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An Interdisciplinary Inquiry into the Female Athlete

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Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Thesis

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INQUIRY
INTO THE FEMALE ATHLETE

by

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2013

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INQUIRY
INTO THE FEMALE ATHLETE

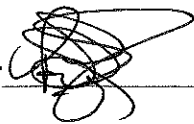
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On February 1, 1960 four black college students sat at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, NC and waited to be served. This one act was revolutionary—Woolworth's lunch counter was whites-only. While black patrons were allowed to shop in the general merchandise section and eat at a stand-up snack bar, the lunch counter was off-limits. The civil rights movement was in effect throughout the country at this time but segregation was an area yet untouched. The Greensboro Four, as they would later be called, dared to challenge the existing social order, to risk life and limb in order to enact change. Using their bodies as instruments of defiance, these four challenged the existing unjust social order.

In this town, rich in its history of social confrontation, I was born. Greensboro's energy is in my blood; its fight against injustice is in my bones. My heart beats to the rhythm of this town's history—that same heartbeat that tried to determine my sex even before my birth. On account of an old myth that based the future sex of the baby on heartbeat, my parents had expected me to arrive with a penis. On my day of birth, I triumphantly emerged from my mother looking exactly like my father—except that I was female. This confusion between identities determined the course of my life from the very moment of conception. When I was in the womb, I imagine I overheard the whispers of my sex because I gravitated towards “male” dress, activities, and toys from the moment I could express emotion. My mother, overjoyed at having a baby girl, dressed me as a doll in dresses and bows; I fought back through tantrums of displeasure, disliking the attire and apparel chosen for baby girls. There is a picture of me at age

two looking severely unhappy dressed in a homemade dress, stockings, and patent leather shoes. Unable to coherently voice my opinion, I used my limited emotional understanding to express myself. It took the photographer two hours to get me to stop crying long enough for a picture; and even then, I refused to smile. By the time I was able to speak, my mother either gave up or allowed me the freedom to dress myself. My favorite outfit quickly became an all-green sweatsuit and I sported a bowl cut that my mother referred to as being in the “Dorothy Hamill” style. Even from this early age, my body and my gender expression were already questioning existing social structures that prescribed certain behaviors and performances.

I was raised in a southern, Christian household and bred on sweet tea, cornbread, and the Bible. My father was the breadwinner, my mother the homemaker, my brother the athlete. After I came along, our little family unit was complete. With two males and two females in the household, we were a balanced group, and there would be no more babies after me. Not too long after my birth, we relocated to the wilds of Yankee New Hampshire where we welcomed my mother’s April birthday with a blizzard that dumped four feet of snow on our doorstep. The cold was something my mother would bemoan—and continue to bemoan—as a true, southern lady should; “I miss my flowers”, she would mournfully tell my brother and me as we rolled around in this new, unknown form of precipitation. The snow meant cold and the cold meant ice and ice meant a new type of sport for my brother to try. Ice hockey quickly entered into our daily existence and my parents slowly learned a new language: puck, net, stick, skates, rink eventually became more nuanced with top-shelf, breakaway, five-hole, slap shot, toe-drag. This was the state language of New Hampshire and my parents quickly realized that to make friends meant traveling to hockey games and watching practices in cold arenas. My brother was promptly

outfitted in the necessary gear and enrolled in the local program. He progressed quite quickly, as the family athlete should, and was soon demonstrating his prowess up and down the state of New Hampshire.

By the time I was old enough for Kindergarten, my parents realized I needed to learn how to skate as well—after all, I was about to enter into my first experience of socialization outside our family unit, and they were concerned about me making friends. I was equipped with a pair of figure skates and enrolled in a local learn-to-skate program with other girls my age. I was fairly good in this group and found that I could make it from one side of the rink to the other without much effort. I was captivated by this new activity. The rink felt like home and skating felt all too familiar. However, something wasn't right. I didn't have the same skates as my brother; I didn't have all of that fancy equipment; I didn't have a puck or a net or a reason to take a slap shot. My parents noticed my intense surveillance of the hockey practices and games and when I mentioned that I wanted to try to play, they consented to my request. They found some used equipment for cheap and allocated my old orange spandex leggings as my hockey socks. My mother considered my excitement for the sport an adorable whim, an endearing imitation of my big brother. But my father—he knew. He saw the life in my eyes when I put on that equipment and stepped onto the ice. He saw me quickly overtake the boys and score my first goal. He saw that spark that meant I had found what I was supposed to do. He knew.

My father told my mother that I was not going to quit like she thought—I, not my brother, would be the one in the family to continue to play the sport as long as possible. He was right. That moment was the beginning of my 17-year ice hockey career.

My thesis evolved from this narrative of my life. I grew up surrounded by hockey, religion, and supportive parents. My body developed alongside my newfound sport, transforming from a skinny child to a sturdy adolescent, and this body was constantly at odds with society's dictates for femininity. As a result, my awareness of self opposed my awareness of traditional feminine behavior and appearance. Much of my youth was spent wrestling with the concept of my identity as I tried to reconcile the disparity between my physical presentation to the world and my interpretation of society's gender norms. Additionally, by high school I realized I was queer. Now, my physicality, sports' participation, and sexuality were all in conflict with societal normatives. Furthermore, my sexuality contested my understanding of scripture and theology. I was taught that one could be Christian or queer, not both. It is from this black and white understanding that I began my academic foray into Theology. This thesis is therefore a culmination of the personal narrative of my life as a female athlete, a queer Christian, and a student of theology.

The construction of identity is best understood through the metaphor of narrative. Narratives represent a cohesive, constructed collection of discourses that individuals organize into a representation of self. These narratives are undergirded by language—the primary carrier and constructor of reality. Words and how they are used and organized reflect the relationships and power dynamics of a given society. Narrative analysis then considers the relationships and actions that give these words their meaning.¹ I structure this paper according to the category of

¹ Nancy T. Ammerman. "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions." Pp. 207-224 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michele Dillon, 2003.

identity as narrative, specifically as an autobiographical narrative² in dialogue with public narratives³. In this on-going construction of self, the action proceeds from specific locations and contexts. The narrative structure functions through constructing a sense of order between the past, present, and future. As such, I move through each chapter in a relatively linear progression. Chapter Two deals with Primary Socialization; Chapter Three with Secondary Socialization; and Chapter Four with potential digressions and progressions in the socialization process.

The narrative structure, however, often does not proceed linearly, especially in terms of a counter-narrative; “counter-narratives are narratives infused with resistant political possibilities. They make visible the complex, historically specific, matrices of social inequalities that surround us”.⁴ As my thesis deals with the female athlete in the male-dominated world of sport, this structure will play a large role. Additionally, as my thesis also involves a chapter dedicated to the queer individual and the queer athlete, the counter-narrative is an important demarcation for critically engaging with the multiple and competing narratives at play in a society. Queer identities are constructed as much in reverse as in forward. The narrative structure often revisits

² Autobiographical narrative: the sense of a “core” self being constantly negotiated in various social contexts. The individual understands themselves as a character in a script in which they are capable of acting in particular ways and incapable (or unwilling) to act in other ways. Ibid.

³ Public narratives: the narratives that are attached to institutions, cultures, groups, and categories. They work in identifying where one is and how one should be acting. Margaret R. Somers. “The narrative constitution of identity: a relational and network approach.” *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), 605-649.

⁴ Mary G. McDonald, and Susan Birrell. "Reading Sport Critically: a Methodology for Interrogating Power." *Sociology of Sport* 16 (1999): 283-300.

the past to understand the present.⁵ Therefore, the narrative construction of my thesis will reconsider the past and historical occurrences in the light of present phenomena.

In terms of methodology, I borrow from Mary McDonald and Susan Birrell's methodology for critically examining sport.⁶ This approach merges cultural studies and quantitative methodology in terms of the poststructuralist linguistic turn. The cultural studies approach is multi-disciplinary and traverses academic discipline boundaries moving across and blurring traditional and paradigmatic borders between the humanities and the social sciences. This allows for a negotiation and traversal of boundaries concerning lived experience, knowledge production, and political practices. A cultural studies approach to a critical investigation of sport is ideal; "when we recall that sport is a social realm whose primary subject—the body—is also constructed by the sciences, the appropriateness of a multi-disciplinary approach consistent with cultural studies becomes even more evident".⁷ Poststructuralism, inspired by deconstruction, argues for the preeminence of language, meaning, and representation. Language, as the mediator of knowledge, is epistemologically unreliable due to constantly shifting and unstable forms of signification. Therefore, knowledge cannot be understood as objective. If reading sport as a cultural text, the institution is subjected to an interrogation at many levels that includes political struggles related to gender, sex, and

⁵ Melissa M. Wilcox. *Queer Women and Religious Individualism*. (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁶ McDonald & Birrell, "Reading Sport Critically: a Methodology for Interrogating Power."

⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

sexuality.⁸

With this methodology as a structuring agent, I used a multi-disciplinary approach to research the implications of the female athlete in the male-dominated and controlled sporting environment. I employed a sociological analysis of sport and socialization; cognitive psychology; neurology and biology; a historical analysis of sport; feminism; postcolonialism; and theology. I investigated various power dynamics through a reliance on poststructuralism and postmodernism. Some major theorists I draw upon are Butler and her theory of gender as performance; Foucault—specifically his Panopticon theory, but more generally, his concept of the body as a site of struggle over various and scattered forms of power and knowledge; and Girard and his sociological analysis of the scapegoat mechanism.

As a theology student, my investigation additionally takes on a religious aspect. I am trained to think as a theologian and my analyses reflect this fact. Each chapter ends with a theological inquiry into how each specific section can be understood in theological language. Religion, similar to sport, exists as a powerful institution that has been defined and understood through dogmatic and creedal language for centuries. My concluding thoughts for each chapter represent my own interpretation into that reality. I take a Christological approach because the Christ-event represents one of the defining factors of a Christian theology. Each section ends with an image of Christ; however these images are all varied because assuming only one image for Christ negates the Christian tradition. I support this statement through applying at least four different streams of thought. The first concept speaks to the Kingly-Nationalist Messiah

⁸ Ideally this would also include relations of race and class; however, due to the scope and constraints of this thesis, I will be focusing on sex, gender, and sexuality.

structured by the fall of the Israelite Monarchy giving rise to a Kingly Messiah⁹; the second concept is the Apocalyptic-Universalist Messiah¹⁰; the third concept speaks to the impression of Christ as the suffering servant¹¹; and the fourth concept is the High-Priestly Messiah^{12, 13}. Images of Christ apply these four concepts thus assuring an in-built plurality to any image; therefore, to acknowledge tradition is to acknowledge plurality and the central image of Christ is a pluriform image.

While diversity can exist without plurality, plurality cannot exist without valuing diversity. Therefore, to acknowledge an image of Christ is to expect other images of Christ. Images of Christ are meant to comfort and discomfort challenging the producer and the consumer to broaden one's own understanding. It puts us into a dialogue with one another as engaging with others is a dialectic undertaking. Diana Eck defines pluralism as based on an inter-religious dialogue;¹⁴ I would take this one step further and say that a pluralism of Christ images can also be an intra-religious dialogue. By participating in a dialogue of Christ images, we seek to go beyond a simple tolerance by striving for an understanding. This assumes a real commitment and a respect for variance. Allowing for differences and diversity in imagery also means that the dialogic space is opened to the encounter of "commitments". These commitments

⁹ Matt. 1:1-18, Luke 3:23-38, Mark 12:35, Rev. 5:5, 22:16.

¹⁰ Mark 10:40.

¹¹ Mark 8:27-33.

¹² Alluded to in Rom. 8:34, 1 John 2:1, Hebrews 7:15-28.

¹³ Thomas Thangaraj. "Acknowledging Tradition." Presentation, Boston University, Boston, MA, September 5, 2012.

¹⁴ Diana L. Eck. *Encountering God*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

represent ideas, beliefs, statements, and truths that an individual brings to a dialogue. For example, my commitment is to the representation of women and queer minorities when presenting an image of Christ. In a dialogue of Christ-images, I may encounter someone whose commitment is to African-Americans or to the Third World, or I may encounter another woman with a different image. This dialogic interaction will serve to deepen my understanding of Christ though enriching my creative engagement.

If we use Gordon Kaufman's understanding of God as creativity, we are released from the traditional doctrinal language of Christianity in order to understand Jesus using our own terms and images. Theology in itself becomes a work of imaginative construction, and our images and understandings a product of the human imagination.¹⁵ Warner Sallman's popular image of Christ presents an impression of a white, bearded, long-haired man. The widespread dissemination of this image has made it into *the* accepted image of Christ and therefore it loses the creative aspect. In other words, we lose sight of the creativity employed by Sallman to produce his image of Christ. It then translates into definition rather than creation. Affirming the creative aspect in this process opens up the possibility for plurality, and the potential for images to be able to enrich one another. Additionally, it allows for marginalized images of Christ to be heard and acknowledged. When the marginalized and oppressed population has a voice to speak, the power balance is shifted. Salman's image of Christ will then become just one image within a multitude of perspectives and people. However, here lies a paradox: the right to speak is usually conferred to those without power by those in power. Those who have the power to judge then

¹⁵ Gordon D. Kaufman. *Jesus and Creativity*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006).

determine the credibility of their speech. Therefore, a recognition of multiple images of Christ, especially from disempowered populations, allows for a subversion of the European and white hegemony of Christ imagery recognizing such images as Jesus as the Feminine Shakti, Jesus as Corn Mother, or Jesus as theological transvestite.¹⁶

Affirming a plurality of images, therefore, does not dilute the central message of the Christ-event; affirming one image is what dilutes this understanding. I employ this inclusivist, pluralistic perspective in my analysis of sport and the female athlete. Sport, as an institution, has been developed over centuries and has featured male domination and participation. Sport, in turn, serves an important social function through providing a training ground for traditionally understood masculinity. Through reinforcing a polarized gender binary of male/female and masculine/feminine, sport defines and reinforces the masculine stereotype while reinforcing male privilege and female subordination. It serves as an arena for acceptable male bonding and establishes status distinctions among men. Additionally, sport reinforces heterosexuality through upholding the binary of heterosexual/homosexual.¹⁷ Implicit in any binary-defined system is a privileging of one definition over the other. In this hierarchal dynamic, men have controlled the sporting environment and women have been punished as the trespasser. Looking at sport through a pluralistic lens allows for variation in gender performance, sexual difference, and multiplicity in sexuality; however, much of the history of sport is written in either/or rather than both/and. I write this thesis in an attempt to expose the underworking of sport while also giving the female

¹⁶ Kwok Pui-Lan. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

¹⁷ Pat Griffin. *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. (IL: Human Kinetics, 1998), 20.

athlete a voice and the ability to speak.¹⁸

¹⁸ When I refer to the female athlete, I am usually referring to the female athlete in a 'masculine' sport.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BEGINNING

I call this chapter “The Beginning” because it represents the formative platform of this thesis. To understand the female athlete that participates in a “masculine” sport, one must first understand what comes before this instance. To see an athlete at the start of a race does not equate to the beginning of that narrative; the start of the race implies hours and hours of training, dedication, setbacks and triumphs. In a similar fashion, the female athlete’s narrative begins before she becomes the female athlete. This narrative includes a socialization process involving her and her caretakers, her and society, and her and her peers. It involves support or lack thereof of her sport participation; it involves a maneuvering and negotiation of societal expectations; and it involves compromises and conciliations to those that define and control the sporting environment. Catherine Keller’s theology of becoming encompasses this notion.¹ She reads Genesis, specifically the first two verses, as a “text of becoming”.² If Genesis is interpreted as a finished narrative, then the text can only be understood through two poles of meaning: a beginning and an end. This kind of interpretation closes off meaning, and “the beginning” and “the end” become “boundary markers of a closed totality”.³ Genesis, Keller argues, is a text of becoming, an unfinished narrative, the beginning that precedes beginning. This is the purpose of this chapter: to fill in the pre-narrative, to explain how the beginning becomes the beginning.

¹ Catherine Keller. *Face of the Deep*. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*

The Gender Binary

Androcentrism, Patriarchy, and Gender Polarization

In the history of Western culture, three beliefs regarding gender have fundamentally been accepted: that men and women have different psychological and sexual natures; that men are the dominant and superior sex; and that male and female difference, as well as male dominance, is inherently natural.⁴ We view these beliefs through three main lenses: androcentrism, biological essentialism, and gender polarization.⁵ Androcentrism reflects the patriarchal nature of our society. It is a male-centeredness that goes beyond the binary of male and female by viewing maleness not only as superior but also as the norm. It becomes a neutral category with female being the ‘other’ or the deviance from that norm. As Sandra Bem elaborates, “it is thus not that man is treated as superior and woman as inferior but that man is treated as human and woman as ‘other’”.⁶ Androcentrism reveals not just who is in power, but how—it highlights the fact that historically, man⁷ has determined the power distributions of society and acted as the definer of woman.

For example, Freud defined the psychological differences between men and women anatomically. According to Freud, the differences arise during the castration complex (which is happening simultaneously with the Oedipus complex). The castration complex originates in the

⁴ Sandra Lipsitz Bem. *The Lenses of Gender*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷ Man in this sense means the white, heterosexual, elite man.

phallic phase when the child's interest turns towards his or her genitals; the mother and/or father witness the masturbatory behavior and condemn and prohibit the child from further activity.⁸ Here, the boy and girl's development begins to diverge. The boy understands that the masturbatory behavior is not allowed and the prohibition is interpreted as a threat. The threat is perceived as a potential removal of his sense of pleasure—his penis; however, the warning in the threat is unheeded until the boy sees the female genitals. At this point, the castration complex emerges for both sexes. The boy sees the girl's vagina and, under the possibility of being castrated for his behavior, identifies the girl as castrated. The threat then becomes real through witnessing a child who is marked by the absence of a penis. When the little girl witnesses the boy's genitals, she experiences a sense of inferiority and shame regarding her own (lack of) genitals.⁹ In comparing her clitoris with the penis, she eventually accepts castration as a condition of her being, but not without wanting what the boy possesses. Freud calls this 'Penis Envy'—the girl sees the penis, becomes jealous, and wants it. Her narcissism is wounded in this instance, and she (according to Freud) views the male as superior and the female as inferior. In this example it becomes clear that Freud, as holding the position of power, was able to impose meaning on woman, safeguarding and perpetuating woman as other.¹⁰

⁸ According to Freud, the threat issues from the mother while the father is perceived as the one who will carry out the threat.

⁹ As well as a sense of rebelliousness.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud. *Female Sexuality to The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 225-43. Vol. 21. (London: Hogwarth Press, 1964).

Biological essentialism represents the legitimizing factor when discussing sex differences by defining them as innate and intrinsically biological.¹¹ This theory links sexual organs at birth with assigned gender roles. Important to note here is the difference between sex and gender. Sex, as male or female, is the biological aspect of the person; gender, as masculine or feminine, is the social role¹². Essentialist theories link sexual identity with social roles, and biological influences are presumed to precede cultural influences. The male, born with a penis, is believed to have a masculine essence that will naturally guide him towards preferences that society deems appropriate; the female, born with a vagina, will possess a feminine essence that then determines the path of her life. These essentialist suppositions are based on the idea that there is a universal understanding of masculine and feminine.

