

The Institution of Sport: Female Athletes, Media Representation and the  
Social Construction of a Dual Gender Identity

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## **ABSTRACT**

### The Institution of Sport: Female Athletes, Media Representation and the Social Construction of a Dual Gender Identity

Rebecca Martindale

The purpose of this study is to discuss the intersectionality of feminine identity and athletic identity, as well as the public representation of female athletes, labeling, and the construction of dual identities. Media images of elite female athletes were deconstructed in order to analyze how media images of female athletes mold and influence public opinion and discourse. The findings of this study discuss stereotypes of femininity, while deconstructing how the media influences the societal interpretation of femininity, and how this affects the advancement of women's sport. This discussion concludes that femininity and appearance are at the root of how society understands and values female athletes. Successful female athletes automatically become representative of all women in sport, and their actions and public image on and off the field of play have a substantial impact on the sustainability and advancement of female sport in general.

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## **DEDICATION**

To Curtis and Dax, you have all my words.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Since its creation, sport has been an environment for one to demonstrate physical dominance and achieve social status. The games and rules have changed, but sport has remained a hyper-masculine environment, defined by physically exerting and demanding competition that has been historically dominated by males. This male hegemony is perpetuated by the media, which presents athletes differently based on their sport and gender. Competitive sport was created as a tool to subordinate marginalized groups, such as women and homosexual men while lifting the dominant male group to a position of power (Jakubowska, 2018). One of the most described categories in this context is women, who were excluded for example from the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. Although female participation has grown to almost equal men in the most recent Olympic Games, women continue to remain excluded or marginalized in different dimensions within the context of sport. For example, special attention is often given to certain females, such as Muslim women who cannot take part in many sports activities because they can only participate in the presence of women and/or by covering their bodies (Jakubowska, 2018).

Another example is the attention that elite female hockey players are receiving for organizing and participating in a 'Gap Tour' in the hopes of establishing a professional league after theirs was dismantled last year because it wasn't deemed financially profitable for investors (PWHPA, 2019). Despite advances in participation and equal opportunity, there continues to be a divide between male and female athletes and their perceived levels of athleticism and success, and therefore women constitute a minority in professional sport. In particular, female athletes are continuously forced to justify their athleticism while managing their over-sexualized representation in the media (Liang, 2011). This has culminated in female athletes creating dual

identities, one that demonstrates their role and ability as an athlete, and another that preserves their femininity by appealing to social contracts of women's traditional roles (Kane, LaVoi, and Fink, 2013).

Female participation in sport has increased dramatically over the last four decades and according to Kane et al. (2013), two historic moments in women's sports resulted in this participation surge. The first event was Title IX, established in 1972 in the United States, which was designed to protect people from sexual discrimination in education programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Following this legislation, participation in women's sport increased in the United States from 300,000 in 1972 to 3 million by 2011 (Kane et al., 2013). Secondly, the 2012 Olympic summer games in London saw American female athletes outnumber their male counterparts (Kane et al., 2013). These breakthroughs reflected the never-before seen opportunities that were made available to women following Title IX.

The surge of female participation in sport was not a phenomenon exclusive to the United States; Canada also experienced an increase in female interest in sports of all varieties, such as female ice hockey. After the 1998 Olympic Games in Nagano Japan, women's hockey enrollment in Canada increased by 30% and increased again by an additional 12% after the team won gold at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics (Hockey Canada, 2017). For young females, participating in sport brings positive physical, psychological, and social benefits. In Canada, 59% of girls between the ages of 3 and 17 years participate in sport and research has shown that girls who participate in sport at a young age are more likely to continue to be physically active as adults (CAAWS, 2016). Interestingly, girls often choose different types of sport compared to boys. Only 22% choose to participate in team sports, and in general, girls are three times more likely to prefer individual and creative forms of sport (CAAWS, 2016). Such sports include

dance, ballet, gymnastics, and trampoline, which are often identified as suitable for girls and socially acceptable (Bernstein, 2002).

Since the passing of Title IX of the Educational Amendment in 1972, female athletes have made huge strides in the traditionally male-dominated sporting community. This legislation served as a legitimizing force for women's sports, which opened the field of women and also made it of interest for academic inquiry. According to current reports from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the number of female teams and participants in high school and intercollegiate athletics has skyrocketed since the 1980s. In 2019-20, there are vastly more opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport and these opportunities are reciprocally met by eager young athletes looking to pursue them (NCAA Report, 2016).

Logic would dictate that the recent increase in the participation and success of women in sports would correspond with an increase in media coverage and representation and also social acceptance and prestige equivalent to the male athletes. However, despite participation growth, no significant gains have been made in the media coverage of female sports (Mannion, 2016). The media influence our daily lives through their preservation, transmission, and creation of important cultural information, and for years, female athletes have been searching for social acceptance in their coverage. The concept of media framing allows for a reporter's choice as to what aspects of a story in the news are emphasized the most, and what characteristics of individuals are highlighted (Shaller, 2006). It is a means for them to stress certain aspects over others that they believe are more important or appealing to their desired audience. Sports journalists tend to emphasize masculinity over femininity; this framing is used to explain why so few women are depicted in the media (Shaller, 2006). Therefore, as my thesis confirms, the media perpetuates the notion of male dominance throughout the sport. According to Shaller

(2006), media professionals argue that they are only providing broadcasting coverage that the public wants. Mainstream televised media continue to cover, promote and “overemphasize men’s sports while simultaneously marginalizing or ignoring altogether women’s sport” (Kane, 2013, p. 232).

## **Context**

An example of this occurs in Montreal, Quebec where Les Canadiennes Women’s professional ice hockey team rarely receives televised coverage of their games, even though the Canadian Women’s Hockey League (CWHL) signed a partnership with the sports network Sportsnet in 2014. Despite the lack of televised games, the team was able to generate tremendous interest and routinely had significant fan turnouts at their games, largely due to their self-promotion and online publicity through sites such as Facebook. Professional women’s organizations such as Les Canadiennes correspond to the notion that Stromquist (2015) discusses in her article concerning the crucial role that non-political organizations play in working to create gender equality. The fact that the team was able to generate this attention also corresponds with Kane’s research (2013), who found that rising interest in women’s sports runs counter to the media mainstream-promoted idea that no one is interested in watching female-centric sporting events.

An ongoing impediment to women’s success is that the sports world is a longstanding stronghold of masculinity wherein women are still expected to behave gender appropriately. Women and girls in sports still face low crowd appeal, sexual orientation stigmas, and bodily objectification. If expressing emotion, passion, or anger in her sport, she then faces the possibility of ridicule and reprimand. This was the case with Serena Williams at the U.S Open

finals in 2018, where she was penalized by the male chair umpire for expressing frustration after being accused of communicating with her coach during the match using a hand gesture, which is a violation of sport rules (Traister, 2018). Even as a superstar athlete, a woman is expected to maintain her composure and accept that challenging male authority is automatically interpreted as a threat and form of defiance.

There are two interrelated issues to consider. First, the under-representation of sports women in media, and second, whenever sports women actually appear in the media they are often misrepresented and/or sexualized. Much research has been conducted regarding media portrayal of sportswomen, and it has been found that there is a gross misrepresentation of what it means to be a female athlete in both television and print media (Mannion, 2016). When female athletes are represented in visual or written text, their femininity and sexuality are emphasized far more than their athletic ability (Kane, 2013). The displaying of female athletes in sexualized manners perpetuates stereotypical ideologies and ultimately “serves to trivialize or downgrade the seriousness and importance of women’s sports” (Shaller, 2006, p. 51). According to Shaller (2006), being a female athlete contradicts the conventional female role. Therefore, we can conclude that from a media perspective, physical appearance is the main attribute to spotlight to generate public interest. This, alongside emphasizing their traditional gender roles, assists media outlets in accumulating maximum viewership and the correlated financial return.

This sexualized portrayal of female athletes stems from the media’s fear of representing women in a masculine light (Shaller, 2006). According to sports researcher Dorothy Harris, as quoted in Kane's article, "today's woman athlete has become so trendy, she has now become sexy" (Kane, 1989, p. 58). Because one is more apt to find a female athlete in a sexualized pose on the front of a sports magazine rather than in action, the idea of a sexy female athlete is

developed. For the purpose of my study, my focus is on the way that gender is culturally, rather than biologically, constructed, and interpreted. Traditionally stereotypical views of women and gender exert the ideals of femininity instead of athleticism and strength. Kane writes, "Stereotypic presentation ultimately serves to trivialize or downgrade the seriousness and importance of women's sports" (1989, p. 58).

In contrast to the tough portrayal of men, female athletes are seen as overly feminine rather than physically powerful. Choosing to depict female athletes in a different manner than males perpetuates traditions of what society considers as acceptable of men versus women. Unfortunately, this lack of appropriate representation influences the success of a female athlete during her career, as well as the longevity of her reputation and marketability once she retires. Elite female athletes do not garner the same wage earnings as men, and as a result, many rely on sponsorships from companies and businesses for financial success (Bernstein, 2002). Routinely these campaigns focus on a female athlete's femininity rather than her athletic ability, often choosing to print pictures of female athletes posing suggestively or dressing in a sexualized manner. Kane et al. (2013) found that a number of female athletes in their study pointed out their desire and obligation to increase interest in their sport and to promote women's sports overall. The study participants indicated that the best way to do this was by "selling sex" (Kane et al., 2013, p. 275). If you search Google images for 'female athlete' the majority of the images generated from the search depict women posing rather than action shots from actual competition, partially clad, or participating in an activity unrelated to their actual sport.

