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Post Title IX Representations of Professional Female Athletes

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Post-Title IX Representations of Professional Female Athletes

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Female Athletes and Conceptions of Gender

“Can you give us a twirl and show us your outfit?” Sports presenter Ian Cohen asked this very question to professional female athlete Eugenie Bouchard during the Australian Open in 2015 (Brognna). Instead of focusing on the athlete’s competition, the presenter made the focus of the interview all about Bouchard’s apparel and feminine appearance. In a similar case, one of the U.S.A. female Olympic swimmers, Corey Cogdell, was announced as the wife of a professional NFL lineman during the Summer 2016 Olympic Games. This announcement masked her identity as a world-class swimmer with her role as a wife to a famous, male football player. The U.S.A. women’s gymnastics team likewise faced inequalities in recent years and is currently speaking out against Larry Nassar for sexual harassment and abuse. The gymnasts faced sexual harassment and abuse for years without the community around them believing or voicing the problem. These instances are just a small number of the outrages and inequalities that professional female athletes face every year at competitions and in media coverage.

Professional sports are certainly an integral part of the culture in the United States. People watch sports live or on television, listen to competitions on the radio, read about games in the newspaper or magazines, or perhaps follow favorite athletes on social media sites. Today’s mass media make it easy to follow along with favorite athletes and interact with their successes, competitions, and endorsements, but female athletes are failing to be depicted to their fullest potential, resulting in harmful representations. Although mass media provide countless exciting opportunities for sports fans and followers, the media can also flood televisions, magazines, and news articles with gender imbalances. As a result, stereotyped images of female athletes are seen by viewers every day, leading to the comments and inequalities that the athletes are facing as in the cases of Bouchard, Cogdell, and the USA women’s gymnastics team. This is

counterproductive as female athletes try to present and market themselves as strong athletes and fierce competitors.

Historically, women did not always have this chance to participate in sports in the U.S.A. For centuries, women were not allowed to partake in organized, competitive athletics because these sports interfered with traditional notions of femininity. Thus, sports fans watched and celebrated major male-only sports until women pushed back and demanded equal rights, pay, and representation in the early 1900s. By 1970, women in the United States made major progress in asserting their role in society and extended that into the sporting sphere. Then, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 came into effect to promote more equality in sports at the collegiate level. This federal law took action in 1972 and grew out of a need for equal participation among the genders in collegiate clubs and sports. The law pushes for equal participation, scholarship, and benefits, regardless of sex. Women embraced the opportunity to compete at the collegiate level, which was a catalyst for countless women to achieve professional opportunities in sports in the following decades. Despite the growth and progress of women's participation in sports, female athletes continue to face a lack of appreciation for their athletic accomplishments in the media.

As the participation of sports shifts to encompass more women, magazine features and coverage of female athletes remain rooted in stereotypical gender performances. Such standards and performances still translate to today's society and result in socially expected gender norms. Society should not underestimate how sports reinforce expectations of an underlying patriarchal construction of gender. Sports media coverage emphasizes measurable and physical differences between men and women in which heights, scores, and distances are recorded and compared. In turn, representations of female athletes in the media are not always true portrayals of the athletes

themselves or their accomplishments. Rather, they are represented to reflect society's normative gender expectations of beauty, fashion, and domestic roles. This is clear in the cases of the professional tennis player, who received coverage about her outfit, and the Olympic swimmer, who was announced as a wife. In other words, the media marketing of female athletes creates an identity that is less concerned about the sport and more concerned with historical feminine qualities and the gender binary of men and women (Lynn et al. 338). In doing so, masculinity continues to dominate media coverage, and women are left to deal with the unfair consequences, which have damaging results, as in the case of the USA women's gymnasts.

Due to these imbalanced representations, female athletes are turning to social media sites and presenting themselves on the digital platforms. The features and interactivity of social media sites allow athletes to connect with their fans and followers in a new and exciting way. With the social media site Instagram, female athletes are able to share pictures of their choosing and represent their athletic accomplishments, bodies, interests, and participation in sports however they please. This posting and sharing ability allows the athletes to have more control of what they post about themselves, so these "athletes can exert more control over their self-presentation and disseminate these identity aspects directly to fans" (Reichert Smith and Sanderson 345-346). With social media, athletes can present themselves casually, competitively, and honestly, giving them the opportunity to depict their true selves to followers. Thus, social media are providing a new and exciting platform for female athletes to present themselves and control what is delivered to their fans and followers.

Inspired by the the magazine and social media representations of female athletes, my research explores the function of magazine features of female athletes and how Instagram serves as a platform for professional female athletes to present themselves. My research addresses the

questions: 1) How do *Sports Illustrated* covers, published in the years following the enactment of Title IX, reflect perceptions of the relationship between women and sports; 2) what meanings and messages are conveyed through the images of the magazine covers and Instagram posts; 3) how do the Instagram posts, published in 2018, reflect the relationship between women and sports; and 4) how is gender depicted in the magazine and Instagram images? It is important to understand the concepts, movements, and theories of women in sports in order to understand the significance of how these athletes are being presented and the harm that can stem from misrepresentations. The study identifies post-Title IX magazine covers that demonstrate patterns of marginalization that continue to function in contemporary sports culture, as well as in American culture. The project will identify the visual and interactive abilities of Instagram and explore how female athletes are choosing to present themselves in ways that compare and differ from the historical selection of magazine features. Ultimately, identifying how female athletes are choosing to represent themselves on Instagram can lead to a better understanding of how female athletes want to be portrayed in the media and how they are breaking traditional gender norms and expectations. With this analysis, the research will shed light on the representations of female athletes and shape a conversation on how to encourage fair and full coverage of athletes to suppress similar media instances to that of Bouchard, Cogdell, and the women's gymnastics team.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Title IX

The gender inequalities present in sports media existed for years and certainly escalated with the outcry from the USA women's gymnastics team in 2018. However, this inequality that female athletes are facing is not new to the arena of sports. For decades, female athletes have been stereotyped, compared to male athletes, and received fewer news coverages than men in sports media. To combat this inequality, Title IX passed in 1972 to promote fairness in school clubs, organizations, and sports. This federal law enforces that no one could be excluded from participating in any education program or activity that receives federal financial assistance on the basis of sex (Mak 34). The law also requires that for every dollar spent on a male sport, an equal amount has to be spent on a female sport (Mak 34). For example, the amount spent on scholarships, competitions, and other benefits, like facilities, allowances, and coaching, needs to be equal between the traditionally male sports and female sports. In other words, Title IX pushes for equality among the sexes in any federally-funded education group or sport. Thus, the enactment of Title IX was monumental not only for giving women more opportunities in educational clubs, but also for giving female athletes a more equal chance at participating, competing, and excelling in the sports industry.

Despite this push for equality in college athletics, research shows that female athletes continue to face marginalization even after the passing of Title IX. Although women's participation in athletics is record-breaking thanks to Title IX, the inequalities that are still present need to be addressed and changed. Joshua Senne explains while Title IX has created more opportunities in sports for women, "it has done very little to reduce the stereotypical image of women in sports" (1). Senne illustrates that there is presently more female participation in

sports than before Title IX was pushed through, but the image of the female athlete is still unequal to that of the male athlete. Likewise, Mary Jo Kane argues that this inequality affects society's understanding and acceptance of female athletes. Kane explains, "Although an increase in participation rates is no doubt significant, it does not necessarily follow that this increase reflects and/or creates major attitude shifts toward the social acceptance of female athletes" (88). These stereotypes of female athletes as being less than, or unequal to, male athletes have huge impacts on society's understanding of female athleticism.

In particular, the lack of social acceptance of female athletes reflects the male privilege in sports. Masculinity has become "the operating principle within sport, which identifies male activity as privileged" (Senne 3). This privilege is problematic for the female athlete because male athletes become the dominant force and the standard of sports. Kane explains that because society's stereotyped image of how women should behave does not align with competitive sports, men have become privileged in sport media coverage as well (88). Thus, male athletes receive clear advantages over female athletes because of their physicality, greater media coverage, and historical presence in sports. Male privilege, then, refers to the advantages that are available to men on the basis of their gender (Krane et al. 316). Although "Title IX was monumental in increasing the participation of women in sports," the law has not changed the inequalities that women still face due to male privilege (Senne 1).

For example, one form of male privilege in sports is reflected in an imbalance of male and female athlete coverage in the media. Scholars Senne and Kane turned to analyzing media to present how women's coverage in mass media is disproportionate to that of men's coverage. Kane analyzes the representation of female athletes in magazine media, specifically *Sports Illustrated*. Her results "indicated there was no significant increase in the total amount of

coverage given to women during and after Title IX in contrast to before” (Kane 94).

Interestingly, Kane’s research shows that the media coverage of female athletes “remains heavily influenced by traditional beliefs about what is considered appropriate, ladylike behavior” (97).

Similarly, Senne explains that a recent study found that sport commentators “often participate in gender marking for women's events but not men's events. It was found that gender marking occurred an average of 27.5 times in women's sporting events, but none in men's sports” (7). The most common themes of gender marking include identifying the female athlete’s make-up, hair, and body shape. Interestingly, these themes are rarely, if ever, identified when covering male athletics. Even after the enactment of Title IX, there are major inequalities, and a study conducted in 2013 explains that women “comprised 28% of those who participated in individual sports and 20% in team sports” (Senne 7). This statistic demonstrates that fewer women participating in sports, and perhaps this is a result of privileged masculinity, traditional beliefs of womanhood, and society’s lack of acceptance. Even though Title IX made a tremendous push for female participation, there is currently another need to break down the stereotypes and limitations that female athletes face.

Gender

Female athletes are presented in the media based on cultural notions of femininity rather than their athletic abilities. In order to fully grasp the source of these inequalities that female athletes face, it is crucial to understand how gender is formed as a cultural identity. According to Dorothy Holland et al., cultural identities are “identities that form in relation to major structural features of society: ethnicity, gender, race, nationality, and sexual orientation” (Holland et al. 7). Gender, therefore, is socially enacted and culturally constructed. One’s gender identity is majorly shaped by the cultural world and expectations around him, her, or them. Importantly, this identity

is based on gender, not on biological sex. Theorist Judith Butler unpacks this distinction between the two terms. Butler notes that sex is biological, and gender is a cultural interpretation or signification (Butler 522). Butler lists:

To be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (522)

Interestingly, Butler designates that sex is not what compels a woman to become a woman. Instead, women see the cultural construction and performances of other women, which dictates one's actions. In this instance, a woman may see herself being seen and act in ways she culturally assumes that a woman should act. In other words, a woman surveys culturally accepted gender performances and reflects those actions. John Berger, in his book *Ways of Seeing*, explains complexities of a woman's identity and how a woman's identity is shaped from being both the surveyor and the surveyed. A woman's identity and presence is thus a manifestation of "her gestures, voice, opinions, expressions, clothes, chosen surroundings, and taste" (Berger 46). Berger states that a woman's presence is shaped by the notion that women were destined to take care of men. He argues that women are always self-conscious and always aware of their presence in every performance (Berger 46-47). By surveying themselves constantly, women see themselves in their own eyes, in others' eyes, and in men's eyes. Berger identifies that women can therefore see themselves meeting or not meeting the expectations around them (46). The combined ideas from Holland et al., Butler, and Berger illustrate that gender is culturally formed,

and women form gender identities based upon the cultural pressures, normalcies, and expectations around them.

In addition to the cultural construction, gender is heavily shaped by society. Since society expects certain behaviors and actions of women and men, one's gender tends to reflect these expectations. Butler explains, "The more mundane reproduction of gendered identity takes place through the various ways in which bodies are acted in relationship to the deeply entrenched or sedimented expectations of gendered existence" (Butler 524). Society often believes that gendered behavior is linked to the sexed body, but instead these gender performances are indeed socially constructed. Judith Lorber adds that gender constructions and expectations determine roles that are used to structure society. In response, society depends on "predictable division of labor, a designated allocation of scarce goods, assigned responsibility for children and others who cannot care for themselves, common values and their systematic transmission to new members, legitimate leadership, music, art, stories, games, and other symbolic productions" (55). In other words, Lorber is explaining that society needs a sense of predictability and neat design. Therefore, society has designed the roles of women caring for the children and men being the leaders. There is a predictability about how these roles are assigned to each gender, and these assigned roles are problematic as the structure of society depends on how society sees gender and understands gender. In other words, individuals understand and perform gender based on these expectations.

For example, women are historically identified by their domestic abilities taking place in the private sphere of the household. Barbara Welter defines "True Womanhood" and explains that the nineteenth century "woman was the hostage in the home... The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors,

and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (152). Welter’s definition of True Womanhood identifies the elements that have been used to create a standard for women since the Victorian Era. Additionally, Welter emphasizes that it was expected of a woman to maintain her domestic duties of the home, function as a nurse for the family, and provide children for her husband. Scholars like Lindsey Banister and Ann Hall argue that this idea of True Womanhood has become the standard for how women should act even today. The ideals of True Womanhood illustrate the role women should play in society, creating expectations of how they should act and even dress. Similarly, Krane et al. explain that femininity is a socially constructed standard for women’s appearance, demeanor, and values (316). This standard is developed from gender performances that reoccur and are promoted within our society. Since women are valued in the media based on distinct features, such as feminine beauty, nurturing capabilities, and domestic skills, society has created a standard based on those features. Krane et al. explain that there is a hegemonic femininity that “is constructed within a White, heterosexual, and class-based structure, and it has strong associations with heterosexual sex and romance. Hegemonic femininity, therefore, has a strong emphasis on appearance with the dominant notion of an ideal feminine body as thin and toned” (Krane et al. 316). Thus, the ideals of True Womanhood and femininity become the standard for women in society. According to these scholars, society and culture create gender roles and expectations, which prescribe ideal or appropriate behaviors for the different genders.