This theory must be presented alongside its counterpart, social constructionist theory.¹³ This theory deconstructs the formulation of biological essentialism in proposing that “reality” is socially situated and defined by constructs; there is no universal understanding of gender, only socially acceptable ways of performing gender. A helpful way of understanding this proposition is to analyze the term “gender *role*”; role suggests playing a part, acting a certain character. In this sense, and according to Judith Butler, gender becomes a “performance”.¹⁴ Leanne Tigert expands on this thought: “And when we are not being actively taught, we watch, and listen, and

¹¹ K. Y. Ritter, & A. I. Terndup. *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002).

¹² Sex and gender, while presented as a binary here, should be seen as a spectrum with a wide variance of self-identification.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1990).

integrate everything we see and hear within our very core, so that we can know just how to ‘be’”¹⁵ Social constructionist theories investigate the way that a social reality is created over time. These constructs are often institutionalized and made into traditions. This assumes the influence of humans on producing and acting into various interpretations of reality turning something subjective into an objective ‘fact’. According to social constructionist theory, gender is an effect of societal constructs that shape and demand people to fit within the binary of male/female. Variation within the gender binary is perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and a willful subversion of the created order.

Gender polarization represents the organizing principle behind the gender binary in society. The assumed differences between male and female are prescribed onto constructs that then determine sex-specific skills, personality attributes, and behaviors. These prescriptions are internalized and consciously or unconsciously acted upon in accordance with the dictates of society. Sandra Bem¹⁶ labels this gender-based classification system as *gender schema theory*. This theory attempts to explain how individuals become gendered in society, and how male and female are transmuted to masculine and feminine. A schema represents a cognitive framework or structure that helps to organize and interpret incoming information or stimuli in such a way that makes sense through a processing in schema-relevant terms. It acts as a filter that helps in sorting material by weeding out irrelevant information. Managing information through schematic processing is good and bad: it’s good in the sense that it allows for an accelerated method of

¹⁵ Leanne McCall Tigert, and Maren C. Tirabassi, eds. *Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 8.

¹⁶ Sandra Lipsitz Bem. "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing." *Psychological Review* 88, no. 4 (1981): 354-64.

interpretation; it's bad in the sense that information is then interpreted according to pre-existing beliefs and structures. Bem's gender schema is based on the concept of *sex-typing*. Sex-typing represents the classification of appropriate behavior and presentation based on stereotypical understandings of gender roles. It derives from a gender-schematic processing; "accordingly, sex-typed individuals are seen as differing from other individuals not primarily in terms of how much masculine or feminine they possess, but in terms of whether or not their self-concepts and behaviors are organized on the basis of gender".¹⁷ Processing incoming information on a gender-based schema reifies sex-typing because it is based on an internalization of the gender polarization of Western culture.

The sex/gender binary¹⁸, while presented in a simplified form above, is actually much more complex. It is important to note that "sex" should not be thought of as independent of social forces and contexts¹⁹ and that "gender" should be not be reduced to mere choice or self-determination. As Judith Butler writes, "these limits [of a discursive conditioned experience] are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appears as the language of universal rationality".²⁰ The destabilizing and disabling of the sex/gender binary is necessary in order to understand that gender does not causally follow sex

¹⁷ Ibid., 356.

¹⁸ Sex binary: male/female; gender binary: masculine/feminine.

¹⁹ "...the visible differences between the male and female sex organs are a social construction which can be traced back to the principles of division of androcentric reason, itself grounded in the division of the social statuses between the female body and the male body which, being perceived and constructed according to the practical schemas of the androcentric worldview, became the most perfectly indisputable guarantee of meanings and values that are in harmony with the principles of that worldview...". Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 22.

²⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12.

and that gender is not a cultural prescription imposed on a universally-recognized sexed body. Additionally, working in a binary system assumes that it is an either/or situation rather than a both/and. For both sex and gender, in my working definitions, there are many variations and presentations; however, for the purposes of this paper and for simplicity's sake, I will refer to "sex" as the composite of anatomical and physiological characteristics that typically differentiate males and females, and I will refer to "gender" in regards to self-identity and specific role within a social context. However, the complexity of sex and gender will become much clearer in my discussion of the sporting environment.

Primary Socialization

Socializing Agents

Androcentrism, patriarchy, and gender polarization cannot exist without these beliefs being imparted from generation to generation. The process of socialization²¹ ensures the continuity of them as well as preserving them as the norm. A baby is not born as an autonomous individual free from societal constraints; a baby is born into a world with pre-existing social structures and is thus inducted into a specific societal dialect. In other words, a baby's development and burgeoning self-awareness is subject to his or her context; this includes, but is not limited to, the caretaker's location, economic status, and ethnicity. The caretaker is the mediator and definer between the world and the child²²; the world is thus presented through a lens determined by the immediate caretaker's social location. The child takes on the caretaker's roles and attitudes, reflecting the caretaker's specific location in the social structure. Berger and Luckmann²³ describe this beginning participation in this societal dialectic as the process of internalization: "...internalization in this general sense is the basis, first, for an understanding of one's fellowmen, and, second, for the apprehension of the world as a meaningful social reality".²⁴ It is the subsequent realization of an objective event expressing meaning. The child takes the information received from the caretaker and then applies it in a more general sense. For

²¹ For Western culture.

²² This is assuming that the child has some sort of caretaker.

²³ Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*. (N.p.: Anchor Books, 1967).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

this concept, Berger and Luckmann use the example of a child spilling soup. When the child first spills soup, he or she realizes that Mom is angry with me *now*; then, the child progresses to realizing that mom is angry with me *whenever* I spill the soup; this finally progresses into applying the concept generally: *everyone* is against spilling soup.²⁵ In this progression, the internalized norm is transferred from caretaker to the generalized other—society. It is the adult that sets the rules of the game and the child that plays by these rules.

A cognitive theory of gender development follows this idea of primary socialization: the individual is an active participant in translating environmental stimuli into information rather than a passive receiver of input. In a cognitive framework, children construct their own understanding of the world; however, the bricks that are used to construct that understanding are based in the information that socializing agents (primary caretakers) and cultural practices provide.²⁶ These prior expectations and cognitions play an important role in organizing incoming information (schematic processing). Lawrence Kohlberg first introduced a cognitively-oriented theory of gender development in 1966²⁷. He reversed the emphasis on child passivity in regards to absorbing gendered information, and he stated instead that children are active participants in learning about gender and in adhering to gendered norms²⁸. He proposed that an understanding

²⁵ Ibid., 132-33.

²⁶ Thomas Eckes, and Hanns M. Trautner, eds. *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*. (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000).

²⁷ L. Kohlberg. "A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex-role concepts and attitudes." In E.E. Maccoby (Ed.), *The development of sex-differences*, 82-173. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966).

²⁸ "A norm operates within a social practices as the implicit standard of *normalization*". Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 41.

of gender then initiated gender development. This idea follows the schematic processing proposed by Bem. Through participating in a highly gendered society, individuals interpret information through a gendered lens.

While an understanding of gender may precede gender development in a child, gender-specific behavior is modeled at the moment of birth for most infants. Differential treatment for boys and girls begins in infancy; girls are given pink rooms, baby dolls, and dressed in dresses while boys are given blue rooms, trucks, and dressed in pants.²⁹ It is almost an automatic process to present a child according to society's gender regulations. Seavey, Katz, and Zalk³⁰ investigated this concept through studying the way adults perceive and react to infants based on gender stereotypes through labeling an infant as boy, girl, or with no gender label. A 3-month-old infant (Baby X) was dressed in a yellow jumpsuit, and the adults in the study were then told to interact with the child. 1/3 of the participants were told that the infant was a boy; 1/3 were told that the infant was a girl; and 1/3 were given no gender information. Three gender-stereotyped toys were also available for the adults to use in interacting with Baby X: a doll (female gender-typed), a rubber football (male gender-typed), and a plastic ring (neutral). The adults then interacted with the infant for three minutes. Gendered stereotypes defined this interaction. When Baby X was labeled female, the adults were more likely to engage in play using the doll; when Baby X was labeled male, the adults tended towards the gender-neutral toy. When Baby X was presented without gender specification, all subjects attempted to guess at the infant's gender with

²⁹ Once again, it is important to note that this analysis is Western-specific.

³⁰ Carol A. Seavey, Phyllis A. Katz, and Sue Rosenberg Zalk. "Baby X: The Effect of Gender Labels on Adult Responses to Infants." *Sex Roles* 1, no. 2 (June 1975): 103-09.

‘boy’ being the most frequent guess (Baby X was actually female). These guesses were predicated on stereotypical behavior (firm grip for example) or physical cues (softness for example). This study highlighted the notion that when parents and other adults claim to see sex differences, this could be a result of what they are expecting to see based on gendered stereotypes.

Society’s discourse around gender is so polarizing that children interpret incoming information based on gender-schematic processing without even realizing; as Bem notes, “that is, in imposing a gender-based classification on reality, children evaluate different ways of behaving in terms of the cultural definitions of gender appropriateness and reject any way of behaving that does not match their sex”.³¹ Persons are automatically sorted according to his or her sex organs; therefore, at a very young age, the classification of boy and girl is physically and socially divided. To use Berger and Luckmann, the child internalizes the gender schemata through reflecting the caretaker’s gender roles and attitudes; “simultaneously, the child also learns to evaluate his or her adequacy as a person in terms of the gender schema, to match his or her preferences, attitudes, and behaviors, and personal attributes against the prototypes stored within it. The gender schema becomes a prescriptive standard or guide and self-esteem becomes its hostage”.³² Thus, children’s unquestioning acceptance of the gender schema leads to conventional sex-typing.³³

³¹ Bem, *The Lenses of Gender*, 125-6.

³² *Ibid.*, 355.

³³ Transgender children present an example, however, where the gender schema may be not only unquestioned but also unaccepted in terms of the body they inhabit.

To illustrate this concept, Beverly Fagot's study³⁴ on the recorded behavior of both teachers and children in a toddler playgroup presents the dynamic between the caretaker and child. Fagot et al. analyzed the behavior at two separate times. The first time, the researchers noted that the boys and girls communicated to the teachers and to one another in similar ways; however, they also noted that the teachers reinforced specific behaviors according to gender. For girls, they emphasized gentle communication; for boys, they emphasized more assertive communication. By the second observation, the researchers noted that the boys and girls displayed much different communication styles that were more in accord with gender stereotypes. Fagot's study highlights the notion that the gender preconceptions of adults, especially those in a caretaker position, do influence the information processing of children. Through reflecting the gender bias of the adult, the child becomes socialized into a gender-stratified society. Thus, it becomes "normal" to understand boys and girls as categorically different, and to organize behavior and physical presentation according to gender stereotype.

If looking at this distinction in a neurological framework, an interesting consideration arises. The brain is an ever-changing, dynamic organ, and neural pathways are constantly being reorganized due to certain experiences. This process is called neuroplasticity—it is the change in neural connections in response to one's environment, development, repeated movements, bodily injury, and/or learning new things.³⁵ It occurs under two conditions: one, during normal brain

³⁴ B. Fagot, R. Hagen, M.D. Leinbach, & S. Kronsberg. "Differential Reactions to assertive and Communicative Acts of Toddler Boys and Girls." *Child Development*, 56, (1985), 1499-1505.

³⁵ Oliver Sacks. "This Year, Change Your Mind." *The New York Times* (New York, NY), January 1, 2011, A19.

development; and two, in response to the environment and actions of that specific person. A popular debate over the years has considered why American males tend to throw better and harder than American females; looking at this topic in light of neuroplasticity raises the consideration that “throwing like a girl” is in fact a learned disability through social and cultural contexts.

Greg Downey was originally studying Brazilian men who took part in capoeira, “an acrobatic genre that combines aspects of dance, sport, martial art, music genre, and participatory spectacle”.³⁶ He called these men “extraordinary” athletes possessing incredible amounts of bodily control and strength; however, when he tossed a set of keys to one of the athletes, he noted something remarkable. These men could not throw or catch; in fact, they threw “like girls”. This led Downey to study the possible cultural and social reasons behind the inability to throw. When females are deemed to “throw like girls” they usually stand facing the target and throw the ball without the movement necessary for a properly thrown ball. There is no twist, no reaching back, no step forward—they remain relatively immobile. When children first learn to throw, this immobility and facing towards the target usually describes the first stage in development. This suggests that females “throw like girls” due to not receiving the same attention in regards to learning the proper techniques of throwing overhand, and not due to a ‘natural’ inability. As the child begins to throw and learns the proper technique, the body adapts to the pattern of throwing: “in a sense, the nervous systems, with repeated practice, becomes better at squeezing

³⁶ Greg Downey. Throwing like a Brazilian: On Ineptness and a Skill-Shaped Body to *The Anthropology of Sport and Human Movement*, edited by Robert R. Sands and Linda R. Sands, 297. (N.p.: Lexington Books, 2010).

performance out of the body at the same time that the body becomes better suited for performing the task”.³⁷ The musculoskeletal foundation adapts to this practice developing greater joint mobility and supportive body motion. Therefore, the stages of technical development for throwing is a “self-reinforcing cycle; throw harder and the body and brain get better at throwing so that one can throw harder still”.³⁸ The neuroplasticity of the brain means that with repeated learning and practice in proper throwing technique, new neural pathways are created; thus, to “throw like a girl” is not natural but rather a product of deficient learning opportunities. Reinforcing this finding is a study done on the same subject. Williams, Haywood, and Painter³⁹ studied prepubescent boys and girls in throwing velocity and technique. When the children threw with their non-dominant hand, there was no difference between boys or girls; however, when throwing with the dominant hand, boys emerged as better. The researchers concluded from this study that environmental factors such as practice and learning opportunities, rather than biological reasons, led to an increase in skill efficiency.

With the possibilities afforded for more pronounced neurological research due to functional magnetic imaging research, the importance of considering sociocultural reasons behind potential findings becomes more significant. If brain regions are gender differentiated in something such as doing mathematical problems, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that there is a fundamental reason behind male proclivity in math; however, it is also necessary to assume

³⁷ Ibid., 316.

³⁸ Ibid., 317.

³⁹ Kathleen Williams, Kathleen M. Haywood, and Mary Painter. 1996. “Environmental vs. biological influences on gender differences in the overarm throw for force: Dominant and nondominant arm throws.” *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 5(2): 29-48.

that male and females experience different opportunities while growing up.⁴⁰ These specific experiences may then create new neural synapses and pathways, thus making it seem as if these differences were “hard-wired” rather than a difference in primary socialization.

In destabilizing the concept of “normal” human development through sociological and psychological studies and perceptions, the potential for altering a binary understanding of gender is increased. The interpretation of gender as two opposing poles attempts to fixate a fluid reality. Additionally, it prescribes specific, and acceptable, behavior onto children based on sex. Through a more comprehensive analysis of gender development, the connection between sex and gender is weakened, and it becomes clear that the process of familial and public socialization plays a significant role in constructing gendered stereotypes. In the next section, I discuss how this process of socialization and the gender binary play into the sporting environment for the female athlete.

⁴⁰ Janet Shibley Hyde. "New Directions in the Study of Gender Similarities and Differences." *Association for Psychological Science* 16, no. 5 (2007).

The Sporting Environment

Boundary Maintenance

Cognitive developmental theorists suggest that by age six, children establish relatively stable gender identities.⁴¹ They then use that information to influence behavioral choices, and are active in integrating values and behaviors accordant with that identity.⁴² Around this age, children begin to participate in activities—often, gender-specific. Therefore, girls are enrolled in dance and girl scouts and boys play sports and participate in boy scouts. While the child is capable of making decisions and speaking opinions by this age, they are still the reflected entities of their caretaker and society. Thus, the child chooses specific activities based on acceptable behavior; however, the standards the individual ultimately assents to and adopts can be understood as a combination of what society dictates and what the individual accepts. Judith Butler⁴³ defines gender as an inherently performative concept; identities do not exist until the individual performs gender through a repetition of acts that are understandable within society's constructs. Therefore, the more gender-accordant acts performed, the more sex-typed the individual. The female athlete, especially one participating in a “masculine” sport, constantly performs gender-discordant acts while involved within the sporting environment. Participation in sports at a young age for females allows for a more flexible gender expression; however, this can

⁴¹ I. Frieze, J. Parsons, P. Johnson, D. Ruble, G. Zellman. *Women and Sex Roles*. (NY: N. W. Norton and Co, 1978).

⁴² M. Allison, B. Butler. “Role Conflict and the Elite Female Athlete: Empirical Findings and Conceptual Dilemmas.” *International Review for Sociology of Sport* 19, no.2 (1984): 157-168.

⁴³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

only occur if her participation is accompanied by attitudes and behaviors from others that normalize her behavior.

Christine Mennesson's study⁴⁴ on women involved in French boxing investigated the process of identity-formation among female boxers in France. She used two methods of data collection in her study: she observed the social interactions within various boxing clubs, and she interviewed 12 female boxers. Of these 12, seven practiced a contact style of French boxing while the other five participated in 'harder' styles such as English or Thai boxing or kickboxing. In investigating the specific identity-creation of these boxers, Mennesson looked at the histories, social situations, and modes of socialization within the family unit. She found that the process of socialization turned out to be very important, especially in regards to the sexual and corporeal identities of the boxers. Physical activity and games in childhood are often left to boys; girls occupy a 'bedroom culture', spending time at home working on their appearance.⁴⁵ This process of sexual differentiation centers on the presentation and the use of the body. All of the boxers interviewed in Mennesson's study differed from this traditional pattern; all were involved in various sports at a young age. Perhaps most importantly, they received encouragement from their primary caretaker(s) to participate in competitive, physical activities.

The boxers, however, did differ in one significant area. Those that participated in boxing at a relatively young age favored the 'hard' style of boxing that focused more on aggression and

⁴⁴ C. Mennesson. 'Hard' Women and 'Soft' Women. *International Review for Sociology of Sport*, 35, no.1 (2000): 21-33.

