletes (2009, p. 402). Girls who are exposed to these images over and over are routinely socialized to believe that only one type of body is attractive and acceptable. In a study conducted by Daniels, an investigation on the impact of performance versus sexualized images of women athletes on adolescent girls and college women was performed. The participant's level of self-objectification after looking at these images was performed. Both sexualized and non-sexualized images were used to assess the psychological impact these images had on the participants (2009, p. 405). It was found that performance images prompted feelings of empowerment, promoted self-descriptions that discussed one's own physicality and physical competencies, and focus on what women's bodies are capable of. Interestingly, girls and women who were exposed to the performance athlete's pictures made more negative comments regarding their own physical appearances. Those who viewed the sexualized images had fewer physicality descriptors in their own appearance while on the other hand, physical appearance became



especially salient, and negative comments were made about their own appearance. The author suggests that this could be due to the socio-cultural influence on women from the media. Women are socialized to focus on their body and physical appearance no matter what kind of images they are exposed to. The images that girls are exposed to cause them to be extremely critical, discouraged and depressed about their own bodies (Daniels, 2009, p. 404). These psychological impacts cannot be understated. Media messages serve as primary agents of socialization that contribute highly to how girls and women feel about themselves, their bodies and their self-worth. Changing the way in which female athletes are showcased would not only serve as an extremely influential way to alter the way that girls feel about their bodies but also as a way in which to change the narrative surrounding women and their place as sexualized beings in society. Women's bodies are not solely the objects of sex and desire, but can also be powerful, strong and athletic.

In conjunction with the idealized and sexualized image of a woman is the emphasis on heterosexuality and the lesbian label on those who participate in more masculinized sports and do not choose to showcase their femininity. As women entered the male-dominated field of sport, they were unwelcomed and those who succeeded were labeled as lesbian (Trolan, 2013, p. 221). The threat of this label and the stigma associated with it is influential for women athletes, making them go to extremes to emphasize their femininity. Examples of this include wearing bows in their hair while competing, or posing provocatively on the cover of magazines off the field of play. When a female athlete does not over perform her gender, her sexuality becomes a target of discussion. The sporting world is steeped with homophobia and women athletes must constantly monitor their appearance, mannerisms and behaviour (Fink, 2012, p. 53).

Homophobia plays a huge role in the marketing and broadcasting of women's sports. The use of

the lesbian label on those who excel at sport and do not fit within traditional gender norms further disparages women's sport as well as participation in general.

In addition to underrepresentation and sexualization, women athletes face trivialization at the hands of the media. In comparison to men's sports, women's sports are portrayed as less important and second-class. The production value of women's coverage compared to men's shows lower levels of replays, statistics and close-ups of players (Bruce, 2015, p. 365). This does not foster a dramatic and interesting view of the game and is another contributing factor in the lack of interest in women's sports coverage. Infantilizing female athletes serves as another way in which they are seen as less important. More often commentators referred to female athletes as “girls” or “young ladies” than they did male athletes as “boys”. Additionally, as Trolan notes, female tennis athletes were referred to by their first names 304 times as opposed to male athletes who were called by their first names only 44 times (Fink, 2015, p. 334). This shows a causality when referring to female athletes that is not extended to male athletes who are discussed in a more formalized manner. Furthermore, their emotionality and their specific gender role becomes more salient than their athletic ability. For example, a commentator will bring up a female athlete's personal life and her role as a mother and wife more often than a male athlete's family life (Nezlek et al., 2015, p. 3). All of these factors are problematic for a number of reasons. The trivialization of women athletes and their representation as women first and athletes second, is just another way in which women are seen as second class citizens forever defined by their sexuality and femininity. Furthermore, societal norms, attitudes and cultural values at this large scale have the potential to trickle down into youth sport. Children who take in these forms of media will internalize and take on these messages and apply them to their own sporting realities.

Increasing the amount of media coverage dedicated to women's sports is a crucial step forward in promoting participation and interest for girls to get involved in sport. As has been pointed out throughout this chapter, sport is a social institution which showcases the overwhelming belief in mainstream culture of male superiority and female inferiority (Kane, 1996, p. 96). By challenging these ideals, the narrative within society can be altered and girls can feel more empowered to confront inequalities they may come across in other areas of their lives.