Therefore, gender is performed to act out both the social and cultural expectations of one’s surroundings. These social and cultural expectations of gender create what Butler explains as “gender acts.” Butler states:

Gender is no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (519)

These gender performance “acts” refer to the way people perform gender because of the social and cultural expectations, and Butler asserts that this is not inherent, but rather, these acts are constructed. She emphasizes that gender is not a starting place, but an expected gender identity that is repeatedly constructed through time (56). This is a key concept for this study as female athletes tend to counter cultural and societal boundaries of gendered behavior and body images. A female athlete’s athleticism often counters cultural assumptions of female performance, complicating society’s perception of female athletes further. For example, a female athlete’s defined and trained muscles contradict society’s historical notions of women being nurturing and passive. This demonstrates how the performance of gendered behavior is imposed on society by repeated cultural influences and expectations.

Furthermore, Western culture has shaped a gender binary because, historically, there has been a large difference between performances that are identified as man and woman. In her book, *Gender Trouble*, Butler articulates that one’s learned performance of gendered behavior is commonly associated as masculine or feminine and is imposed upon us by normative heterosexuality (Butler 187). This divide of masculine and feminine performances created re-occurring signs that one interprets as being one or the other. Lorber explains how seeing “man” and “woman” is a result of socially identified signs and signals that society learned to expect. For

example, passivity and nurturing characteristics are seen as womanly as the mother is expected to be more of the caretaker, and therefore more feminine, than the father. Berger adds to this idea and claims that the social presence of a woman is significantly different from a man. This difference, Berger explains, is because a man's presence is dependent on his embodied power, and a woman's presence expresses her own attitude to herself, which emphasizes this gender binary (45). This binary of male and female roles dictates how the ways one dresses, talks, and interacts with others reveal gender.

The ideals of gender performances, True Womanhood, and femininity also transfer to the conversation of athletics. Since sports counter the qualities of femininity, nurturing, and domestic duties, female athletes have to redefine what it means to be a woman and an athlete at the same time. To illustrate, Lindsey Banister explains, "Rhetorically, 'True Womanhood' functioned to persuade many women that athletic inclinations would have immediately suffered from such criticism and social scorn, and so they avoided engaging in sports as a way to protect themselves from scrutiny and criticism" (27). By engaging in sports, female athletes show off their athleticism and power, which directly counters the historical expectations of women. Likewise, Hall claims that sports literature often focuses solely on male discourse, leaving the female identity out of the conversation. Hall asserts that Western culture values "achievement, individuality, and self-promotion. Femininity must forego these values to be true to a feminine morality ... Therefore, the conflict between gender and culture exists only in the realm of femininity because masculinity is culture" (332-333). In order to identify such instances of masculine dominance, scholars use semiology to analyze the media images of female athletes and how the images reveal stereotypical gender constructions in sports and inequalities to viewers. Semiology, according to Gillian Rose, answers the question of how an image makes

meaning and studies the signs present within an image (75). Banister and Hall both incorporate semiology to their analysis to describe how the female athlete is being marginalized in the media. Overall, scholars like Banister and Hall explain that how gender has historically been seen and identified creates limitations for female athletes.

Magazine Media

Furthermore, gender performances are a central topic to scholars' analyses of the representations of female athletes in magazine media, such as *Sports Illustrated*. In particular, *Sports Illustrated* demonstrates this marginalization of female athletes with a lack of coverage on women's sports and stereotypical representations of female athletes. Interestingly, *Sports Illustrated* is known for being "the" sport magazine and has millions of subscribers. However, the content of this magazine does not fairly present female athletes. Kane explains, "It [*Sports Illustrated* magazine] overwhelmingly ranks number one with respect to sport magazine publications.... It seems safe to assume that the amount and type of coverage given to women's athletics in *Sports Illustrated* can tell us a great deal about how the female athlete is perceived" (89). In her research, Kane analyzes 1,228 issues of *Sports Illustrated* from the years 1964 through 1987 to see how women were presented in the magazine before, during, and after the enactment of Title IX (Kane 90). She establishes that even after Title IX, the coverage of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* is still heavily influenced by traditional beliefs about sports and the role of women. Also, in the article, "Where Are the Female Athletes in *Sports Illustrated*? A Content Analysis of Covers (2000–2011)," Jonetta D. Weber and Robert M. Carini solely focus on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* to determine how female athletes are represented. Weber and Carini's research states that women appear only 4.9% of the time on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* magazines from 2000 to 2011 (196). Interestingly, Weber and Carini found that

“beyond the limited number of covers, women’s participation in sport was often minimized by sharing covers with male counterparts, featuring anonymous women not related directly to sports participation, sexually objectifying female athletes” (200). The research of Kane, Weber, and Carini demonstrates that *Sports Illustrated* is a clear example of how female athletes are not receiving a fair amount of coverage or fair representation in magazine media. In magazines, female athletes face the limitation of not being able to choose how they are presented to the public; the magazine chooses.

For example, Janet Fink argues that magazine media continue to stereotype female athletes and showcase historical gender performances instead of focusing on athletic capabilities. In her article, “Female Athletes, Women's Sport, and the Sport Media Commercial Complex: Have We Really ‘Come a Long Way, Baby?’” Fink argues that magazine and newspaper media represent “stereotypical gender roles and negatively impact perceptions of women’s capabilities” (332). The marketing of female athletes in magazine media demonstrate an apparent inequality. Susan Lynn et al. confirm these claims and analyze four magazines, *Shape*, *Sports Illustrated for Women*, *Women’s Sport & Fitness*, and *Real Sports*, to demonstrate that magazines illustrate the female athlete as passive and submissive, which reflects ideals of True Womanhood and historical gender performances and expectations. In particular, Lynn et al. explain that magazines “confined women to traditional mother-, home- or beauty/ sex-oriented roles. Female role stereotyping in advertising is nearly a universal phenomenon; images of women in magazine advertisements remain generally weak, childish, dependent, domestic, and subordinate” (338). Thus, the identity constructions of female athletes in the media are not always true representations of the athletes themselves or their accomplishments. The marketing of female

athletes creates an identity that is less concerned about the sport and more concerned with maintaining historical feminine qualities and the gender binary of male and female identities.

This identity of the female athlete has therefore created a clear marginalization for female athletes in magazine media coverage. Banister argues that there has been a “long history of marginalization in women’s sports, which includes diminishing women’s bodies via sexualized, racist, and/or gendered discourses, that influences how female athletes work within and against the male-dominated sporting world to exert agency” (6). Banister rhetorically analyzes historical accounts of female athletes’ representations in mass media, as well as current spreads in *ESPN The Magazine*’s Body Issues, which range from 2009-2015 (7). Banister asserts that the athletes’ bodies, positioning, and relation to men are part of a larger conversation about sports and gender representation. Specifically, she identifies that the way female athletes are portrayed in magazine media reflect a deep-rooted patriarchal society. The complexity of representations of female athletes in magazine media comes from how the feature may acknowledge the success of the female athlete, but it simultaneously attributes success to a man or diminishes the woman’s success with stereotyped imagery (Banister 84). Banister’s research shows that by taking a closer look at the magazine representations of female athletes, one can begin to understand the magazines’ significance and contribution to society’s viewing and expectations of female athletes. Similarly, Pikko Markula argues that the female body can be a platform for bigger conversations of body image, cultural agencies, and historical contradictions of femininity. Thus, Bannister and Markula take the conversation of female identity to magazine media, as well as a rhetorical discussion of the body. This research on gender and the representation of female athletes combined allows for interesting intersections and conversations about feminine qualities,

how women have been historically perceived, and what mainstream media decide to focus on when highlighting a female athlete.

Self-Presentation

A key difference between magazine media and social media is the room for self-presentation on social media channels. Central to this conversation is the theory of self-presentation, a concept coined by sociologist Erving Goffman. In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman uses a metaphor of theatrical production to articulate how people attempt to present themselves and shape how others view them. Much like a theatrical production, Goffman asserts that people like to control how others see and interpret them. Specifically, Goffman states, “When an individual appears before others, he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation” (Goffman 15). Goffman explains that it is human nature to desire to reveal certain aspects of oneself to an intended audience. Therefore, self-presentation is the behavior that conveys information about oneself to others.

Central to Goffman’s argument is the idea of front stage and back stage performances. In particular, Goffman details that “front stage” behavior is what people do when they know others are watching, as if they were on a stage with a crowd watching (Goffman 27). Such behavior reflects internalized norms and expectations, and “back stage” behavior is free from such expectations and refers to what people do when they think no one is watching (Goffman 30). This front stage behavior establishes ethos for the intended audience. Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee, in their book, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, discuss invented and situated ethos and explain, “According to Aristotle, rhetors can invent a character suitable to an occasion – this is invented ethos. However, if rhetors are fortunate enough to enjoy a good

reputation in the community, they can use it as an ethical proof – this is situated ethos” (149).

Invented ethos is a crucial aspect of gaining credibility with an intended audience. Crowley and Hawhee explain that “rhetors must seem to be intelligent, to be of good moral character, and to possess goodwill toward their audiences” (Crowley and Hawhee 153). Accordingly, analysis of front stage and back stage performances can reveal how someone wants to be interpreted by an intended audience. This concept is a central idea to the analysis of how female athletes are choosing to present themselves on their social media platforms.

Scholars consider both front stage performances and impression management when analyzing female athletes’ social media posts. For instance, Lauren Reichart Smith and Jimmy Sanderson’s article, “I’m Going to Instagram It! An Analysis of Athlete Self-Presentation on Instagram,” explores twenty-seven professional athletes’ Instagram sites and analyzes the displays of self-presentation. By using Goffman’s ideas on impression management and self-presentation, Reichart Smith and Sanderson confirm that professional athletes have more control of what they post about themselves and convey to their audience with social media rather than how they are represented in more traditional media forms. Reichart Smith and Sanderson explain, “Athletes can exert more control over their self-presentation and disseminate these identity aspects directly to fans” (345-346). Thus, Reichart Smith and Sanderson confirm that social media allow for professional athletes to post with “front stage” behavior and have more control of the audience’s reactions. Eden Litt also explores this relationship and discusses how users on social media post with an imagined audience in mind. Litt defines the imagined audience as “the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating, our audience” (331). Litt suggests that when social media users post, they keep in mind who they believe will interact with the content. Litt takes Goffman’s ideas of self-presentation to the arena

of social media by detailing how a user weighs the importance of the social media platform, affordances, and interactivity in presenting himself or herself. Therefore, the female athletes are identifying and considering their intended audience when posting and presenting themselves on social media. Goffman's theory of self-presentation, particularly the front and back stage behaviors and impression management, are imperative for analyzing female athletes' social media accounts and interactions.

Online Identity and Social Media

Additionally, this research takes into account how online identity is constructed through social media abilities. In particular, the growing popularity of social media is giving female athletes a new platform to present themselves to their followers how they see fit, constructing an online identity. danah boyd¹ asserts that an online identity is constructed through "coarse categorizations," such as age and location. She also explains that by marking a user with a specific identity due to these categories, the user "has to be aware of how others are reading hir and react accordingly" (boyd 7). Online identities are heavily influenced by these socially constructed norms, similar to how gender is constructed. Paula Uimonen also speaks to this topic of identity on social media and argues that the visual representations of oneself on Facebook create a "digitally mediated selfhood" (122). This digital-mediated version of oneself creates a unique platform for identity construction. The digital social media sites also allow for more gender fluidity. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow users to select their own pronoun, giving the users the opportunity to present themselves and gender how they please. With the conversation of identity construction on social media comes the popular form of

¹ danah boyd does not capitalize the first letters in her name. Please refer to: <https://www.danah.org/name.html>.

social media image: the selfie. Alexandra Georgakopoulou argues that selfies on social media sites “emerge as contextualized and co-constructed presentations of self, shaped by media affordances” (301). In other words, Uimonen and Georgakopoulou both argue that the visual representations on social media sites create a new way of presenting oneself with the digital affordances.

Importantly, these digital affordances of social media come from the unique abilities of the communication medium. Marshall McLuhan coined the term “the medium is the message” in his book, *Understanding Media*. McLuhan asserts that the medium is what influences how we perceive a message as he explains, “It is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action” (20). Thus, analyzing the medium is imperative when discussing social media affordances. Social media allow users to interact and connect with content digitally. Rebecca Hayes et al. explore such interactions and affordances on social media sites. They find that social media sites are full of “paralinguistic digital affordances,” or PDAs as the authors explain (172). PDAs include the interactions on social media, such as liking a photo, favoring a tweet, and reposting content. PDAs “facilitate communication and interaction without specific language associated with their messages” (Hayes et al. 173). Their research shows that the interaction on social media sites are selective behaviors that contribute to how users perceive their audience’s reactions to posts, as well as how the audience interacts with the posts. The female athletes can identify the PDAs on their own social media site, which may contribute to their future posts. Thus, the PDAs and the athletes’ posts continually shape one another. Understanding how an audience may interact with posts contributes to how users formulate their posts and representations.