⁴⁵ C. Hasbrook. 'Gendering Practices and First Graders' Bodies: Physicality, Sexuality and Bodily Adornment in a Minority Inner City School', paper presented at the North American Society for the Sociological Study of Sport Annual Conference. Ottawa, 6-10 Nov., 1993.

combativeness. The women who discovered boxing at a later stage in life, post-adolescence, were more likely to choose the ‘soft’ style of boxing that focused more on grace and technical mastery. Eight of the boxers interviewed identified as self-reported tomboys in childhood. They tended to dress like the boys, play physical games, and prefer the company of boys to girls whom “they considered boring and fragile”.⁴⁶ These tomboys were more likely to later prefer the combat style of boxing valuing aggression to aesthetics. So what cause precipitates the performance of gender-discordant behavior? The explanation for the integration of masculine tendencies in childhood cannot be simply defined—it is a complex dynamic of sociocultural factors and family dynamic. As Mennesson concludes,

The entry of women into the world of boxing depends on two main conditions: the inculcation of a competitive sporting ethos during the primary stage of socialization and involvement in traditionally masculine games and sports during childhood. Thus, involvement in boxing is facilitated by early parental and community experiences that favor the formation of a relationship to the body and to the world that enables girls to construct rough physical pastimes and competing with males as relatively taken-for-granted activities.⁴⁷

The caretaker of the child therefore plays a significant role in encouraging the child to transgress traditional gender boundaries. For females, the decision to box could be from personal initiative; however, the behavior becomes socially acceptable only in the response from others. In other words, the child’s decision to do a gender-discordant act may be perceived as gender-accordant by the child if the caretaker reflects this notion. In a study of middle school students and their perceptions of athletic girls, Maihan Vu found that 85% of the middle school girls identified their

⁴⁶ Mennesson, ‘Hard’ Women and ‘Soft’ Women, 25.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

family as the most influential factor in their decision to play sports.⁴⁸ Due to the gender-based classification system of Western society, children evaluate behavior in regards to cultural definitions of gender-appropriateness; this classification system is taught through the primary caretaker as well as through society. If the caretaker encourages gender-discordant acts, the child will be more likely to engage in and find fulfillment through alternative behaviors. However, once the child enters into athletics, he or she will be exposed to an environment that is based on perpetuating the gender binary.

The sporting environment is distinctly organized and controlled through a policing of the gender binary. Participation is generally organized by contestant's sex creating a highly regulated system of boundary maintenance; however, participation in sport often redefines the physical body blurring traditional boundaries. The structure of sport exists within this dichotomy: "that sport is invested in boundary maintenance in so many ways indicates psychic anxiety. At the same time, sport operates as a complex site of pleasure and desire".⁴⁹ Sport simultaneously upholds the binary while also encouraging a manipulation of the physical body. The resultant reaction to women that defy gender definitions is similar to the anxiety that trans people cause society through their gender-blurring and reappropriation; "the difficulty managing gender in bodies that swell and enlarge is not unrelated to transphobia (the irrational fear or hatred of the gendered subject in transition)".⁵⁰ In a society that functions on labels and clearly

⁴⁸ M. B. Vu, D. Murrie, V. Gonzalez, J. B. Jobe. "Listening to Girls and Boys Talk About Girls' Physicality Activity Behaviors." *Health Education & Behavior* 33, no.1 (2006): 81-96.

⁴⁹ Heather Sykes. Queering theories of sexuality in sport studies. In J. Caudwell (Ed.), *Sport, Sexualities, and Queer/Theory*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 26.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

defined categories, female athletes participating in masculine sports challenge the system.

The tenuous definitions and regulations of sex and gender come to the fore through a close investigation of the Olympic Games. Gender verification testing began for female athletes in 1936 at the Berlin games when Polish journalists accused American gold medalist Helen Stephens of being a man. At age 18, Stephens was at the top of her game; the “Fulton Flash” had never, and would never, lose a sprint. The accusation followed from her 100m sprint where Stephens beat out Polish star Stella Walsh. Her success coupled with her 6ft tall frame and “long male-like strides”⁵¹ triggered the accusations. The Olympic committee performed a sex-test and confirmed that Stephens was indeed a female.

Officially, however, the IOC⁵² did not publicly adopt gender verification testing until the 1968 Olympic Games. The reasoning behind the legislation was to create an equal playing field for women by ensuring that all of the athletes were indeed female. Gender verification at these games was preceded by certain instances that caused apparent justification for the testing. This included four athletes who lived and competed as women but who later transitioned to men: Zdenka Koubkova (1934 world record holder), Lea Caurila and Claire Bressolles (1946 medalists at European games), and Erica Schinegger (retired in 1967 due to ‘medical irregularities’). The ruling was also preceded by gender verification tests at other events. 1966 marked the first year that these tests were introduced at the European Athletics Championships. The contestants were told to parade naked in front of a panel of gynecologists, and to endure a close-up examination of

⁵¹ Alison Carlson. "Essay: Suspect Sex." *Medicine and Sport* 366 (December 2005): S39-S40.

⁵² International Olympic Committee.

their respective genitals. In 1967 at the European track and field championships, the genital inspection was coupled with a chromosome test. This year also marked the first year that a woman failed the test. Ewa Klobukowska, a Polish sprinter, passed the visual genital test but failed the chromosome test because she had one chromosome too many.⁵³ Klobukowska was publicly disqualified, her records were wiped from the books, and she suffered from severe depression following the news.⁵⁴

At the summer Olympic Games in 1968, the gender verification testing was now comprehensive; every one of the 781 female athletes at the games was tested. However, the testing measures changed. The nude parade was replaced with sex chromatin analysis, and chromosomal testing became the norm. Claiming that the intention behind the testing was to promote fairness and equality in women's sport, the IOC stood behind its veil of ethics. These policies served another purpose though: to silence women through controlling who had the right to compete. While the test was chromosome-based, the athletes that got singled out the most were the women who were more androgynous looking (more muscle, flat-chested). These athletes were "considered guilty of 'masculinity' until proven innocent"⁵⁵. As a result, female athletes took, and were encouraged to take, measures to confirm their femininity. Many athletes adopted overt feminine, heterosexual characteristics:

Female athletes were encouraged to marry prior to commencing training for elite sport because they risked men resenting their training and masculine figures. Those who were

⁵³ M. A. Hall. *Feminism and Sporting Bodies: Essays on Theory and Practice*. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1996), 158.

⁵⁴ Carlson, "Essay: Suspect Sex," S39.

⁵⁵ Helen Lenskyj. *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality*. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986), 88.

married felt pressure to showcase their relationships to reassure the public of their heterosexuality. Housewives and mothers were recognized for their athletic accomplishments, but applauded for their commitment to their families. Makeup was considered compulsory as well as dresses and high heels.⁵⁶

The policies also served another purpose: they symbolized assumed male athletic superiority in sport. The IOC claimed, “The aim of gender verification tests is not to differentiate between sexes but to prevent male imposters from participating in female competitions”.⁵⁷ This statement implicitly makes the claim that men are inherently better at sport than their female counterparts. The presence of a man in a woman’s sporting environment would therefore be destructive to the ‘level playing field’. In reality, since the introduction of sex-testing, no man has ever been found to be parading as a woman; rather, these tests have singled out, publicized, and harmed women with biological sex differentiation that confer no advantage. Often, these women have no idea and are completely unaware of these differences. The testing arose out of the contradiction still present in women’s sports today: muscles, aggressiveness, and competitiveness are needed in sport—but these are also the very things that cause question regarding a woman’s sex and gender.

Since chromosomal testing began at the 1968 Olympics, many women have been banned based on a Y-chromosome. This is founded in a very black and white definition of sex: men will be XY and women XX. However, sex is not this simple:

⁵⁶ Amanda Nicole Schweinbenz, Alexandria Cronk. "Femininity Control at the Olympic Games." *Third Space* 9, no. 2 (2010).

⁵⁷ J. L. Simpson, A. Ljungqvist, M. A. Ferguson-Smith, A. de la Chapelle, L. J. Elsas, A. A. Ehrhardt, et al. Gender Verifications in the Olympics. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284, no. 12 (2000), 1568-1569.

The easy assumption has been that there are two quite separate roads [to gender identity], one leading from XY chromosomes at conception to manhood, and the other from XX chromosomes at conception to womanhood. But...scientists are uncovering a different picture. The fact is that there are not two roads, but one road with a number of forks where each of us turns in either the male or the female direction. You became male or female by stages. Most of us turn smoothly in the same direction at each fork ... the difference between male and female is not black and white; it is a biologic continuum.⁵⁸

One of the more common combinations of XY is found in complete adrenal insensitivity syndrome (cAIS). Women with cAIS do not respond to the genetic material of a Y-chromosome. Therefore, they lack androgen receptors and their bodies develop mostly along the female path. They are born and they develop looking like typical females, although they have testes instead of ovaries. However, due to their lack of androgen receptors, “their brains and muscles are presumably subject to even fewer androgens than the average female, because average females make some androgens and have the receptors to respond to them”.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is actually the XX female that has the competitive edge over a woman with cAIS. Many competing women were completely unaware of the presence of cAIS until they were tested. The findings ruined athletic careers and shattered personal lives. As María Patiño said after her diagnosis, “If I hadn’t been an athlete, my femininity would never have been questioned...what happened to me was like being raped. It must be the same sense of violation and shame. Only in my case, the whole world watched...”.⁶⁰ cAIS is only one possible chromosomal variation. As such, it should be clear that trying to categorize sex as male or female is increasingly difficult and why trying to level the playing field between men and women is nearly impossible. Chromosome testing,

⁵⁸ J. Money, & Patricia Tucker. *Sexual Signatures: On Being a Man or a Woman*. (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1975), 6.

⁵⁹ Alice Dreger. "Sex Typing for Sport." *Hastings Center Report* 40, no. 2 (2010): 23.

⁶⁰ As quoted in Carlson, S40.

rather than clarifying any sort of definition of ‘natural’, only illuminated the variations found in nature.

In 1999 the IOC finally bowed to external pressure to end genetic-based sex testing⁶¹ of female athletes making the 2000 Sydney Games the first Olympic Games in 32 years without mandatory gender testing. However in 2009, gender verification testing resurfaced through the South African sprinter Caster Semenya. Semenya’s masculine appearance and physical capabilities raised concerns from spectators, competitors, officials, and the media after she burst onto the scene winning the world title at age 18. Her chiseled abs, deep voice, and ‘masculine’ figure were cited as evidence of Semenya’s sex. She was then sidelined for nearly a year as the governing body of track and field conducted tests. In 2010, Semenya was cleared to compete again being successfully defined as a woman.

In 2012, the IOC looked to avoid another controversy like Semenya’s by providing a new test: now, instead of testing DNA, they would test levels of testosterone. This test is administered only if concerns are raised and must be requested by a chief medical officer of a national Olympic committee or a member of the International Olympic Committee's medical commission. In a New York Times article, Dr. Eric Vilain, an advisor to the IOC, called the test imperfect, but that “you have to draw a line in the sand somewhere”.⁶² He then goes on to say that the test is not unfair as long as the levels of the female athletes stay below the lowest male level. Without

⁶¹ Sex chromatin testing had been replaced with DNA analysis for Y chromosome material.

⁶² NY Times. Last modified June 23, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/24/sports/olympics/oc-adopts-policy-for-deciding-whether-athletes-can-compete-as-women.html?r=0>. (accessed March 14, 2013).

naming what the level is, Vilain says that there is no overlap between the highest levels of testosterone in a woman and the lowest levels in a man. There is, he says, “a huge no-man’s land” between them.⁶³ However, these claims are faulty. In a study funded by the IOC to further anti-doping measures, testosterone levels of elite athletes were also measured. The results showed substantial overlap in testosterone levels for male and female athletes with 5% of female athletes testing in the male range and 8% of male athletes testing in the female range. Additionally, approximately 25% of male athletes (including at least one gold medalist) fell below the male range. An investigator of the study, Professor Peter Sönksen, confirmed that the data was indeed seen by the IOC but that the IOC “apparently did not take much notice of the data as [the data] did not agree with their oversimplified definition of a ‘woman’”.⁶⁴

It’s an interesting paradox that testing in women’s sport was instituted to assure fairness; however, where is the fairness when men have never once been subjected to a sex test? The performance gap between male and female athletes continues to shrink; often, there is an overlap in results from certain matches.⁶⁵ The issue here is not fairness. It is a further example of male governance and control of sport and of women. Man is the neutral and woman the other. The “science” behind gender verification testing is not science at all; rather, it is based in normative, cultural assumptions in the definitions of man and woman. Variations from the norm are

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Rebecca Jordan Young, and Katrina Karkazis. "The IOC's superwoman complex: how flawed sex-testing discriminates." *The Guardian*. Last modified July 2, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/02/ioc-supwerwoman-complex-flawed-sextesting-policy?INTCMP=SRCH>. (accessed March 14, 2013)

⁶⁵ This is due to an increase in women’s participation in sport as well as to an increase in opportunity for women. With more opportunity and more participation, the level of women’s athleticism has drastically risen.

punished, publicly ridiculed, and banished from sport. However, it's important to note that the norm is only carefully safeguarded and tested for in women's sport. Key to the new testosterone test is the fact that the IOC is testing for a hormone they believe to be foreign to a female body, when in reality, testosterone levels vary significantly in individuals regardless of sex. Through controlling women's participation and physical presentation, the male-dominated IOC board⁶⁶ continues to define sport as a male's world. This is implicitly understood through the explicit wording found in the IOC charter. Man and mankind continue to be used as representative of woman and humanity. In the introduction, there is a note regarding this use of language:

In the Olympic Charter, the masculine gender used in relation to any physical person (for example, names such as president, vice-president, chairman, member, leader, official, chef de mission, participant, competitor, athlete, judge, referee, member of a jury, attaché, candidate or personnel, or pronouns such as he, they or them) shall, unless there is a specific provision to the contrary, be understood as including the feminine gender.⁶⁷

Using exclusive language trivializes the presence of women and continues to perpetuate the idea that females are trespassing into male domain. The privileging of one gender systematically silences the other. Female athletes thus must not only prove their femininity but also demonstrate just enough athletic skill to compete at the top of their game without raising too much scrutiny.

The gender binary and the expectations of women in Western society hamper the female athlete. Sport is an environment with the potential for equalizing relations between the sexes as well as seriously impeding the myth of female frailty. However, resistance and opposition to women's involvement in athletics characterize the history of the female athlete in sport. Myths

⁶⁶ Between 1884 and 1981, no women served on the IOC board.

⁶⁷ International Olympic Committee. Last modified July 8, 2011.
http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf. (accessed March 14, 2013)

and assumptions perpetuate male control of this environment. By investigating sport through the lens of socially constructed postulations, the hold of biological essentialism is made more tenuous.

Theological Implications

The Hybrid Christ

An understanding of social constructionism and the gender binary can also serve to help in interpreting Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Additionally, these measures help to ensure an ongoing critique to the Historical Jesus research. This "quest" represents an academic effort to define Jesus through historical methods and portray a historically accurate image of Jesus; this research, however, obscures the fact that context and ideological interests always shape research.⁶⁸ Malestream⁶⁹ scholars claim scientific objectivity through a sense of value-neutrality and impersonal, qualitative language; however, Jesus is always reconstructed in the scholars' own image. The Historical Jesus image is a product of the European Enlightenment and thus carries the weight of the ideological assumptions of Eurocentric colonialist, racist, and antifeminist scientific discourses. In this sense, historiography needs to be understood as formative in a national, religious, communal, and personal identity.⁷⁰ The subtext to a study of historiography is a question of power. As discussed in the previous section, power is exercised and spread through language, tradition, and culture. Through deconstructing the constructs behind accepted "facts", the female athlete and Jesus are both freed from the confines of an objective discourse. Additionally, focusing on the Historical Jesus overlooks the dual nature of

⁶⁸ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. "Critical Feminist Historical-Jesus Research." In *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, edited by Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter, 509-48. (Boston, MA: Brill, 2010).

⁶⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza uses this term as a descriptive way to indicate that Scripture, tradition, church, and society have been shaped and determined by elite educated white men.

⁷⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Critical Feminist Historical-Jesus Research," 509.

Jesus Christ as both human and divine. As such, my focus for this section will be on the Hybrid Christ.

Discourse focusing on Jesus Christ often begins with a return to certain creeds. Jesus Christ represents the most foundational concept of the Christian faith as well as the most confounding. How can one man be both human and divine? The first Council of Nicaea met in 325 AD in an attempt to create a consensus and uniform belief for the church and all of Christendom. However it was not until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD that the understanding of Jesus as both fully human and fully divine was propagated through the Chalcedonian Creed. In it, Christ is acknowledged as two natures, “consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood”. These two natures represent one unity with the property of each nature being fully and completely observed. While the Chalcedonian Creed created a standard for defining the problem of Jesus’ two natures, it did not explain any further. As Daniel Migliore points out, Christology has long been defined through these obscure creeds that state the reality of Christ in far-removed language.⁷¹ Understandings of Jesus represent further repetitions and interpretations of his dual nature using the Chalcedonian Creed as a universal starting point.

When thinking about the images and languages for Jesus Christ it’s easy either to reduce the idea to binary thinking (so Jesus or Christ) or to fuse the two concepts into one and therefore lose the specific individuality of each; Jesus of Nazareth was a man born somewhere around 4 BC while Christ is a vision, a part of the Christian tradition’s Trinitarian understanding of God.

⁷¹ Daniel L. Migliore. *Faith Seeking Understanding: an Introduction to Christian Theology*. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 161.

Jesus, in his humanness, informs any understanding of Christ; however, this does not automatically transcribe Christ as male. By linking the male Jesus with a vision of Christ the process of redeeming God and Christian theology from sexist language becomes that much harder. It additionally trivializes a woman's contextual understanding of Christ, presupposing a universal perception of the Christ figure through reinscribing a patriarchal interpretation of a male God-image. It universalizes any interpretation of Christ, and loses all particularity.

Patrick Cheng in his essay *Rethinking Sin and Grace*⁷² presents a model of Christ based on this dual nature, but brings the concept into a modern framework. This model is part of a four model interpretation of Christ that shifts our thinking away from sin and grace as understood in a legalistic framework; instead, his models propose that Christ should be the starting point for any understanding related to sin and grace. Therefore, sin should be seen as that which opposes the grace of what God has done for us through Christ. His fourth model, and the one specifically concerning Jesus' dual nature, proposes the example of the Hybrid Christ. For Cheng, the Hybrid Christ arises from the theological understanding of Christ as simultaneously divine and human. He belongs to the "in-beyond" space between two or more intersecting worlds. He is neither purely one nor the other, not two, but one Christ. In this model, Cheng identifies hybridity as grace and singularity as sin.

Hybridity is a postcolonial⁷³ term that describes the interaction of two components into a

⁷² Patrick Cheng. "Rethinking Sin and Grace for LGBT People Today." In M.M. Alison and K.B. Douglas, *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

⁷³ Postcolonialism is an academic discipline that functions as a reaction to and an analysis of colonialism and imperialism.

third “in-between” thing that then challenges traditional binary thinking. The idea of hybridity speaks to this notion: in its most simple form, it is a definition of negotiation. This negotiation opens up areas of discourse; discourse leads to inter-relational connectedness; this relationship leads to a rupture of boundary creating porous gaps where cultural experiences can be shared. It challenges the binary and hierarchal nature of dichotomous categories. For Cheng, Jesus Christ represents the ultimate example of hybridity. As both human and divine, Jesus belonged to both worlds as well as existing as in-between both worlds.