In contrast, the same exercise applied to 'male athletes' yields photographs primarily depicting men actively competing in their respective sports. Furthermore, the female athletes who are most photographed while actively competing, highlight sports that are considered

gendered and socially acceptable sports for women to participate in, such as gymnastics, swimming and tennis (Shaller, 2006). Within this framework, the media preserves and perpetuates the cultural assumption that sexualizing female athletes is an effective way to make a profit and that women in sport need to be presented in ways that reaffirm “traditional notions of femininity and heterosexuality” (Kane et al. 2013, p. 275). This impacts the way people view women in sport, especially girls, who at a young age begin to learn that appearance matters more than athletic performance and which ‘female sports’ are socially supported and approved of in society. It also influences girls who are self-conscious of their bodies and do not feel that they conform to the body standards that the media sets forth. These perceived sport and image standards can discourage girls from participating altogether as they feel they lack the competence and confidence to succeed (CAAWS, 2016).

Despite the increase of women’s overall participation in organized sports, female athletes today continue to face a lack of appreciation for their accomplishments, harmful stereotypes rooted in historical, cultural ideologies, and social pressures to manage their dual identities as females and as athletes. As many scholars have noted, female athletes face a female/athlete paradox, in which the two identities clash due to hegemonic ideals of femininity and masculine athleticism, resulting in a need to resolve or cope with it (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, and Kauer, 2004). Female athletes must continuously battle the stigma around women in sport, known as the “image problem” (Shaller, 2006, p. 52). The image problem is the notion that all women who participate in sport, particularly those who compete in sports that are deemed masculine, such as hockey or rugby, are of lesbian sexual orientation. To combat this, many female athletes devote time and effort into their appearance during gameplay to embellish or even exaggerate their femininity, by wearing makeup, placing bows or sparkles in their hair,

wearing visible jewelry such as earrings or necklaces, or by wearing tight outfits that display their female figure (Bernstein, 2002). Focusing on appearance is an attempt to prevent spectators from labeling them as unfeminine or reason that their personal choice of sexual partner be based on their athletic abilities. These actions, combined with the perceived notion that viewers subconsciously fear the idea of strong, athletic women, provide the media a platform to highlight heterosexual qualities over athletic accomplishments (Shaller, 2006) and to promote female sports that are aesthetically pleasing for men (Mannion, 2016).

The quest to be taken seriously as an athlete while fighting against the image problem has proven to be a balancing act for female athletes. Research shows that for women, being an athlete contradicts the conventional female role (Shaller, 2006). The multiple roles that female athletes have to juggle has resulted in the creation of two identities; one that struggles with the media to highlight female athleticism and strength in sport, and a second that desires to be seen as feminine and non-threatening. It is problematic that women must weigh the costs and benefits of marketing their sexuality to increase their fan base while men in sport do not.

### **Researcher Location**

The topic of women's sport and representation is of personal interest because I was an elite female athlete. My bias is rooted in my experience playing university hockey for five years, winning two Canadian Interuniversity Sport championship titles with McGill University, as well as one year of professional hockey, winning the National championship as a member of the Montreal Stars.

During the initial years of my university career, I struggled to find a balance between who I wanted to be as an athlete and how I wanted to be regarded as a female. Hockey is



generally considered a masculine sport, requiring intense training and heavy weightlifting. A demanding schedule of both on and off-ice training six days a week, a similar work regime to that of our male counterparts, propelled our team to be able to compete at such intense and elite physical levels. The desire to compete and to be taken seriously as an athlete in a demanding sport was contradicted by my desire to be identified as feminine. As Shaller (2006) describes, the ‘image problem’ of being labeled as a lesbian solely because I played hockey was a label I resented. To combat this label, I worked hard to make sure I represented myself as feminine by wearing makeup and fixing my hair before games. The research conducted on dual identities by Kane et al. (2013) directly represents the real struggle that I experienced as a female athlete.

Three common stereotypes made about women’s sports that are continuously reinforced in society are: 1) that men are better athletes than women, 2) that female athletes have an overly masculine or manly body, and 3) that women who play sports are lesbian (Kane, 2013). While it is true that many of these stereotypes are a result of hegemonic social thinking, I believe that female athletes surprisingly and unintentionally reinforce them as they try to counter these stereotypes. Ultimately, the quest to be seen seriously as an athlete while fighting against the image problem has proven to be a balancing act, struggling to redefine female athleticism while simultaneously striving to be seen as feminine and non-threatening to social norms.

Academic inquiry has demonstrated that media portrayals of sportswomen emphasize femininity and heterosexuality versus athletic competence (Kane, et al., 2013). This type of coverage and media trivializes women’s sports. While women may be allowed to participate in sports through systematic institutions that create opportunity, they are still evaluated through the standards set by a patriarchal perspective, or what can be considered a hegemonic male gaze. Within this study, I will investigate the production of the gender division within media and how

this has perpetuated the need for female athletes to create a dual identity to appeal as both athletes and females to an audience.

### **Research Questions**

Following questions undergird my study:

1. How does the media's portrayal of female athletes affect the image of what it means to be a female athlete? And how does this correspond with what is prescribed as socially acceptable for females in society?
2. How do media representations influence the popular discourse on women's athletics?

### **Significance**

By drawing on my experience from the collegiate and professional realm of women's hockey, I hope to be able to identify and reflect critically on my personal viewpoints of how women in sport view themselves as both athletes and as females. My aim is to suggest how changes in social discourse can be implemented to positively change how younger generations regard women in sport. Female athletes of elite caliber are role models for many young athletes. By deconstructing my own notions of gender representation in sport in comparison to female athletic representation in the media, I hope to identify possibilities for shifting public and media understandings of the place of females in sport.

Since I have chosen auto-ethnography as the methodological orientation for my research, it is important to link my personal experiences with general societal orientations and the positions that media stories teach us how to think about aspects of identity, such as gender. Thus, it is important to take into consideration the current political and social climate that exists in our

society regarding gender equality and the traditional roles that gender implies. Gender equality is an ever-evolving theme, and the definition of female gender identity is continuously being challenged and re-defined. The rise in feminist movements, such as 'Me Too', challenge traditional patriarchy and bring to light the more subtle nuanced sexualization that women face on a daily basis.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Sport can be regarded as a tool for social change, a way of enabling mobility and improvement of social status. It also plays an important role in the processes of social inclusion, and alternatively allows for the realism of social exclusion as well. The global political situation and cultural changes in different countries constantly provide new contexts for sociological analysis of gender studies. Underscoring this current is the understanding that the meanings of femininity or masculinity are always in motion (Bruce, 2017). This means that context makes a difference, be it historical time period, national context or culture. Beliefs about femininity and masculinity have been around for a long time and have formed strong and powerful tendencies surrounding societal precedent that can be highly resistant to change (Bruce, 2017). Our different and complex societal customs and norms precede any one individual within it; therefore as a participant within society, a woman must learn how to act based on these prescribed norms.

### **Critical Feminist Theory**

Bell Hooks (2000) defined feminism as “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (p. 1). The basic goals of feminism are to promote women’s rights, transform society, privilege women’s ways of knowing, and include their voices in research. Critical feminist theory (CFT) is one of the many theories that stems out of critical race theory, in recognition of the various types of oppression that exist in society. It is anchored to the fundamental assumption that society is structured around a series of inequitable relationships of power whereby females are routinely and systematically marginalized and devalued. CFT focuses on issues of ideology, power, and the need to ask critical questions within the context of sport about meaning, purpose, and organization. Based on the assumption that knowledge about

social life requires an understanding of how gender and gender relations operate in our lives, CFT focuses on the notion that sports are gendered activities that lead to a celebration of masculinity shaped by aggression, domination and conquest (Coakley, 2017). Gender and gender relations remain contentious issues in many spheres and they continue to be concerns within the context of sport as well. CFT provides context to explore how the relationships of girls and women are systematically devalued in sports and why gender equity and the transformation of the culture and structure of sports are in the best interest of both women and men.

Kane et al. (2013) use CFT to investigate the emergence of multiple identities of female athletes. Based on critical theory, which focuses on the way that social relationships and belief systems are entrenched in power and privilege, Kane et al. (2013) investigated this paradigm specific to a sports environment. As an establishment, sport is an example of one environment in our society where gender, privilege, power, and tradition intersect and, where gender-based relationships are used to “establish common beliefs, behaviors and understandings” (Kane et al., 2013, p. 277). These prescribed understandings center on gender-based relationships, the privilege of men, and the need for women to fill socially acceptable gender roles that have been prescribed. In her capacity as a female athlete, she acts both as a member of society and as a member of a sport, and both statuses require that she fulfill societal expectations to be fully accepted in each role. The employment of critical feminist theory allows for the study of these assumptions embedded within our culture, specifically media coverage and the promotion of women’s sports. Critical studies on media coverage and representation have shown that female athletes have been and still are marginalized in quantitative terms and their sports performances trivialized and regarded as less important compared to their male peers (Tolvhed, 2013). CFT

also provides context to question the gender-related rules that have historically prevailed, therefore challenging the mentality of sex versus sport in a masculine dominated domain.