Specifically, professional female athletes turn to social media sites to interact and connect with their audiences. Barbara Barnett explains that female athletes are able to present themselves online and represent themselves as more than “sexy cheerleaders, supportive mothers and wives, and well-behaved fans” (98). Now, professional female athletes control what they release about themselves and interact with fans and followers in a new way. Scholars Katie Lebel and Karen Danylchuk also investigate how professional athletes are presenting themselves on Twitter. Specifically, the authors explore Twitter profile pictures and how the athlete’s self-presentation is interpreted by a Generation Y audience (Lebel and Danylchuk 317). The authors explain, “While research has dealt with the self-presentation of professional athletes by way of textual analysis, this study considers the role of photographic self-presentation through an exploration of the profile pictures chosen by athletes to represent themselves with on Twitter” (Lebel and Danylchuk 317). Lebel and Danylchuk’s research shows that in an age that is growing more and more digital, social media photos work to create a “front stage” performance for athletes. Andrea Geurin adds to this idea and explores how six elite athletes utilize new media sites not only to present themselves, but also to connect with fans. Geurin selected six elite athletes who, at the time of the research, were 2016 Rio Olympic hopefuls, and “this research sought to uncover information such as which new media platforms athletes use in relation to their athletic career; their perceived benefits and challenges of using new media; their goals for new media use; what strategies, if any, they used to accomplish these goals; and the ways in which they measured success on new media” (346). Geurin’s findings present that all six elite athletes use Twitter and Instagram accounts to promote their athletic careers (350). This research shows that athletes are turning to social media to promote their personal brand and connect with their audience of fans and supporters. On the social media sites, athletes are able to display Goffman’s ideas of front

and backstage performances, allowing the athletes to develop their identity more fully. This is certainly an emerging field of scholarship as more and more scholars are assessing how athletes are utilizing the concept of self-presentation to portray themselves on social media sites.

Interestingly, the current scholarship shows that female athletes are using social media to present themselves in ways that magazines do not allow and connect with fans in this online space.

Overall, these sources contribute to a larger conversation of how female athletes have been represented in magazine media and how female athletes are using social media sites to participate in Goffman's theory of self-presentation. Presently, there is a gap in the literature that identifies specific examples of *Sports Illustrated* magazine features that reveal the marginalization of female athletes. Similarly, there is a lack of literature that extends that conversation to how and why female athletes are using social media to present themselves to their fans and followers. In the next chapter, I will discuss at length my methodology and findings from analyzing five *Sports Illustrated* magazine covers. In the fourth and fifth chapters respectively, I will present my methodology and findings from analyzing thirty Instagram posts and later discuss the relationship between those and the magazine covers.

Chapter 3: Professional Female Athletes and Magazine Media

Introduction

To gain a fuller understanding of female athletes' representations in magazine media, I turned to the publication that is considered "the" sports magazine: *Sports Illustrated*. This magazine is considered as such because *Sports Illustrated* "overwhelmingly ranks number one with respect to sport magazine publications...It seems safe to assume that the amount and type of coverage given to women's athletics in *Sports Illustrated* can tell us a great deal about how the female athlete is perceived (Kane 89). The popularity and availability of the magazine made it an easy choice for gathering images for this research. In addition, *Sports Illustrated* has readily available covers on their online "vault" of issues, providing an archive of magazines that date back to 1950.

The covers of *Sports Illustrated* always present powerful messages and images. In particular, magazine covers are one of the most visually interesting elements of a magazine to analyze since they are the first image a reader sees when picking up the magazine, and the covers set the tone for the entire piece (Kane 88). Shockingly, and despite the popularity and reach of the magazine, female athletes appear only 4.9% of the time on the covers of *Sports Illustrated* magazines from 2000 to 2011 (Weber and Carini 196). This statistic is disappointing as there is a limited amount of covers that feature solely female athletes for the magazine sample of this research. Since the research is heavily influenced by Title IX and how female athletes have been portrayed since its enactment, the research sample uses covers that follow the enactment of Title IX in 1972 to more current iterations of the magazine. Thus, the sample of magazine covers is a historical selection of images to represent how female athletes are represented in the decades following Title IX. For the purpose of my research and due to the limited amount of covers

featuring female athletes, my research analyzes one magazine cover from every decade following Title IX. The reasoning for this is to gain a historical sample of *Sports Illustrated* covers, keep the sample small in order to fully analyze each image and its findings, and use the sample as a means to contrast how female athletes are choosing to represent themselves on social media. The sample of covers is not meant to be a generalization of all magazine representations of female athletes, but is instead meant to be a historical sample that illustrates how female athletes have been represented on these covers and perhaps why current professional female athletes are turning to social media to present themselves.

I chose five magazine covers ranging from 1976 through 2015. To keep consistency and efficacy for my analysis, swimsuit editions of *Sports Illustrated* and covers featuring both male and female athletes are not included in this sample. This keeps the focus solely on the professional female athlete. Importantly, the swimsuit editions are often special iterations that do not support an athletic event or achievement. *Sports Illustrated* devotes entire issues to showcase models and athletes in minimal-coverage swimsuits, and such editions do not emphasize sporting accomplishments and instead focus on sexual appearances. The covers analyzed for this project include the December 20, 1976 issue that features tennis player Chris Evert; the December 26, 1983 issue that features track runner Mary Decker; the March 2, 1992 issue that features figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi; the June 5, 2000 issue that features tennis player Anna Kournikova; and the December 21 2015 issue that features tennis player Serena Williams. This sample is meant to be a small scope of female athlete representations in magazine media and works to demonstrate how female athletes have been represented, historically, since the enactment of Title IX.

Research Framework

The research framework for analyzing the post-Title IX magazine covers is based on a critical visual methodology. A critical visual methodology provides the basis for digging deep into the visual elements of an image and making social and cultural connections. Gillian Rose explains that this critical approach to visuals takes images seriously, thinks about social conditions and effects of visual objects, and considers one's own way of looking at the images (12). The specific form of critical visual methodology used for each image analysis is semiology. To define, semiology is concerned with social effects of the meaning, draws upon the work of several major theorists, and studies the signs and symbols to interpret the image's meanings (Rose 74-75). This analysis of signs and symbols of images identifies the social construction of the female athlete in the various pictures. Importantly, Rose explains, "Semiology assumes that these constructions of social difference are articulated through images themselves" (77). Furthermore, semiology offers an approach to analyzing signs for identifying what people can symbolize in an image. Gillian Dyer points out that visual advertisements utilize humans who function as signs, symbolizing specific qualities to the audience (Rose 80). Dyer lists various signs to articulate what people symbolize in an image, including age, gender, race, hair, body, looks, expression, touch, and body movement (Rose 81-82). These signs are present in the magazine covers and work together to articulate different meanings and representations of the female athletes. By analyzing signs, I am able to draw conclusions about the social meanings that are represented, as well as identify instances of the marginalization of women, gendered behavior, and the power of female athletes. In turn, the critical visual methodology approach of semiology identifies and connects symbols and signs of each image to numerous theories, social

constructions, and meanings. In doing so, I connect the images with the gender scholarship and theories of Berger, Butler, Welter, and Krane et al.

Lastly, my research analyzes the composition of the images and the participation of the images. Using the theories of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, my analyses focuses on how the elements of the image are working together to communicate ideas to the viewer and how social distances and angles communicate relationships and power. Kress and van Leeuwen explain that depending on the frame, people in images can offer or demand action of the viewer with direct gaze or eye contact (124). This is a key idea as I analyze the images to see how female athletes interact with the audience. In addition, social distances in images play a key role in my research. I analyze the social distance of an image to understand the relationship of the participant and identify instances of intimacy or detachment. Angles of power further aid my analyses of the images. When the participant of an image is looking down at the viewer, the participant has symbolic power over the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen 140). The opposite is also true; if the viewer is looking down at the participant of the image, the viewer is put at a position of power (Kress and van Leeuwen 140). This is a vital point to my study as understanding positions of power in magazine covers allows me to see how often female athletes are given the opportunity to be in a seat of power. Lastly, identifying the social distance and instances of power in the images helps me understand the social meanings of the images further.

Research Methodology: Visual Analysis

Based on my research framework, I analyze the sport displayed, number of participants in the image, body, active or passive motion, femininity, clothing, pose, angle of the shot, human touch, social distance, and text in each magazine cover. Specifically, the sport, body, activity, and touch can reveal or not reveal elements of True Womanhood, such as piety, purity,

submissiveness, and domesticity, or gender norms. The number of participants in the image is important to analyze as it reveals community, competition, or connections with fans. Clothing and pose reveal important signs and connect to the representation of bodies. Additionally, the angle of the photo and social distance represent instances of power and connect to Goffman's theory of self-presentation. Thus, these areas of analysis allow me to tie in a wide range of research on gender, sports, media, semiology, composition, and self-presentation while interpreting the image in numerous ways. Specifically, I am able to group the images into categories of passiveness and submissiveness; sexualized imagery; showing a sport; not showing a sport; angles of power; promoting community; promoting competition; empowering women; brand promotion; celebrities; and self-growth. Numerous covers fit into multiple categories, but these categories allowed me to make in-depth comparisons of the images and thoughtfully observe the role and impact of the magazine covers.

December 20, 1976 Issue

The December 20, 1976 issue of *Sports Illustrated* features professional female tennis player Chris Evert (see fig. 1). Importantly, Evert was a well-known and successful American tennis player. She won 18 major championships; won the second-most singles titles in history; was the first female player to reach one million dollars in career prize money; was named the Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year four times; and was the first athlete, male or female, to win 1,000 single matches ("Chris Evert"). Evidently, Evert was a well-decorated athlete, which is why she was featured as the sportswoman of the year in the 1976 issue. Despite her long list of awards and accomplishments, the image of Evert on the December 20, 1976 cover displays little athleticism or achievement. Fig. 1 shows Evert looking at the camera in a white, floor-length dress and holding a tennis racket. After coding the image for instances of sports,

focus, activity, femininity, and more, it is clear to see that the image is not highlighting Evert's athletic accomplishments.

In fig. 1, the frame and angle of this photograph do not give Evert a stance of power or



Figure 1. "Sportswoman of the Year: Chris Evert." *Sports Illustrated*, 20 December 1976, <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/45415/1/1>.

represent her sport. Specifically, the

shot of this magazine cover is close

social distance as the viewer can see

most of the full figure of Evert

(Kress and van Leeuwen 125). This

social relation invites the viewer to

be at a social distance that is

comfortable to have a conversation.

In other words, the distance of Evert

in this image is inviting for the

viewer. The close social distance also

allows the viewer to see the details of

the image, such as Evert's smile,

makeup, hair, outfit, and

surroundings. Likewise, the angle of the photograph is at eye-level with Evert. Different angles

of photographs can give the participant or the viewer viewpoints of power. If the participant is

shown at a high angle, looking down at the viewer, the participant is given "symbolic power over

us" and vice versa (Kress and van Leeuwen 140). In fig. 1, Evert is seen at eye-level, which

matches well with the social distance and invites the viewer in as an equal, not giving Evert or

the viewer any power. However, this social distance and angle allow the viewer to analyze the

various signs of the image that fail to communicate that Evert is a professional athlete and reinforce traditional gender expectations.

For example, Evert's outfit in this magazine cover points to a historical view of a woman. As Welter explains in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," women are judged on piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Interestingly, these elements are clearly illustrated in fig. 1. Bannister explains that women in long, white dresses can reveal the True Womanhood ideal of purity (29). In this cover photo, Evert's dress reaches from her neck past the frame of the photograph and covers her arms completely. This kind of modesty certainly connects to the traditional ideas of judging women on purity and piety. Welter explains. "Religion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, the source of her strength" (Welter 152). Likewise, "Purity was essential as piety to a young woman, its absence as unnatural and unfeminine. Without it she was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower order" (Welter 154). Therefore, Evert's outfit in this image connects to Welter's ideas on True Womanhood and places Evert in a position to be judged as a woman. Interestingly, the white dress also connects to the suffragist movement as the dress is not only white, but it is also clothing of that era. Additionally, the outfit that Evert is wearing is not the the kind of competition outfit she would compete in during the 1970s. Instead, this outfit reflects the modest and impractical outfits that women would wear in the late 1800s to play tennis. Similarly, Krane et al. explain femininity is linked with an ideal, thin, covered body (316). In this image, Evert is displaying such tendencies as she is passive, wearing a long dress, and exemplifies an ideal, feminine body. Thus, the cover is pointing to a traditional view of a woman and normalizes femininity. Evert's outfit is a sign that connects to a broader structure of social meaning (Rose 78). The modest dress covers Evert's body except for

her face and hands, and the color of the dress refers to the ideals of True Womanhood. In turn, the dress is a sign of a traditional, socially-constructed view of a woman.

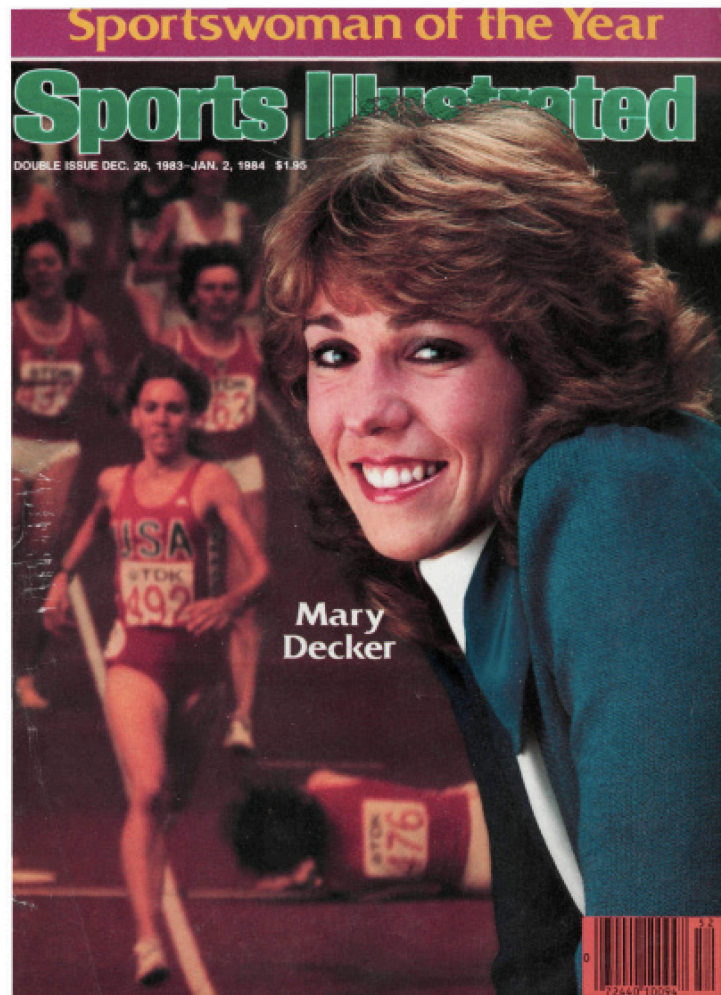
In addition, the photograph is passive and does not display Evert playing tennis. Although fig. 1 shows Evert holding the tennis racket, she does not partake in any kind of motion or physical activity. She is loosely holding the racket, smiling, and not demonstrating any athletic ability. According to Butler, this kind of passivity comes from a historical gender performance. Here, Evert's passive body language conforms to a historical idea of a "woman" (Butler 522). The lack of sport or motion being displayed on this cover on *Sports Illustrated* demonstrates the representation of Evert as a traditional woman rather than an athlete. By not demonstrating any kind of motion or athleticism, Evert is being stripped from her ability to play tennis in this photo and instead is being displayed as a passive, nonathletic woman. Ultimately, the December 20, 1976 issue of *Sports Illustrated* displays Evert as a passive, traditional woman, not as a sportswoman of the year or as a champion tennis player.