## Chapter 5-Socialization in Action

### Introduction

This chapter represents a practical manner in which to view agents of socialization for girls and how they perpetuate the attitudes which surround women in sport. Media in the forms of radio, television, social media, print news, magazines and more bombard us with images and messages which we take in and internalize both consciously and subconsciously every day. The sports section of newspapers represent a snapshot of what is deemed “newsworthy” and is going on in the world of sports for that day. This section of the newspaper therefore indirectly informs the reader which sports, athletes, coaches, associations and leagues are important and worth covering.

The research was conducted between January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 as well as January 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 and February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Over the first week (January 18-25, 2018) the Sports section of the *National Post* Newspaper was analyzed for its coverage of the Australian Open tennis tournament. This particular tournament was chosen because of its prestige, hype and for the fact that both the best men's and women's tennis players from across the globe participate. During the analysis of the *National Post* however, it became apparent that much of the time, articles regarding women tennis athletes were the only ones that featured female athletes. Following the conclusion of the Australian Open on January 28<sup>th</sup>, it was then decided that an analysis of both the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* would take place in order to explore these themes in a more general sporting sense. Throughout this thesis, several themes stood out as important ones which are perpetuated through socialization sites like physical education classrooms and the media. These themes contribute to the attitudes surrounding women and girls in sport. Throughout the analysis of the articles in the newspaper, the 5 themes were examined to

see if there was a difference in the type of coverage male and female tennis stars received and if so, what those differences were. The 5 themes were; the construction of gender, sexualization, sport as a masculine domain, gender roles and stereotypes and underrepresentation. The *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* were chosen because of their status as mainstream newspapers that circulate across Canada.<sup>8</sup>

## **Results**

### Construction of Gender

When looking at the construction of gender and how this was conveyed through newspaper articles, much of the language surrounding both men and women tennis athletes was examined. In the case of the men, words that conveyed aggression were often used to describe their play and attitudes on the court. On Thursday January 25<sup>th</sup>, an article titled “Federer rages his way into semi finals” uses combative language right away to show this male athlete's aggressive style of play. It then goes on to use words like “cranky”, “frustrated” and “angry” as the reporter tells the reader of a match in which he questioned the umpire's calls and accused them of “stealing his challenge” (Pye, January 25th 2018, p. B6). In another article published the previous day, male tennis player Nadal was described as “angrily hurl[ing] his headband into his bag” following a loss (Pye, January 24th 2018, p.B3). Earlier, on January 19<sup>th</sup>, “tempers were tested” in a match between male players Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka as both players “survived” but complained about the “brutal” heat during their match (Pye, January 19th 2018, p.

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<sup>8</sup> National Post circulation numbers-186, 108 papers circulated weekly  
Globe and Mail circulation numbers-336, 487 papers circulated weekly

B7). On the women's side, the only time aggressive and assertive language was used to describe a female player was when Caroline Wozniacki had “fighting words” in response to the media who back in 2012 implied that she was finished and had few good years left in her at the age of 27 (The Associated Press, January 20th 2018, p. FP13). Canadian Eugenie Bouchard said that she wants to “go out there and do some damage” saying that “it's fun to have no pressure” when discussing her status as under dog (The Associated Press, January 18th 2018, p. B5). Much of the time, articles did not go into enough detail to use descriptive words about the women tennis player's matches, their demeanors on the court, or their post game interviews. Instead, they simply stated the score lines of the games and the eventual winners. However, words such as “fun” and “positive” were used to describe the female players when athletes were highlighted (The Associated Press, January 18th 2018, p. B5; January 20<sup>th</sup> 2018, p. FP13). The findings related to the language surrounding male and female tennis players were indicative of the social construction of gender and male aggression and female docileness. In terms of photographs featured in the *National Post* of the Australian Open, two pictures of female athletes were featured, while five featured male athletes. In the photos of male athletes, two were intense mid-game shots that showed the players celebrating. One was of a player visibly suffering from the heat, dumping water on his face (The Associated Press, January 19, 2018, p. B5). Another was of a player in a post game press conference, smiling. The last one was of Roger Federer waving to the crowd after a victory (Thian, January 25, 2018 p. B6). The photos of female athletes showed an action shot of Marta Kostyuk mid stroke and Eugenie Bouchard looking sad after a loss (Pye, January 19, 2018, p. B7; The Associated Press, January 20, 2018, p. FP13). The main difference in these observations, other than the under-representation of female players versus male players is the pictures which convey intensity and victory.