### **Objectification Theory**

Women in sport must routinely manage being objectified and sexualized by the media and the general public (Daniels, 2012). Critically reflecting on the sexual objectification of female athletes through the lens of objectification theory allows for further understanding and promotion of research; it may also lead to interventions to improve women's lives in a sociocultural context that sexually objectifies the female body and equates a woman's worth with her body's appearance and sexual functions (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The theory stipulates that Western societies routinely sexually objectify the female body. As a result, many women focus on their physical appearance rather than other attributes, such as their athletic prowess and ability (Daniels, 2012). Objectification takes place within social encounters, as well as through an individual's personal interactions with visual media. There is growing evidence documenting the widespread objectification of women in media and the negative correlation of this objectification felt by female viewers (Daniels, 2012).

Examining women in sport through the lens of critical feminist theory and objectification theory, we can explore how and why women's sports are marginalized, with reference to the large bodies of sociological research on the ways in which men's and women's sports are socially constructed. These theories help describe how these social institutions have been formed, negotiated, and challenged throughout history.

This literature review is divided into five sections. (1) The first section explores the role of the media in sports promotion and how gender inequality continues to be a prevalent issue in the world of sport. (2) The second section focuses on sexual objectification and how an athlete's appearance impacts their marketability. (3) The third section reflects on the development of a female athlete's social identity in the male hegemonic environment of sport. (4) The fourth section reviews a specific case of the media's impact on a professional women's ice team. (5) The fifth section examines current feminist movements and how gender inequality and identity are at the forefront of society. The review of the literature will end with a brief conclusion of main points and highlight questions that require further investigation and discussion in subsequent parts of the thesis.

### **Section One: Media, Gender and Sport**

Although the advancement and visibility of women's sport has increased over recent decades, research shows that media coverage of female athletes still lags behind that of men (Knight & Giuliano, 2001). And although the application of many theoretical and methodological approaches has allowed researchers to "identify default settings of mainstream media, it has had very little impact on shifting these settings or the discourses that inform them" (Bruce, 2017, p. 24). The lack of representation in the media has created a void in knowledge where females can participate in sport on a professional level, and ultimately leads to an absence of role models for female athletes (Sport Information Resource Center, 2015). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media, also known as the Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), argues that the media tells the audience what to think about by giving a topic or issue with higher importance more coverage. Therefore, women's sports, in the eyes of the sports fans,

maybe experienced as less important than men's sports because they consistently receive less media exposure and are therefore deemed less noteworthy. One major exception to this marginalization is the Olympic Games. Studies have shown that coverage of sportswomen increases during this global, multi-sport event (Bruce, 2017). Research focusing specifically on female athletic representation within the media has steadily increased over the last twenty years (Shaller, 2006). The University of Minnesota established the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport in 1993, which is devoted exclusively to girls and women in sport, and encourages researchers and educators to work together to enhance the lives of females on and off the playing field. Many resources have been developed and devoted to women's sports and it has been found that despite the attention, there has been a decline in the amount of media coverage of women in sport at the amateur and professional level (Kane, 2013). Media coverage in general both in terms of content quality and quantity, still lags behind that of men. Using commentators unfamiliar with women's sport, and providing poor or less technology for game coverage, instant replays, and statistics, present the women's games as less important and less interesting than their male counterparts. In addition, it is interesting and noteworthy to consider how sportswomen are compared to sportsmen as a way of flattering them (Knight & Giuliano, 2001). This practice ultimately establishes men's sports as the standard against which women's sport should be judged.

Sexist media coverage brings up the question of how female athletes are portrayed by the media, and how sports media are involved in the propagation of gender inequality. Sports commentators and writers often allude or explicitly refer to a female athlete's attractiveness, femininity, and sexuality yet refer to their male counterparts as powerful and dominant (Kane et al., 2013). Media professionals argue that they are only providing broadcasting coverage that the



public wants and that by describing the athletes as attractive they will be perceived more positively than female athletes who are not described in that way, as being attractive softens the perceived gender role inconsistency of a female athlete (Knight & Giuliano, 2001; Shaller, 2006). There is no doubt sport is an institution steeped in sexism. As Walker and Sartore-Baldwin (2013) discuss, sexism in sport seems to be an impermeable institution. Sexism as a norm is so entrenched within the institution of sport that it is rarely even perceived at a conscious level, and if detected, most consider change impossible because, “that’s just the way things are” (Walker & Baldwin, 2013, p. 21). Ultimately, it needs to be seriously considered whether media outlets believe in sexualizing female athletes as the only means to reach a greater audience, or are they simply catering to pre-existing historical sexist notions of female sport?

Female athletes are often forced to balance the emergence of multiple identities that form out of being members of these two different social spheres, each of which demands separate behaviors (Kane, et al., 2013). First, she is a female member of society where she must negotiate being female based on the prescribed notions of what feminine behavior entails. Second, her role as an athlete demands an alternative set of behaviours such as being assertive, aggressive, strong, and powerful, characteristics not traditionally associated with females. As both a female and an athlete, a woman must negotiate these two identities as they contribute to her overall sense of self within this male-dominated landscape.

Judith Butler began a discussion about sex and gender by exploring the notion that both are socially constructed because the biological sex is a projection of our gender expectations (Butler, 1988). Crucial to this argument is the idea of performativity. Butler points out that gender is not an expression of what one is but of something one does. Gender is not merely expressed but “instituted through stylization of body and 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” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). Everyday actions construct and reinforce how individuals should perform in their gender, what is socially accepted, and what is generally expected. Performing gender is not straightforward; the active production of gendered identities constructs multiple femininities. It has been implied that inserting females into the male domain of sport can disrupt traditional assumptions about girl’s strength and athleticism (Krane, Ross, Barak, Lucas-Carr & Robinson, 2014). Within a sports environment, we can strive to better understand how female athletes construct their sporting identities and the degree to which these constructions reflect traditional male hegemony or substantive changes within the community of sport (Mean & Kassing, 2008).

Building upon Butler’s understanding of gender as a symbolic order of society, it is necessary to understand that our social reality is continuously reproduced by the media, because the media is part of the public discourse. The media plays a particularly important role in the discursive construction of reality. Media stories teach us how to think about aspects of identity, such as gender, and sport, by mirroring the symbolic order of society, which can impart constraining gendered messages.

Mass media tends to reflect dominant ideologies, such as the accomplishments of males in the world of sport, therefore it is necessary to examine male hegemony when evaluating the portrayal of women in the media (Shaller, 2006). When an individual or group, such as female athletes, are seen as ‘Them’, it is likely to think about and treat them differently. This is often the case in sports media, where men are understood as the norm and sportswomen are seen as others (Bruce, 2017). Much research into the media’s representation of sportswomen has also focused on “gender difference in media coverage rather than gender similarities” (Bruce, 2017, p. 26).

This puts a focus on an equality with men within the existing social structure, therefore normalizing coverage of men as the desired form of sports media coverage. This practice would not have such an impact if sportsmen were regularly compared to sportswomen, but this seldom happens. By sexualizing sportswomen, the media continually remind us that females are not really like male athletes and never can be or should be (Daniels, 2012).

## **Section Two: Sexual Objectification and Sexuality**

Narratives discussed by Western researchers on the topic of media coverage of sportswomen usually pertain to historical marginalization, trivialization, and feminization of sportswomen (Bruce, 2017). As a result, frustration sits alongside cautious optimism concerning new possibilities for shifting public and media understandings of the place of women in sport. Bruce (2017) created a list of the ‘15 rules of Media Coverage’ (Appendix G) based upon existing research and predisposed pretenses. These rules are not static or absolute, but they have established themselves as powerful frameworks for making sense of women in sport and have been problematic in changing or adaptation.

Sport is a context in which gender is tightly held in place. Since competitions are divided into men’s and women’s events in a way that assume a strict gender binary, there are few other arenas in which so much work is put into affirming that each body fits firmly into a male or female category. Bruce (2017) lists compulsory heterosexuality/Appropriate femininity and Sexualisation as rules #7 and #8 in his media coverage rules. Compulsory heterosexuality is evident when the media focus on sportswomen’s sexual or emotional relationships with men, and appropriate femininity is seen when the emphasis is placed on characteristics that are associated culturally with femininity, for example, small size or concern for others, and gender-appropriate

sports. Gender inequality in sport perpetuated by the media has many negative consequences for female athletes. The media tends to ignore and therefore devalue women's athletic accomplishments by focusing more often on their physical appearance, private lives, and femininity and sexuality, even if they achieve impressive athletic feats (Scheidler & Wagstaff, 2018).

In addition to the unequal types of coverage that female athletes receive, they also receive less overall coverage (Scheidler & Wagstaff, 2018). Furthermore, evidence has been consistent that the type of coverage that is portrayed is highly sexualized (University of Minnesota Tucker Center, 2014). The increase in women's sporting presence has worked to raise awareness and concern about female athletes' sexuality and has highlighted the need to negotiate discourses of traditional beauty, size and femininity. Gender inequality in the media coverage of sports events is obvious, permeating, and despite the efforts of feminist movements and sports activists, it continues to persist. It has been shown that women are represented best in sports where their bodies can be sexualized and they can be shown off as attractive (Mannion, 2016). Stereotypical representations of women as the 'sexy athlete' in media ultimately serve to trivialize or downgrade the seriousness and importance of women's sports (Kane, 1988). This inaccurate portrayal of female athletes affects society as a whole. If female athletes continue to be portrayed and promoted in ways that emphasize their physical attractiveness over their athletic skills, they will literally and figuratively be stripped of their power not only in sport but in society overall (Kane et al., 2013).