Cheng identifies sin in this model as singularity. Singularity represents the failure to recognize multiplicity in creation and the reality of existing in multiple worlds. The female athlete understands this notion all too well. She represents society’s inability to recognize multiplicity, and is therefore condemned. She participates in the ‘masculine’ domain of sport while being expected to uphold hegemonic femininity. Society marginalizes the female athlete due to atypical presentation of self—the more “masculine” the athlete, the more the athlete is labeled as deviant. She is therefore forced to reconcile social expectations of femininity with her athleticism. This type of singularity, as forced upon the female athlete, is a sin as it opposes the example of the Hybrid Christ. Refusing or failing to acknowledge the hybrid nature of identity raises the potential for creating a community of insiders and outsiders, those who belong and those who are ostracized. Fear of the ‘other’ and the fear of the stranger cause people to isolate, preserve the integrity of the body, and create boundaries between *we* and *them*.

Cheng’s model of grace is therefore hybridity. This includes and incorporates all that exist in the “in-beyond” space between two or more transecting worlds. Female athletes

represent an archetype of this kind of hybridity.⁷⁴ In a community interspersed with people defying gender roles and gender prescriptions, the binary of masculine and feminine is destabilized. The clear boundaries between what defines male and what defines female are erased or ignored; these boundaries become permeable and inclusive rather than exclusive. Female athletes garner the distaste and abhorrence of society because of society's inability to define and control the identity of someone who presents as such. Participation in a 'masculine' sport brings gender construction to the fore through its respective deconstruction. Grace is extended to this community through the example of the Hybrid Christ. This model reconstructs the concept of being human through the Hybrid Christ's belonging to multiple worlds. Our definitions of humanity are reconfigured and deepened through this example.

In postcolonial terms, hybridity is the process in which the colonizer attempts to translate the identity of the colonized into a singular, universal understanding; however, in this process, the attempt fails but produces a familiar, but new, identity. This new identity emerges from both strands and challenges the validity of an essentialist cultural identity. Rather than reinterpret the dominant context that has been universalized as normative, hybridity calls for the recognition of multiple positions. The female athlete's presence brings attention to the heterogeneity of identity. She represents the destabilizer, the disruptor to dominant cultural ideologies and hegemonic narratives. It is here, in this third space, that articulation for new possibilities is engendered allowing for the emergence of new identities. The hybrid identity subverts binary thinking and essentialism, and "...exposes the myths of cultural purity, the monologic discourse, unitary

⁷⁴ Important to note is that I am referencing the female athlete who plays a "masculine" sport.

enunciation, and the collapse of difference that legitimize colonial authority”.⁷⁵ In this borderland, creativity and imagination transform the settledness of the dominant discourse.

Postcolonial theory additionally allows for a way of thinking that disarticulates power through calling attention to the way language and discourse function in imposing a preferred order on the lives of marginalized people. The focus of postcolonial theology is not on unification of thought or identity but on shifting forms of resistance and dominance so that the subjugated can be liberated; therefore the concentration is not on creating equality but rather on creating a voice and reallocating power. Politically, those in power have written the history of God; therefore, white men have determined the definitions and descriptions of God. God has become masculinized, labeled ‘Father’ and characterized as apathetic, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. Althaus-Reid refers to this process as the Colonization of God.⁷⁶ God is civilized according to the standards of society and made pure and non-threatening while the Other becomes the one in need of mastery and control. God becomes the God of those in authority; “Colonial Theology employs the high road to the city and the centre of the empire”.⁷⁷ Postcolonial Theology provides the roads that diverge from the high road and turns towards the location of Others. This reading into God is not possible without the voices of those outside the accepted community. Bringing new promises into old hermeneutical practices, the Other searches “for God in dark alleys”⁷⁸ looking for the God found in the complexity of sexuality and

⁷⁵ Kwok Pui-lan. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 171.

⁷⁶ Marcella Althaus-Reid. *The Queer God*. London: Routledge, 2003.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

in the relationships of humanity.

The space between the Jesus in history and the Christ in divinity is unsettling and fluid; it resists easy categorization and refuses an easy label. It's the border zone between two relatively stable places, a third place of liminality; it's "the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference of identity, past and present, inside and outside, exclusion and inclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the "beyond".⁷⁹ The Hybrid Christ resists binary and dualistic thinking, challenges exclusivist language, and honors the diversity and plurality found in the human experience.

⁷⁹ Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EMBODIED BODY

On July 10, 1999 the Women's World Cup final game had come down to a penalty shootout. China and the United States had finished 120 minutes of play in a scoreless heat. 90 of those minutes were dominated by the U.S.; the 30 minutes of extra time was controlled by the Chinese. 90,185 fans, the largest attendance at a women's sporting event, tensely watched as the teams entered into a 5-kick showdown. With the score tied 4-4, all eyes turned to Brandi Chastain, the last American scheduled to shoot. She kept her eyes down, avoiding the gaze of the intimidating Chinese goaltender. Taking a step forward, Chastain left-footed the ball into the upper-right corner of the net. With this goal, the U.S. had clinched victory. In celebration, Chastain ripped off her shirt, exposing her ripped abs and clenched muscles.

This image became the iconic photograph of the women's victory over the Chinese; it also became the most infamous. Brandi Chastain would forever be remembered as the "woman who took off her shirt".¹ While this image catapulted women's soccer's popularity, it also served to reinforce the media's focus on "attractive" athletes. Media and its images are more than just representations of an event or person; they speak to our culture and our values. The image of Chastain in celebration serves as the enduring memory of the game, but what does the image say? Does it proclaim celebration and victory or does it emphasize a woman without her shirt?

¹ Leslie Heywood, and Shari L. Dworkin. *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 134.

Secondary Socialization

Gender Socialization

Secondary socialization is the internalization of institution-specific knowledge. While primary socialization is mediated through a primary caretaker, secondary socialization is apprehended through an institutional functionary. The role of the institutional functionary is to transmit specific knowledge in regards to certain roles that are rooted directly or indirectly in the division of labor. Berger and Luckmann² use the example of a foot soldier and cavalry to illustrate the differentiation that may arise in secondary socialization. The cavalry, through role-specific training and specialized language, will develop and internalize a set of images and symbols that is unlike, and irrelevant, to that of the foot soldier. This process requires a subjective identification with the role and its customs as well as the acquisition of role-specific knowledge and vocabularies. Secondary socialization presupposes a primary socialization, and therefore must deal with an already internalized reality and developed self. Whatever new that is introduced in secondary socialization must be applied to this reality; this new knowledge may be consistent or inconsistent with that which is gained in primary socialization. The more consistent, the more readily the new information acquires a sense of reality. Berger and Luckmann compare this process to learning a new language. At first, the new language is continually retranslated into the “mother tongue”. As the new language becomes more

² Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*. (N.p.: Anchor Books), 1967.

recognizable, the need for retranslation is diminished and the individual can begin to think in this new language.

The institutional functionary's role is similar to the primary caretaker of primary socialization except without the emotional attachment. The individual in primary socialization understands reality only as mediated through the primary caretaker; in secondary socialization, the individual usually comprehends the institutional context behind certain meanings. Roughly speaking, it is the difference between a mother and a teacher. In primary socialization, the mother is reality; in secondary socialization, the teacher is an instrument of learning. The teacher, and other institutional functionaries, therefore carries a level of anonymity that the primary caretaker does not—the role is detached from the individual, and the same knowledge could be taught by another. Modern education represents the most fitting illustration of this process. The family's important role in primary socialization declines as the teacher in secondary socialization becomes the educational caretaker; however, primary and secondary socialization share a common theme: they are both social processes, and “they also reflect the basic fact that subjective reality must stand in a relationship with an objective reality that is socially defined”.³ The objective reality is structured by institutions and primary and secondary socialization represents the method of participation in the social reality.

Modern education, as an institution, represents a process of habitualization: “Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can be reproduced with an

³ Ibid., 149.

economy of effort and which, *ipso facto*, is apprehended by its performer *as* that pattern”.⁴ This pattern of habitualized actions serves to precede institutionalization, and institutions in turn establish predefined patterns of behavior. Through the very power to name a pattern of conduct, institutions possess the power to control. Additionally, due to the historical nature of institutions, they are experienced as objective realities: “The individual’s biography is apprehended as an episode located within the objective history of the society. The institutions, as historical and objective facticities, confront the individual as undeniable facts. The institutions are *there*, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not”.⁵ Thus, the paradox of institutions: they are a manmade social reality experienced as objective and apart from social forces. Another consequence of institutionalization is the division of labor. Roles are assigned to various actors and these actors typify specific information. To act as a teacher in an educational institution is to embody a particular role tasked with mediating knowledge to others. Students are thus inducted into a societal dialect and a common language emerges. This language takes on a level of objectivity as well because it is collectively shared and experienced externally forcing an individual into specific patterns.

The language of gender stereotypes represents a dialect that functions on appearing objective. It is incredibly powerful and significant in sorting society and pushing them towards specific societal roles. Beginning in early childhood, sex-typed behavior is found in most children before the age of two; between the ages of three and six, the stereotyping of behavior is

⁴ Ibid., 53.

⁵ Ibid., 60.

apparent and extensive.⁶ The gender classification system is “infused with an affect to an extent few other knowledge bases can match, making it what is perhaps the most salient parameter of social categorization for the young child”.⁷ The social forces and contexts behind gender classification appear objective because they represent what Berger and Luckmann call “commonsense knowledge”.⁸ This knowledge is readily available and is shared with others in a presumed self-evident representation of reality. Gender-stereotype language and expectation then funnel men and women into sex-specific social roles. Therefore, from the stereotype of women as other-oriented and communal, they are channeled into nurturing roles in the family (homemaker) or in female-dominated occupations (teacher, nurse). The expectancies of gender-typified behavior act as normative guidelines for consistency in sex-typified work. Therefore, in referring back to Berger and Luckmann’s example of modern education as an institution of secondary socialization, the role of teacher becomes significant in terms of sex-role categorization. As an institutional functionary, the teacher represents a pattern of gender stereotype. While the United States may seem as demonstrative in terms of equal gender opportunity, ~76% of public school teachers were female in 2007-08.⁹ This statistic proves that women in the workforce are still more concentrated in female-typified jobs. In schools,

⁶ Thomas Eckes, and Hanns M. Trautner, eds. *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*. (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 67.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁸ Berger and Luckmann, 23.

⁹ National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>. (accessed March 20, 2013).

consciously, students are being inducted into a communal, educational language; unconsciously, they perceive sex-typical roles being fulfilled by the corresponding sex.

However, this communal, educational language is still the language of society; therefore, it will replicate the gender stereotypes of that culture. As mentioned in Chapter Two, math has long been associated with male achievement. While the gender gap in math-specific achievement is being diminished, the number of students taking advanced courses in math and pursuing math-related careers is still primarily male. This is a result of gender stereotypes being reinforced by parents and teachers.¹⁰ For example, 38 first grade teachers in the U.S. were asked to identify their two most and least successful boy and girl students in mathematics. They were then asked to ascertain causation as well as describe the characteristics of these students. For the most and least successful boys, the teachers determined the cause to be related to ability; for the most and least successful girls, the teachers believed the cause to be effort. The boys were perceived as more competitive, more logical, more independent, and more adventurous in regards to mathematics.¹¹ Gender expectancies of the teachers then affect those of the students with females performing poorly and being less interested.¹² In this case, and others, it is the teacher that teaches the students the language of society. Therefore, through reinforcing assumed gender-specific behavior, the teachers perpetuate gender stereotypes as 'given' and 'innate'.

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Gunderson, Gerardo Ramirez, Susan S. Levine, and Sian L. Beilock. "The Role of Parents and Teachers in the Development of Gender-Related Math Attitudes." *Sex Roles* 66 (2012): 153-66.

¹¹ E. Fennema, P. L. Peterson, T. P. Carpenter, and C. A. Lubinski. "Teachers' attributions and beliefs about girls, boys, and mathematics." *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 21 (1990): 55-69.

¹² C. Keller. "Effect of Teacher's Stereotyping on Students' Stereotyping of Mathematics as a Male Domain." *Journal of Social Psychology* 41 (2001): 165-73.

Peer groups are another huge factor in terms of gender socialization. Maihan Vu's study of middle school students in 2006 investigated peer perceptions of athletic girls.¹³ Eighth-grade boys and girls were interviewed. Both groups identified physically active girls as tomboys and credited them with being too aggressive. The interviewed girls discussed, however, that the active girls were also all in shape and how this was a good example for all girls. Therefore, while the female athletes were labeled tomboy, they also functioned as an exemplar for the other girls. The interviewed boys on the other hand claimed that the girls were too athletic, and that they were merely girls who wanted to be boys. The active girls were subsequently viewed as not a "turn-on". One boy furthered this idea: "It makes me feel uncomfortable if a girl is more athletic than I am...cause it makes me feel less dominant. I feel inferior. I feel lacking. It makes me feel like the woman."¹⁴ Therefore, because the boy feels threatened by the athletic female, she is consequently stigmatized. Already, at ages 12 and 13, the female athlete is simultaneously encouraged and deterred from sport participation and weighted down with gender requirements. Boys were at the top of the list for the interviewed girls on the barriers to being physically active. However, they were not only seen as barriers, but also seen as influential motivators. The boys admitted to teasing the girls who were active, especially the ones who played football because of the masculine nature of the sport. The girls mentioned how this kind of mockery served two purposes: the teasing either barred them from participation or spurred them on in order to prove themselves. Boys proved to extremely influential in girls' participation in athletics. In these

¹³ M. B. Vu, D. Murrie, V. Gonzale, J. B. Jobe. "Listening to Girls and Boys Talk About Girls' Physicality Activity Behaviors." *Health Education & Behavior* 33, no.1 (2006): 81-96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

middle school students, gender stereotypes have already made it into a normative discourse. The female athlete, through presenting a counter-narrative to typified sex-roles, worries and confounds her peers.

The Sporting Environment

The Feminine Demand

The societal construct of the female athlete revolves around longstanding beliefs and stereotypes that are intertwined with femininity. A woman's sexual identity translates into her social identity. Portrayed as a caring, gentle, delicate creature, the female is acted upon rather than acting, submissive to the world around her. Modern Western media depicts the womanly body as a slender beauty declaring that aggressiveness and competitiveness belong in a man's repertoire and muscles express masculinity. The female athlete inhabits a liminal space somewhere in between the constructed male and female world. Struggling to express socially acceptable femininity while playing a masculine sport, female athletes deal with a duality of character. On one hand, they may conform to the norm, cleaning up and wearing skirts out in public. On the other hand, they fail to find shirts that hide their muscles. Female athletes must navigate social expectations, reconciling their own identity with societal demands.

A consequence of playing sport is the transformation of the body; the construction of the body is both individual and collective. The athlete creates her physical presentation in an environment that is both inside and outside societal gender norms. Judith Butler speaks to this phenomenon: "In this sense, we are radically dependent upon a cultural projection of our bodies in order to assume a sense of who we are in the world...the ideals by which we become intelligible to ourselves are not the ones that we choose, although, in assuming those ideals—as we must—we take part in their rearticulation and transformation".¹⁵ The female athlete thus

¹⁵ Judith Butler. "Athletic Genders: Hyperbolic Instance and/or the Overcoming of Sexual Binarism." *Stanford Humanities Review* 6, no. 2 (1998).

defines her body through a cultural framework, while also challenging “idealized feminine morphologies”. Just as institutions are created over time and through repetition, so are the gender ideals for the female body; however, these ideals are subject to change through presenting an alternative form. Butler determines that the “athletic performance of gender” alters gender norms through “a spectacular public restaging”.¹⁶ “Within the last fifteen years, certain women’s bodies have gone from being perceived as ‘outside’ the norm to being perceived, at least by some, as some of the most progressive instances of the norm, that is, as challenges to the norm that effectively unsettle the rigidity of gendered expectations and broaden the scope of acceptable gender performance”.¹⁷ While the female athlete may surpass the cultural definitions of femininity, it is not without a struggle. These definitions are pervasive and exist within sport as well; therefore, female athletes may lift weights while bemoaning the added muscle or they might wear extra makeup during competition.

While female athletes deal with the often tumultuous exchange between social and personal expressions of femininity, the pressure to conform to their gender role forces them to change or be changed by society. The presentation of the female body in public incites public opinion; therefore, she must perform her gender correctly if she is to adhere to the rules of normative femininity. When it comes to women’s bodies, society’s standards are often strictly defined and close to unattainable. For women in sport, femininity becomes spectacle.¹⁸ The body as dressed, adorned, and decorated is used to signify gender. Her physical body is a particularly

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ N. Theberge. *Higher Goals: Women’s Ice Hockey and the Politics of Gender*. (New York: SUNY, 2000).

important area for cultures to control and camouflage symbolic meaning.¹⁹ The athlete can then either comply with society's standards or resist gender regulations.

In the sports socially classified as masculine, the female athlete may try to bring a certain femininity to her social life or to her sport life. This "behavioral overcompensation"²⁰ can include anything from wearing pink to promoting a less aggressive form of the game. Young female ice hockey players can choose to wear pink gloves, use a pink stick, or even wear pink laces. They have multiple ways of expressing their gender through their choice of gear. In one study on athletic women, a hockey player noted, "You lose all femininity when you put on a hockey uniform".²¹ Through the pink equipment, the young women chose to show society that they could express femininity while playing a masculine sport. Society's expectations of gender performance influence their gender expression. Female boxers in a study done in France²² asserted their femininity by choosing socially suitable attire for the ring. One boxer noted how she chose "something sexy" for the match. The uniform then becomes her mode at affirming her feminine side. In a study on female cricketers, the athletes resisted changing their uniforms from

¹⁹ J. Goldenberg, S. McCoy, T. Pyszczynski, J. Greenberg, & S. Solomon. "The body as a source of self-esteem: The effect of mortality salience on identification with one's body, interest in sex, and appearance monitoring." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 118-130 (2000).

²⁰ M. Hall. "Sport, sex roles, and sex identity." Paper presented at the First Annual Conference of the North American Society for Sport Sociology. Denver, 1980.

²¹ V. Krane, P. Choi, S. Baird, C. Aimar, K. Kauer. "Living the Paradox: Female Athletes Negotiate Femininity and Muscularity." *Sex roles*, 50, 315-329 (2004).

²² C. Mennesson. "'Hard' Women and 'Soft' Women." *International Review for Sociology of Sport*, 35(1), 21-33 (2000).

skirts to more practical trousers because their skirts symbolized their femininity.²³ Uniforms themselves can be a source of pride or consternation for these athletes. Some view the attire as sexualizing while others view it as representation of femininity, and some view them as a combination of both options. In a study by Krane et al.,²⁴ track runners complained of their “butt-huggers” type of uniform; however the same athletes also noted how they felt faster when putting on the uniform. It became a symbol that it was time to play, time to compete, not time to worry about how they looked or how they were perceived. The uniform was then both a symbol of sexualizing the female athlete, and a symbol of competition.