During the analysis of both the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* newspapers for the following week, many of the same trends were observed both in the pictures printed in the newspapers as well as the stories and wording used to cover both male and female athletes. This week was of particular interest because of the lead up to one of the most anticipated sports events in North America, the SuperBowl. Football is arguably one of the most masculinized sports in the mainstream media today. Players must be strong, fast and tough as they tackle each other to the ground and purposely go charging head first into their opponents. To no surprise, much of the discourse surrounding this event emanated hypermasculinity. On Wednesday January 31<sup>st</sup>, an article titled “the Making of a Legend” highlights the New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick and his success with his managerial style (Barb, p. B3). Deemed the “greatest coach in history”, Belichick is described throughout the article as “impatient, hyper-efficient, unwilling to wait on anyone”, “unforgiving”, “demanding and sarcastic.” Many of these terms suggest aggression and even authoritarianism, however they are used in praise for one the most celebrated coaches in football history. Of note was the notion of roughness, violence and injuries which surround the game of football. “Crushing hits”, “hard hits” and “limping around the field” are phrases used to describe average plays which took place on the field of play (Maaddi, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, p. B5). In an article on Friday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Super Bowl was likened to going to war as opponents looked to “conquer” the New England Patriots (Stapleton, p. B17). This further contributes to the notion that men and athletes are tough and willing to be aggressive, violent, and put their body on the line for victory and glory. In women's sports that week, once again there were not enough in depth articles or interviews to elaborate further on the social construction of femininity within the sporting realm. An article featuring Canadian speed skater Ivanie Blondin covered her tumultuous relationship with the sport. The article described the highs and lows she experienced

en route to appearing in the 2018 Olympics. As a girl she was cited as being “determined” and “competitive” however after leaving home at a young age her vulnerable side was shown as she recounted the isolation she felt and the eating disorder she developed. Now however, with the encouragement of her coach and a move closer to family, she has “tougher skin” and is in a positive head space to be a medal contender in Pyeongchang (Spencer, Tuesday January 30<sup>th</sup>, p. B 13). This article exemplifies some vulnerability and emotion which is not present in articles featuring male athletes where physical obstacles are generally the ones they must contest.

Photos for this section:

Figure 4:

Picture of Gabriela Dabrowski, female tennis player. She is pictured celebrating by doing a fist pump and in the picture she looks happy and warm and appears to be smiling (The Canadian Press, Thursday February 1<sup>st</sup>, p. B5).

On the other hand, there is a picture of male tennis player Marin Cilic (Figure 5) also doing a fist pump while celebrating. In this picture he appears angry and intense and appears to be yelling (The Associated Press, Wednesday January 24<sup>th</sup>, p. B3).

These two photos although similar in what the two athletes are doing, differ highly and relate to the construction of gender and how women and men are presented contrastingly. The manner in which Dabrowski is presented here show that women are stereotypically cheerful and perhaps lack intensity whereas Cilic is presented as intense and aggressive through his picture.

Figure 6: This photo shows figure skaters Meagan Duhamel and Eric Radford in action. Radford has Duhamel lifted above his head and Duhamel is posing above him smiling and looking



graceful. Although a stereotypically feminine sport, figure skating requires much strength which Radford is exhibiting here. Duhamel looks elegant, is wearing a dress and full makeup and is embodying clear signs of femininity. It is noteworthy that this is one of the few pictures of female athletes found throughout the study and it showcases hyperfemininity and a traditionally feminized sport.