Currently, gender remains the primary categorization of female athletes, reproducing athletes as women who play sport rather than as athletes first and foremost. Gendered forms of athleticism represented in the media become inextricably linked with the performance of actual

athletic identities. We become emotionally subject to the discourses from which our identities arise therefore making it “hard to resist predominant hegemonies even when they are not in our best interest” (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 128). This becomes apparent when girls and women are questioned about what they think of female athletes. Elizabeth Daniels (2010) investigated how girls define and reflect upon their own self-perception after looking at images of current female athletes that had been used by the media. We see sexualization in media coverage that focuses on the sexual appeal of sportswomen’s bodies rather than their athletic skill. She found that teenage girl athletes who compared themselves to the idealized images of women engaged in sport felt negatively about themselves because they felt it was impossible to look like those women. Girls learn that sport is considered masculine, and when they participate, they are often confronted with limits on what they should do. Girls feel discouraged from participating and stop playing when they do not see female athletes being successful or respected. Sexualized displays of female athleticism prompt adolescent girls to self-objectify and focus on their own physical appearance rather than their athletic ability (Daniels, 2013). The issue of body image and physical beauty and the desire to be all things marketable is a constant in the background of female athlete’s minds. Tennis stars Serena Williams and Genie Bouchard have publicly addressed difficulties with their own self-image. Williams has said she “wishes she wasn’t so muscular and that her arms were more toned”, and Bouchard has publicly shared her fight with an eating disorder after struggling with expectations, declining results and stress from her training (Cole, 2016).

In contrast, Bruce (2017) identifies the ‘pretty and powerful’ rule, a rule that encourages people to rethink sexualization because it challenges the belief that physical strength and power are incompatible with ideals of feminine beauty. It embraces sporting excellence and femininity

as complementary and empowering. It stresses that the context in which an image appears matters more than if they are overly sexual because these images may actually communicate power, self-confidence and beauty, not sexual access.

Daniels (2010) noted three themes that emerged from her study: appearance and attractiveness, athleticism and body, and looks. It was found that girls and women commented extensively on sexualized images of female athletes, either admiring or showcasing jealousy of the appearance of those women. The exception lay with images of performance athletes that had not been digitally altered, enhanced or objectified by the media. These images inspired participants to focus on athletic success and the breaking of gender stereotypes by those athletes. Overall, Daniels (2010) concluded that more non-objectified images of female athletes in media were needed in order to foster a more positive impact on female viewers.

### **Section Three: Athletic and Social Identity**

Many of Bruce's (2017) 15 rules of media coverage construct femininity and physical strength as incompatible characteristics that need to be managed through "representation that emphasizes heterosexual femininity and simultaneously hides or negatively represents lesbian athletes of masculine-looking female bodies" (p. 30). A women's athletic identity has to manage the implications of contesting what is viewed as a predominantly masculine domain. According to American sociologist Joseph Harry (1995), women who commit to sport wholeheartedly often have their sexualities questioned; "women who participate in physically rough and high-risk sport are still commonly seen as 'unfeminine', and their (hetero)sexuality is often considered suspect" (Davison & Frank, 2006, p. 180). This includes either being framed as masculine and hence lesbian, subjecting oneself to reproducing traditional heterosexual femininity and 'softer'

forms of masculinity by adopting the label of ‘tomboy’, or being overtly sexy in order to maintain being seen as heterosexual (Mean & Kassing, 2008).

Athletic identity is defined as the degree to which individuals identify themselves with the role of an athlete (Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder, 1993). Individuals with high athletic identity place great importance on their success or failure in the athletic realm and may attribute large portions of their self-worth to these accomplishments. The degree to which the media cover female athletic events helps to mold society’s identity of female athletes and influences its perceptions of women in general. MacArthur, Angelini, Smith, and Billings (2017) found that women overall are more likely to have their success attributed to experience rather than skill, and that female athletes were more likely to receive comments about their size and body versus their male counterparts. Comments and notions such as these can be associated with a person’s social identity, whereby individuals develop their personal and social characteristics by focusing on similarities and differences with others. Social identity can be understood as a person’s sense of who they are based on their group membership. When someone regards a peer group positively, they will want to adapt and be accepted in order to feel a sense of identity and belonging to that group.

The regular appearance of women in the community of sport would suggest that female athletes have overcome traditional hegemony to participate in sport. However, some believe that by embracing the identity of athletic muscular femininity, we “endorse the position that it is disempowering since it inherently limits femininities and therefore the types of women athletes and women’s sports” (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 137). It is essential to consider how female athletes achieve athletic identity through the reproduction of the traditional hegemonic definitions that marginalize, exclude and differentiate ‘other’ women from the sport by creating a

non-athletic female category. In this sense, athletic identity is only achieved by distinguishing oneself as different from 'normal' female categorization.

Historically it has been believed that girls participate in sport for social purposes or to simply stay in shape rather than based on competitive desires (Daniels, 2012). Being an athlete is viewed as being unique or special, versus participating just for fun. An alternative thought is that some girls play sports to improve and confront restrictive expectations surrounding femininity, using athletics to triumph over gendered social restrictions and to create a site for growth and empowerment. These girls are breaking social rules by finding a space where their version of athletic femininity is supported by teammates (Krane et al., 2014). At the same time, sport is complete with demanding and conflicting expectations concerning the skill, emotional expression, and social hierarchies within social groups and teams. Being a female athlete can be a hard road to navigate in regard to fitting in with one's peers. Participating in a team network allows for female athletes to develop bonds with teammates who allow for and support exploration of gender performances and create a safe space for identity negotiations (Krane et al., 2014). MacArthur, et al. (2017) distinguish three steps that a person's social identity experience when joining an activity or group. They place themselves in a social group, they learn the norms and behaviors of the group, and they internalize the norms to act accordingly. How girls and women manage group expectations and codes and conventions is dependent upon how they interpret and approach the demands of femininity, and how their personal and social identities focus on similarities and difference with others of the group.



## **Section Four: Women in Hockey**

Hockey is one of the few sports that is played by almost as many girls and women as boys and men (CAAWS, 2016). The rise in interest in women's ice hockey has been very recent compared to the men's version of the game. While men have competed in the Olympics since 1920, women's ice hockey was only introduced in the Nagano Olympics in 1998. Initially, the women's game struggled to gain acceptance and support from the wider, male-dominated hockey community (Reid & Mason, 2015). Interestingly, after facing lack of public and media interest, it was primarily the support of the media, along with the approval of the International Ice Hockey Federation and International Olympic Committee, that allowed women's hockey to become a mainstay on the world stage (Reid & Mason, 2015).

One of the most significant challenges associated with elite Canadian female hockey players is the marketability and expansion potential of women's hockey (Locke & Karlis, 2015). At the first Women's World Hockey Championships in 1990, a strategic decision was made for the women to wear pink and white jerseys to create a unique identity for the women's team, and at the same time draw attention from the hockey media, to encourage them to write about the event (Ellison, 2017). Initially, journalists reported that hockey traditionalists were outraged, and some felt it was promoting a degrading stereotype of being a female athlete (Reid & Mason, 2015). However, the pink jersey tactic proved to be effective for generating media for the tournament and cultivating awareness of the event within the general public.

The Montreal based professional women's hockey team, Les Canadiennes, relied on promotion and advertising via the internet and social media sites in order to garner public interest and game attendance. With very few televised games, the team and Canadian Women's Hockey league (CWHL) had to rely on word of mouth to generate public interest and sustainability for

their league. The ‘nobody’s interested’ narrative that the media uses to justify their lack of exposure and investment ignores the fact that when women’s sports are covered, the audience frequently responds in record-setting numbers (Kane, 2013). By ignoring this, the media avoids acknowledging its role in building an audience for men’s sports while suppressing interest in women’s. Ultimately, if the media chose to provide more representations of skilled, strong, and talented female athletes in their sports coverage, it could contribute and lead to the advancement and growth of women’s hockey (Stromquist, 2015). Unfortunately, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 the Canadian Women’s Hockey League announced that they had made the decision to discontinue operations due to an economically unstable business model after the loss of a major financial backer (Spencer, 2019).

Today, modern sports have evolved to foster the socialization of males in line with previous eras of what constitutes masculine identity and attitude. A sport that is considered masculine functions in society to reinforce the sense of separation between men and women and such ideas lead to the construction of ideologies concerning the female body and the polarization of the sexes (Trolan, 2013). There is nothing inherently male about some of the key themes relevant to the community of hockey and sport, such as dreams, passion, and dedication, except the powerful association within a foundational discourse that is rooted in masculinity. Consequently, women achieve athletic identities using culturally established norms of male athleticism while managing femininity. We need to look beyond criteria, such as the rise in female participation in sport, to analyze the embedded practices of those who regulate, promote and “mediatize sport” (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 142). By focusing on increasing awareness of the issues that exist for women in representation by sports media, we can work towards the better achievement of gender equality and empowerment. Women are already breaking down historical

barriers to their sport involvement. As scholars and educators, we should challenge the media to reflect that reality.

### **Section Five: Global Consciousness**

Inequality and sexualization experienced by women are not isolated to the world of sport, but rather can be experienced in every facet of our society on a daily basis. Since scholars have been discussing sexual objectification, its presence in our daily lives and its normalization have all increased. Globally and across all professions, women are continuously objectified and degraded based on their gender and their supposed inherent skillset and ability solely because they are female (Gill & Orgad, 2018). Sexual objectification of women has become a widespread and rampant societal problem affecting the lives of millions of women. In fact, Batool and Zaidi (2017) believe sexual objectification should be regarded as a new type of gender bias against females. Due to objectification, women tend to become objects or commodities to be presented and used for pleasure, as well as for commercialism.