In other instances, the influence from society to stay within the gender binary is more apparent. Women’s ice hockey is an appropriate example. As a gendered adaptation of men’s ice hockey, female players are discouraged from assuming the masculine characteristics of the sport through gender-appropriate rules and regulations. For example, women are penalized for checking while men are not. Checking is a strategy within the sport to hinder another player by knocking them off the puck and/or reducing his or her ability to play effectively. Penalizing women for checking thus allows men to protect the delicate, gentle, caring gendered characteristics of women. The gender binary is literally enforced through a punishment of two minutes in the penalty box. Additionally, while men are given a five-minute penalty for fighting, women are given a five-minute penalty, a game misconduct, and will likely receive some sort of suspension. The very presence of women in contact sports undermines gender regulations;

²³ K. Russell. “On Versus Off the Pitch: The Transiency of Body satisfaction Among Female Rugby Players, Cricketers, and Netballers.” *Sex Roles*, 52 (9/10), 561-574 (2004).

²⁴ V. Krane, P. Choi, S. Baird, C. Aimar, K. Kauer. “Living the Paradox: Female Athletes Negotiate Femininity and Muscularity.” *Sex roles*, 50, 315-329 (2004).

therefore, specific rules are created and enforced to attempt to control behavior and body expression. The rules for assessing female bodybuilders function along the same lines. Female bodybuilding requires the athlete to add muscle; however, they are prohibited from adding so much muscle that they lose their feminine figure. In the competition rules for bodybuilding competitions, the rule for assessing the female physique is as follows,

First and foremost, the judge must bear in mind that this is a women's bodybuilding competition, and that the goal is to find an ideal female physique. Therefore, the most important aspect is shape - a muscular yet feminine shape. The other aspects are similar to those described for assessing the male physique, but muscular development must not be carried to such an excess that it resembles the massive muscularity of the male physique. Definition of a woman's muscles must not be confused with emaciation resulting from extreme loss of weight. Competitors shall also be assessed on whether or not they carry themselves in a graceful manner while walking to and from their position onstage.²⁵

Through this directive for judging the female bodybuilder, femininity is brought into masculinity as muscles are made into an acceptable idea as long as they remain within the construct of being female.

Besides visually expressing their femininity through uniform or accessories, female athletes may also transform their chosen sport making it their own. Female ice hockey players describe their sport in socially acceptable terms stressing the technique and tactic of how they play the game over the blunt force and aggressiveness found in the men's hockey game. The female boxing study stresses the same idea discussing the difference between "soft" and "hard" boxing. Hard boxing is considered the more American form emphasizing a more combat-style of

²⁵ International Federation for Bodybuilding and Fitness.
http://www.ifbb.com/amarules.Rule_28.3. (accessed March 10, 2013)

fighting. Soft boxing focuses on technical mastery. A few compared this style to dancing because of its aesthetic characteristics. One French soft boxer remarked, “I’m keen to give a feminine image of boxing, so I avoid fists to the head or a series of moves.” Through this style of boxing, the athletes redefined a masculine sport into something feminine.²⁶ A study of male cheerleaders found the same ideology. They built a masculine image in their typically feminine sport through their use of acrobatics and physically demanding movements.²⁷ By contributing something masculine to the feminine sport, they make it socially acceptable for them to participate.

The idea that femininity must be brought into the masculine context of athletics can also be a mere mockery to the female athlete. In college women’s rugby, a tradition at many schools is the annual Prom Game. Each year, the teams play each other decked out in prom dresses. A sense of societal ridicule pervades the field when by the end of the game the dresses are torn, dirty, muddy, and bloody. The over-the-top inculcation of femininity of the game provides a parody of the culture’s desire to see a feminine touch in the masculine rugby.

Female athletics and athletes, by their very presence, destabilize cultural gender norms of femininity and masculinity. In some cases, these norms are overpowering; in others, they are subtle. Their constructed bodies reflect and deflect societal requirements for femininity; however, in the process of challenging norms, they create the possibility for a new concept of what it means to be a woman. In this liminal space is a crisis of knowledge where we must reconsider what we know or claim to know about gender categories. Change and transformation

²⁶ Mennesson, “‘Hard’ Women and ‘Soft’ Women”.

²⁷ L.R. Davis. “Male Cheerleaders and the Naturalization of Gender,” in M. Messner and D. Sabo (eds.) *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1990).

of these categories can only be brought about through crisis and instability. The female athlete offers this potential, and through her the system of classification is weakened.

The Media Panopticon

Presentations and Representations

Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher, political reformer, and the father of modern utilitarianism. As a Utilitarian, Bentham espoused a consequentialist moral reasoning that placed morality in the outcome of chosen actions. The right action was the one that maximized overall happiness (the greatest good) for the greatest number. Bentham believed that all humans are governed by two factors: pleasure and pain. Utility is then governed by the balance of pleasure over pain, and happiness over suffering. Evil, according to Bentham, was only present because some greater good would come out of it. Punishment, as a form of evil, destroyed some of the individual's happiness. Additionally, the overall happiness of the community would be reduced. To circumvent the loss of happiness for the greatest number, the individual's happiness should be sacrificed thus achieving a "good of the second order" rather than "evil of the first order".²⁸ The panopticon, Bentham's most powerful and lasting impact, was a plan for a prison institution that represented a theory of power reduced to its most ideal form. The design of the panopticon fulfilled Bentham's utilitarian principles through sacrificing offending individuals from society in order to deter potential pain and suffering.²⁹

His concept of punishment was paradoxical: while punishment acts upon the individual in inflicting pain, it acts upon others through the external appearance of pain. Therefore, Bentham argues that the appearance of punishment outweighs the reality. The design of the panopticon

²⁸ Jeremy Bentham. *The Panopticon Writings*. (New York, NY: Verso, 1995), 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-27.

then functioned on Bentham's theory of fictions. Punishment, according to Bentham, only needed to be a mere spectacle to deter the innocent through the appearance of suffering. In order to maintain control and obedience of the offenders without the use of real punishment, Bentham once again turned to spectacle and fiction. Through his design of the actual structure, he could create the appearance of an omnipresent overseer conveying a sense of constant surveillance to the prisoners. The guard was placed in the center of the structure with the prisoners circling around the center. The prisoners could not tell if they were or were not being observed thus giving complete power to the observer. The sense of conveyed invisible omniscience coupled with the threat of potential punishment created an impression of fear and subsequent obedience from the prisoners. This idea functioned as a solution for easy supervision for a large number of men through illusion. As long as the inspector remained unseen, his or her characteristics took on a Godly aspect. The inspector would then seem to be omnipresent, all-seeing, omniscient, and omnipotent. The prisoners would be able to hear the inspector yet see no body attached to the voice; additionally, through the ability to potentially see everything within the structure, the inspector could convey a sense of constant surveillance. This combination of a bodiless gaze and voice served to construct God; the prisoners, feeling the ever-present gaze, would become their own guards internalizing discipline and becoming conscious of their every action.³⁰

Michael Foucault based some of his theories of modern society according to Bentham's prison plan.³¹ He states that society is founded on supervision of one human by another. The

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. (New York: Second Vintage Books Edition, 1995).

concept of the layout “induce[s] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power”.³² Therefore, as in Bentham’s original idea, the guard need not even be present in order for compliance to occur. Observational power makes the prisoner his or her own prison guard encouraging continual surveillance of the self. Every indiscretion has the possibility of being made visible and punishable. Female athletes are in this sense the prisoners of society. They are subject to the feeling of constant supervision due to the panoptic gaze. The societal panopticon controls the actions and behaviors of the athletes through the athlete’s personal self-monitoring. Bartky affirms the duplicity of this idea by asking “where and who are the disciplinarians?”³³ Society, in one sense, victimizes the female athlete through the idea of imposing the femininity construct; in an entirely other sense, the female athlete acts as the agent through conforming and yielding to that construct. The perpetrator, in accordance with the panopticon, is invisible and imperceptible; therefore, instead of combating the power of the panopticon, she surrenders, and instead of blaming society, the female internalizes the construct and blames herself.³⁴ Without an observable and tangible adversary, the panopticon becomes incredibly difficult to resist.³⁵ One of the ways that the panoptic gaze materializes is through the media and the subsequent female representation. Through this mechanism, the feminine construct is reinforced. The media represents a formidable force influencing the beliefs,

³² Ibid., 201.

³³ S. L. Bartky. *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. (New York: Routledge, 1990).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ M.C. Duncan. “The Politics of Women’s Body Images and Practices: Foucault, The Panopticon, and Shape Magazine.” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 18(1), 48-65 (1994).

values, and attitudes that shape the perception of self and others.³⁶

Mass media influences, perpetuates, and mediates dominant culture's beliefs and stereotypes. Traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity are transmitted through images that serve to preserve and continue established gender differences. Since Title IX passed in 1972, women's sports participation has increased and the female athlete has become more visible; however, coverage of women's sports is still incredibly disproportionate. In a study of gender stereotyping in televised sports in 1989³⁷, the researchers found that women's sports were underreported and the coverage that did exist was substandard in comparison to men's sports. Men's sports received 92% of airtime compared with 5% for women's sports and 3% for neutral topics. Sports news broadcasts did focus on women, but rarely on female athletes—and when they did, it was common for the newscasters to use the women as comical targets of jokes and/or as sexual objects. In comparing the coverage of the NCAA³⁸ "Final Four" for men and women, the researchers found more slow-motion replays, more dramatic opening sequences, and more acknowledgement of relevant statistics for men rather than women. For in-game commentary, women were referred to as "girls" and "ladies" compared to male athletes who were more often referred to as "men" or "young men". Additionally, women were often referred to by first name while men were more often referred to by last name. Lest one deem these results to be something of the past, the study was completed again in 2009 with results that showed that women's sports

³⁶ N. Koivula. "Gender Stereotyping in Televised Media Sport Coverage." *Sex Roles*, 41(7/8), 589-604 (1999).

³⁷ Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Michael A. Messner, and Linda Williams. "Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports." *The Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles*, August 1990.

³⁸ National Collegiate Athletic Association.

actually received *less* coverage than in 1989.³⁹ In this study, men's sports contributed to 96.3% of airtime, women's sports 1.9%, and neutral sports 2.1%.

The problem with women's sports coverage doesn't end here; it continues with how a female athlete is represented and portrayed in the coverage she does receive. While many studies have confirmed the media's representation of the female athlete as according to gender stereotype, Jo Ann M. Buisse and Melissa Sheridan Embser-Herbert decided to analyze the media materials produced by collegiate organizations.⁴⁰ Focusing specifically on portrayed gender construction in intercollegiate sport, these researchers evaluated NCAA media guide photographs from two different time periods: 1990 and 1997. Buisse and Embser-Herbert chose collegiate media guides because "[the guides] provide a window into the world of intercollegiate sport and reveal the way in which the media and sport collude, intentionally or not, to present messages about gender and sport".⁴¹ Looking at the depiction of both men and women, the researchers took an exploratory approach in determining the variances in athletic portrayal in the media guide photographs. They explored the guides with a focus on four different questions: (1) Are athletes portrayed on or off the courts?; (2) Are they pictured in or out of uniform?; (3) Are they in an active or passive position?; and (4) What is the theme of the cover photograph?

The results for these analyses proved that collegiate media guides followed the same guidelines as the mass media in portraying female athletes in stereotypically feminine ways. Men

³⁹ Michael Messner, and Cherly Cooky. "Gender in Televised Sports." *Center for Feminist Research*, June 2010.

⁴⁰ J. A. M. Buisse, M. S. Embser-Herbert. "Constructions of Gender in Sport: An Analysis of Intercollegiate Media Guide Cover Photographs." *Gender & Society*, 18 (1), 66-81 (2004).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

were photographed on the court significantly higher than women in both 1990 and 1997; men were also photographed in action more often than women. Between 1990 and 1997, the number of men in action went up while the number of women shown in action actually decreased. In terms of cover themes, men were more often photographed according to “true athleticism”—this was Buysse and Embser-Herbert’s code for when an athlete was on the court, in uniform, and in action; women, on the other hand, were more likely to be portrayed as “feminine”—code for female athletes portrayed in traditional feminine roles, appearances, and/or fashion.

Buysse and Embser-Herbert’s research makes an important contribution to media studies of the female athlete by highlighting intercollegiate media guides—even educational institutions with a smaller distribution base engaged with gendered stereotypes. From 1990 to 1997, female participation in collegiate and Olympic sports increased; the WNBA was created and maintained; greater understanding of gender discrimination and inequality was publicized. However, the only category examined by Buysse and Embser-Herbert that showed a positive result was that the gender difference in being portrayed in uniform disappeared; this result was paired, however, with a decrease in actual court appearance. These results further the notion that the media and sport are the remaining bastions of gender discrimination. The persistent marginalization of women’s athleticism in favor of women’s femininity continues to perpetuate male dominance in sport.

Knight and Giuliano carry this idea further with their study on the reaction and response to the media depiction of the female athlete in sport.⁴² Participants in the study were shown an

⁴² J. Knight, T. Giuliano. “He’s a Laker, She’s a “Looker”: The Consequences of Gender-Stereotypical Portrayals of Male and Female Athletes by the Print Media.” *Sex Roles*, 45(3/4),

article that either focused exclusively on an athlete's attractiveness or an athlete's athleticism. When attractiveness was the main focus, that female athlete was perceived as more physically attractive than the articles focusing on her athleticism even though the same image was used for both articles. Additionally, the athlete was perceived as less talented, less aggressive, and less heroic. Therefore, the media's apparent preference for advertising the female athlete as attractive over athletic ultimately undermines her standing as a legitimate athlete and is detrimental to her credibility. People are more apt to rely on peripheral information (the angle provided by the type of coverage) to form their impressions of the female athlete. As Buysse pointed out, in media coverage, "girls and women may be athletes, but they are female first".⁴³

In a similar study, adolescent boys' open-ended responses were recorded in reaction to media images of performance versus sexualized images of female athletes.⁴⁴ Additionally, a third group was included that used sexualized images of non-athletes (models). 15 pictures were selected with 5 images per category. Boys who saw the sexualized images of female athletes were more likely to make statements about appearance, female ideal/male gaze⁴⁵, and women's sexiness⁴⁶ than the boys who saw the performance-focused image. These boys were also more likely to make advertising and marketing statements. On the other hand, boys who saw the

217-229 (2002).

⁴³ Buysse, "Constructions of Gender in Sport: An Analysis of Intercollegiate Media Guide Cover Photographs," 68.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth A. Daniels, and Heidi Wartena. "Athlete or Sex-Symbol: What Boys Think of Media Representations of Female Athletes." *Sex Roles* 65 (2011): 566-79.

⁴⁵ These statements encompassed comparisons of the women in the images to an idealized standard of women as well as comments on the perspective of male viewers.

⁴⁶ i.e. "she's hot".

performance-focused image of the female athlete made more play-by-play comments⁴⁷, and they very rarely marked the athlete's gender. Only six boys referred to the athlete as a *female* athlete. The boys who saw the sexualized non-athlete (model) images made similar statements as the boys who saw the sexualized athlete. However, and very interestingly, the boys seemed to objectify the sexualized athlete *more* than the sexualized models. This highlights the particularly problematic nature of sexualized images of female athletes. In highlighting attractiveness over performance, the female's credibility as an athlete diminishes.

In the context of the media, the female athlete is both subject and object: "both active subjects who perform their sport and market their image, and commodified objects who are passive, who exist to be ogled in the classically 'feminine' position of being seen".⁴⁸ This brings in Butler's point that while the female athlete's body works to transform society, it does so within a socially defined context. In a very modern sense, the athlete's body is an example of triumphant individualism: she works to transform her self into an athletic machine, building muscle and agility and a centered self-presence. However, in a postmodern sense, the athlete is working to build an image in a context where image is everything. This leads to the modern/postmodern paradox. The modern problem for the athlete is how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable; the postmodern problem for the athlete is how to avoid fixation and keep all options open. Getting her body into shape becomes a sense of empowerment; however, her body is still a product of culture and will be evaluated as such. Susan Bordo speaks to this

⁴⁷ These statements focused on what was happening in the athletic context.

⁴⁸ Leslie Heywood, and Shari L. Dworkin. *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 86.

last point: “The notion of women-as-objects suggests the reduction of women to “mere” bodies, when actually what’s going on is often far more disturbing than that, involving the depiction of regressive ideals of feminine behavior and attitude that go much deeper than appearance.”⁴⁹ In sum, images are never just pictures; they speak to us and project meaning. They are symbolic representations of American ideals and are communicators of our values as a society. As long as female athletes continue to be shown in passive, vulnerable, and/or sexualized manners, and as long as women’s sports continue to be devalued by television networks, the cultural norms defining and controlling women will not change. The societal panopticon will continue to exist.

⁴⁹ Susan Bordo. *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

Theological Implications

The Embodied Christ

Identities within the gender binary are cultivated to reflect the “natural order”; this natural order is a result of a cultural development that has reified certain gender roles as normative. Certain religious discourses have given legitimacy and power to maintaining these constructs as reality. Christianity in particular has contributed to the construction of bodies as male and female with respective gender and sexual expressions. This discourse begins with the Creation account in Genesis and serves as interpretation into Jesus’ story. Jesus, as male⁵⁰, was then coded through the corresponding gender expression. Jesus was not a privileged white male with power and authority; he was a Galilean Jew subject to Roman laws and suppression. His teachings and works develop out of this environment. His identification with the outsiders and marginalized of society and his opposition to the Roman Empire represent his upbringing. Theologies and creeds that describe him in imperial terms misappropriate the societal and political praxis of Jesus. Shawn Copeland calls this arrogation of Jesus as the “anti-Logos” because it dismisses his body while seeking the decreation of other human bodies.⁵¹ The image of Christ that I’ll discuss for this section is the Embodied Christ and informs and is informed by an understanding of Jesus’ humanness.

Copeland uses Theological Anthropology to remember Jesus in his full human capacity.

⁵⁰ We assume Jesus’ maleness in terms of his circumcision (Luke 2:21). In this act (and the presumed historical accounting in the book of Luke), Jesus’ body becomes sexed.

⁵¹ Shawn M. Copeland. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 57.

His body is a boundary that matters because it represents his unique individuality as well as evoking the reminder that Jesus was a living, breathing human being. All bodies are specifically and distinctively marked through race, gender, sex, culture, and sexuality. While accepted as male (and thus XY), Jesus' narrative of birth is stressed as miracle. He is birthed by Mary, an XX female, but without a male donor. In the very interpretation of his birth he is deemed unlike other male bodies. Somehow, Jesus affects a Y-chromosome without a male contributor. As Graham Ward notes, "...the specificity of Jesus' male body is made unstable from the beginning. This is made manifest by the absence (in Matthew and Luke) of a male progenitor".⁵² This concept of destabilizing the normative continues as a theme through Jesus' embodied life and ministry. Recalling Judith Butler's theory of gender as an inherently performative concept, identities exist as soon as the individual performs gender-specific acts through a repetition of undertakings that are understandable within society's constructs.⁵³ As a male in the context of the Roman Empire, Jesus performed his maleness in opposition to patriarchal norms: he did not exploit people, he did not use coercive means, and he refused to abuse his power as a male over women. He treated other bodies as equal to his own; in other words, no body was a nobody in his embodied spirituality. In his preaching, he opened his body to others through an intimate connection of one person to another. His teaching of the future bodies in God as opposed to the current reality of bodies in Empire placed Jesus in tension to the larger government; thus his

⁵² Graham Ward. "The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ." In *Radical Orthodoxy*, edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, 163-81. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 164.