### Sport as a Masculine Domain & Under-representation

Originally the themes of “sport as a masculine domain” and “under-representation” were meant to be separate. However, upon further examination of the two themes as well as the articles published throughout the weeks of January 18th and January 29th, it was impossible to talk about one without discussing the other as they are very much linked. A quick look at the front page of the sports section of the *National Post* for the week of January 18th show top stories regarding male athletes. Two out of the six front pages included pictures of female athletes on the cover and on those pages they were relegated to the top and bottom corners of the front page, which on average had about four to five pictures on it. Without even having to read any of the articles, this indicates right away that sport is heavily guarded by notions of masculinity, making it hard for women to break through. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous section, the pictures chosen embodied masculinity showing male tennis athletes visibly celebrating and shouting. Another trend which correlates to masculinity and under-representation is that of how the articles were framed. In four out of the six articles in the *National Post* devoted to Australian Open coverage, the title and beginning of the article discussed the performance of the male tennis players, featuring interviews and describing the match. Women athletes were given a smaller amount of the article near the middle or the end and the writing reflected only the

scoreline and did not go into as much detail about the game. In terms of sport as a masculine domain, what is not in the newspaper is more telling than what is included. With a significant under-representation of female tennis players being showcased in the spotlight, this sends a message to the world about what we value and what is deemed important in the world of sports. In the case of three out of the six newspapers (from January 18th to January 25<sup>th</sup>), female tennis players were the only women athletes mentioned in the entire sports section of the paper. With women competing in a variety of sports in many disciplines as well as with the approaching Olympic Games, it is alarming that there are not more women athletes being showcased in the *National Post* newspaper.

Throughout the observations of the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* the following week, similar themes were noticed; a lack of overall representation of women conveys the idea that sports are safely guarded by men and masculine ideals. Twelve newspapers were examined in total during the week of January 29th to February 6th, women athlete's photos appeared only 3 times on the cover, with one of those pictures being a smaller one in the corner. This theme also continued throughout the various issues, showing women athletes' photos 12 times while printing photos of male athletes 83 times. Much of the time, stories covering female athletes and sports were not given much print space, let alone a photo attached to the article. On one occasion, there was an edition of the *National Post* that did not feature a single article regarding women's sports (February 2<sup>nd</sup>). In the January 31 edition of the *National Post*, only one article discussed women athletes. This article is hardly a positive one, however, as it features a male gymnastics coach in Ontario who has been charged with sexually assaulting teen girls that he coached. It was particularly interesting to note that on the weekend of February 3<sup>rd</sup>, two large sporting events took place within their respective sports, the Super Bowl as well as the

Scotties Tournament of Hearts curling final. The first features men's football while the second features women's curling. *The Globe and Mail* devoted five pages of coverage discussing various topics surrounding the upcoming football game while only one quarter of a page to Scotties Tournament of Hearts coverage.

It was interesting to note however, in the National Football League, there is a movement to make it less male-dominated by employing more females. While women already make up 33% of front office positions, there are still “very few working in areas such as coaching, scouting, officiating and team operations” (Brady, February 2 2018, p. B13). Women can be found working office jobs for the NFL but are not in positions which are more visible and at the front lines such as coaching and officiating. The NFL Women's Careers in Football Forum is held during the Pro Bowl weekend and provides qualified women an opportunity to network with employers from the NFL, CFL and high school football programs. According to the article the NFL would “love to hire females” but don't know where to find them because “all of the resumes coming across [their] desks are from men” (Brady, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018, p. B14). This is an encouraging step being taken by people within the sport of football as they attempt to make it less a male-dominated space for coaching, training, scouting and officiating levels. However, at the actual playing level there is still an obvious under-representation of female athletes in this male-dominated sport.

### Gender Roles & Stereotypes

As has been mentioned throughout this thesis, the construction of gender lead to many stereotypes and roles assigned to each gender. Men must be strong and aggressive while women weak and submissive. Throughout the readings of the National Post over the week of January 18-25<sup>th</sup>, attention was paid to whether or not male and female tennis athletes were portrayed in this

manner. Because the social construction of gender lead to the development of gender roles and stereotypes, many of the examples in the newspaper which display the social construction of gender can also be seen as stereotypical masculinity or femininity. For example, in the case of Roger Federer in the article “Federer rages his way into semifinals” it is reported that he is unhappy with the officiating during the match, is visibly frustrated and accuses the umpire of “stealing his challenge” (Pye, January 25 2018, p. B6). This is a performance of gender in which a male tennis player is acting in accordance to the stereotype that a man is assertive and aggressive. There was no backlash for Federer for acting this way and the reporter cites the “cheers intensifying” in the crowd as he made his complaint. One must therefore question whether or not a female tennis player who acted like this would have received the same reaction.