Worldwide, we are witnessing a move away from discussions of sexualization to a more “critical and political register interested in a variety of ways in which sex and power intersect” (Gill & Orgad, 2018, p. 1313). Women are becoming more and more public and vocal in their expression of intolerance and injustice that they face throughout different institutions, specifically the workplace. Online spaces such as websites and social media sites allow for women to express their gendered identities and network with others. The online world creates a forum where people can write, express themselves, and question the exclusion and sexualization of women, space that is seldom found in mainstream media coverage (Bruce, 2017).

Dominant forms of gender representation appear to be in flux, shifting as new frameworks for making sense of female embodiment emerge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Current public movements create platforms for building feminist solidarity across lines of class, race, and sexuality. Most notably, the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault has provided a forum where women are coming forward to expose and shed light on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace. The visibility of #MeToo in the present moment illustrates in interesting ways the shifted engagement from a concern with sexualization to a more critical and political register interested in how sex and power intersect. More broadly, it is concerned with the intersection of sex and power within a framework of justice.

While the #MeToo campaign was sparked by the exposure of the experiences of white heterosexual women in the US especially in the media industry, it has quickly expanded, with more and more stories of queer women and men, women of color, and women and men in other countries coming into the limelight. The campaign has provided important spaces for a wide range of women to participate in the public debate concerning sexism. However critics of the movement point out that it is powerful and privileged white western women who are at the center of #MeToo. It is also worth noting that much of the debate focus on the specific (male) perpetrators rather than the capitalist, patriarchal, and sexist system that has produced, sustained and rewarded these individuals over time (Gill & Orgad, 2018). How should we understand the role of a mainstream media that suddenly seems to believe some women, after decades of trivializing and undermining them?

Another protest against patriarchal structure dominant in society took shape in the Women's March on Washington on January 21, 2017. The march was incited to protest the bigoted and misogynistic rhetoric used by Donald Trump during the 2016 United States

Presidential campaign. As part of the march, the ‘PussyHat Project’ was launched to create a powerful visual of collective identity and action. The idea behind the bright pink hat was that it could be worn by supporters anywhere, and by all kinds of people crossing age, gender presentation, socio-economic backgrounds and abilities (Boothroyd, Bowen, Cattermole, Chang-Swanson, Daltrop, Dwyer, Gunn, Kramer, McCartan, Nagra, Samimi, & Yoon-Potkins, 2017). The hats were viewed as pushback against the ways in which women are reduced to their sexuality. The use of the word pussy was an attempt to reclaim the term after Donald Trump made derogatory remarks that women would let him “grab them by the puss” (Keating, January 24, 2017). The march and the hats received global attention, with critics linking the pussyhat symbolism and language directly to the hegemonic notion of femininity by reducing gender identity to sex (Boothroyd et al., 2017).

The reaction of the public when these events took place centered not only on the issues at hand but also criticized the anger and emotion that women were expressing when confronted with the inequality and injustice of such incidents (Boothroyd et al., 2017). The outward expressions of the victims and protestors themselves came under scrutiny. Their anger was viewed as nasty and deviant for contradicting the social norms of what types of emotion feminine bodies should be displaying. According to Boothroyd et al. (2017), “women who do not maintain proper emotional control are considered to be threatening to the underlying understandings of what it means to be female” (p. 716).

In reviewing the literature, we can conclude that sport is a prominent institution in our society as it draws on and celebrates valued characteristics. These characteristics include respect, hard work, and integrity, but also can be gender categorized and thereby influence our social norms and expectations of others (Ellison, 2017). We are witnessing a change in how

marginalized groups confront categorization and stigmatization. Women are continuously confronting and defying the many different obstacles that impede equality and advancement for all. This includes challenging the role of the media in representation and objectification of women, defining female athletic identity, defining their professionalism, denouncing sexism in the workplace, and working against the inequality that is present in all facets of life. There is much room to grow and further studies and education are necessary to evoke permanent change and resonance.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The research methodology for this study is autoethnography, which is categorized as a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world, which indicates that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The objective of investigating in the natural setting is to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people in the natural setting make of their experiences. For this study, it is the meanings I formulate while constructing my identity as a female athlete. Some characteristics of a qualitative approach are (a) the data is collected as words, (b) the outcome is a process rather than a product, (c) the focus is how the participants make sense of their lives and experiences, and (d) the language is expressive (Creswell 2003). The qualitative researcher's goal is to better understand human behavior and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This qualitative study is conducted using autoethnography, a form of research and writing about the self (Ellis 2004).

#### **Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is a form of ethnography, which makes the researcher's life and experiences the focus of the research (Creswell, 2003). Ethnography is a research approach, which focuses on learning about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings. Ethnography takes the position that human behavior and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their worlds and their lives are highly variable and locally specific. In autoethnography, the researcher is the subject, and the researcher's interpretation of the experience is the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This method allows the researcher easy access to the primary data source which is the researcher. Autoethnography is self-reflexive

research delving into the self and the social (Creswell, 2003). Unlike other forms of qualitative research where the researcher is expected to keep personal bias from the writing, autoethnography is written in the first-person voice.

Autoethnography is research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As I construct my identity as a female athlete, I do so using my philosophy of learning which is personal, and the events that occur in the culture of the sport, which involves social interaction.

Because culture is comprised of self and others, autoethnography is not a study simply of self alone. Autoethnography is a study of self as the main character with others as supporting actors in the lived experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this thesis, I describe my story of constructing an identity as a female hockey player and reflect on how this identity evolved by connecting my experience to how other female athletes have been publicly represented.

The purpose of this autoethnography is to detail, explain and make meaning of my experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This process assists the readers and me in gaining insight into the behavior and dynamics of the representation of female sportswomen. The construction of my identity as an athlete entails an introspective look at my actions and how those actions define who I am as a female and an athlete.

## **Research Design**

This autoethnographic qualitative case study discusses the intersectionality of feminine identity and athletic identity as they are perceived and experienced by the individual athlete, as well as how they are affected by the dynamic of mainstream media. In this ethnographic study, I often refer to the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and femininity that have shaped modern



sport and influenced stereotypes of female athletes. Much of my topic observation contains valuable personal experiences because of my role as an insider and my ability to relate to the population of interest as a former elite female athlete who experienced many of the same struggles. I recognize that this approach is much different than that of many other ethnographers because I did not have to assimilate into a new culture and therefore, my existing role as a member of this community was extremely helpful to my research because I had already established a base knowledge of the subject matter I was interested in closely examining.

The supporting data I used to facilitate this study involves examining published photographs of professional female sportswomen and their corresponding news articles in order to explore how these women were depicted by media outlets. The articles also take into account how the public reacted to the images in question. To put into context, I explored professional male athlete's photographs and corresponding articles from closely similar situations in order to examine and extract similarities and differences in how the professional athletes in question were framed by the media.

The athletes being examined represent the sports of tennis and hockey. The case study situations are:

1. Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic – Outward expression of anger and frustration (Tennis)
2. Alize Cornet and Novak Djokovic – Changing of uniform between play (Tennis)
3. Marie-Philip Poulin and Alex Ovechkin – Post-victory celebrations (Hockey)

## **Deconstruction of Images and Media Literacy**

The media and entertainment culture are a growing part of our daily discourse that dictate information about and construct our social identities through framing, enforcing one idea as being more important or acceptable than another (Shaller, 2006). Increasing awareness of the nature of these discourses will allow people to participate actively and knowingly in these ways of thinking. To be understood by their audiences, media workers have had to learn what are “the best sense-making practices in their culture and think within them” (Bruce, 2017, p. 25). Their success depends on being able to present information that best intersects cultural discourse and how media interpret and represent women’s involvement in sport.

Through a critical examination of print media, we can transform literacy education into an exploration of the ideological role of language and communication to define relationships of power and domination (Kellner & Share, 2007). Media literacy provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms. It helps to build understandings of the media’s role in our society as well as allow for inquiry and self-expression. My research involves a multi-perspective inquiry of popular culture and, in these specific case studies, the cultural discourses that address issues of gender and ability. Critical media literacy offers individuals the necessary tools to critically analyze media in its many forms and thus contributes to an informed citizenry (Kellner & Share, 2007). Without the ability to critically engage in critical analysis, individuals remain passive consumers of media and their messaging.

In the three case studies, each image was deconstructed using Feldman’s model of art criticism and the following guiding questions:

1. How does the media portrayal of the given athlete affect their athletic image?
2. How does this representation influence popular discourse on women’s athletics?

**Case study 1: Serena Williams and Novac Djokovic: Outward expression of anger and frustration**

Image i: Serena Williams, Professional Tennis Player



Lawson, G. (Photographer) (2018, September 8). Serena Williams argues with umpire Carlos Ramos during her Women's Singles finals match against Naomi Osaka of Japan on Day Thirteen of the 2018 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. Images for USTA. (Retrieved September 3, 2019).

Image ii: Novac Djokovic, Professional Tennis Player



AFP (2018). Serbia's Novak Djokovic argues with the chair umpire. (Retrieved October 4, 2019).