December 26, 1983 Issue

The December 26, 1983 issue of *Sports Illustrated* features track and field runner Mary Decker (see fig. 2). Decker is known for changing the face of women's distance running. She is a multi-world champion in the 1500 and 3000 meter races; she set numerous world and American records while competing; and she qualified for four summer Olympic games ("Mary Slaney (Decker)"). Like Evert, Decker was named sportswoman of the year, which landed her on the cover of this issue of *Sports Illustrated*. Decker's cover is interesting at first glance as it displays her competing at an international track meet and also displays her smiling straight at the camera. This cover makes a push towards showing the competition of female athletes but still complicates that image with the view of Decker posing for the camera in front.

For example, there are two social distances and camera angles present in this magazine cover. In the image of Decker running, she is seen at public distance since the viewer can see “the torso of at least four or five people” (Kress and van Leeuwen 125). That social distance starkly contrasts with that of the image of Decker smiling at the camera, which is close personal distance as the viewer “takes in the head and the shoulders” (Kress and van Leeuwen 125).

The close personal distance invites the viewer to have a more personable and detailed view of Decker, whereas the public distance allows the viewer to see many details of the shot, including about six other runners, one of whom evidently fell on the



track. The difference in these social distances complicate the magazine cover because the public distance allows the viewer to see the competition and experience the sport, but the close personal distance takes the viewers' eyes from that to Decker's posed smile. Likewise, the angles of these two images contrast. The running image of Decker is taken from a high angle. Kress and van Leeuwen explain, "High angles tend to diminish the individual, to flatten him morally by reducing him to ground level, to

Figure 2: "Sportswoman of the Year: Mary Decker." *Sports Illustrated*, 26 December 1983, <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/43403/1/1>.

render him as caught in an insurmountable determinism” (qtd. on 140). This angle, therefore, puts the viewer at a seat of power and diminishes the power Decker is exhibiting in this photograph. The image of Decker smiling into the camera is taken at eye-level, so that angle demonstrates the Decker is at an equal level of power to that of the viewer. Pulling in these different elements of social distances and angles, the viewer can see that the magazine cover gives the viewer power over the scene of the women’s race and invites the viewer with a close personal distance to interact with the smiling face of Decker.

Furthermore, the sport and dress present in this cover further complicate how the audience perceives it. This magazine cover shows a track and field race and also shows passivity with Decker smiling and posing for the camera. Again, this cover is complicated because it tries to demonstrate a sport but overrides it with the traditional view of a woman. Specifically, on the left-hand side of this image, Decker is racing in her team U.S.A. racing kit, and on the right-hand side of the image, she is wearing a sweater and turtleneck with her hair down. The U.S.A. racing outfit certainly goes against traditional views of women. Welter explains that the traditional views of True Womanhood maintain virtue and modesty, and the racing kit is not modest as Decker’s legs and arms are fully exposed (157). The racing outfit counters stereotypical views of women by giving Decker the opportunity to show her muscles, expose her strength, and race with efficient clothing. At the same time, this magazine cover presents Decker in a modest outfit with her hair and makeup done, which again takes the viewer’s focus away from the athleticism portrayed in the race and emphasizes Decker’s feminine qualities, including her styled hair, makeup, red lips, smile, and outfit. In addition, the image of Decker smiling at the camera is even a brighter color, contrasting to the dullness of the image of her running. This contrast once again emphasizes her passivity and feminine qualities. Subsequently, this magazine cover of

Decker showcases a track competition but complicates that image with a traditional and feminine image.

March 2, 1992 Issue

In March of 1992, *Sports Illustrated* featured American figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi on the cover. Yamaguchi is most well-known for her Olympic gold that she won in figure skating in the 1992 Winter Olympics. In addition to her Olympic gold, Yamaguchi won numerous world



Figure 3: “American Dream: Gold Medal Figure Skater Kristi Yamaguchi.” *Sports Illustrated*, 2 March 1992, <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/710937/toc>.

championship titles and was inducted into the U.S. Figure Skating Hall of Fame in 1998 and the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame in 1999 (Specter and Scott). A hardworking and talented professional athlete, Yamaguchi was featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* shortly after winning her Olympic gold medal (see fig. 3). The cover shows Yamaguchi smiling with her Olympic medal in hand and states “American Dream.” Certainly, this image celebrates Yamaguchi’s gold medal, but it lacks imagery that represents motion, competition, or strength.

Specifically, the social distance of this image invites the viewer to interact with Yamaguchi with a close personal distance. Similar to the smiling image of Decker, Yamaguchi's head and shoulders are visible in this shot, which invites the viewer to have a more personable and detailed view of Yamaguchi (Kress and van Leeuwen 125). This social distance is effective in allowing the viewer to clearly see the medal and Yamaguchi's proud smile. But this intimate distance to Yamaguchi does not display any motion or competition aside from her medal and the assumed figure skating outfit she is wearing. This distance also allows the viewer to get a clear view of her painted nails, smile, and red lips. Krane et al. explain that being feminine and being athletic are two separate cultures; being feminine is a social construction that promotes passivity, the ideal body, makeup, and overall appearance (315-316). In the image, Yamaguchi displays feminine features, which complex her role as a serious athlete. In fig. 3, Yamaguchi certainly illustrates these ideals of femininity.

Additionally, the text on the magazine cover complicates the viewing of the image. The text reads, "American Dream" and "Gold Medal Figure Skater Kristi Yamaguchi." Interestingly, the text does not identify what event she won and emphasizes this idea of the American dream on the left-hand side. This obscures the information value of the magazine cover. The information value of an image is broken down into different zones with the left side or zone being the given and known information, and the right being the new information (Kress and van Leeuwen 177). Thus, the given information is the text that identifies the American dream and Yamaguchi as a gold medalist, and the new information presents an image of Yamaguchi, passive and posing for a camera. The American dream text also, perhaps unintentionally, affects Yamaguchi's story as her gold medal was won at a global competition, so her success stretches far beyond the American dream. This magazine cover could have been an excellent opportunity

to present the athleticism and dedication of Yamaguchi to the viewer of the magazine, but instead the cover does the opposite.

Overall, this magazine published twenty years after the enactment of Title IX and makes major steps towards celebrating a female athlete's accomplishment. This is huge progress for the sport and women, but the image still does not showcase Yamaguchi's training, global accomplishment, perseverance, or activity. By leaving that piece of her story out, this image fails to capture the true meaning of her gold medal and still focuses on femininity and gendered expectations.

June 5, 2000 Issue

A little over eight years after Yamaguchi appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, Anna Kournikova landed on the cover of the June 5, 2000 issue with a controversial image of her posing with a pillow. Prior to this image, Kournikova blasted onto the professional tennis scene at fourteen years old. In her professional tennis career, she won major matches, including the Open Juniors, Fed Cup, and Junior Orange Bowl (Colson). Despite her numerous titles and wins, Kournikova's *Sports Illustrated* cover demonstrates no such athleticism or accomplishments (see fig. 4). Instead, this cover backtracks from the progress made

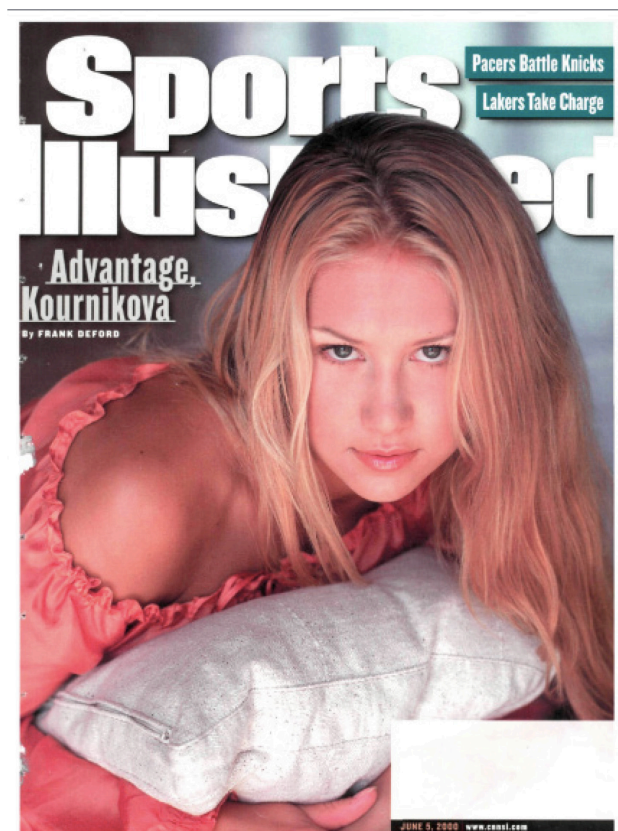


Figure 4: "Advantage, Kournikova." *Sports Illustrated*, 5 June 2000, <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/704423/0>.

with Decker and Yamaguchi's covers, which made strides to celebrate women in competition and their accomplishments. Kournikova's cover, on the other hand, puts the viewer at an angle of power, emphasizes sex, and fails to identify Kournikova as an athlete.

For example, Kournikova is seen at a close personal distance, and the image is taken from a high angle. Once again, the social distance of this cover is intimate and engages the viewer with a personal relationship with the represented participant – Kournikova. This distance allows the viewer to clearly see her hair, facial expression, blouse, and the pillow she is holding. Additionally, the image is taken from a high angle, and Kournikova's eyes are looking up at the camera. This angle is crucial to understanding the meaning of the image. Kress and van Leeuwen explain, "If a represented participant [Kournikova] is seen from a high angle, then the relation between the interactive participants (the producer of the image, and hence also the viewer) and the represented participants is depicted as one in which the interactive participant has power over the represented participant" (140). Therefore, viewers of this magazine cover are in a position of power as they view Kournikova lying on the pillow. The social distance paired with the angle also creates a sexual image as Kournikova is placed at an intimate distance and is stripped of her power. This distance and position of power seem to contradict the fact that Kournikova was being featured on the magazine to celebrate her power and strength as a tennis player.

Moreover, the magazine cover emphasizes femininity and sex. Specifically, Kournikova's hair is a salient image of the cover as it takes up much of the frame and covers part of the magazine title. Likewise, the ideal body is emphasized in this image as Kournikova is placed in a lying position and seen as slim and "appealing" (Krane et al. 316). Kournikova is passive in this image. She is not in motion or resembling any sort of physical activity, which once again promotes a traditional female gender performance. The pillow can also be seen as a

suggestive of sex as pillows create an association with a bed. Specifically, this image uses a figurative metaphor of metonymy as the pillow represents the larger concept of the bed. In this image, Kournikova's identity is not that of an athlete, but one of a young girl, lying on a pillow with her viewer having power over her. Also interesting to note, this *Sports Illustrated* cover does not detail anything about Kournikova's sport, accomplishments, or recent competitions like the last three covers. Instead, the magazine provides the highlights "Pacers Battle Knicks" and "Lakers Take Charge." Not only is Kournikova seen as a powerless woman in this image, but her athleticism is completely overlooked and not even mentioned on the cover.

December 21, 2015 Issue

Over forty years after the enactment of Title IX, professional tennis player Serena Williams made an appearance on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. The December 21, 2015 issue features Williams sitting on a throne, staring down her viewers (see fig. 5). Williams is famous for her fierce athleticism and outspokenness. She is currently tied for the most Grand Slam singles titles in the Open Era and is a seven-time Wimbledon singles champion. Williams is a six-time US Open singles champion, six-time Australian Open singles champion, and a 2012 Olympic gold medalist, among many more remarkable titles ("Serena Williams"). Although Williams is one of the most successful tennis players in history, her cover of *Sports Illustrated* communicates a different message. Her body language and outfit sexualize the image and do not emphasize her athleticism or sporting accomplishments.

Specifically, Williams is seen at a far social distance, wearing a bodysuit that reveals her legs. This social distance shows “the whole figure ‘with space around it’” (Kress and van Leeuwen 125). This distance reveals a unique representation of the body. It allows the viewer to completely see Williams’s body, but the image is not as inviting as the previous magazine covers. Also, the image is seen from eye-level, so neither the viewer or Williams are at an angle of power. Thus, Williams is not given power through the angle of this photograph. However, she does demand power



Figure 5: “Sportsperson of the Year: Serena Williams.” *Sports Illustrated*, 21 December 2015, <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/1015976/0>.

through her gaze. Her intense, direct eye contact “creates a visual form of direct address” (Kress and van Leeuwen 117). Her serious facial expression, paired with her intense stare, shows her demand and power over the viewer. Although Williams is not seen from an angle of power, her gaze suggests power over her viewers.