In the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* the following week, examples of gender roles and stereotypes furthered the stereotypical ideals of gender roles. It was interesting to note in a story about the Toronto Maple Leafs bringing their dads along with them on a road trip that the stereotypical notions of the gendered sports and roles are alive within the hockey family narrative. Rookie defencemen Travis Dermott's family is described as a “typical hockey family” where his dad coached him and his mom, a former figure skater, taught him to skate when he was little. In this example, “typical” is the father being into hockey and pushing his son and coaching him to the level he is at today, while his mother has a background in a more feminine sport, figure skating (Shoalts, February 1 2018, p. B16).

In another article, however, figure skating is featured as a sport that is “a feat of endurance, power and balance” and is working to combat the image that it is simply a sport in which the objective is to look elegant and smile the whole time (Ewing, February 6 2018, p. B12). This article claims that behind cross-country skiing, figure skating has the second most

amount of calories burned out of all the Olympic sports. It is describe by three time world champion Patrick Chan as a very difficult sport as “you're trying to run a marathon, but with the explosiveness of a 100-metre dash” (Ewing, February 6 2018, p. B12). This article serves as one which combats the stereotypical idea that figure skating requires only elegance and artistry but also requires incredible, strength and endurance; something that women athletes are capable of doing.

Another way in which traditional roles are perpetuated is through the manner in which the managerial style of New England Patriots football coach Bill Belichick is portrayed. He is very authoritative in his coaching and management styled being cited as “impatient, hyper-efficient, unwilling to wait on anyone” and “unforgiving” “demanding and sarcastic” (Barb, January 31 2018, p. B3). He demands a lot out of his assistant coaches and players, having them commit fully, sacrificing time away from family in the process. He is praised as one of the best coaches of all time, however, despite his bossy and stubborn ways. Just like the incident with Roger Federer complaining to the officials at the Australian Open, it is hard to believe that a woman with the same coaching style would receive the same praise as Belichick.

Figure 7: There is much over lap over the themes presented in the primary research and the images which will be presented as a part of it. In this photo, Canadian ski jumping athlete Taylor Henrich is getting a kiss on the cheek from her mother. It is a cutesy photo in which she is smiling and looking happy (Barnes, January 25<sup>th</sup>, p. B5). This photo exemplifies the affection and caring attitude expected out of a mother toward her child and from women in general. It is interesting to note that with the limited amount of pictures printed of female athletes during this study that this was one of the ones that ended up being printed while there were no photos of

men exhibit the same type of affection.

Figure 8: This is a picture of Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock photographed yelling and looking intense. This picture was chosen as it contrasts the previous one examined greatly. It also embodies stereotypical notions of masculinity and the idea that hockey coaches, especially male ones are meant to be loud and opinionated.

Figure 9:

This picture of Ben Simmons of the Philadelphia 76ers and Kyle Lowry of the Toronto Raptors basketball teams exhibits stereotypical masculine traits in sport and in general. It showcases the players “[having] words” with each other during a competitive and heated match. Their body language appears as if they are arguing while their teammates and the referee are using physical force to keep them apart in case things were to get physical. Once again, this photo exhibits tidbits from the themes discussed throughout this section. It shows the construction of masculinity and aggression and how it takes form in stereotypical ways in sport such as wanting to fight and show machismo. The choice to show this picture and contrast it with a picture of a female tennis player who is smiling and laughing further polarizes male and female athletes.

### Sexualization

The theme of sexualization was more difficult to examine as there was so little representation of women in the *National Post* between January 18-25<sup>th</sup>. Had there been more content devoted to women, perhaps then themes of sexualization and over-emphasized femininity would have emerged. While there were no overt displays of sexualization in the

newspaper regarding tennis players, there was one article which reported that a former Olympic speed skater came forward following the head coach of the Canadian speed skating team taking a leave. Under his coaching, this athlete alleges that she engaged in a “totally unethical” sexual relationship with him (Barnes, January 20 2018, p. FP5). While Chantal Cermak, the athlete who came forward said that she accepts her responsibility for the affair she believes that head coach Crowe abused his power. She said that she felt like he had control over her and that “he had the power and [she] couldn't get out of the relationship.” This article adds to the current climate of the #metoo movement which has seen many women come forward in many areas including athletics, politics and Hollywood to speak of their own experiences and denounce sexual harassment in all forms, especially in the workplace.