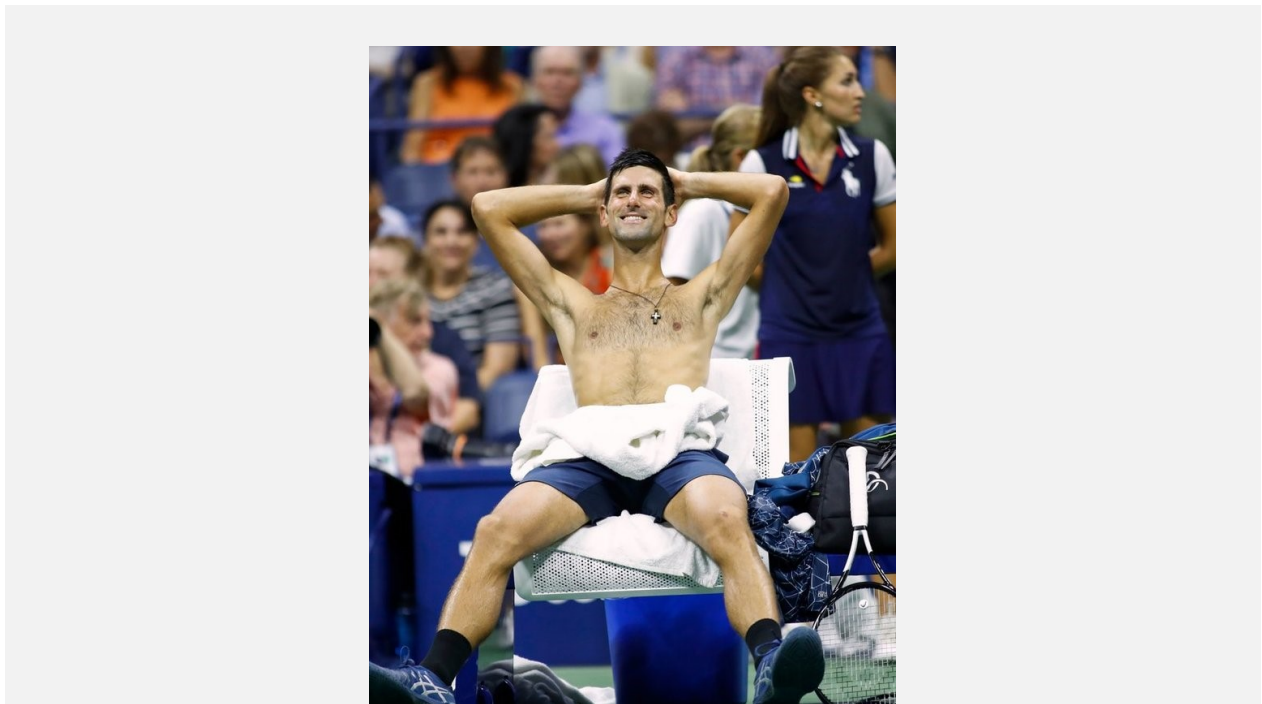
**Case Study 2: Alize Cornet and Novak Djokovic: Changing of uniform between play (Tennis)**

Image iii: Alize Cornet, Professional Tennis Player



*Tandon, K. (Photographer) (2018, August 29). Alize Cornet given Code Violation for changing her shirt on court at US Open. (Retrieved September 21, 2019).*

Image iv: Novak Djokovic, Professional Tennis Player



Munoz, E. (Photographer) (2018, September 6). 2018 US Open. Getty Images (Retrieved September 27, 2019).



**Case Study 3: Marie-Philip Poulin and Alex Ovechkin – Post-victory celebrations (Hockey)**

Image v: Marie-Philip Poulin, Professional Hockey Player



Gardner, S. (Photographer) (2010, February 6). Marie-Philip Poulin, left, Kim St-Pierre, middle, and Charline Labonte drink on the ice after the Canadian women's team defeated the U.S. in Thursday's gold-medal game. Canadian Press (Retrieved September 18, 2019).

Image vi: Alexander Ovechkin, Professional Hockey Player



KGras13/Twitter (Photographer) Ovechkin darted into Georgetown's waterfront fountain for a swim, taking off his shirt and hootin' and hollering (Retrieved September 24, 2019).



## **Data Analysis**

The ideological and philosophical framework of this research is founded in critical feminist theory and objectification theory. In an attempt to remain unbiased when examining each case study, I employed the Feldman approach to deconstruct each image, independently from its associated article. Each image was examined using Feldman's four stages: description (describing what is visible in each photograph), interpretation (my interpretation as an observer), analysis, and evaluation. (Ellsworth, 2005). The written articles associated with each photograph were analyzed during the analysis stage, in order to situate the image within the message that was being presented by the media. Finally, coupled, we can examine and evaluate the photograph and articles combined significance and impact on public perception of the female athlete in each case study.

## Chapter 4: Discussion

This study aims to provide a greater understanding of how female athletes are affected by media representation and how this representation affects the perception of their athleticism and feminism. Each of the three case studies highlights a different scenario taking place, yet all share a distinct commonality: the knowledge, values, and attitudes imparted in these images are centered around power.

### Case Study 1: Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic on-court displays of emotion (2018)

Image i: Serena Williams argues with Official

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Description</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- African American female tennis player pointing finger at white male official</li> <li>- An official is sitting in an elevated position of authority</li> <li>- The facial expression of the female is angry/upset</li> <li>- The male official's face is not visible, and he is leaning forward in his chair, down towards the female</li> </ul>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interpretation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I see and feel that the female player is visibly emotional and angry</li> <li>- This emotion and anger is being directed at the male official</li> <li>- Without seeing the male official's face, it is impossible to see his state of emotion</li> <li>- The male officials position of power is replicated in his physical position on the court, as well as the photo, looking down on the female player in a lower position of power</li> </ul>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Analysis of article</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The article was written by a woman</li> <li>- This photo took place at the 2018 US Open</li> <li>- According to the journalist, the official abused his authority because he "couldn't take a woman speaking sharply to him"</li> <li>- Instead of de-escalating the situation, the official became angered over her comments towards him, penalizing her for verbal abuse</li> <li>- The player did not swear, however she called the official "a thief"</li> <li>- According to the journalist, this was a display of male dominance and authority over a woman</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In this case, the official received Williams' show of emotion as intimidating and he used his position of power to penalize her for expressing her voice</li> <li>- Even though the crowd booed the official at the end of the match, Williams recognized her ability to make it stop by speaking directly to the crowd and asking them to calm down. In this instance she had to take on the role of peacemaker to de-escalate a situation whereas a competitor she felt discriminated against</li> </ul> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was also noted that the same official had endured ‘worse’ from male athletes and he had not penalized them in the same way</li> <li>- The crowd at the end of the game booed the official</li> <li>- The journalist felt both game players were ‘stolen from’, one penalized by points, the other prevented from winning a game in a clear and decisive manner</li> </ul> |  |
|---|--|

Image ii: Novak Djokovic argues with official

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Description</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- White male tennis player gesturing to white male official</li> <li>- Official is sitting in an elevated position of authority</li> <li>- Official is gesturing back to player with open hands</li> <li>- Umbrella is being held to shelter player from the sun by attendant during exchange with official</li> </ul>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interpretation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Djokovic is questioning a play or call that the official has made and appears to be doing so in a calm and civilized manner</li> <li>- The exchange between the two men appears calm and normalized</li> <li>- It is the same male official that was involved in the incident in photograph 1 with S. Williams</li> </ul>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Analysis of article</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This event took place at the 2018 Wimbledon Tennis tournament</li> <li>- The journalist refers to Djokovic’s emotions boiling over, however the picture doesn’t portray that moment</li> <li>- The article goes on to focus more specifically on Djokovic winning the match, seeing his season peak at the right moment to be successful and advance into the next round of the tournament</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Even though Djokovic had multiple confrontations with the official during the match, he was never penalized a point for his behaviours</li> <li>- Djokovic accused the official of ‘double standards’ for not warning/penalizing his opponent for a similar infraction</li> <li>- Outburst of anger was attributed to emotions in the midst of a tough match, seemingly necessary in order to show competitiveness and be successful</li> </ul> |

### Impact of the Image

When comparing both images of case study 1, there are similarities in terms of the sport, the official, and the expression of emotion in the heat of a match. However, upon further reflection, we can interpret that the emotion S. Williams displayed on the court was not received in the same way that N. Djokovic’s emotion was regarded. Sportswomen are routinely portrayed

in ways that emphasize their femininity far more than their athletic competence (Kane et al., 2013). Williams was expected by the official to respect the ruling whether she agreed with it or not. This same official has had other altercations with male players who have made aggressive comments towards him, including Rafeal Nadal at the 2017 French Open (“Rafael Nadal criticizes Chair,” 2017). Krane et al. (2010) explain this comforting behaviour by arguing that when sport is contextualized within a male-dominated structure, conventional expectations of femininity rule the day. This also leads to the wider societal issue underlying this case – the question of whether women are free to speak in the same ways as men or whether they are subject to different expectations about their behaviour and language.

Another difference lies in how the public reacted to both events. The article paired with photograph 2 was entitled “Double standards’: Fuming Novak Djokovic unleashes on chair umpire” (Fox Sports, 2018). However, the photograph does not depict an overly angry or ‘fuming’ athlete, and there was little public uprising or discontent following Djokovic’s interactions with the official. The William’s article was titled “At U.S. Open, power of Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka is overshadowed by an umpire’s power play” (The Washington Post, 2018). The title infers power of the match onto the official, rather than the athletes themselves. The title also makes no mention of Williams’ anger or emotion yet its accompanying photograph depicts an angry and aggressive Williams confronting the official. After the Williams incident took place, many members of the public were vocal in their displeasure of the transpired events, most sympathizing with Williams, even going so far as to say the official “abused his authority” (Jenkins, 2018). The article concludes by acknowledging Williams attempts to restore peace and calmness of the crowd by telling them, “Let’s make this the best moment we can” during the award ceremony (Jenkins, 2018). Women athletes will use various apologetic strategies to

navigate the association between characteristically male attributes, such as showing emotion during play, and their athleticism. This reiterates Bruce’s (2017) rule of Appropriate Femininity, where the emphasis is placed on characteristics culturally associated with femininity, such as concern for others.