There are also numerous signs working together to create a sexualized image of Williams. In the image, Williams is lounging on a throne with her right leg elevated on the arm of the chair and her left hand touching her face. This image, therefore, exhibits many culturally significant signs. Her hair can be viewed as seductive beauty, her long legs are seen as the ideal

female body, and her makeup resembles traditional views of femininity and beauty. Her legs are perhaps the most salient element of the image as her legs shine against the muted teal background, and her right hand touches her leg. The shine and placement of her hand both attract the viewer's attention and emphasize Williams' legs. These signs placed together on this magazine cover communicate Williams' femininity rather than her athleticism. Lastly, the magazine ironically highlights Williams as the "Sportsperson of the Year," yet the imagery does not depict any sport. Once again, Williams is lacking an opportunity to illustrate her power, athleticism, and accomplishments on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Instead, the cover emphasizes her feminine features as she lounges across a throne.

Discussion

The five *Sports Illustrated* covers all offer unique ideas surrounding gender, sports, and magazine media. Despite the differences, there are numerous similarities among these five covers that followed the enactment of Title IX (see Appendix A). My research shows that four out of the five of the magazine covers fail to show any kind of motion, activity, or participation in sports. Fig. 2 is the only cover that shows a competition, which highlights Decker racing but with a complicated image of her smiling and posing for the camera over it. In addition, all five images show a form of passivity with the participant posing still for the camera and femininity with dress, makeup, or posing. Three out of the five covers (figs. 2, 3, & 4) show the female athletes at a close-personal distance, which creates more intimate views of the professional athletes rather than views that communicate competition and athleticism. Two of the covers (figs. 4 & 5) create sexualized images of the female athletes with different visual signs and angles. These findings demonstrate that these *Sports Illustrated* covers do not communicate the athletes' capabilities and instead focus on representing instances of femininity and passivity.

Additionally, these findings confirm that the identity constructions of female athletes from *Sports Illustrated* covers are not always true representations of the athletes themselves or their accomplishments. By limiting the representation of the athletes to passive and gendered images, the consumers or viewers of these magazines do not receive realistic insight into the perseverance and talent that goes into accomplishing what these women have, and continue to, accomplish in their sports and the community. Thus, this small sample of *Sports Illustrated* covers truly identifies the fact the female athletes have been misrepresented or perhaps underrepresented in at least one sports magazine. Despite the tremendous growth and success women have experienced since the enactment of Title IX, their magazine representations fail to reflect their exciting and incredible accomplishments.

Chapter 4: Professional Female Athletes and Self-Presentation on Instagram

Introduction

Unlike magazine media, social media affords users the opportunity to interact, chat, like, and share content instantaneously. Within the past decade, social media has grown tremendously, causing society to move towards social media for news, keeping up with celebrities, connecting with friends, and following along with favorite athletes. The digital features and connectedness make social media a unique platform for professional athletes to create their own brand, share their training, and connect with fans and followers. Using these platforms, athletes take a more active part in their public presentation and share more aspects of their identity than what is typically portrayed in mainstream media coverage (Reichert Smith and Sanderson 342). On social media, athletes can “disclose information that prompts identification and potentially parasocial interaction with fans” (Reichert Smith and Sanderson 342). For this project, I use the social media site Instagram to analyze images shared by three professional female athletes.

Since this project studies the visual representation of professional female athletes, Instagram provides the most visually-dense content of current social media platforms. Specifically, Instagram is a photo-sharing and video-sharing social networking service and is owned by Facebook. On Instagram, users can share photos or videos, write captions, connect with hashtags, message other users, and tag users on posts. Instagram also has a “story” capability in which users can take photos and videos and share on a twenty-four-hour story highlight real on their profiles. Another capability of Instagram is the “live” option, where users can record live content for followers to watch and comment on. Thus, these features give professional athletes a unique opportunity to share content, reply to fan messages, and keep followers up to date with competitions and training.

Research Sample

Since there are thousands of professional athletes on Instagram, I had to narrow the scope for this project. I selected three professional female athletes based on social media presence, current role as a professional athlete, and public access to their feed. I needed to find athletes who are active on social media and share their lives, sports, beliefs, and perhaps accomplishments on Instagram to truly grasp the affordances and choices that go into their Instagram usage and self-presentation. Furthermore, I wanted to ensure that the athletes I chose to analyze are still currently competing or training to keep consistent with the gender and sport focus of the research. Lastly, the Instagram accounts needed to be public to followers, allowing anyone to access the Instagram posts without granted permissions. There were countless female athletes' Instagram accounts to choose from, but for the sake of the length and the purpose of this research, three athletes were chosen for in-depth analyses.

Specifically, the three athletes for the Instagram sample include track runner Emma Coburn, alpine skier Lindsey Vonn, and gymnast Aly Raisman. Emma Coburn is twenty-seven years old, graduated from University of Colorado Boulder in 2013, and since competed in two summer Olympics. In addition, Coburn earned a bronze medal at the Rio 2016 Olympics and won the IAAF World Championship steeplechase in 2017 ("Emma Coburn"). She is sponsored by New Balance and currently trains for the steeplechase race. Her Instagram presence is frequent, and she uses the site as a platform to connect with fans, brands, and other athletes. Lindsey Vonn is thirty-three years old and has competed in four winter Olympic games – 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2018 – and is a three-time Olympic medalist ("Lindsey Vonn"). Vonn uses her Instagram presence to showcase her life as a professional alpine skier and also relate her love for fashion and fitness to others. Aly Raisman is twenty-three years old and competed in the 2012

and 2016 summer Olympics. She is decorated with numerous Olympic medals, as well as U.S. and world championship titles (“Aly Raisman”). Her Instagram presence aims to connect women and has recently been used as a platform to share her thoughts on the sexual abuse occurring in the USA gymnastics community. Each of these three athletes has a large following base, giving them a unique opportunity to present themselves and interact with their fans.

In order to get an interesting and full sample of these Instagram accounts, I gathered ten photos and corresponding captions (when captions were included) from each of the three accounts. I gathered the first ten photos shared in March of 2018 by each athlete. I chose to research March based on the timing of this research. Additionally, I chose only single and still images for this project. Videos and multiple image posts were skipped, allowing me to analyze singular images and captions. This enabled me to make more meaningful comparisons to the magazine covers, which are still layouts. Ultimately, thirty total Instagram posts were collected for this project. There is an interesting breadth of interests, poses, and social constructions featured in the images.

Research Methodology: Framework and Analysis

The research framework for analyzing the Instagram images is consistent with that of the magazine images. I utilize the critical visual methodology approach of semiology to analyze the the images with attention to social constructions, gender expectations, and sports. Once again, I analyze the sport displayed, number of participants in the image, body, active or passive motion, femininity, clothing, pose, angle of the shot, human touch, social distance, and any text included in the captions. Berger, Butler, and Welter again contribute a huge role in the analyses of the images. The major difference between my analyses of the magazine images and the social media images is the emphasis on self-presentation and the text content. Since the athletes have control

over what they post and share on their Instagram accounts, the theory of self-presentation is much more apparent in the social media content compared to the magazine media. Erving Goffman explains that individuals have motives and control the impression they receive from their audience (15). Instagram users have “more control over their self-presentation and disseminate these identity aspects directly to fans” (Reichert Smith and Sanderson 345-346). This sample of Instagram images does not serve to compare to the magazine covers, but rather serves to show how female athletes are choosing to present themselves perhaps in response to the limitations of other media coverages. Because of the control the female athletes have over their content, the analyses focus more on the instances of self-presentation.

Instagram Account #1: Emma Coburn

Emma Coburn is currently one of the most popular and well-respected middle-distance runners in the U.S.A. She motivates the track and field industry with her emphasis on clean competing, extreme work ethic, and drive to unite runners across the world. Her Instagram account is a true reflection of this, and she consistently radiates positive and encouraging messages to her followers. The ten posts collected from Coburn’s Instagram reflect her passion for teamwork, racing, training, and her sponsorship with New Balance. Figures 6 through 15 show the variety of content Coburn shared during the first few weeks of March.

To begin, fig. 6 shows Coburn with her teammate, Aisha Praught Leer, in an Instagram post from March 2. The two runners train together under the direction of Coburn's husband, Joe Bosshard. Even though the two runners compete against each other often and do not have the same sponsorship, they embrace their training and encourage each other through posts like fig 6. In the photo, Coburn is side-hugging Praught Leer, holding onto a water bottle, and wearing a New Balance shirt, shorts, and shoes. The photograph is taken from eye-level from a close social distance. This combination of angle and distance invites the viewer in to experience the photograph and does not give power to the participants of the photo or the viewer. In addition, an



Figure 6: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 2 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf1qFvllHYr/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

emphasis in this post is Coburn's sponsorship with New Balance. Her shirt, shorts, and shoes all show the brand logo, so she is able to promote and market her sponsorship with New Balance within this post.

Another interesting aspect of this photo is the element of touch. Coburn and Praught Leer are posing with a side hug, which can be interpreted as a point of ritualistic touching. This touching is seen as a feminine behavior or act in which "women are frequently depicted touching persons in a ritualistic manner, occasionally just barely touching the person" (Reichart Smith and

Sanderson 353). Although this side hug is seen as feminine, the athletes' bodies and work on the track complicate their assumed feminine identity. Specifically, the athletes' leg muscles are emphasized here with their shorter shorts, which does not abide by the expectations of modesty that is associated with True Womanhood. Likewise, their muscles are fit and prominent, which complicates a feminine identity as fit muscles are seen as a masculine trait (Krane et al. 316). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this post is the caption. In it, Coburn congratulates Praught Leer for qualifying for the indoor 1500 championships final. Coburn writes, "We are happy here, but have become happier, stronger, better, faster together." She also thanks her husband for his coaching and wishes Praught Leer luck in the finals. This caption demonstrates Coburn's encouraging attitude and friendship with her teammate. Her followers are able to read this comment and get a glimpse into what it would be like to be a teammate to Coburn. Overall, this post is inviting, complicates femininity, and displays Coburn's encouragement to her teammate.

The next three photos that Coburn posted in March all show her in action. Figs. 7 through 9 are taken from a far social distance and emphasize Coburn's ability to compete and train.

Specifically, fig. 7 displays Coburn racing in the 2016 Rio Olympics steeplechase race, where she won the bronze medal, and she uses the hashtag #motivationmonday for



Figure 7: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 5 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf9U94ZFAxo/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

her caption. In fig. 8, Coburn is training with Praught Leer, wearing all New Balance clothing, and celebrates #internationalwomensday in her comment. Then fig. 9 shows Coburn training by herself in her New Balance apparel. The caption of fig. 9 implies that Coburn ran for fifteen miles in the hills of Colorado. These three posts demonstrate activeness, competition, and training, which display how Coburn wants to be perceived by her viewers. Evidently, Coburn wants her followers to understand her love and motivation for competing and training. This image shows Coburn's self-presentation as she is controlling the



Figure 8: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 8 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgExtG3Ff8/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.



Figure 9: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 11 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgMaCfyhT-m/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

impression her followers receive from her as she posts active shots. Also, an interesting element to consider in these images is the angle. Figs. 8 and 9 are taken from a low angle, so Coburn is given the power in these images. This certainly counters traditional notions of gender in which women are seen as powerless and submissive. Thus, these three posts, ranging from March 5 through March 11 show Coburn as a competitive, hard-working, elite athlete, which are all adjectives that are not usually resembling of a traditional and passive woman.

The next photo from Coburn's Instagram feed is fig. 10, which shows Coburn's strength as she poses in her New Balance racing kit. In this photo, Coburn is seen with her hands on her hips, her hair in a pony tail, and her eyes staring down the camera. This photo illustrates her strength as her arm and ab muscles are clearly shown in her racing apparel. Certainly, this image complicates traditional views of femininity as Coburn is



Figure 10: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 12 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgPChflhyZ3/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

exposed, celebrating her body rather than covering up to meet the tenets of True Womanhood. She looks like she could toe the line of a track race as she is posing for this photo, so the image celebrates her identity as an elite runner. Once again, her body complicates traditional ideas of femininity as her body is clearly muscular rather than being a “feminine toned” (Krane et al. 318). Coburn's caption in this post also expresses her identity as a professional athlete as it articulates that Coburn wants to race again.

Overall, this Instagram post illustrates Coburn's strength and identity as a professional and elite athlete.

Once again in fig. 11, Coburn is seen in action as she runs 200s. The photo shows Coburn running on turf with mountains in the



Figure 11: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 19 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgRjDK1hUkk/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

distance. This action shot portrays Coburn's strength while also showing off her home state of Colorado. She is from Colorado and has a lot of state pride, so it is fitting that she includes the location in many of her posts and shows the mountains in her images, such as in figs. 8, 13, and 14. Additionally, her caption shows off her humor as she states "I like eating too much so I guess I'll have to keep working on making my feet faster." This image certainly invites followers to see what her training consists of, and she tags New Balance to promote her sponsorship.

The following post on Coburn's Instagram feed differs from the previous images. Fig. 12 shows Coburn walking her dog, wearing casual New Balance clothing. The post emphasizes

more fashionable content and tags New Balance to give credit to her sponsorship. In this post, there is no activity displayed. Her mid-drift is also showing in her outfit, which could be inferred as a provocative choice in clothing as it is not modest and covered.

Although seeing Coburn in casual apparel does not illustrate her

abilities as a professional athlete, it does show that she is someone who walks her dog and has a life outside of her consistent training and racing schedule. In terms of self-presentation, Coburn is showing that she has more to her identity than being only a runner with this photo and her dog, Arthur.



Figure 12: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 16 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgXG-J1BOdh/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

Two more posts from Coburn’s sample, figs. 13 and 14, once again emphasize action. Fig. 13 shows Coburn tying her shoes and gearing up for a run, and fig. 14 displays Coburn running hill sprints. In fig 13., Coburn’s muscles are shown off, countering the traditional idea of femininity. Likewise, she once again tags her sponsor, New Balance, for her shoes and running apparel. In fig. 14, Coburn is seen from a low angle, giving her power over her audience as she sprints up the hill. The angle also reveals her power and strength as she completes her workout. By looking at fig. 14, the viewer can see the evidence of Coburn’s hard work and see her in action. Both of these images identify Coburn’s training and show her actively working towards her track goals for 2018.