Upon further reading of both the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* sports sections the following week, more articles were devoted to reporting stories of sexual misconduct by men toward women in the sports setting. In total 5 articles in both the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* addressed issues of sexual misconduct within the sports world. An article in the *Globe and Mail* from February 6 is titled “Nassar sentenced to another 40 to 125 years” and goes on to inform the reader that Larry Nassar, the former USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University sports-medicine doctor has received an additional sentence on top of the one he had already received for child pornography for sexual misconduct towards girls at the USA gymnastics facility (Hauser, February 6, p. B13). It is reported that 256 people, both women and girls, have come forward as victims of his abuse. In another article discussing the Nassar trial and tales of abuse by the victims, it is claimed that this trial is “bigger than gymnastics” as it represents a larger societal problem (Hauser, February 1 2018, p. B19). The athletes had been “conditioned to obey” the people whom had authority over them as children and were fearful of the

repercussions of speaking out against their doctor at the time, Nassar. On a more positive note, incidents like the Nassar case have spearheaded movements and conversations throughout society and other sports in order to speak out about sexual abuse. At a women's world cup downhill skiing event, the message "stop violence against women and girls" was printed on the bottom of the skiers' bibs (Dampf, February 3 2018, p. FP16). This message is in response to the Nassar case and sexual violence in general against women in the work place. The bib serves as a way to start a conversation about combating sexualized violence against women and girls while also showing support for the victims who are brave enough to come forward with their stories.

## **Discussion**

The analysis of both the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* over two separate one week periods illuminated many interesting findings, many of which were surprising and both expected and unexpected. Each theme that was examined was helpful in highlighting the different ways in which differences between men's and women's sports are presented. Perhaps the most obvious theme in the newspapers was under-representation. It is quite well known that men's sports receive more coverage than women's sports however the concrete evidence presented in the observations heightens the understanding of the staggering differences in both the amount of coverage and the way in which the coverage is presented. Under-representation of women's sports is another way of showing sports as male a male-dominated area. By not having parity when it comes to representation, the readers are immediately informed of what is deemed important and legitimate based on the types of sports that are covered and who is performing the activity. Through examining sport as a masculine domain as well as under-representation, it was noted that it was impossible to talk about one without incorporating the other. For that reason those two themes were examined together. Findings like the one which pointed out that female



athletes were only shown through photographs 12 times versus male athletes being shown 83 times was a staggering and shocking observation which solidified the issue of under-representation being at the forefront. Another aspect of the analysis of under-representation which is noteworthy is the fact that in the case of the Australian Open, women athletes were given more attention than average. This could be because it is a big event in the tennis world. It could also be because tennis is a sport in which female athletes still show femininity through the manner in which they dress. Why is it that women's sports are shown sporadically when there are big events like the grand slams in tennis or when women's hockey is occurring during the Olympics? Leagues such as the National Women's Hockey League or the Women's National Basketball Association are not analyzed and covered regularly as opposed to their male counterparts. Again, what is not covered is more telling than what is. This plays a large role in socialization for young girls growing up with aspirations to follow sport. How can girls become something they cannot see? Without regular coverage of all types of sports and leagues in which women play in, girls will not be aware of the possibilities that are available to them through sport. Considering the lack of coverage devoted to women athletes and sport, an alarming amount of articles discussed inappropriate sexual behaviour present in sport. There was much coverage of the Larry Nassar trial in which Dr. Nassar sexually assaulted over 150 gymnasts throughout his time as a sports-medicine doctor for Michigan State University as well as the USA Gymnastics national team (Hauser, February 1 2018, p. B19). Further, there was an article discussing a gymnastics coach in Ontario sexually abusing his athletes as well as a story of a coach for the speed skating national team taking a leave as a story of him having an inappropriate affair with one of his athletes had surfaced (Thompson, January 31 2018, p. B4; Barnes, January 20 2018, p. FP13). When there is not a lot of coverage devoted to women's