⁵³ Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1990).

“larger program of social healing” addressed “illnesses brought on by Roman imperialism”.⁵⁴ His egalitarian measures challenged the prevailing norms and created an alternate example in terms of gender expectations.

Jesus’ body takes on additional signification in the narrative of his last days through the Passover meal, crucifixion, and resurrection. At the Last Supper, Jesus communed with his disciples as the living, breathing, embodied Jesus; however, at this point in the story, “the body begins its withdrawal from the narrative”.⁵⁵ This is the last supper that Jesus shares before his death, and serves as the scriptural basis for the sacrament of Communion. The Synoptic Gospels all share this event in which Jesus breaks bread and says, “Take, this is my body”⁵⁶. The bread is then transposed for the body. Bread, as a tangible corporeality, symbolizes the physical materiality of Jesus. Additionally, Jesus coded as male, becomes coded as neuter through the bread. Bread, in Greek, is ‘*to ἄρτον*’; ‘*to*’ is a neuter pronoun taking the place of ‘*ὁ Ἰησοῦς*’, the masculine-identified Jesus. This transposition of body to bread then serves two meanings: one, Jesus’ sexed body becomes neutral; and two, Jesus becomes object rather than subject. Taking on a neuter pronoun changes the signification of Jesus as representing one half of humanity to the entirety; “Jesus’ body as bread is no longer Christ as simply and biologically male”.⁵⁷ The breaking of the bread prefigures the crucifixion. Jesus as subject becomes the object acted upon by society.

⁵⁴ Richard Horsley. *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 111.

⁵⁵ Ward, “The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ”, 167.

⁵⁶ Mark 14:22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

Jesus' death on the cross represents society's response to his embodied existence. It symbolized a violent, brutal end to Jesus in terms of his political and social theology and praxis. He was a threat to the hierarchal power structures of the Roman Empire through his egalitarian teachings. The cross was not a product of God's will but an implication of political control; "the cross symbolized the cruelty of the Roman imperial system, patriarchal violence and privilege, the political infrastructure of the co-opted aristocracy and Temple leadership, a compromised sacerdotal aristocracy, and ultimately ruthless human behavior".⁵⁸ The breaking of the bread now becomes the breaking of Jesus' body. His body becomes an object of ridicule and violence, mere flesh and bones nailed to cross. In the scene of the crucifix, the meaning and significance of the Eucharist changes: it becomes identification with Jesus' suffering rather than the feeding, sharing, and nurturing of a shared meal. The bread is broken, and in this time between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is a displacement of identity.

On the threshold of death, Jesus encountered the possibility for a new story. David Jensen deconstructs the resurrection through the image of the empty tomb, specifically from the Gospel of Mark.⁵⁹ Mark's narrative is difficult because of the ending—Jesus is utterly alone and forsaken. There is neither any follower present at his burial nor any follower around to witness his resurrection. He is "rejected by the authorities, scorned by the crowds, abandoned by his disciples".⁶⁰ The end of Mark serves to multiply questions rather than neatly answer them. Mary

⁵⁸ Robert Goss. *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*. (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 159.

⁵⁹ David Jensen. *In the Company of Others: A Dialogical Christology*. (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome visit the tomb only to find it empty. A man clothed in white tells them that Jesus is not there—he is risen—and he has gone ahead of the women on the road to Galilee. As Jensen explains, the pericope then hinges, not on the discovery of the empty tomb, but on the proclamation that Jesus is risen. Not only has Jesus been resurrected, but he also returns to the place of his ministry—Galilee. Back to the fringe of society, back to the marginalized. In this return to the beginning, the narrative continues.

With this proclamation of the Risen Christ, it is easy to perceive the empty tomb as evocating presence; however, as Jensen points out, the empty tomb is equally suggestive of absence. The tomb of Jesus cannot be applied to a present matter—that tomb remains historically empty. This absence is also what connects the kenotic Christ to the Risen One; “The Risen Christ, accordingly, is the One who empties himself of any parochial, localized context. He is not a presence to be sought at our own convenience or for our own justification...rather, his absence is a lure, drawing us into the future and towards others, so that we might encounter him in others”.⁶¹ This absence can also be seen in Mary’s and the Disciples’ reaction to seeing the risen Christ for the first time.⁶² At first, they do not recognize Christ and react in disbelief; however, eventually, they identify this body as the risen body of Jesus. The familiar had become unfamiliar only to become familiar again. To be open to the Risen Christ is to be open to future possibilities and different manifestations prompted by the discovery of the empty tomb.

In the absence of the empty tomb, however, is the presence of the Risen Christ. To claim that Jesus is present today as Christ is to say that the story continues. Death and the tomb are not

⁶¹ Ibid., 104.

⁶² As recorded in the Gospel of John.

the final answer; “this evocation of Christ’s presence brings our kenotic model full circle; the empty tomb of the resurrection thus involves a return to life, a return to the more”.⁶³ Therefore, kenosis must be partnered with a sense of return; absence must be partnered with presence. The boundary between the two is transgressed. It is no longer an either/or but a both/and. As Jensen reminds us, because of absence, we cannot reduce presence; however, his presence can be mediated through others in acts of embodied love: “The Risen Christ is present whenever and wherever Jesus of Nazareth’s ministry of open commensality and healing is faithfully remembered. Thus understood, resurrection presence is nothing less than the recognition that God’s grace comes to us embodied, granting new life to our hungry and bruised bodies”.⁶⁴ Sacraments, as visible signs of an invisible grace, represent this idea of the resurrection presence as embodied acts. To take part in communion is to break bread, in remembrance of suffering, and in an act of embodied relationship.

Graham Ward has a similar perspective towards the resurrection. The empty tomb is an example of displacement, and the absence of Jesus’ body as “[announcing] the plenitude of God’s presence”.⁶⁵ Additionally, the absence of Jesus’ body is felt in his absence from the text. Whereas the Gospels follow Jesus from place to place during his life, they now are restricted to his visitations and scattered appearances as the resurrected body; however, this absence is not a negative. Through the removal of the gendered body of Jesus, the inclusive body of Christ is incorporated: “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer

⁶³ Ibid., 112.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁵ Ward, “The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ”, 173.

male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”.⁶⁶ The binaries are removed, and the hierarchies overcome. A greater identification with Christ’s body is generated through the resurrected body, and Christ’s body becomes symbolized as the church—the body that continues the work of Jesus.⁶⁷ As such, this body is now neither male nor neuter, but multi-gendered as representative of all creation.

In today’s society, we judge people based on body; we punish people for failing to manifest the correct body presentation; we fear any deviation in body appearance. Our understanding is based in binary and dualistic thinking. Implicit in this type of thinking is a hierarchal judgment; one category is always valued over the other. The body/soul dualism characteristic of much of Christian theology therefore places emphasis on the soul over body. Body is then deemed sinful and prone to corruption. The body became a site essential to understanding personhood because it preserved the hierarchy of binary thinking. Male was privileged over female, strong over weak, beauty over plainness. The female athlete blurs these boundaries. She is female, yet strong; a combination of masculine and feminine; she is both/and. In this way, she resembles Jesus’ embodiment through challenging prevailing gender expectations and changing cultural norms through an embodied living. Additionally, through Christ’s embodiment of unfamiliar becoming familiar, her physicality engenders the potential for new forms of being.

⁶⁶ Galatians 3:28.

⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:27.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRANSGRESSOR

In the May 6, 2013 edition of *Sports Illustrated*, Jason Collins came out as gay. With the words, "I'm a 34-year-old N.B.A. center. I'm black and I'm gay," Collins entered into new territory becoming the first openly gay male athlete who is still active on a major American sports team to disclose a sexuality that is not heterosexual. With this announcement, Collins experienced an outpouring of support and huge amounts of media coverage. Former and current teammates, league executives, coaches, and N.B.A. stars all spoke out in favor of Collins' announcement. Even President Obama called Collins to express support.¹

But what about Brittney Griner? Griner is the #1 draft pick for the WNBA and is one of the most dominant players in women's basketball history. On April 17, 2013 Griner made an announcement of her own: she is a lesbian. In the interview, she mentioned it casually, and then the sports world and everyone else seemed to take it the same way. There was very little coverage of her disclosure and certainly no call from the President of the United States of America. Very little traffic happened on social media sites after she publicly came out, and there was hardly any discussion about what it means for one of the best female athletes to disclose her sexuality.²

This chapter begins where the coverage stops: with the lesbian in women's sports.

¹ Howard Beck, and John Branch. "'I'm Gay,' an N.B.A. Center Breaks a Barrier." *The New York Times* (New York, NY), April 30, 2013, A1.

² Sam Borden. "Female Star Comes Out as Gay, and Sports World Shrugs." *The New York Times* (New York, NY), April 19, 2013, B15.

Socialization Affects and Effects

Successful and Unsuccessful Socialization

The process of socialization is never complete; it is an on-going process that involves series of modifications and adaptations. As such, every interaction and experience that is internalized has the potential to be a threat to one's subjective reality. Primary socialization is rooted in a reality that appears certain; secondary socialization is rooted in a reality that is more liable to displacement. Therefore, secondary socialization is more susceptible to challenges. Berger and Luckmann³ use the example of public nudity. In primary socialization, a child internalizes the taboo against nakedness; in secondary socialization, the child internalizes the social customs and roles behind certain kinds of dress. Primary and secondary socialization then complement one another and serve to define a reality characterized by socially-acceptable attired individuals. If the prohibition against public nudity was challenged, this challenge may pose as a threat to the individual socialized into wearing clothes.⁴ If the threat manifested in primary socialization then it would have to be significant enough to overcome reality-as-inevitable; however, if manifested in secondary socialization, this threat would not have to be quite as significant. Since secondary socialization is more vulnerable than primary socialization to contestations of reality, certain measures serve to maintain the necessary symmetry between

³ Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*. (N.p.: Anchor Books, 1967).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

subjective and objective reality. This reality-maintenance safeguards the continuity of everyday life.

Reality-maintenance generally presents in two types: routine maintenance and crisis maintenance.⁵ Routine maintenance functions to preserve daily life. As mentioned in the previous section, these processes are upheld through routines. These routines represent the foundation of institutionalization. Beyond the reality as institutionally-defined is the reality as understood in individual consciousness. This reality is upheld and confirmed through individual interaction with others. Berger and Luckmann divide the category of others into two types: significant others and less important others.⁶ While significant others represent the more privileged group in terms of maintaining individual reality, both groups confirm and reaffirm subjective reality. For example, the routine of the morning commute to work includes less important others that all serve to affirm the reality of the job milieu.⁷ However, significant others perform a vital purpose in confirming an individual's sense of identity through mirroring and confirming one's idea of self. If an individual believes him or herself to be a powerful and important member of society then it is fundamental that his or her significant others reflect this belief in order to confirm its validity. If the individual receives treatment inconsistent with his or her idea of self, then that individual is forced to choose between modifying his or her reality or his or her reality-maintaining relationships. Significant others and less important others engage in a dialectical relationship with the individual in terms of reality-maintenance; "the significant

⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 149-150.

others in the individual's life are the principle agents for the maintenance of his subjective reality. Less significant others function as a sort of chorus".⁸ Therefore, an individual's specific social situation becomes a combination of reality-maintenance and reality confirmation.

This concept is similar to Erving Goffman's theory on Face-work.⁹ This theory is based on social interaction and communication through our most expressive instrument: our face. Face-work is determined by the actions we take to create consistency with the face we present to others. His definition of face is therefore "...a positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line¹⁰ others assume he has taken during a particular context".¹¹ This gives freedom to the role we choose to assume; however, this also means that we must be consistent and live up to this chosen role. In this sense, we are all perpetrators of the same social constructs, and our face "...is only on loan to [us] from society".¹² When the image we present is inconsistent with our face, then we jeopardize our place in society; therefore, our concern is directed towards consistency and presentation. We sustain others and ourselves through mutual consideration. This means that in these face-to-face interactions with others, we are maintaining two contexts: we are defending our own face while protecting the image of the other (combined rule of self-respect and rule of considerateness). In this mutual acceptance of lines, we agree to the ground rules of society. Those that do not adhere to the rules are trouble (i.e. those who

⁸ Ibid., 150-151.

⁹ Erving Goffman. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. Ch. 1, "On Facework." 1967.

¹⁰ Line: a pattern of nonverbal and verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

¹² Ibid., 10.

cannot be relied upon to play the rules of the game). These individuals challenge the social structure of everyday life.

When there is a significant challenge to everyday life, then there is a crisis situation and crisis-maintenance is required. Crisis-maintenance proceeds very similarly to routine-maintenance but involves a more pronounced set of measures. These measures are instated in situations that carry the risk of creating a collapse or interruption to reality. For example, in the aftermath of a 9/11, the United States went into crisis mode and established a set of procedures to preserve the everyday reality of America pre-9/11. These included various security measures as well as a considerable outpouring of American nationalism. The larger the threat, the greater the response. However, if the threat becomes commonplace or too frequent, then the crisis becomes routinized and loses its crisis character.

With the procedures of reality-maintenance in place, it seems nearly impossible to affect any sort of change; however, reality can be transformed because society is an on-going process of modification.¹³ Berger and Luckmann discuss an extreme case of transformation that they term alteration in which there is a near total change in subjective reality.¹⁴ Alternation requires a re-socialization that reconstructs and resembles primary socialization. However, it does not replace primary socialization because once an individual is socialized, it is impossible to begin from scratch. What becomes most important then is a new “plausibility structure”¹⁵—this serves as a different, concrete social base from which to pull more theoretical concepts. Like the

¹³ Berger & Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 156.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

procedures for reality-maintenance, this process must be mediated by significant others who redefine and legitimate the world for the individual in new, understandable terms. Alternation will then be successful if the old world is dismantled in exchange for the new world.

What happens then if an individual is unsuccessfully socialized? The process is preceded by biological or socialized “biographical accidents”,¹⁶ and there is an asymmetry between the socially-defined reality and the individual’s subjective reality. This individual has no subjective argument against his or her assigned stigmatized identity because he or she accepts their fate as objective. They are socially pre-defined and lack an alternative plausibility structure that could redefine their objective reality; however, if and when these individuals gather together into a group, they create a social base that can serve as the foundation for a counter-reality; “as long as individuals, even if they number more than a handful, do not form a counter-community of their own, both their objective and subjective identities will be predefined in accordance with the community’s institutional program for them”.¹⁷ This counter-reality can then become objectified in the group setting. The unsuccessful socialization into one world can then serve as the prerequisite for successful socialization into another world. In the early stages of the creation of the counter-reality, the larger world may still act on predefined identities; however, as the counter-reality becomes more of a reality within everyday life, a split between the visible conduct and the invisible self-identification may occur for the stigmatized. The individual acts or appears as predefined but is something entirely different based on the new community’s

¹⁶ Ibid., 165.

¹⁷ Ibid., 166.

definition. This eventually leads to the possibility that individuals may refuse predefined identities—able to name rather than be named.¹⁸

Another theory based on the concept of insider/outsider communities is social deviance. This theory posits that the failure to conform to society's norms and rules results in being labeled as deviant and is recognized through the negative and stigmatizing social reaction by others. The theory of deviance is divided into three categories that define deviant behavior: structural functionalism, symbolic interaction, and social-conflict theory. The functionalist approach was most aptly described by Emile Durkheim. He believed that deviance was a necessary and normal part of social organization: "Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will be there unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such."¹⁹Crime, in this case, represents unconventional and non-normative behavior, and was therefore deviant. For Durkheim, deviance followed four important functions: it affirmed cultural values and norms through defining virtue as the opposing idea to vice (i.e. no good without evil, no justice without crime); it clarified and further defined moral boundaries; it promoted social unity through compelling people to come together; and it challenged society's moral boundaries which in turn encouraged transformation.²⁰

Symbolic interactionism theory was first coined by Herbert Blumer, a student of George

¹⁸ Ibid., 167.

¹⁹ Emile Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. (New York: The Free Press. 1938), 69.

²⁰ Ibid.

Mead, and he based much of his theory on Mead's work. Mead championed social behaviorism (rather than psychological) and Blumer used this to establish and ground his theory. He defined three premises based on this perspective: humans act towards things based on meanings that they ascribe to them; these meanings are derived from social interaction one has with another; and these meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process that the individual uses in dealing with things that she or he encounters.²¹ If recalling the description of Goffman's Face-work earlier in this section, one will see a further example of symbolic interactionism theory.

The final category of deviant behavior is conflict theory and is based in a Marxist understanding of social dynamic. Therefore, whomever or whatever is labeled deviant is determined by those in power, and those labeled deviant tend to share a common trait of powerlessness. The interests of those in charge will be reflected in the laws and norms of a particular society. The justice system is then a system designed by the ruling class, for the ruling class. Those who threaten this system are deviant. The ruling class, through the nature of their power, avoids being labeled even when a law is transgressed. This is why the ruling elite are rarely arrested or punished. Additionally, there will be a widespread belief that the laws and norms are natural and good; however, rather than consider if these laws are fair and just, individuals are concerned with if they are applied equally.²²

²¹ Herbert Blumer. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

²² John Macionis. *Sociology: The Basics*. 11th ed. (N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007).

The Sporting Environment

Women in Sport and the Heterosexual Ideal

Historically, the word *homosexual* entered into vocabulary during the 19th century as a part of psychiatric usage: “homosexuality appeared as one form of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism (*sic*) of the soul. The sodomite was a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.”²³ The term took on an iniquitous biblical and secular aspect; it was now a sin and a disorder, a perversion and a pathology. The medicalization of homosexuality gave heterosexuality, the binary opposite, the social power of normativity. It became the biological, cultural, and psychological standard of the average. While the mid 19th century focused on homosexual behavior as the problem, the last 19th century perceived homosexuality as belonging to certain types of people. Gender role, gender identity, and sexual orientation became conflated as one entity that was understood as consistently leading to a specific outcome; this was understood as inversion. Thus, lesbians were understood as men trapped in women’s bodies and that is why they looked and acted masculine and were attracted to women. This was popularized by medical doctors and sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing who respectively described inversion as “sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional abnormality toward persons of the same sex”²⁴ and “the masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom”²⁵.

²³ Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 1:53-73.

²⁴ Havelock Ellis. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. Vol. 2. (UK.: Echo Library, 2007).

²⁵ Melanie A. Taylor. "The Masculine Soul Heaving in the Female Bosom': Theories of

The relationships between men and women at this time in history were still dominated and understood through Victorian cultural values; therefore, men and women were not supposed to be equals and marriage equated to a legally binding form of male superiority over woman. Additionally, women were perceived as sexually passionless and morally superior to men. Sex, within the marriage bond, was only for the purposes of procreation. In terms of sport participation, middle-class women²⁶ in the early 20th century began participating in golf, tennis, and bicycling.²⁷ Advocates for women in sport considered this participation to be good for women's health; critics believed it interfered with a woman's ability to fulfill her roles as a wife and mother.²⁸ Additionally, medical experts cautioned against involvement in sports for women because it could cause damage to reproductive organs and may increase a masculine appearance in these women. Critics, agreeing, deemed females in sports to be unattractive, unfeminine, and unnatural.²⁹

Post-War 1920s brought along a new liberalism for women's roles and for women's relationships with men. Women went from being seen as passive and passionless to energetic,

Inversion and The Well of Loneliness." *Journal of Gender Studies* 3, no. 7 (1998): 287-96.