Figure 13: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 16 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgY60P0hnGt/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.



Figure 14: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 19 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BghawwXhjBw/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

Next, fig. 15 shows Coburn in an advertisement for the Oslo Bislett Games on June 7, 2018. Fig. 15 is unique to Coburn’s Instagram feed as it shows an advertisement image for a race and depicts Coburn versus Karoline Grovdal. In her caption, Coburn explains “This reads, ‘world champion v challenger.’” As the world champion steeplechaser, Coburn is a marketable athlete

for various track meets. Thus, the Oslo Bislett Games invited Coburn to compete in the meet to add valuable competition and following to the event. It is interesting to see this image with the two professional runners standing next to each other, staring at the viewer. This advertisement



Figure 15: Coburn, Emma. *Instagram*, 21 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgmBfL5Bfbl/?hl=en&taken-by=emmacoburn>.

image certainly depicts competition and celebrates the two women's strength and ability. The information value of this image is also interesting. Coburn is seen on the left-hand side as the given information, and Grovdal is on the right-hand side and is seen as the new information for the viewer.

This information value depicts that Grovdal is the new challenger to the world champion, Coburn. Likewise, the advertisement image shows the two women in black and white with the name and date of the meet in green, and "vs" in a glowing yellow. With this contrast of black and white with the colored text, the image emphasizes the competition of the two athletes.

Overall, fig. 15 displays a unique information value, color contrast, and emphasis on competition.

To summarize, five of Coburn's ten posts from the March clearly show her in action and running (see Appendix B). In addition, two posts of her sample emphasize teamwork and her friendship with Praught Leer. In all ten posts, she tags or mentions her sponsor, New Balance, and she includes an advertisement for an upcoming track meet. Of the ten posts, there is only one image that shows Coburn in non-athletic apparel and away from a competition or training scene.

Thus, Coburn's sample of posts clearly illustrates her identity as a runner, teammate, New Balance athlete, and world-class competitor.

Instagram Account #2: Lindsey Vonn

Lindsey Vonn is another professional athlete, who uses her Instagram account to connect with her fans, celebrate her sport, and shed light on her love for fashion. Vonn's account differs from Coburn's as there are less active shots and more posts about Vonn's public appearances and selfies. Interestingly, this juxtaposition of posts creates a unique presentation of a female athlete. Her posts show her ambition and love for competition, her interest in makeup and fashion, and her excitement for public events.

The first post that Vonn shared in March is fig. 16. In this post, Vonn is seen walking towards the camera, looking down, and wearing heels and a black and gold outfit. This photo

certainly displays society's expected ideas of a woman as Vonn is wearing heels, is seen as slim and not too muscular, has long and blonde hair, and is wearing makeup (Krane et al. 316). Her appearance embodies social expectations of gender as she walks



Figure 16: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 3 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf37g62AoNp/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

towards the camera. In addition, this photo is taken from a low angle, giving Vonn power over the viewer of the image. This angle and movement towards the camera express Vonn as

powerful. In addition, the caption of this post details how Jeff Kim, a fashion stylist, created her outfit. Although this post does not show Vonn's athleticism or work as an alpine skier, it does allow for her followers to see into her excitement for fashion. This is a form of Goffman's impression management as Vonn is purposefully posting a photo about fashion to connect and interact with fans of similar interests. Even though this post emphasizes societal expectations of a woman, it also expresses Vonn's interests and perhaps connects with numerous fans.

In figs. 17, 18, and 20, Vonn posts both selfies and group selfies, or "usies," on her Instagram. Selfies are classified as self-portrait photographs that are most commonly taken with a

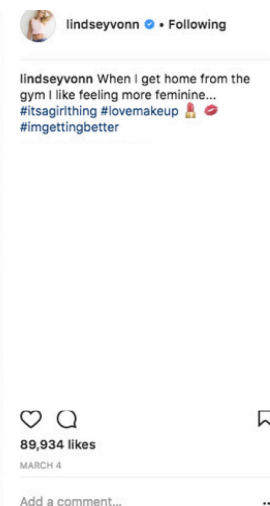


Figure 17: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 4 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bf5NHYqqqLA/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

camera phone (Georgakopoulou 303). Selfies are a unique category of social media posts as there are different kinds of selfies: traditional, me selfies, group selfies or usies, and significant other selfies (Georgakopoulou 308). In particular, fig. 17 shows Vonn with a full face of makeup and the caption, "When I get



Figure 18: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 8 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgDaGJagZkD/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.



home from the gym I like feeling more feminine...” Additionally, fig. 18 shows a group selfie of Vonn with James Corden and Jim Gaffigan. The photo is from Vonn’s appearance on Corden’s Late Late Show. Similarly, in fig. 20, Vonn posts a selfie of her and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson at an Under Armour event. All three of these photos are taken from an intimate distance as the viewer can see from only the shoulders and up in each photo. This distance makes it a more personable relationship between Vonn and the viewer and therefore invites the viewer into the scene. Interestingly, fig. 17 demonstrates Vonn’s love for makeup and embraces the idea of being both an athlete who trains at the gym and a woman who loves to feel feminine and wear makeup. In fig. 17, the selfie is used to capture the moment and presents Vonn in a way that is interactive for the viewer (Georgakopoulou 316). Likewise, figs. 18 and 20 celebrate Vonn’s

public appearances at the Late Late Show and an Under Armour event with group selfies. These posts are interesting as they showcase Vonn’s activity with celebrities and presence at events, moving her into a very public sphere. This is contrary to the expected and domestic roles of a woman. One of the tenants of True Womanhood is submissiveness, and Vonn breaks down



Figure 20: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 9 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgGaTUzgyFM/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

this tenant as she embraces her public outings and documents her group selfies with famous comedians and actors. Figs. 17, 18, and 20 thus are effective in showing Vonn’s personality and invites followers to engage with her everyday life.

On March 8, Vonn posted an image to promote International Women’s Day. In fig. 19 below, the image displays an unidentified woman behind a signs that reads, “Mother told me a couple years ago, ‘sweetheart, settle down and marry a rich man.’ I said, ‘Mom, I am a rich man.’” In the caption, Vonn states “Happy #internationalwomensday! Here’s to all the bada\$\$ women out there who are unapologetically themselves. Be you, be strong, and never let anyone tell you what you should or



Figure 19: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 8 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgEakjDASET/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

shouldn’t be!” This post is empowering and reflects Vonn as an enthusiast for women’s rights and equality. Additionally, this post also adds to Vonn’s ethos as a woman who is not afraid to leave the domestic sphere and speak out and engage with society. In this post, she is promoting women to be themselves, which is a stance that breaks down traditional expectations of a woman.

Figs. 21 and 22 show Vonn in the alpine skiing setting and reveal more about her humorous personality and competitive side. In fig. 21, Vonn is posing with her skis at far personal distance. Vonn is sporting a Red Bull hat, which is one of her sponsors, Spyder ski jacket, Under Armour turtleneck, Head skis, and Oakley glasses. She adds humor to her post as she explains that she forgot her sunglasses and states, “Tip: When forgetting your real sunglasses, it’s best to pretend you did it on purpose in hopes of looking cooler ... I don’t think I pulled it off but I tried hard.” In this post, Vonn is showcasing her sponsors, creating brand

awareness, exhibiting her sport with the skis, and connecting with her followers with her humor.



Figure 21: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 13 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgRS-6XgUMz/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

With this social distance and caption,

Vonn is able to reveal more about her personality to her viewers and show

how even as an elite athlete, she still has fun and is humorous at

competitions. In fig. 22, Vonn

transitions from humor to an active

competition photo. In this image, Vonn

is seen yelling as she is finishing her

race. The photo depicts her eighty-second win at the World Cup finals in Sweden. In this image,

Vonn is wearing her Red Bull sponsored helmet, goggles, and a skiing suit with various sponsors

listed on the arms and chest, including Visa and Toyota. Fig. 22 shows Vonn's most



Figure 22: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgTq3xOgg6k/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

competition-focused image

of her sample and it

celebrates her eighty-

second win. Her emphasis

on competition with this

post reveals her seriousness

for the sport and celebrates

all of her hard work that got

her to eighty-two wins. Figs. 21 and 22 present interesting aspects of Vonn's personality and

competition.

Next, in figs. 23 through 25, Vonn shares images following her eighty-second win. In particular, fig. 23 shows her smiling and wearing her Red Bull sponsorship apparel, and her caption depicts her grateful feelings towards the win. The far-personal distance of fig. 23 invites the viewer in to celebrate the win with Vonn. In this image, Vonn's blonde hair and makeup are also emphasized, which complicates her sporting setting and the



Figure 23: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgTxh7hA72Z/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

context of the image. However, her caption states, “Grateful,” and a hashtag with the number eighty-two. This caption articulates that Vonn is grateful for this win rather than emphasizing her feminine qualities of the image, like her hair or makeup. Fig. 24 shows Vonn side-hugging and posing with her teammate Soffia Goggia. This image embraces



Figure 24: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 15 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgWAA3dgIVs/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

teamwork and her thankfulness for her team and the competition. Lastly, fig. 25 shows Vonn hugging an untagged teammate after her eighty-second win. Figs. 24 and 25 demonstrate the ritualistic touching that is expected of female behavior. This touching is seen as a feminine behavior or act in which “women are frequently depicted touching persons in a ritualistic

manner” (Reichart Smith and Sanderson 353). Moreover, fig. 24 once again shows Vonn in her racing gear and holding her skis. The focus on her racing apparel once again reflects competition and her profession in alpine skiing. Fig. 25 reveals Vonn’s smile as she hugs her unidentified teammate or coach. This Instagram



Figure 25: Vonn, Lindsey. *Instagram*, 15 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgXxtZFAE40/?hl=en&taken-by=lindseyvonn>.

post shows Vonn’s emotions over the win and allows her followers to experience the emotions with her. Thus, figs. 23 through 25 celebrate Vonn’s eighty-second win in Alpine skiing and give her followers the opportunity to see her emotions and accomplishment.

Overall, the ten posts from Vonn’s Instagram depict her personality, interests, and ability as an athlete (see Appendix C). In particular, the three selfies of Vonn’s sample show off her willingness to share everyday snapshots of her life with her followers as she tries on makeup, goes to the Late Late Show, and attends sponsorship events. Interestingly, five of Vonn’s ten posts are taken in the setting of her alpine skiing competition, which highlights her athleticism and her commitment to her sport. Likewise, four of her posts highlight her eighty-second career win, which celebrates her athleticism and ability. Overall, Vonn’s Instagram account depicts her instances of self-presentation as she provides posts that shape her ethos of being a world-class skier who loves fashion, makeup, public outings, and promoting others.

Instagram Account #3: Aly Raisman

Unlike the previous two Instagram accounts, gymnast Aly Raisman uses her Instagram account as tool to empower women, raise awareness, and motivate others to do the same. Where Coburn and Vonn emphasize their sport and training, Raisman focuses on presenting herself in a way that sparks conversation towards social change. Raisman also uses her platform to speak out against the mistreatment she faced from Larry Nassar. In the midst of the accusations surrounding the mistreatment of U.S.A. women gymnasts, Raisman’s posts invite followers to empower one another and to take a stand.

To begin, the first post of Raisman’s sample displays her smiling at the camera and wearing a Life is Good Company shirt (see fig. 26). The shirt states, “Fierce Mind. Kind Heart. Brave Spirit,” and creates the silhouette of a flexing woman. Raisman repeats this mantra in her comment, which is an



Figure 26: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 1 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BfzYYtXF41/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

uplifting message for her followers. In addition, this photo is taken from eye-level, and Raisman is seen from far personal distance as she is photographed from the waist and up. This social distance makes the image of Raisman very personable and depicts how Raisman is offering this empowering mantra to the audience as if her followers are her friends. This image is certainly passive in terms of movement, but the message Raisman is spreading is active and timely.

Next, figs. 27 and 29 both depict the “Flip the Switch” campaign. Fig. 27 does not show a picture of Raisman but instead shows a marketing material for the movement that states, “By Acting together we can make sports safer.” Likewise, Raisman details in her comment that the lack of attention given to the issue of sexual abuse in sports needs to change. In an effort to raise awareness and change the issue, Raisman explains that she partnered with Darkness to Light and is



Figure 27: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 7 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgCR1k4IDP3/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

promoting the certificate programs available for this issue. Thus, she is encouraging her followers to complete a certificate program that promotes a safer and better educated sporting system for children. Similarly, in fig. 29, Raisman again posts about the Flip the Switch

campaign with a photo of her holding a completed certificate and smiling. The image is casual and friendly and addresses the viewer directly. In the caption, she explains, “42 million Americans are survivors of child sexual abuse. We



Figure 29: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 8 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgFOLZ-Fa7T/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

MUST change that horrifying number. Please, I urge you to go to [FlipTheSwitchCampaign.org](https://www.fliptheswitchcampaign.org).

Each of you have the power to make change.” The emphasis of these two posts is to raise awareness about the campaign and to encourage Raisman’s followers to make a change. Raisman is clearly using her platform to present herself as a promoter of this cause and creates an ethos of a motivated and encouraging individual.