Ultimately, the often negative reaction to women speaking out or being confrontational seems to point to the idea that female athletes are seen as women first before they are seen as athletes. Their behavior may be primarily subject to the often gendered or stereotypical expectations society holds for women before it is interpreted through the lens of their identity as a professional athlete.

**Case Study 2: Alize Cornet and Novak Djokovic changing of uniform (2018)**

Image iii: Alize Cornet fixes uniform

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Description</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female tennis player turned with back to court adjusting shirt</li> <li>- Black sports bra is showing</li> <li>- Female ball person is standing in background</li> </ul>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interpretation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It looks like Cornet is attempting to discreetly fix uniform by turning away from court</li> <li>- Turning away from the court could indicate an attempt at being respectful/trying to correct the problem quickly</li> </ul>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Analysis of article</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This incident took place at the 2018 US Open</li> <li>- Cornet was issued a code violation by the official for showing her sports bra in the process of fixing her top</li> <li>- The article slammed the given penalty as sexist because male players are allowed to change their shirts on court</li> <li>- Many prominent tennis players reacted to the violation as sexist because men are allowed to change their shirt on court</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trying to create an environment where gameplay is equal and fair for all players, regardless of sex, is made harder when such incidents occur</li> <li>- The reaction of fellow players, as well as the public outcry, indicates that such there is no such room for sexist incidents to occur</li> <li>- The fact that the US Tennis Association apologized after the fact for the penalization can be seen in 2 ways: they agree that there is no room for punishment of such an act or that they are pandering to public criticism of the incident</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The article indicated that Cornet was surprised at the backlash from the other players</li> <li>- She felt focus should be shifted to a previous incident where S. Williams was banned from wearing an outfit on court</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|

Image iv: Novak Djokovic changes uniform

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <u>Description</u>   | <u>Interpretation</u>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This took place at the 2018 US Open</li> <li>- Male white tennis player sitting, seemingly relaxed, in chair on side of court</li> <li>- He is not wearing a shirt</li> <li>- He is smiling, leaning back reclined, with his hands behind his head</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Djokovic is able to relax in between sets comfortably</li> <li>- He is comfortable with the fact that his has removed his shirt</li> <li>- No discretion is noted</li> </ul>  |
| <u>Analysis</u>  | <u>Evaluation</u>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The article begins by focusing on Djokovic’s physique rather even though the article title refers to the double standard experienced between male and female tennis players when it comes to when it is acceptable to change uniforms</li> <li>- The public reaction of rage and double standard is in connection to the previous week when Cornet was penalized for adjusting her shirt courtside.</li> <li>- The article incorporates public opinion by incorporating twitter and social media comments throughout</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The events have led some to regard the tennis court as a battleground for feminism and for advancing a feminist agenda</li> <li>- It is acceptable and allowed by rule for male players to remove the upper portion of their uniform courtside in between play</li> </ul> |

### Impact of the Image

It is important to note that image 2 in this case study was taken within a week of image 1. The proximity of time between both photographs elevated the public outcry of injustice regarding how Alize Cornet was treated for adjusting her top so as not to impede her performance on the court. At its root, the message behind each image is basic: it was inappropriate for Cornet to show her sports bra unintentionally, but Djokovic consciously sitting topless courtside was acceptable.

When questioned about the violations she was issued, Cornet did not condemn the sport of tennis. In fact, she stated that she “was surprised” by the reaction of the public to the incident (“Alize Cornet’s US Open code violation sparks reaction, policy change,” 2018). When interviewed, she guessed that maybe the umpire was overwhelmed because of the extreme heat when he made that decision to penalize her. Instead, Cornet shifted focus from her experience to another significant tennis outfit controversy, when the French Tennis Federation banned one of Serena Williams’ match outfits as being disrespectful of the sport. The uniform in question was specifically designed for Williams in order to protect against possible blood clots. Cornet’s attempt to shift focus away from her situation can be viewed as a facet of female apologetic behavior, reinforcing gender hierarchies and performativity. By excusing the officials actions and shifting attention away from herself and onto Williams, Cornet unintentionally reinforced the idea that what happened to her was not as important as what Williams encountered and that Williams deserved more attention as a more popular elite tennis player than Cornet herself.

Oppression of women in sport is multilayered. It operates through inequalities in established rules and established precedent, and in how sportswomen themselves react in situations of discrimination or experienced sexism. Similar to other socially marginalized groups, female athletes have been found to internalize their oppression and are prone to adopting blame (Batool & Zaidi, 2017). Cornet focused on keeping things amicable in her response to the shirt violation. Possibly she saw this as a necessity to push past barriers and the double standards set for men and women to ensure that the sport of tennis can become as progressive as possible. This mindset of sacrificing oneself for the greater good is admirable, but more often than not falls flat on false hopes. Change of patriarchal established discourses will not be changed by singular, small acts. It requires the voice of

many to start a movement towards progress, and even then, progress is not always achieved. Cornet may have tried to turn attention to the Williams catsuit incident, but in doing so, downplayed her own experience of injustice. It is also interesting that the article takes note that when Cornet was responding to the incident with reporters, she did so with a smile on her face. There was no anger or aggression in her voice or mannerism. Unlike other female athletes who have expressed their frustration at sexist discrimination, Cornet was calm and collected in her responses and actions. In doing so, she unconsciously promoted and upheld the societal characteristics and qualities that we associate with being feminine and appropriate (Bruce, 2017).

In contrast, the article attached to the image of Novak Djokovic sitting topless was approached from the standpoint of highlighting Djokovic’s physical attributes rather than condemning his decision to sit topless (Reed, 2018). Only after commenting that Djokovic was “looking like an absolute snack” (Reed, 2018) did the article turn to point out the discrepancy in how male and female tennis players have been treated in the past, and how various international tennis associations have come under fire for sexist policing of women's ensembles. Overall, the two articles exemplify the different standards that have been set and which are being enforced for men and women in the sport of tennis.

**Case Study 3: Marie-Philip Poulin and Alexander Ovechkin – Post-victory celebrations (2010, 2018)**

Image v: Marie-Philip Poulin celebrates with teammates on ice

| <u>Description</u>  | <u>Interpretation</u>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three female hockey players sitting on the ice in equipment, leaning against the boards</li> <li>- Each is drinking a beer</li> <li>- Each is wearing a medal</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As a spectator and player I interpret this as an end of game celebration with teammates</li> <li>- Players seem unaware of the photograph being taken (no one is looking or smiling into</li> </ul> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>- Vancouver 2010 Olympic sign is on the boards behind the players</p>   | <p>the camera- seemingly capturing a private moment)</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After the photo was published, the team received backlash because Poulin was 18 and the drinking age in British Columbia is 19 (she is legal to drink in her home province of QC)</li> <li>- The article opens with an apology from Hockey Canada and some of its players for the photograph, because they are seen as role models to many young girls</li> <li>- One player spoke in the article to the point that it was a team celebration in the closed arena hours after the game had finished and the spectators had left</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The team Canada players were celebrating their gold medal victory at the Olympic Games and public opinion was mixed between role model status and double standard of male versus female celebrations</li> <li>- Double standards are seen in celebrations as men’s teams who win the Stanley Cup spray champagne in dressing rooms and no one complains about any 18/19-year-old players on the team drinking in those moments</li> </ul> |

Image vi: Alexander Ovechkin celebrates with teammates in fountain

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|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Description</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ovechkin and other males swimming/playing in public fountain</li> <li>- They are throwing beer on one another</li> <li>- People are watching/taking pictures and videos on electronic devices</li> </ul>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interpretation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The crowd looks interested/entertained by the events taking place and some spectators are taking pictures and videos</li> <li>- The men were aware of the public spectators and the use of their media devices – notion of ‘playing it up’ for the cameras</li> </ul>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The article highlights Ovechkin’s drunken debauchery, labeling him as a rascal for his public displays, after the Washington Captials won the Stanley Cup in 2019</li> <li>- The article comments on his celebratory activities in public after winning the Stanley Cup, such as doing keg stands in public, being drunk while throwing out the opening pitch at a baseball game, and swimming in public fountains (as the photo showcases)</li> <li>- He was praised by the President of the United States in a series of tweets for his skill and personality during his celebrations</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His antics were seen as funny and harmless fun by the public</li> <li>- There is no mention of being role models or public figures for youth in the article</li> <li>- This reiterates the idea of what is socially acceptable for men and women within the domain of athletics, even when it comes to celebration styles</li> </ul> |

## **Impact of the Image**

According to Shaller (2006), looks are the main attribute that media tend to spotlight, but traditional gender roles are also heavily emphasized. Case study 3 exemplifies this when we examine both the images and their associated articles.