²⁶ In this discussion, it is important to realize that 'women' is often referring to middle-class to upper-class white women. Lower class women and women of color were not considered by medical doctors at the time (white men) in terms of sport participation. Hard labor and physically demanding jobs were the norm for these women, and they did not support the predictions that these doctors were making.

²⁷ Pat Griffin. *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. (IL: Human Kinetics, 1998), 31.

²⁸ Helen Lenskyj. *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport, and Sexuality*. (Toronto, ON: The Women's Press, 1986), 18.

²⁹ Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, 32.

assertive, and active.³⁰ Feminism, brought on by the push for the vote, spurred women's rights; a greater urbanization brought more factory jobs and more opportunities for women outside of the home; women's colleges created an environment for women to gather together without men.³¹ However, with the increase in women's visibility and a change in the perception of a woman's sexual nature, new social controls were implemented to ensure the gender hierarchy remained in place. Since marriages were now considered to be companionate with men and women being friends and fulfilling one another sexually, women's close relationships with other women began to be pathologized. While women's opportunity for participating in sport grew in this more liberalized environment, there was still an underlying fear of maintaining the gender hierarchy and the heterosexual normative.³² Therefore, advocates for women in sports cited the enhancing of heterosexual appeal and the notion that sports made women better mothers and wives as reasons for allowing continued involvement; critics labeled women in sports as "mannish gender anomalies".³³

The 1930s ushered in a conservative backlash to the more liberal 1920s. The Depression caused a reversal in cultural values as economic uncertainty instigated a return to traditionalism and an end to women's freedoms. The image of the woman in sport increasingly became associated with masculinity and therefore with lesbianism; "the cultural nervousness about changes in gender roles and power found a perfect boundary marker in the emerging social

³⁰ Susan K. Cahn. *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Women's Sport*. (Toronto: Free Press, 1994).

³¹ Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, 33-34.

³² Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport, and Sexuality*, 67-71.

³³ Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, 34.

consensus that lesbians were pathological threats to normal womanhood”.³⁴ Through using the stigmatized image of the lesbian as a marker of women in sport, the female athletes of the 19th century were discredited and women’s sports became historically invisible. Women’s sports began to be viewed more often through the lens of a heterosexual matrix.³⁵ Therefore, advocates of women’s sports named an increase in heterosexual appeal as a positive to sport participation. Additionally, they further differentiated women’s sports from men’s sports by controlling for ‘masculine’ attributes in a woman’s game through de-emphasizing competition.³⁶ Lesbians were, however, present in the sporting environment. Sports teams represented a way for women to connect, but the social climate was so hostile that a high level of secrecy was required; “the invisibility of lesbians enabled the public perception of lesbians as mannish sexual deviants who were not real women to flourish unchallenged”.³⁷ This secrecy contributed to their silence because there could be no collective voice, only individuals attempting to exist unnoticed.

As popularized in the film *A League of Their Own*, World War II, and the absence of men, allowed for women to become more independent in work and sport. However, after WWII, a conservative backlash once again confined woman to the house and the role of wife and mother. Post-war propaganda encouraged traditional domestic ideology; as a result,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Heterosexual matrix defined by Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*: “...the grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are neutralized...[and] characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” 208.

³⁶ Ibid., 35.

³⁷ Ibid., 36.

“heterosexual couples married in droves, women bore babies at an astonishing rate, nuclear families prodigiously moved to the suburbs, society discouraged individual rebelliousness, and feminism lay in a deep state of hibernation”.³⁸ The binary of masculinity and femininity became more and more divided, and ‘masculine’ women were perceived as women who deviated significantly in the normal development of femininity. This theory was popularized by Freud who believed that, post-castration complex, the female could develop in three different ways: a general revulsion from sexuality, a ‘masculinity’ complex, or ‘normal’ female development. The first possible course of development comprised of a fear of comparison with boys, a discontent with her clitoris, and then a renouncing of sexuality. The second course of development involved an over-attachment to the hope of one day getting a penis, and “that hope becomes her life’s aim; and the phantasy of being a man in spite of everything often persists as a formative factor over long periods”.³⁹ Freud determined that this was the path that often led to homosexuality in women⁴⁰. The third course of action is the one deemed to lead to ‘normal’ femininity. Therefore, masculinity in women was equated with lesbianism.

The 1950s also began with the government being consumed with a fear of communism and the McCarthy hearings served to root out communists and other subversives from American society; eventually, homosexuals were added to this list causing public awareness and suspicion

³⁸ Mary Jo Festle. *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

³⁹ Sigmund Freud. Female Sexuality to *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 225-43. Vol. 21. (London: Hogwarth Press, 1964), 230.

⁴⁰ Freud’s understanding of homosexuality is limited. He sees it as evidence of multiplicity in sexual aims and objects but the idea of inversion seems to hold more sway in terms of women’s homosexuality: “But it is only in women that character-inversion of this kind can be looked for with any regularity”. Freud, *Three Essays*, 20.

of gay men and lesbian women to be at an all-time high.⁴¹ Additionally, mental health experts were unanimous in their opinion of homosexuality as a perversion.⁴² The social environment was hostile and dangerous for anyone deviating from the cultural norm of femininity and masculinity. The masculine association of sport coupled with the conservative demand of gender requirements decimated the sporting environment for women; however, women did continue to participate. Lesbians in particular found sport to be a safer place to congregate than gay bars; however, the heightened sense of secrecy remained. Secrecy was exchanged for safety and silence for security.

The 1960s was an interesting era: it featured the enduring effects of McCarthyism as well as the beginning of social change movements. By the 1970s, the black civil rights movement had shaken conservatism, and ruptured the hold it had on American values. As a result, other movements began to take shape and have effects. Second-wave feminism, the sexual revolution, and the developing lesbian rights movement set the stage for a re-emergence of women in sports. With the advent of Title IX in 1972, discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program was prohibited and women became more and more visible in the sporting environment. Due to this increase, there could no longer be a blanket dismissal of female athletes as “mannish lesbians”. The stigmatized image of the lesbian athlete thus became restricted to those women that did not “conform to the new heterosexy image of the woman athlete or on women who challenged the power imbalance between men and women in sport”.⁴³ With the increase of

⁴¹ Luca Prono. "McCarthyism." *GLBTQ Social Sciences*, 2005, 1-5.

⁴² Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, 38.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 43.

women in sport and greater public visibility, the hostility towards lesbians in sport began to come from within sport as well as from without.

By the 1980s, lesbians in sport began to become more visible, usually through a public outing in some form. For example, Billie Jean King was outed by a former partner and Pam Parsons, a basketball coach at the University of South Carolina, was accused of being sexually involved with a player on her team. These kinds of incidents spurred fear and distress from parents, confirming the presence of lesbians in sport. While prompting a backlash in terms of some athletes trying harder to “prove” their heterosexuality, it also finally opened up discourse about lesbians in sport. The 1990s and beyond have continued this trend of unprecedented visibility and beginning acceptance of women and lesbians in sport, although there is still much progress to be made. Lesbians particularly still exist in a culture of silence; however their increasingly visible presence and vocalized voice challenges the institution of heterosexuality and the binary of masculine/feminine.

The Queer Athlete

The Lesbian Scapegoat

René Girard and his scapegoat theory parallels well with the lesbian in society and in women's sport. The majority of Girard's work focuses on this specific mechanism which functions as an unconscious working of the social body in the murder or expulsion of the innocent. He claims that the founding moment of society was in the collective sacrifice of an arbitrary victim.⁴⁴ This moment was preceded by desire—humans are driven by wanting what another already possesses (mimetic desire). No individual can desire an object without first learning of that desire from another; we see others desire something, intuit that it must be desirable, and therefore we want it. This creates a triangulation of desire (mimetic rivalry) that results in conflict. A community is then at risk due to mimetic contagion. To restore order, a person (sacrificial victim) is singled out as the cause of the crisis and is either expelled from or killed by the community. Through the expulsion or killing of a victim, peace is momentarily restored. This victim is called the scapegoat, and the underpinnings of this system the scapegoat mechanism.⁴⁵

In the culture of sport, women began to challenge men's dominance and masculinity through participation in athletics. In wanting to be able to compete and play alongside the men, she created an environment of mimetic rivalry. She became the trespasser into the exclusive

⁴⁴ René Girard later claims Christ as the ultimate scapegoat—this is clarified and discussed at greater length in the Theological Implications Section

⁴⁵ René Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 1977.

boys' club, and her presence weakened the notion that sport existed as a place of instruction for masculinity and traditional male gender roles. Men tried to trivialize and marginalize women in sports, but women kept improving. As the gap between women and men began to close, the exclusive nature of gender roles and expectations was brought into question. The threatening of the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity therefore threatened the male privilege of gender hierarchy. With so much on the line, conflict was inevitable, and with conflict comes violence. A third party had to be scapegoated, and this third party was the lesbian.

The scapegoating of the lesbian comes from both outside and inside the women's sporting environment. When originating externally, the lesbian label serves to police the heterosexual matrix preserving traditional gender roles and gender hierarchy. The label is then applied arbitrarily and every female athlete is under suspicion. The identity for the female athlete is a questionable ambiguity to society. For the male athlete, athleticism = masculinity = heterosexuality without any questioning; on the other hand, the female athlete has athleticism? femininity? heterosexuality? as her vague, uncertain definition.⁴⁶ Sexuality and gender, as areas for identity formation, both inform and are informed by sport; "this dialectic relationship, in which identities are constantly shaped and reshaped, made and remade, presented and represented, engages with sport as a dynamic social and cultural force".⁴⁷ Sport is both a place for transgression and reification of societal gender constructs. Because of the focus on the physical body as a symbol of sexuality, femininity often translates into heterosexuality. The

⁴⁶ M. A. Messner. *Studying up on Sex*, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 13 (1996), 221-237.

⁴⁷ C. Aitcheson. *Sport and Gender Identities: Masculinities, Femininities, and Sexualities*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

female athlete is a threat to heteronormativity because her body and her behavior defy gender requirements. They represent a challenge to the male-dominated arena of sport, and in an androcentric society, this confrontation is a perilous risk. Female athletes are automatically stamped as lesbian: “the equation has always been simplistic: sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are lesbians”.⁴⁸ The lesbian label serves to further police behavior within sport. Society claims that to be a real female entails certain behavior and a certain appearance. A female athlete must be read as feminine and heterosexual in order to be allowed to exist in the man’s sporting world; “Lesbian is the word, the label, the condition that holds women in line...a label invented by a man to throw at any woman who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogatives...A lesbian is not considered a ‘real woman’”.⁴⁹ The “mannish lesbian” thus serves to trivialize women in sport assuring male superiority.

The social reality of the female athlete does not improve with time. As an adult, the label switches from tomboy to dyke. Participation in a masculine sport automatically incurs the lesbian label; “In a culture in which plain features, a muscular build, and a competitive instinct are often equated with lesbianism, female athletes becomes ‘dykes’. And lesbians in sport have yet another reason to stay in the closet”.⁵⁰ Labeling all female athletes as lesbian functions as an instrument of oppression. To be a top athlete automatically translates into being a lesbian. To

⁴⁸ Victoria A. Brownworth. The Competitive Closet. In S. F. Rogers (Ed.), *Sportsdykes*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 80.

⁴⁹ Betty Hicks. Lesbian Athletes. In S. F. Rogers (Ed.), *Sportsdykes*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

counter these perceptions, femininity is pushed to the level of spectacle. The 1990 world championship for women's ice hockey illustrated this concept. With rumors of lesbianism circulating among spectators and concerned parents, Canada decided to counter the allegations with making the team colors pink and white. Additionally, the players on the team were "sanitized from the stigma of being lesbians by being posited as daughters".⁵¹ To overcome the stereotype that all women's ice hockey players were lesbian, Canada relied on trusted gender definitions. Any resistance to the forced feminizing was met with the threat of being kicked off the team. Once again, deviation from normative gender expression resulted in a literal punishment.

While lesbians feel freer within their specific sport or team in expressing their true identity, they are also subject to finger pointing by fellow team members or participants. This is where the scapegoating of the lesbian comes from inside the sport environment. The lesbian label of the female athlete becomes so common that those that identify as straight feel the need to out other women in an effort to prove their own sexuality. Therefore, the lesbian female athlete must deal not only with society's negative perceptions, but also with her own teammates' and coaches' homophobia. In this context, Vu's study of middle-school students perceptions of a female athlete are replicated as the athlete is subjected to support and condemnation for her ability. Many lesbian athletes are forced into the closet to counteract negative stereotypes. To risk being out is to risk the loss of media attention, sponsorships, and product endorsements.

⁵¹ R. Lock. *Heterosexual Femininity: the painful process of subjectification* . In J. Caudwell(Ed.), *Sport, Sexualities, and Queer/Theory* . (New York: Routledge, 2006), 167.

Many are forced to choose between continuing in their respective sport and being an out advocate for the queer community.

Pat Griffin categorizes the varying climates of sport for the lesbian athlete into three groups: hostile, conditionally tolerant, and open and inclusive.⁵² The first category represents a climate where the closet is the only option for the lesbian athlete. To be out exposes an individual to the possibility of discrimination. The problem in this category is not homophobia, but the lesbian athlete. She is not tolerated, and disclosure often results in being kicked off a team or in being maltreated if she chooses to stay. An apt example of this environment is Rene Portland's homophobic requirements of her players. Portland was the basketball coach at Penn State, and allegedly would tell prospective recruits that drugs, alcohol, and lesbians were not tolerated on the team. Not until 2006, when a player filed a federal lawsuit against Portland, was this scenario fully addressed. Jennifer Harris claimed that she was kicked off the team due to perceived sexual orientation, and the University's internal review concluded that there was enough evidence to backup Harris' claim. Portland was found guilty of creating a "hostile, intimidating, and offensive environment", and was fined \$10,000 and required to attend diversity trainings.⁵³ Lesbian athletes in hostile sporting environments exist through absolute silence, making them invisible yet safe. They are not welcomed; they are not affirmed.

Griffin's second category is conditionally tolerant. This setting is characterized by what Griffin calls the "glass closet". Lesbian athletes are allowed to disclose their identity, and are

⁵² Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, ch. 6.

⁵³ Penn State News. Last modified April 8, 2006. <http://news.psu.edu/story/203885/2006/04/18/university-concludes-investigation-claims-against-womens-basketball-coach>. (accessed March 20, 2013)

tolerated, but only if they abide by a set of implicit rules. These rules usually involve silence and feigned heterosexuality. To breach these rules negates the conditional tolerance. In 1981, Billie Jean King held a press conference and revealed that she was being sued by a former lover. This pronouncement was met with shock and consternation by the public since King was married to a man at the time and was generally perceived by the public as an attractive and well-liked player on the WTA⁵⁴ circuit; however, King's relationship with the other woman was a well-known fact by the other player's on the tour. With the implicit understanding that to publicly acknowledge lesbian athletes participating on the tour equated to public condemnation, the other tennis players remained mum on King's sexuality. Additionally, with King's announcement, she did in fact lose many of her commercial sponsorships thus confirming that it is detrimental to a career to expose sexuality and that one is accepted as long as one poses as heterosexual.⁵⁵ To breach the implicit rules of conditional tolerance is to step into a hostile environment; to keep those rules is to be welcomed, but not affirmed.

Griffin's final category is the open and inclusive setting. This is the setting that identifies the problem in athletics as homophobia and discrimination rather than the lesbian athlete. It is the category that serves as model for all the others; it is the setting that is welcoming and affirming. On a minimal basis, this setting is characterized by an openness that is created and maintained by individual coaches and teammates; on a maximum basis, the openness is backed up through institutional policy and public statements of inclusiveness and anti-discrimination. While ideal, this setting is still particularly difficult to completely represent. Even with institutional anti-

⁵⁴ Women's Tennis Association.

⁵⁵ Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, 45.

discrimination policies, individual teams and coaches may still present as hostile or conditionally tolerant. As long as homophobia is still present, the lesbian label⁵⁶ will continue to maintain its power, and the lesbian athlete will continue to function as the scapegoat.

⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, the labeling of female athletes is a tool of oppression. It is through a specific rendering and manipulating of language that this type of power is maintained. As Michel Foucault writes, "...power's hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law. It speaks, and that is the rule." Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 83.

Theological Implications

The Transgressive Christ

To identify as Queer is an act of transgression. Socially, anyone deviating from the sexual norm is treated as abnormal and morally questionable. Spiritually, anyone deviating from accepted biblical interpretations that identify heterosexuality as morally superior is considered sinful. While not representative of the whole, these views are characteristic of the majority. Queers are continually denied full participation in the church and in society—those in power prevent certain rites such as the taking of sacraments or the ability to be ordained; those in power also prohibit certain secular rights such as marriage and anti-discrimination laws to be allowed to the Queer community. As a marginalized group of society, the Queer community is epistemically and systemically disadvantaged. To challenge societal norms requires overcoming years of reinforced homophobia and heterosexism propagated by the church and society. As Margaret Urban Walker succinctly expresses, “not everyone, however, gets authoritatively to define moral life. To have the social, intellectual, or moral authority to perform this feat, one must already be on the advantaged side of practices that distribute power, privilege, and responsibilities in the community in which one does it”.⁵⁷ Therefore, the Queer community enters into the epistemological and systemic framework from a disadvantaged position where their moral and intellectual standing is questioned, disregarded, and/or ignored.

Sin becomes a particularly sensitive topic for the Queer community; it represents an exclusion from the church community as well as a comprehensive denunciation of personal

⁵⁷ M. U. Walker. *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60.

identity. Patrick Cheng in his essay *Rethinking Sin and Grace* argues against a legalistic view of sin.⁵⁸ This system of rules and laws shifts our focus away from Jesus Christ. Cheng, using Karl Barth as a model, believes that Jesus Christ should be the starting point for any understanding relating to sin and grace. Therefore, sin should be seen as that which opposes the grace of what God has done for us through Christ rather than a violation of God's laws and commands. If focusing on sin as a breach of the law, attention is narrowed to individuals or groups thought to be sinners. This often leads to an obsession over what is right and wrong resulting in endless arguments over what the Bible means, says, or dictates; "the Bible becomes simply a book of rules as opposed to the revelation of God's relationship with—and love for—humanity as the Word made flesh".⁵⁹ Cheng's third model in his four-model interpretation is the Transgressive Christ, and this model specifically speaks to the Queer experience in society and the church within a theological context.