Again, Raisman makes a powerful statement with an Instagram post on March 8. In fig. 28, Raisman is posing in a black and white one-piece suit that states, “Survivor.” This post was

in honor of International Women’s Day, and Raisman explains in her caption that she is thankful to be part of the brand, Aerie, and their effort to promote body positivity and women



Figure 28: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 8 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgEfm7jLXBd/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

empowerment. Raisman is also revealing her past and her ability to overcome and survive sexual abuse while competing in professional gymnastics. In this photo, Raisman is at a far personal distance, and the shot is taken from a low angle. So, Raisman is seen as having the power in this image. This angle is interesting as it gives Raisman power over the viewer as she promotes women’s empowerment. Thus, the composition of this photo shows Raisman embodying such power. Raisman is also directly staring at the viewer in this image. This stare or gaze directly addresses her audience and demands a response (Kress and van Leeuwen 117). Particularly, Raisman is demanding a change and is promoting awareness for sexual abuse. In her caption, Raisman again refers to the Flip the

Switch campaign and encourages her followers to “support & wear what matters.” Furthermore, Raisman breaks down traditional expectations of women as she is speaking out, raising awareness to the fact that she is a survivor, and is showing off her power in this photograph.

In figs. 30 through 32, Raisman again empowers her followers and shows her caring personality through birthday posts for her teammate and sister and an encouraging post for her

followers. In fig. 30, Raisman is seen with her U.S.A.

women’s gymnastics

teammate, Simone Biles. Her

comment wishes Biles a

happy birthday, and the two

are embracing at the 2016 Rio

Olympics. This image shows

the two athletes after they won

gold and silver medals in the

all-around event. Even though

this photo is shared for Biles’

birthday, it still depicts the

companionship and hard work

that the two gymnasts shared

to accomplish their Olympic

titles. In fig. 31, Raisman

posts a selfie of her smiling



Figure 30: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BgTs3PmlDed/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.



Figure 31: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 17 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgbm8eMITQR/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

and a caring caption that sends love to her followers and wishes them a great weekend. The intimate distance shows only her face and shoulders, which compliments the personal caption. In



Figure 32: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 18 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bge0--yINTC/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

the caption, Raisman states, “Sending (heart emoji used to indicate love) to you all. Have a great weekend. Appreciate all the kind people out there who support each other. You know who you are.” The caption and close-up selfie shape her ethos as a friend and role model with her caring

message. Similarly, in fig. 32, the image shows Raisman with her younger sister Madison and wishes her a happy birthday. This reveals Raisman’s identity as an older sister, which once again shapes her ethos. Fig. 32 demonstrates an intimate distance as the viewer can only see the participants’ shoulders and faces. Also, the sisters are wearing the same hats and embracing in a hug. This connection between the sisters shows the viewers the bond and love they have for each other, which once again shapes Raisman’s ethos as a supportive and caring figure. At the same time, the image shapes Raisman’s ethos as approachable and real rather than a famous athlete. As Raisman continues to post encouraging images and captions, she establishes a supportive ethos and acts as a role model for her followers.

The last three posts of Raisman's samples continue to shape her ethos as a passionate athlete, who empowers her followers. Fig. 33 is perhaps the biggest outlier of Raisman's sample as it depicts her wearing a dress with heels and posing with her hands on her hips while looking right at the camera. The caption is only an emoji of twinkling stars. Raisman is seen



Figure 33: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 19 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BghCXBoFsOt/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

from a high angle as she is looking up at the camera, so the angle gives the viewer the power.

Thus, this is the first post of her sample that shows Raisman posing for the camera without a caption or motive of empowering her audience. Instead, this image abides by traditional views of

femininity and shows

Raisman dressing up. Next,

Raisman shares an important

quote in fig. 34. Instead of a

sharing a photograph, the

post shares a quote from

Benjamin Franklin that

states, "Justice will not be

served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are." Raisman does not

include a caption for this image. Thus, this is a powerful post and extremely kairotic as it was

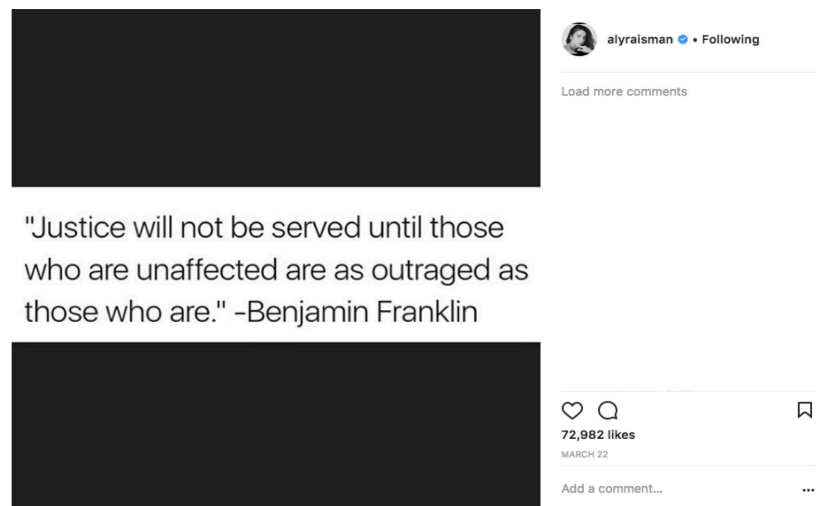


Figure 34: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 22 March 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BgpZryjlz_f/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman.

posted during the time of trials and members of the USA women's gymnastics team speaking out against Larry Nassar. In the last post of Raisman's sample, she is seen holding her book. In her

caption in fig. 35, Raisman thanks her fans for the support of her new book, *Fierce*, and explains that they can overcome anything. The image is taken from a far social distance, so the viewer can see Raisman and her surrounding



Figure 35: Raisman, Aly. *Instagram*, 26 March 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgzb6J1FfZs/?hl=en&taken-by=alyraisman>.

area. Interestingly, Raisman is smiling and leaning on a chessboard in the image. The chessboard can be indicative of Raisman making a powerful move with this new book and taking a chance to publish her struggles and encouraging message. Furthermore, the image is taken from a high angle, giving the viewer power over Raisman. The angle is fitting as Raisman thanks her fans in her comments and gives her fans and followers the power not only to read her book, but also, as Raisman explains, to believe in each other, be supportive, and to be fierce. This post once again embraces Raisman's drive to empower her followers and gives her a platform to market her new book.

Overall, Raisman's Instagram sample depicts her passion for empowering women.

Although there are no active images that show her competing in gymnastics, her images do show her active voice and role in raising awareness about sexual abuse (see Appendix D).

Interestingly, Raisman posts more personal and intimate photographs than Coburn and Vonn. In doing so, she develops a different ethos as more of a big sister role and connects with her

followers through her series of images that highlight her affiliate campaigns, encouraging words, and new book.

Discussion

The thirty Instagram posts reveal unique ideas surrounding gender, sports, self-presentation, and social media. The posts are rich in visual composition and show numerous aspects of each athlete. Of the thirty Instagram posts, a total of six images (see figs. 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 22) show the athletes actively competing. Likewise, an additional nine posts (see figs. 6, 10, 13, 15, 21, 23, 24, 25, and 30) show the athletes during competition or in the midst of training but not actively moving. Coburn posted the most active and athletic images with five active images and four images that show her during training or in her racing apparel. Vonn posted one active image of her skiing and four images at a ski competition before and after her eighty-second win in her skiing gear. Raisman posted one image of herself in a gymnastics uniform, which was taken at the 2016 Rio Olympics. These findings show that the female athletes are choosing to portray their competition and hard work on their social media accounts.

In addition, this research sample shows that the female athletes are also concerned with sharing their interests and life with followers, empowering followers, and pushing for social change. Four posts (figs. 12, 16, 17, and 33) show fashion and lifestyle images of the athletes engaging in both casual and dressy apparel. In these instances, Coburn, Vonn, and Raisman are sharing their lives outside of competition and their profession. The athletes are instead showing their interests and connecting with followers over fashion, makeup, and brands. Likewise, Vonn posted two images of social outings with celebrities (see figs. 18 and 20). By doing so, Vonn shares her success and social appearances with her followers. Lastly, one area I did not expect to find in analyzing these images is the empowerment and social change shared by the athletes.

Coburn, Vonn, and Raisman all posted on International Women's Day (see figs. 8, 19, and 34). The athletes also posted additional empowering posts through the images and captions (see figs. 6, 7, 24, 25, 26, and 31). Raisman posted for social change as well (see figs. 27, 28, 29, and 34). The empowering posts and push for social change by Raisman show that the female athletes are encouraging their followers to work hard, support others, and stand up for their beliefs. These posts certainly defy traditional notions of gender as the athletes are speaking out, taking charge, and using their platform as professional athletes to push for change. Overall, the combined thirty Instagram posts show that the professional female athletes are sharing images that show their training and competition, lifestyle, social outings, empowering messages, and push for social change.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Discussion of Sports Illustrated and Instagram Samples

This research shows that there is a major difference in the way professional female athletes have historically been represented in *Sports Illustrated* and how they are choosing to represent themselves on Instagram. The study of the thirty-five images in the previous chapters illustrates a variety of ideas, including historical notions of femininity, passivity, nurturing behavior, power, competition, strength, encouragement, and empowerment. Using theories of gender, media, and visual rhetoric, the analyses of the five magazine covers shed light on the fact that professional female athletes have faced stereotypical representations in *Sports Illustrated*. Dissimilarly, the analyses of the thirty Instagram posts show professional female athletes engaging in self-presentation, empowering followers, competing, training, and sharing social outings. Overall, these findings reflect the difference in the historical sample of magazine covers and the Instagram posts.

Likewise, the findings of this study answer the four research questions of this study. RQ1 is: how do *Sports Illustrated* covers, published in the years following the enactment of Title IX, reflect perceptions of the relationship between women and sports? Only one of the five covers shows a female athlete competing (fig. 2), and all five covers display a form of passivity and stillness instead of active shots. Additionally, two of the magazine covers create very sexualized representations of the female athletes (figs. 4 and 5). The five magazine covers emphasize ideals of True Womanhood, passivity, and even sex. These depictions of female athlete focus less on the sport and more on societal and historical notions of gender. Therefore, these professional female athletes are seen more as images of their gender rather than well-respected athletes in their sports.

Moreover, RQ2 asks: what meanings and messages are conveyed through the images of the magazine covers and Instagram posts? The image samples convey a variety of messages. The magazine sample conveys messages of submissiveness, piety, sex, and competition (in the instance of fig. 2). Fig. 3 also depicts a female figure skater winning an Olympic gold medal. At the same time, the five magazine covers demonstrate a collective message that women are passive and fail to feature a stand-alone image of a female athlete competing or training. On the Instagram side of the study, messages of training, competition, social outings, fashion, empowerment, fighting against sexual abuse, and International Women's Day appear. The thirty Instagram images show that the female athletes are engaging with their followers and sharing numerous elements of their lives. These varying messages confirm that the athletes are engaging in self-presentation on Instagram.

RQ3 asks, how do the Instagram posts, published in 2018, reflect the relationship between women and sports? The Instagram sample shows very different images of female athletes. Using Goffman's theory of self-presentation, as well as gender, media, and visual rhetoric theories, the analyses of the Instagram posts show the athletes presenting their lives through images of competition, activist posts, and a variety of social images. Of the thirty Instagram posts, six posts depict the athlete actively training and competing. Additionally, fifteen of the Instagram posts show the athletes in training or competition outfits, and ten of the posts reflect encouraging and motivating captions. Another interesting category that came from this Instagram sample is that all three professional female athletes used for the study posted for International Women's Day. These images show that women and sports can co-exist rather than being a paradox or separate worlds of sports and womanhood.

Lastly, RQ4 asks, how is gender depicted in the magazine and Instagram images? In the magazine covers, historical notions of gender are present. Specifically, Welter's ideals of True Womanhood, piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, are present in all five covers. The covers show female athletes posing and passive rather than strong, independent, or competitive. In the Instagram sample, gender is depicted in numerous ways. Coburn counters traditional ideals of femininity with her pictures of running and racing in her New Balance racing kits. These racing uniforms are tight and short, revealing her overall muscular physique, which Krane et al. describe as opposing to the feminine ideal body (316). Vonn, on the other hand, shares selfies and fashion images that depict traditional notions of feminine beauty. However, she also shares images of herself skiing, winning, and encouraging her competitors. Vonn presents herself as both a competitive athlete and a woman who loves makeup and fashion. Her juxtaposition of images reveals that traditional notions of gender and the sporting sphere can intertwine. Raisman demonstrates an empowering image of a woman. She breaks out of any form of a traditional, passive role and speaks out against sexual abuse and encourages her followers to educate themselves and stand up for their beliefs. Raisman's activism shapes her ethos and forms a message that women can speak out and make a difference. The combined thirty-five images from *Sports Illustrated* covers and Instagram posts offer numerous ideas about gender, the historical marginalization of female athletes, and self-presentation on Instagram.

It is also important to point out that there are major differences in the mediums of *Sports Illustrated* and Instagram. When posting on Instagram, the athletes can choose to post whatever images and captions they please. In doing so, they are able to engage in self-presentation and control how their audience perceives them. In magazine media, the female athletes do not have any control over what images, text, or composition the editorial team chooses to feature on the

cover. Thus, there is a major difference in these two image samples, but the images still show a unique difference not only in medium, but also in representation.

Limitations

As with any study, this research has limitations. The first limitation is the magazine sample as it was a convenience sample. The magazine covers were selected from the free, online *Sports Illustrated* vault. Although this vault provides numerous covers, only using this source for the historical magazine analysis in the study limits the content to only one magazine. Therefore, the magazine sample does not reflect a wide range of magazine features of professional female athletes. Likewise, the Instagram sample is a convenience sample as the images were selected based on the athlete's popularity and activity level on the social media site. The images are only from the month of March 2018. Perhaps a truly random sample of posts from different points in time or across more than three profiles would have yielded different results.