sports to begin with, coverage that is printed depicts tales of abuse contribute more damage is done to overall appearance and image of women's sports. These articles which feature sexual abuse also reflect a larger societal problem which reaches beyond the sporting realm; sexual abuse from a male with power and the fear that victims face when reporting their assault. The words used to describe athletes and their performances were quite polarizing as well. This plays a large role in the stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity. Describing a male tennis athlete as “cranky”, “frustrated” and “angry” versus a female one as “fun” and “positive” is problematic for both male and female stereotypes. Not only does it limit women from being anything other than docile and soft, but it also constrains men to be assertive and aggressive (Pye, January 25 2018, p. B6) (The Associated Press, January 18 2018, p. B5) (January 20 2018, p. FP5). It was encouraging to note that there is an acknowledgment of trying to get more women involved in male-dominated sports like football. The article that discusses the NFL Women's Careers in Football Forum addresses the issue of lack of women representation in the front lines of the NFL coaching and officiating (Brady, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018, p. B14). This is an important movement that wished to see more female gender representation in one of the most stereotypical masculine leagues. While this is a positive move, why not also try and create a National Football League for women where women athletes can participate in sport and be in the spotlight. This would provide a different platform for women athletes to showcase their athleticism in a sport which does not convey traditional notions of femininity.

The analysis of both the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* highlighted many issues and discrepancies when looking at both men's and women's sports. Both the direct and subliminal messages that are conveyed through mediums such as newspapers are instrumental in socialization and affect the socio-cultural attitudes which surround women in sport. These

attitudes inhibit women and girls from participating at the same level as boys and men. The way in which the media covers female athletes as well as the amount of coverage they receive is an important aspect of socialization which needs addressing and changing in order to attract more women and girls into sport. Putting pressure on media outlets to cover women's sports more as well as covering the athletes and their athleticism rather than their appearance and perceived attractiveness will allow for inspiration and role models for all girls to be able to see themselves participating in numerous different activities. Placing emphasis on performance and positive stories regarding women's sports (not just ones of sexual assault) will help girls see sport and physical activity as a more welcoming space. Shifting the narrative around what it means to be feminine and what women can and cannot do is important. A cultural shift in society's attitudes about stereotypical femininity and insistence on marking differences between boys and girls would result in more inclusiveness within sport and therefore more girls involved.

## **Conclusion**

The manner in which girls and women are socialized is reflected in the socio-cultural attitudes that define what it means to be feminine and masculine and in the sites of socialization, specifically schools and in the media. These attitudes were shown to be present in historical patriarchal beliefs, the social construction of gender, the media and in physical education classrooms. The themes drawn from the literature were explored in the analysis of newspaper reporting on women's sports and were found to be represented and perpetuated through this medium. The need to alter society's attitudes towards girls and women in physical activity through mediums like the media was therefore deemed necessary in order to spark widespread change. The most prevalent theme found during this analysis was that of under-representation. This further exemplified that sport is still considered a male-dominated institution. What is not

shown in terms of women's sports is very telling, without regular coverage of women's leagues and women athletes, girls and women cannot be educated in the possibilities and opportunities that are available to them outside of the little amount of sport that is shown in print media.

The social construction of gender highlights the differences that are reinforced by societal institutions about what it means to be male and female and the backlash that one faces when pushing back against those norms. Boundaries have been set up through social processes which keep masculinity and femininity on either side of the gender spectrum. The belief that biologically, members of each gender are predisposed to act a certain way based on their gender is also socially constructed (Enloe, 2017, p. 42). This contributes to the widely shared belief that because of one's biological makeup, women possess the capacity to be elegant and docile while men have the innate capacity to be aggressive and strong. In sport, barriers are built up which inhibit girls and women from choosing to perform a physical and exerting task that goes against the ideals of femininity.

The classroom serves as another important venue in which socialization occurs and attitudes surrounding femininity and masculinity are formed. In physical education settings in particular, the socio-cultural attitudes of society at large trickle down into the attitudes towards girls in physical education classrooms. There is a need for structured curriculum delivered in a manner that will encourage participation and teach girls fundamental skills in movement while acknowledging personal strengths so that when they grow up and reach adolescence, they will have the confidence to try different sports and activities. Proper training for educators needs to be a priority especially in the realm of the attitudes which surround women in sport. Gendered attitudes and misconceptions should be incorporated into the curriculum and addressed at an early age and throughout schooling so that children can grow up aware of their own biases and

learn to think critically about gender and sport. Finally, importance needs to be placed on educating girls physically and creating time and devoting resources into doing so is of extreme importance.