The Transgressive Christ model corresponds to the reality of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Throughout the gospels, Jesus is constantly portrayed as not conforming to religious or political authority through an open transgression of the moral, religious, and legal boundaries of his day. He challenged the religious authority of the day by questioning Sabbath laws; he interacted and physically touched the unclean and impure; he ate and drank with the outcasts of society; he related with those believed to be possessed by demons; he rejected war, violence and Empire. Additionally, He sided with the underprivileged and marginalized associating with the

⁵⁸ Patrick Cheng. "Rethinking Sin and Grace for LGBT People Today." In M.M. Elison and K.B. Douglas, *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

homeless, the poor, and the hungry. Through his public transgression, he is rejected by society as a deviant. Rick Talbott's *Jesus, Paul, and Power* expands on the Transgressive Christ model by characterizing Jesus as a "rebellious son".⁶⁰ Talbot, through his juxtaposing of two passages in the Bible, attempts to expose a ritual of social marginalization. The first passage is Deuteronomy 21:18-21:

If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all of Israel will hear, and be afraid.

This passage is used with Luke 4:16-29. In this selection of text, the beginning of Jesus' ministry is highlighted through a conflict between him and the elders of Nazareth. In verse 29, the reaction of the members of the synagogue is provoked: "They got up, drove [Jesus] out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff". Talbott associates this violent reaction from the crowd as congruent with the passage from Deuteronomy. Jesus becomes the 'rebellious son' because he forsakes his village and his family by his helping of Capernaum and his blatant disregard for authority. He flouts the social structure of the village. Through this example, Talbott sets the stage for Jesus' eventual community on the margins of society that consists of other people that suffered from the social ramifications of expulsion from one's kin group and village; this concept can also be understood through Berger and Luckmann's concept of re-socialization through alternation. Jesus created

⁶⁰ Rick F. Talbott. *Jesus, Paul, and Power: Rhetoric, Ritual, and Metaphor in Ancient Mediterranean Christianity*. (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010).

new plausibility structures that re-defined the world in new, understandable terms.

Within the Transgressive Christ model, Cheng identifies sin as conformity. Sin, as opposing the grace of God through Jesus, then represents a willful compliance with society's structures and a "mindless or blind conformity with the rules of the ruling majority".⁶¹ Jesus was excluded, rejected, and ultimately crucified for daring to break with convention. If we are to live through his example, we must refuse to subsist in willful ignorance; we must live mindfully and aware. Sin as conformity has the additional potential to lead to "mob violence against an innocent scapegoat or even the genocide of entire groups".⁶² It is destructive and dangerous to fail to speak or act in the face of injustice and suffering. Grace for Cheng is found in deviance. In this deviance is a willingness to transgress whether this is through a boundary crossing or a refusal to live according to society's norms and standards. As Cheng writes, the grace that allows us to challenge and question is not earned but given as a free gift from God. This hermeneutical role of transgression allows for normative theologies to be questioned and challenged. The act of reconstructing the term transgression to mean something positive is in itself a transgression. Usually aligned with such negative markers such as abomination, deformity, and sin, transgression can be transformed into a positive metaphor connoting revelation and transcendence. Jamake Highwater extends this concept:

The word transgression is generally understood to mean an action that is morally subversive. A transgression is closely associated with the religious idea of damnation. Therefore, we do not admire those who transgress. We reproach them as sinners. And the

⁶¹ Patrick Cheng. "Rethinking Sin and Grace for LGBT People Today", 112.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 113.

more “terrible” the transgression, the more we reproach them. We may ridicule them, disdain them, beat them, imprison them, or we may even kill them.⁶³

By challenging unquestioned norms, the Queer traverses traditional boundaries and exposes inequitable assumptions. From the margins of society, the cry for justice emerges through “undermining established paradigms by revealing their fragility and instability”.⁶⁴ It is an act of liberation resulting in transformation.

The concept of insider and outsider in terms of community alludes back to Girard’s theory of the scapegoat. There are two versions of a sacrificial victim in mimetic crisis: either one of the two involved in the mimetic rivalry kills off the other or both parties place their tension and violence on a third, substitutionary victim. The Biblical story of Cain and Abel represents the first option and the “first murder”. Cain, as tiller of the ground, offers a sacrifice to God in terms of the fruits of the land; Abel, as keeper of the sheep, offers the firstborn of his flock to God as a sacrifice. God accepts Abel’s sacrifice of an animal while Cain’s is rejected. In jealousy and anger Cain murders his brother. Both brothers were involved in a mimetic crisis that resulted in violence. In the second example of the substitutionary victim, the Biblical narrative of Jacob receiving the blessing from his father Isaac functions as an example of using a scapegoat to prevent further violence. In order to receive his father’s blessing meant for Esau, Jacob sacrifices two animals. This serves to not only present his father with a savory meat dish, but also to seek literal refuge in the animal’s skin. The animals serve as a mediator between father

⁶³ Jamake Highwater. *The Mythology of Transgression: Homosexuality as Metaphor*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 42.

⁶⁴ Robert Goss. *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*. (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 229.

and son preventing violence. In this instance, the third party embodies the scapegoat. In the first example, it's easy to focus attention on the inherent violence involved in the act of generating peace; in the second example, the sacrificial victim's role fades from view. As Girard explains, "sacrificial substitution implies a degree of misunderstanding. Its vitality of an institution depends upon its ability to conceal the displacement upon which the rite is based".⁶⁵ The participants must not understand the true function of the sacrificial act in order for the process to continue and be successful in maintaining or restoring peace.

When the scapegoat is another human rather than an animal, the sacrificial ritual functions in a similar fashion. The death or expulsion of this victim functions as a tribute imposed for the continued existence of the collective. In the victim's removal, the solidarity of the surviving members is enhanced and the appetite for violence reduced. Peace and order is restored inside the community. Therefore, order in society must be the result of some form of previous violence. The term "community" simultaneously connotes inclusion and exclusion. It comes from the Latin *communitatem* meaning with or together (com) and to defend or fortify (munire). Therefore, community always has an inside and an outside, an insider and an outsider. In this respect, the hybrid individual represents the ultimate scapegoat. As a marginalized member of society, they are both an insider and an outsider. The Queer, and especially the queer female athlete, functions as today's scapegoat, "sacrificed on the altar of heterosexuality: thrown out, abandoned, ignored, disinherited, divorced without shared custody".⁶⁶ The biological family

⁶⁵ René Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*, 5.

⁶⁶ Chris Glaser. *Coming out as Sacrament*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 27.

and the faith family too often justify the expulsion of the queer individual on the grounds of administering “tough love”. The Church forbids the presence of the Queer from the congregational community on the grounds of keeping the peace, maintaining unity, and keeping the purity of the church in order. The political community decries the basic civil rights of the Queer community because of a desire to supposedly preserve the sanctity of marriage or to uphold “traditional family values”. The athletic community kicks the lesbian off of teams in order to uphold the image of the organization. Queer children and adolescents often are subject to bullying and harassment due to not fitting into a specific gender role. Non-queer people in the church wrestling with shame and alienation from their own bodies and sexual sins scapegoat the Queer in order to channel their own negativity. In all of the above examples, the Queer hasn’t done anything wrong; they are merely construed as different and therefore an outsider within a community.

Sacrificing a scapegoat to maintain social order never equates to a lasting peace or salvation. The victim serves a purpose and a specific time, and when a new conflict arises a new victim will be needed. For Girard, only Jesus Christ’s death on the cross effectively ends ritual sacrifice. As the ultimate scapegoat, Jesus reveals the fallacy of the scapegoat mechanism and its inherent violence. By exposing its true nature, he subverts its power. His death revealed the roots of human violence and the failure of society’s method to maintain order. The scapegoat mechanism does not end violence; rather it perpetuates it. Therefore, Christ proposed a new model through his sacrificial death. Rather than mimic another human, we should mimic Christ himself because Christ mimics God.

This theory of Christ's death develops as well as diverges from a normative understanding of substitutionary atonement. In this understanding, God sends his son, Jesus Christ, to die in substitution for humanity. Through his death, we are saved and redeemed. In light of Girard, substitutionary atonement is slightly modified; Jesus still acts as a sacrifice but not as a willing participant. As the ultimate scapegoat, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection revealed the underpinnings of the scapegoat mechanism thus rendering it visible and ineffective. Chris Glaser believed that God was present at Jesus' crucifixion, not in demanding his death, but rather in "between the severed pieces...*trying to bring these pieces back together*, to heal the breach, to reconcile the parts, to stop the sacred flow of vitality that we call blood".⁶⁷ In Christ's death, humanity is redeemed through the end of scapegoating. Christians are delivered from the practice of ritual sacrifice; the Queer community is delivered from exile and "although there is always the very real risk of crucifixion for challenging societal norms, there is always the promise of resurrection..." (Cheng, 113).

For the female athlete that also identifies as lesbian, this concept of transformation and boundary crossing parallels with the Transgressive Christ model. Tricia Sheffield in her essay on the *Performing Jesus* speaks into a queer reading of the Chalcedic body and constructs a site for transgression and hybridity in regards to gender identity and expression.⁶⁸ Jesus becomes the ultimate example of an embodied disruptive performative act of gender⁶⁹: "In the Creed, we see

⁶⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁸ T. Sheffield. *Performing Jesus: A Queer Counternarrative of Embodied Transgression. Theology and Sexuality*, 14, no. 3(2008), 233-58.

⁶⁹ A disruptive performative act of gender are acts or bodies that do not necessarily reify the established identity categories of gender (See: Sheffield, 238).

that Jesus has two natures, one not privileged over the other, but occurring within the one person, the one body. Jesus' body is not divided or cut into two persons, or made to be either divinity or humanity, but rather is constructed into what may be a transgressive site of corporeality".⁷⁰ She argues that his body is itself a disruptive performance that then queers any dichotomous thinking. This destabilizes the gender binary because it means that there is no pre-existing identity; "In other words, God is passing as human because God is presented as following the right gender/sexual codes...and Jesus is passing for divine, and so they are both transgressively intertwined".⁷¹ To be a female athlete in sport is to perform a disruptive act of gender similar to the example of Jesus. It is to exist in the essentialized perspective of masculine and feminine, to be both/and; it is to transgress social and gender norms; it is to exist as the societal deviant, the scapegoat for a heteronormative society.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., 241.

⁷¹ Ibid., 243.

⁷² Important to note: the female athlete is not the only scapegoat in sports. Male athletes who do not uphold a certain level of masculinity may fall into this category as well. However, the scope of this paper does not encompass anything beyond the female athlete's experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

René Girard's scapegoat mechanism ties in elements that make up tradition, culture, and religion. Using literature, he claims that the founding moment of society was in the collective murder or expulsion of an arbitrary victim. This moment was preceded by a mimetic crisis. In the last chapter, I mention that the lesbian, specifically the lesbian athlete, functions as the scapegoat in society and sport. I propose that the mimetic crisis can be overcome without violence if we base sexual identities and orientations on the same model of salvations proposed by Mark Heim.¹ This model comes out of the realm of pluralism. In our modern culture, the reality is one of religious diversity. Out of this reality, three general approaches to how one associates towards different religions than one's own is followed: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Exclusivism believes that there is only one way to salvation. While other religions may contain bits and pieces of religious truths, they are not the way to salvation. Inclusivism also believes that there is only one way to salvation, but that specific way embraces everyone and is made available to all. Pluralism believes that all religions provide knowledge about the mystery of God, and that all ways are equally valid for salvation. Most pluralistic theologies speak of one God and one form of salvation. Heim decries this approach as not being pluralistic enough. This convergent method reduces the richness and particularity of religious approaches to a common essence thereby squelching the distinctness of each path. Where there is vast diversity and

¹ Mark Heim. *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

uniqueness, only sameness is offered, and often from the perspective of a Christ-centric model.

Heim breaks with such Pluralists as John Hick, Wilfred Cantwell, and Paul Knitter in offering his model of salvations. Salvation never appears in the plural in pluralistic theology except in Heim's model. Rather than assuming the existence of one religious end, why not recognize the possibility of multiple ends? He bases the paradigm on Nicholas Rescher's notion of "orientational pluralism" that says that "one and only one position is rationally appropriate from a given perspective, but we must recognize that there is a diversity of perspectives".² In this sense, Heim is advocating a postmodern position as he calls for the recognition that perspectives arise from one's specific position. Previous pluralistic positions are informed by the world of Western liberal thought; however, the theologians taking these positions do so without owning up to it. Rather, they seem to propose paradigms from a neutral standpoint. Heim very clearly takes his perspective as a Christian as he creates his own argument.

Salvation, as religious fulfillment, takes a variety of forms in religion. No fulfillment is identical, and each religion or faith takes certain means to reach that end. Therefore, everyone is taking a different path to reach a different goal. No end is better than another, just different. A Buddhist trying to reach Nirvana is going to take very different means than a Christian trying to reach heaven. A Buddhist and a Christian are not taking different means to relate to the same reality; rather, "they are different systems in the same subject area".³ Therefore, Heim proposes we understand salvation in the plural—so, *salvations*. By allowing for other religious realities, Heim is able to stay true to his own religion, Christianity, as well as allowing for others to

² Ibid., 134.

³ Ibid., 150.

remain true to their religion.

The human community would do well to borrow from Heim's theory of salvations in respect to the variety of sexual identities and orientations represented. I believe that no one identity can fulfill everyone. Heim ironically names his paradigm "orientational pluralism"; using this as a springboard for a queer interpretation is therefore more straightforward. Orientation, in the singular, as a fulfillment should be orientations, in the plural, allowing for differences in expression and identification. Christianity, like heterosexuality, is unique but the "uniqueness of Christianity has come to signify the normativeness, superiority of Christianity in comparison with other religions".⁴ Heterosexuality has become heteronormative and the only path to fulfillment of any sort. Someone who identifies as queer can not identify as heterosexual as much as someone who identifies as heterosexual can not identify as queer; "as to whether one approach is better than the other in terms of restraining conflict and supporting harmony, this turns on the fundamental question of whether we can only respect and appreciate what is identical, or whether we can equally respect and appreciate what we recognize is real but different".⁵ As a human community we can either include or exclude, and the more homogenous the community, the more hostile to the outsider and the more vulnerable to mimetic crisis. Diversity is not only the reality of God's creation but also the fundamental basis of understanding. Fulfillment is found on multiple paths with multiple ends—all equally valid, all equally true.

⁴ John Hick, and Paul F. Knitter. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), vii.

⁵ Heim, *Salvations*, 156.

In applying this pluralistic methodology to sport, the opportunity to recognize differences and variances in sex, gender, and sexuality opens the door to a greater and more effective inclusiveness. Sport, as an institution, represents patterned behavior that has become routinized and objectified; therefore, men continue to rule the roost and define the rules and this is accepted as the norm. It is exceptionally hard to redefine and reconstruct established institutions; however, this is the only option if women are to experience some sort of equality in sport. In my theological undertaking for this thesis, I focus on an imaginative theological undertaking in envisioning various Christ-images; this imagination frees me from institutionally-defined dogmatic and creedal thinking. Imagination and creativity to see beyond what is “normal”, what is accepted as “everyday”, challenges the status quo of the institution. To challenge the institution of sport requires the same approach. Imagination to see beyond the binary of male/female or heterosexual/homosexual frees the athlete to embody multiplicity.

I operate and understand this dynamic from the perspective of being queer. To queer something is to destabilize accepted discourse and examine it from a new, subversive perspective. In this sense, I queer the social and theological field. I queer sport through examining it through a female lens; I queer theology through examining it through a queer lens. Queer theologians find space for tradition through discontinuation and deconstruction; “Queering theology does not leave theology intact in its own systematic structures, traditional positions or ecclesiologies, but uses its own sexual ways of knowing to question the heterosexual assumption”.⁶ As an umbrella terms, queer represents a label that covers the processes of sexual

⁶ Marcella Althaus-Reid. “Queer I Stand: Doing Feminist Theology outside the Borders of Colonial Decency.” In *End of Liberation? Liberation in the End!: Feminist Theory, Feminist*

identity formation in relation to power—this includes regimes of normality dictated by racial and class ideologies. Christianity and society have institutionalized a practice of heterosexist power relations that define the normative as a reflection of the status quo. By universalizing heteronormative practices and these specific discourses, Christianity has excluded the queer community and has actively contributed to homophobia. Queer Theology seeks to give voice to the excluded, the oppressed, and the denied by questioning universal claims and discourse; as Sharon Welch points out, “universal discourse is the discourse of the privileged”.⁷ Queer Theology therefore seeks to challenge the hetero-patriarchal sexism through reconstructing Christianity within a queer context.

In queering sport, I am working off of this understanding of Queer Theology. Therefore, I deconstruct the history and socialization of sport in order to reconstruct it through a female and queer lens. In this attempt, I try to destabilize accepted forms of knowing. To queer something is also to question, and through this thesis I endeavor to constantly query societal norms and practices. Sport, like theology, functions as an institution with a long history of male governance characterized by universal claims. These traditional assertions, ideas, and practices must be approached in non-traditional ways. In this sense, I also queer academia. A traditional thesis for a Master’s in Theology would focus mainly on theology and theological concepts; however, I approach this thesis from the perspective of multiple disciplines. I believe this is necessary in producing a queer thesis, because to be truly queer is to depart from traditional thought and

Theology and their Political Implications, 2002, 27.

⁷ Sharon Welch. *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Perspective*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 80.

practice. It is to approach an institution from the outside, from the margin and the periphery. It is to speak an alternative way of knowing and understanding. Additionally, I believe that my thesis then becomes a literal form of plurality. Pluralism is not just an intra-faith dialogue; it is also an interfaith endeavor. One gains a greater understanding of Christianity through conversing with different faiths and practices. I understand my commitment to Christianity better through a deeper understanding of my Jewish colleague's commitment to Judaism. In a similar fashion, I believe that my commitment to Theology, especially Queer Theology, is made deeper through a dialogue with the institution of sport. Two enduring institutions, based on universal claims and binary definition, serve each other well in a conversation. This conversation is even more profound when coming at them from a marginalized perspective whether this is as a female athlete or as a queer Christian.

The world is not black and white; it is not either/or. We live in a society that is characterized by multiplicity and both/and. This is the representation of the eschatological horizon that pronounces that gender and sexuality are not the ultimate concern. To recognize multiplicity is to uphold a highly suspicious hermeneutic circle in an attempt to unveil the complexity of the sexual base lying below the construction of the church's dogmatics and politics and sport's rules and regulation. In this creative space, one may find and feel the presence of the stranger God that stands outside the classroom and outside of church definitions of binary thinking. This thesis represents my attempt at retrieving Christianity and sport as empowering resources for the queer and for the female; it is my hope that this unites silenced and forgotten individuals into a community dedicated to transgressing and disengaging with societal norms.

This thesis was done from the periphery of societal and theological inquiry. As a female athlete and a queer Christian, I am located around the centers of power, subject to a systemic and epistemic authority that silences the voice of the Other. I hope that my thesis encourages the reader to question objective claims and to see the underpinnings of a society that functions on binary thinking. It is my hope that a pluralistic methodology can be applied to everyday life, opening up space for alternative means of knowing and being. It is also my hope that multiplicity becomes the accepted and respected norm of society allowing for variation and differences.

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