Conclusions

Overall, this study explores the representations of professional female athletes and discusses implications and affordances of magazine and social media. In doing so, the project aims to fill the present gap in literature that explores how female athletes have been presented on magazine covers, as well as how and why female athletes are using social media to present themselves to their fans and followers. The findings illustrate that *Sports Illustrated* featured images are rooted in historical ideals of femininity and gender performances. The magazine covers display the female athletes as sex objects or caretakers over competitive athletes or citizens of society. These stereotyped images are evidence of a culture that does not see the importance of female athletes, which drives the inequalities and unfair representations that athletes like Bouchard, Cogdell, and the U.S.A. women's gymnastics team face. The findings

from the Instagram sample demonstrate that the athletes are presenting themselves in ways that reveal their passions, competition, and community. In doing so, these female athletes are reshaping how society understands and sees women in sports. The athletes from the Instagram sample of the study do not present historical notions of gender, but instead share their athleticism, accomplishments, passions, and community. Interestingly, Coburn, Vonn, and Raisman also redefine community and show that women in sports have a platform to publicly encourage and help other women and athletes succeed.

Therefore, the results, paired with the literature used to conduct this research, demonstrate that there is presently a shift in the perception of female athleticism. The shift indicates that female athletes should be celebrated for athletic accomplishments and community involvement rather than being celebrated based on traditional notions of gender. Perhaps this movement of the athletes' self-presentation on Instagram will transition to other media outlets, like magazine media, sports networks, and newspapers. This research can solicit further research on how professional female athletes are being represented in other magazines, on the radio, and on television. Such research would contribute to this conversation of how media representations of female athletes shape cultural perceptions of female athleticism.

Appendix A

Analysis of Sports Illustrated magazine covers

Fig.	Sport displayed	# of people in the photo	Body	Active or passive	Doing or not doing femininity	Clothing	Pose	Angle of the shot	Human Touch	Size of the subject	Social distance	Text	Additional Notes
1	Tennis	1	Standing, long white dress, covered	Passive - standing	Yes - doing. Cultural expectation of the 70s, dress, smile, hair.	Long white dress, not athletic wear	Holding a tennis racket. Posed	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	close social distance	"Sportswoman of the year" - ironic	No athleticism shown at all
2	Track	Approximately 9 runners in the race.	2: one is Mary and the other is Mary smiling at the camera.	Both	Both. Running - no. Posing for the photo with hair, smile is.	USA racing kit and a sweater	Racing and leaning over, smiling	Eye-level angle	None	Large and zoomed out	Close personal distance and public distance	"Sportswoman of the year"	Interesting with the running and smiling poses combined
3	None	1	Shoulder up	Passive	Yes - doing with the emphasis of smiling and passive pose.	Assumed - figure skating outfit	Holding Olympic medal	Eye-level angle	None	Large, zoomed-in	Close personal distance	"American Dream"	Shows her medal but not her earning it - seems contradicting.
4	None	1	Laying down, shoulder up	Passive	Yes - doing. Societal expectations of femininity with the long blonde hair and passivity.	Pink, off-the-shoulder top	Lying down	High, vertical angle. Giving the viewer the power.	None	Large, zoomed-in	Close personal distance	"Pacers battle Knicks. Lakers take charge."	Does not show that she is an athlete at all
5	None	1	Sitting on a throne	Passive	Yes - doing. Societal expectations of hair, heels, makeup, outfit.	Black one-piece with long, lace sleeves and a leotard cut.	Sitting on a throne with one leg over the arm of the chair, and one hand at her face, and the other hand on her leg.	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far-social distance		Does not show that she is an athlete at all

Appendix B

Analysis of Emma Coburn's Instagram posts

Fig.	Sport displayed	Number of people in the photograph	Body	Active or passive	Doing or not doing femininity	Clothing	Pose	Angle of the shot	Human Touch	Size of the subject	Social distance	Text	Additional Notes
6	None - but on a track		Standing, holding water bottles	Passive	Yes - Passive, smiles, friendship	Running shoes, running shorts, running t-shirt and tank top.	Smiling, standing, and posing for a photo after a workout.	Eye-level angle	Yes	Medium	close social distance	Speaks to her bond with her teammate. Encouraging her teammate at a race.	Tagged sponsors and Aisha Praught-Leer
7	Track		Racing, mid stride	Active	No - not doing. Showing strength and running instead.	USA Nike racing kit - sports bra and spandex bums and racing spikes	Racing	Eye-level angle	None	Small	Far-social distance	#motivationmonday	Tagged sponsors, Rio Olympics
8	Running - not on a track but on a trail		Running on a trail	Active	No - not doing. Showing strength and running instead.	NB long-sleeve, pink shirt, black running shorts, NB running shoes	Running	Taken from a low vertical angle. Making her have power in the shot.	None	Medium	Far-social distance	#internationalwomensday workout	Tagged sponsors and Aisha Praught-Leer
9	Running - not on a track but on a trail		Running on a trail	Active	No - not doing. Showing strength and running instead.	Long-sleeve pink shirt, long black tights, running shoes, sunglasses, and warming headband.	Running	Taken from a low vertical angle. Making her have power in the shot.	None	Small	Far-social distance	Talks about her training and running hills	Tagged sponsors
10	None but wearing NB racing kit		Posed with NB racing kit, standing	Passive	No - not doing. Emphasis here is on strength, not beauty, hair, etc.	NB racing kit - sports bra and spandex bums	Standing, hands on hip, serious look	Eye-level angle	None	Large, zoomed-in	Far personal distance	Looking forward to racing outdoor track	Tagged sponsors
11	Running - not on a track but on a field (assuming inside of track)		Mid stride, running on a field	Active	No - not doing. Showing strength and running instead.	Sunglasses, long-sleeve green shirt, blue/green running shorts, pink shoes.	Running	Eye-level angle	None	Small	Far-social distance	200 workout	Tagged sponsors
12	None		Walking a dog, mid drift showing	Active	Yes, caring for dog, and there is a focus on her hair and outfit.	NB shoes, black jeans, NB shirt, NB jacket	Walking her dog	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	close social distance	#TeamNB, humor	Tagged sponsors
13	Running		Tying shoes, arms and legs showing. Bent over.	Active	No - not doing. Gearing up for a run and exposing muscles that aren't seen as feminine.	White running tank top, black running shorts, NB shoes, and sunglasses.	Crouched over, tying her shoes.	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	close social distance	motivation, running	Tagged sponsors
14	Running - not on a track but on a trail		Running on a road, mid stride.	Active	No, not doing femininity. She is working on her speed work with strides. This shows strength and grit.	Orange and pink tank top, black tights, pink ans green NB shoes.	Mid-stride, running	Taken from a low vertical angle. Making her have power in the shot.	None	Medium	close social distance	Sprinting, "#workworkworkwork"	Tagged sponsors
15	Track, but not running. Advertisement for Oslo Bislett Games		Standing with arms crossed, arms and stomach exposed with the racing kit.	Passive	No - there is an emphasis in this photo on competition, so that counters traditional femininity.	NB track racing kit.	Arms crossed, looking directly at the camera.	Eye-level angle	None	Large, zoomed-in	Far personal distance	Promotes her first outdoor meet of the season	Tagged Karoline, the track meet, and her sponsors. This image was used to market the track meet and create some "hype" around the race of "world champion vs. challenger"

Appendix C

Analysis of Lindsey Vonn's Instagram posts

Fig.	Sport displayed	# of people in the photograph	Body	Active or passive	Doing or not doing femininity	Clothing	Pose	Angle of the shot	Human Touch	Size of the subject	Social distance	Text	Additional Notes
16	None	6 total	Fully clothed, walking	Active walking, not sport	Yes - doing with the emphasis on her outfit, heels, and hair.	Silver heels, black pants and top, gold jacket	Walking	Taken from a low vertical angle. Making her have power in the shot.	None	Medium	close social distance	Fashion Talks about when she gets home from the gym, she likes to "feel more feminine"	Emphasis here on fashion.
17	None	1	Zoomed-in on head and shoulders	Passive	Yes - doing with emphasis on makeup.	Assumed blue robe	Looking at camera, selfie	Eye-level angle	Yes, head on James Corden's shoulder	Large, zoomed-in	Close, personal distance	Practicing makeup.	Appearance on the Late Late Show and connecting with fans.
18	None	3	Zoomed-in on head and shoulders	Passive	N/A	N/A	Looking at camera, selfie	Eye-level angle	None	Large, zoomed-in	Close, personal distance	Late Late Show	#internationalwomensday, motivational, CTA "be you"
19	None	1	Covered by sign	N/A	No - not doing	N/A - sign	Holding a sign	Eye-level angle	None	Large, zoomed-in	Close, personal distance	Tagged Team Under Armour - event - with the sponsor. It was a UA event.	#internationalwomensday
20	None	2	Zoomed-in on head and shoulders	Passive	Yes - doing with emphasis on hair and makeup.	Jeans, jacket	Selfie with the camera	Eye-level angle	Yes, posing with the Rock, arms around side	Large, zoomed-in	Close, personal distance	Funny post about forgetting her sunglasses	Tagged Oakley.
21	Skiing	1	Standing, holding skis	Passive	No, not doing. The emphasis is on her skis and skiing apparel, which contrasts with societal views of femininity.	Ski jacket, Red Bull beanie, Underarmour turtleneck, gloves, glasses	Holding skis and smiling	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far personal distance	Win #62. Tagged Oakley for her goggles.	Win #62. Tagged Oakley for her goggles.
22	Skiing	1	Skiing	Active	No, not doing. Emphasis of the photo is on her skiing and yelling.	Olympic skiing kit, helmet, goggles	Skiing, yelling	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far personal distance	Win #62	Win #62. Tagged Oakley for her goggles.
23	At a skiing competition	1	Sitting, fully clothed in ski gear	Passive	Yes - doing with such an emphasis on her smile and hair.	Red bull beanie, UA turtleneck, black ski jacket	Sitting and smiling at the camera.	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far personal distance	"Grateful #62"	Post-win interview
24	Skiing	2	Fully clothed in ski gear, standing	Passive	Yes and no. Sense of companionship but also a sense of competition with all of the ski gear.	Red bull helmet, ski racing kit.	standing and holding her skis and side hug.	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far personal distance	Thanking her teammates for a great season	End of season and tagged Sofia Goggia and Oakley.
25	At skiing competition	2	Fully clothed in long jacket and beanie.	Actively hugging, but no motion showed	Yes with the hugging embrace	Red bull beanie and black ski jacket	Hugging someone - assumed a coach or a teammate	Eye-level angle	Hug	Medium	Far personal distance	Thanking her teammates for a great season	End of season. No tags.

Appendix D

Analysis of Aly Raisman's Instagram posts

Fig.	Sport displayed	# of people in the photograph	Body	Active or passive	Doing or not doing femininity	Clothing	Pose	Angle of the shot	Human Touch	Size of the subject	Social distance	Text	Additional Notes
26	None	1	Sitting	Passive	Yes. Passive pose, smiling, emphasis on hair. Also no because of the words on her shirt - "Fierce Mind. Kind Heart. Brave Spirit." "Brave Spirit"	Gray and pink shirt that says "Fierce Mind. Kind Heart. Brave Spirit." Gray pants.	Sitting.	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far personal distance	Promoting "Life is good co." tee-shirts, "Fierce mind. kind heart. brave spirit."	Comment tags: "life is good co." company that shares purpose and optimism.
27	None	0	NA	NA	Not doing - speaking out for safer sports	NA	NA	NA	None	Medium	NA	Shedding light on sexual abuse in sports!!	Tags @d2lorg (Darkness to Light) - "empowering adults to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse through awareness raising, education, and training."
28	None	1	Sitting, fully clothed.	Passive	Yes - posing in a bathing suit with emphasis on her bathing suit and hair. At the same time, No because of the context of the "Survivor" written on her suit.	Black bathing suit with "Survivor" written in white.	Standing with hands on her hips.	Making her have power in the shot.	None	Medium	Far personal distance	#internationalwomensday and thanks the company Aerie for supporting the Flip the Switch movement	Tags @d2lorg (Darkness to Light) - "empowering adults to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse through awareness raising, education, and training."
29	None	1	Sitting, fully clothed.	Passive	No - shedding light on protecting children from sexual abuse with a "Flip the Switch" sign in her hands.	Blue turtleneck, black pants.	Sitting, holding sign.	Eye-level angle	None	Medium	Far personal distance	Empowering followers to make a change with the Flip the Switch movement	#flipswitch - encouraging followers to make a change
30	Gymnastics	2	Hugging, wearing leotard	Passive	Yes. Passive, nurturing, hugging, makeup, sparkles	USA red, white, and blue leotards	Standing and side-hugging each other	Making her have power in the shot.	Yes	Medium	Far personal distance	Wishing Simone a happy birthday - community	Sense of community
31	None	1	Only face shown	Passive	Yes - emphasis on smile and hair	NA	Only can see her face	Eye-level angle	Yes	Large, zoomed-in	Intimate distance	Sending love to her followers	Spreading community
32	None	1	Shoulders and faces shown	Passive	Yes - embracing and smiling, Baseball caps complex this, though.	Black baseball caps, tan sweater, blue shirt.	Hugging	Eye-level angle	Yes	Large, zoomed-in	Intimate distance	Wishing her little sister a happy birthday	Tags her little sister
33	None	1	Legs shown, posing in a dress.	Passive	Yes - emphasis on her dress and overall outfit look.	Black, long-sleeve dress with a snake and tiger on it and heels	Standing with her hands on her hips	Eye-level angle	none	Medium	close social distance	Stars emoji	Focus on fashion
34	None	na	na	na	Not-sharing a motivational/ justice quote	na	na	na	none	na	na	no additional comment	no comment, just photo
35	None	1	Fully dressed, sitting, holding book	Passive	No, she is marketing her own book, which empowers and shows drive/ambition	Pink pant suit, black top, nude heels	Sitting, smiling, holding her book	Taken from a high angle, giving the viewer the power.	None	Small	Far social distance	Thanks her fans - without them, she wouldn't have had the opportunity to write the book	Launching her book

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