Continual bombardment from the mass media on a daily basis supplies us with overt and subliminal messages of what we as a society deem normal and good. When the messages that are relayed through sports broadcasting rarely show women athletes, girls and women take in the message that they are not welcome in this realm. As was observed in the primary research, when women athletes are reported on they are not given much space in the newspaper and are rarely shown in pictures. The language used to describe female athletes also took on a lighter less serious tone than did the descriptors of male athletes. Although women have proven that they are indeed capable of being athletic and powerful beings, common discourse throughout the media and the reflecting attitudes of society prevent sport and physical activity from being a welcoming place. Sport therefore serves as an ideal arena in which to challenge stereotypical discourses surrounding masculinity and femininity and for encouraging female participation. Challenging these notions in this venue can lead to further discussions about the impact gendered ideals have on all social institutions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Once again I would like to acknowledge that the issue of gender in sport can also be looked at through intersectionality and looking at race, disability, age etcetera. For the purpose of my study I chose to look at gender in sport specifically. Further research could look at these various degrees of intersectionality.

## Appendices

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

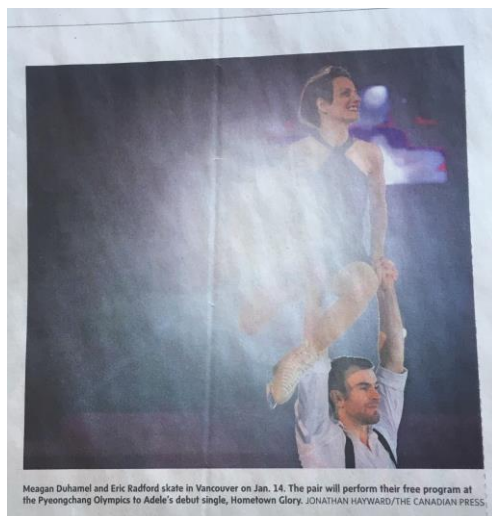




Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

NY at Mem 7 p.m. Ind at LA 10:30 p.m. Detroit 22 20 524 105 Portland 23 21 523 143  
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 Min at Hou 9:30 p.m. All times Eastern



RICH SCHULTZ / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Philadelphia 76ers guard Ben Simmons, second from right, has words with Raptors guard Kyle Lowry during the fourth quarter of game in Philadelphia this past Monday. Lowry was ejected from the game.

## Composure is getting tougher for Raptors

**Team must manage emotions: Casey**

FRANK ZICARELLI

When the going gets tough, the last thing Dwane Casey wants to see is his team going soft. It's a fine line players must always navigate, somehow trying to resist that urge to retaliate when an opponent is getting under your skin.

an Dragic, who is known for his physical play, the kind of style that annoys opponents. Serge Ibaka was tossed earlier that night when he got into it with James Johnson, the two earning a one-game suspension by the NBA.

The game has evolved over the years and no longer do you see bench-clearing incidents or full-out fights. It's not as physical as it once was, when Michael Jordan was forced to get stronger because his Bulls were mauled by Detroit's Bad Boys.

There's pushing, shoving, name calling, threats, but both players one game each.

The league has been quite clear and emphatic when it comes to personal conduct. Players, even though they make millions, don't like to cut a cheque when a fine is doled out.

When it comes to interacting with fans in an unruly way, the NBA does not tolerate it, as it should.

Take, for example, Utah's Rodney Hood, who got tossed from a game in Washington. As he left the court, Hood slapped a phone from a fan's hand. Hood was fined \$35,000.

When players and coaches

Raptors were feisty and testy. Lowry and Simmons exchanged words on the court in the dying seconds.

Later that day, the Rockets and Clippers lost complete control in L.A. The NBA continues to investigate the late-game and post-game incidents.

An ESPN report, citing anonymous league sources, said several players from Houston headed toward the Clippers' locker room before they were escorted away by security.

Which brings us back to Casey's words of wisdom about handling issues on and off the court.

"You never tell players to back down from someone when they are in your chest or challenging you," Casey said. "But you have to be smart, be more composed in those situations."

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