Following the article accompanying image 1, in which Marie-Philip Poulin was criticized as a public figure for consuming an alcoholic beverage at the age of 18, both Poulin and Hockey Canada issued apologies (IOC rep downplays women's hockey party, 2018). Poulin is regarded as a role model for the youth of the country, as well as a leader and superstar of Women's hockey. She was criticized for privately celebrating with her teammates following their gold medal win at the Vancouver Olympics in 2010. Poulin was 18 at the time and is from Quebec, where the legal drinking age is 18, not 19. Even though she had been celebrating with her team privately rather than publicly, the media and public backlash from the image is indicative of the fact that it was expected that she should know that she has a public image to uphold. In response to the backlash, Hockey Canada pandered to public opinion instead of defending Poulin's actions. The organization who regard her as their golden girl and use her image to promote the sport expected her to be thinking of how others would perceive her actions if observed. They did not approve of her actions because she was representing her country at an international competition, and ultimately, it reflected poorly on Hockey Canada. According to Mean and Kassing (2008), gender remains the "primary categorization of women athletes, re/producing female athletes as women who play sport rather than as athletes first and foremost" (p. 127). Women are expected to be classy and "ladylike" (Kane et al., 2013, p. 283) and respectful of their sport and the law.

This is in stark contrast to image 2 of Alexander Ovechkin. After his Washington Capitals hockey team won the Stanley Cup, it was expected and applauded that he would party and celebrate the accomplishment, no matter the venue. Although he is of the legal age to consume alcohol, Ovechkin was repeatedly witnessed publicly intoxicated and was lovingly referred to as a “rascal” (Wright, 2018) for his antics in public, including swimming in a public water fountain while intoxicated. Had this been a female athlete, it is highly likely that her reputation, endorsements, and future career opportunities would have all come under reconsideration and she would have been highly scrutinized.

### **A Common Trend: Female Apologetic Behaviour in Sport**

A common discourse found through each of the image associated articles is the representation of a female apologetic behavior. In case study 1, Williams felt the need to calm the crowd at the end of the match reinforcing the feminine role of motherly figure. In case study 2, Cornet downplayed her penalty and shifted emphasis away toward another cause she felt was of greater importance. Moreover, in case study 3, Poulin apologized for her alcohol consumption while celebrating with teammates, citing her behavior as unacceptable because she is seen as a role model for younger girls. In each case, these female athletes were held to different standards and expectations than that of their male counterparts when placed in similar situations.

These women’s apologetic behavior speaks to a much broader issue of everyday sexism. Women are taught that they must diminish, downplay, or not take credit for or ownership of their achievements. They are taught that the measure of their character is modesty and that expression and pride are unladylike. If they have the audacity to break out this mold, they are promptly

scolded. They have been told to apologize for their greatness – something that is not asked of men. Female apologetic behavior exists in sport in order to conform to society’s idealized version of hegemonic femininity. Sportswomen are framed by their status as both athletes and women, and according to Hardy (2015), cannot solely have an athletic identity. Most sports are still associated with masculinity in Western cultures; therefore female athletes are challenging gender expectations by their participation alone. According to Professor Laurel Davis Delano, “if you are offending people’s sense of gender ideals...people don’t necessarily realize they’re apologizing, but you are catering to other people’s sense of what’s proper” (Proudfoot, 2009).

Female athletes apologize for participating in sport by overemphasizing their femininity through their choice of clothing, physical appearance, self-expression, and style of athletic play. When looking at the case study photos, the public audience verbalizes our impressions, mobilizing a variety of implicit knowledge consciously or unconsciously. Media plays a large role in making people feel comfortable with gender inequality in sport and female athletes are still apologizing for smashing stereotypes while they pursue their sport. Female apologetic behavior is more visible in elite level sport because of commercialization and media portrayal. However, this behavior exists at all levels of sport. Moving forward, I will explore my own personal pathway of how sport influenced my life, my identity, and how I catered to common traits associated with the socially constructed concept of hegemonic femininity.

## **Chapter 5: Gendered athleticism: A brief autoethnographic account**

The quest to be taken seriously as an athlete while fighting against the expectations that society has placed on female athletes continues to be a balancing act. When female athletes fear being labeled, their fear is based on how their appearance as a sportswoman contradicts the standards that have been prescribed through historical gendered discourse. When they do not look like what historical and current societal and gendered norms dictate, they are seen as ‘other,’ blurring the lines publicly between what is masculine and feminine. A society that defines notions of gender and sexuality takes away the power of the individual. Historically when female athletes react to this imposed fear, they try to change things specifically about how they look in order to be viewed as less threatening. They might wear more makeup, dress provocatively, or put ribbons in their hair to avoid being labeled as manly or lesbian. Having been judged based on appearance for years, I personally have taken my ‘image’ into consideration and have felt the need to defend my femininity by incorporating traditional, gendered perceptions of appearance into my sports activities. Unfortunately, it is only now that I am able to understand that participation in this way of thinking has helped to influence its apparent legitimacy.

I started playing ice hockey when I was nine years old. My father was and continues to be a hockey enthusiast and at the time wanted to share his passion with my sister and I. Admittedly, upon the first introduction, I hated it. I disliked the bulky equipment and the smell after practices in the locker room. I desperately wanted to wear the beautiful, clean, white figure skates that the other girls at my school wore when they skated. Nevertheless, over time, as I began to understand the skill behind the game, I started to enjoy the sport and excel as a player. I do believe that my willingness to continue to play the sport was highly influenced by the fact that I

did have a talent for the sport and was successful. I liked being good at hockey and scoring goals and winning games made playing that much more fun.

I was fortunate to experience this at a time when Canada's Women's team was also gaining momentum and garnering a lot of attention. I can remember the 1998 Nagano Olympics and waking up at 3:00 in the morning, because of the time change, to watch Team Canada play in the gold medal game with my sister and dad. Even though the team lost, it was exciting to see that these ladies were competing at such a high level in a sport that I was finding joy in. My hometown of Kingston Ontario also fed into the hockey hype since Jayna Hefford, a star on Team Canada, grew up in the city. After the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, USA, my high school had a special ceremony for Hefford to recognize her place on the gold medal winning roster. This created a lot of attention for women's hockey and a lot of girls, similar to me, saw the potential of where hockey could lead you.

As I got older, I started to play more and more competitively and travel with different teams. My parents were very encouraging of my siblings and my sports endeavors and as long as we were giving our best and enjoying it, they supported our quest to play at the highest level. When I was sixteen, I moved from Kingston Ontario to Mississauga Ontario to play for a Junior AA team based there. This move was significant, as I not only left my family and the comforts of home but also because it was my opportunity to play at an elite level and hopefully impress scouts enough in hopes of playing university level hockey. I moved in with a billet host family and started my final year of high school in a new environment, surrounded by unfamiliar people and places. Back at my former school, I was made fun of and mocked for moving away. Even though our high school in Kingston was the home base for boys who came to play for the Ontario Hockey League Kingston Frontenacs, I was told I was making a mistake moving

because female hockey players had no future in terms of making money and earning a living. It was extremely difficult to make the decision to leave my family and friends, and to receive this ridicule from former peers was devastating. Women's hockey has a different structure than men's hockey; there is no NHL or multi-million-dollar contracts to earn. My goal at that time was to play at the university level and potentially earn a hockey scholarship. This continues to be the goal for many girls today; the women's side of the game is a gateway to higher education opportunities.

It was hard to acclimatize to a new school environment. I was not just a new female student; I was a new female student-athlete. I felt the need to prove once again that I was female first and made sure to dress 'girly' with makeup and jewelry to accentuate my femininity. I also wore the same makeup and jewelry under my equipment when I played. I wanted to ensure that anyone who saw me in public or on the ice understood and identified my femininity. This is a hard concept to define. What is femininity to a 16-year-old teenager? At the time, I just wanted to fit in at school and be seen as pretty, but also be taken seriously on the ice. It was a hard pendulum to balance, wanting to participate socially and make friends but also set time aside to dedicate to training and practice, time that not many non-athletes truly understand or seem to appreciate. I found it nearly impossible to evenly carry the load. If I spent too much time worrying about being social, I didn't have time left for homework or to properly prepare for practice or games, and vice versa. Ultimately, I had to come to terms with the fact that although I wanted to be liked, I was not going to be able to go to every party and always look prim and proper if I wanted to put in the time and energy it was going to take to be successful on the ice and in the classroom. I also realized that not everyone is going to like you or understand what

drives your passions, and that is okay. This was a pivotal learning experience for me and I had to listen to my subconscious and heart to really realize what was important to me personally.

By putting in the hard work, I was fortunate enough to be approached to play university hockey for McGill. The first few seasons there, I navigated the growing pains of being a student-athlete and an independent young adult. Societal perceptions continued to impact my actions: for example, I would paint my fingernails before every game so that if my glove came off while playing, my femininity would be represented by my painted fingernails and I continued to wear makeup while I played. However, as I grew as an individual, I began to reevaluate and reconsider femininity, and particularly how I identified and defined my own femininity.

At McGill, I was surrounded by my teammates, many of whom were uncovering or redefining their own identities. Some of my teammates identified as lesbians and were self-conscious of that label female athletes. They would hide their sexuality, nervous of what their peers, family, and general society might think. Being with these girls helped me to realize that we are all on our own journey of self-discovery, athlete or not. Every girl struggles with the pressures to be what society deems appropriate, not how we differ is in the ways we cope with these pressures. It took many years for me to realize that that only person I needed to please or appease was myself and that I was the only one who could put myself down or allow criticism from others alter how I acted or behaved. Once I started to realize this, I became more self-aware and confident in who I was becoming as a woman. Blaming pre-existing institutions perpetuates the myth that the outer world is more powerful than our own inner worlds (Palmer, 1998).

When an athlete accepts social norms, she finds a way to incorporate them into her athlete self, thereby maintaining close ties to social expectations. Based on how they measure up to social standards, a woman may choose to accept these standards as truth. If she perceives



herself as failing to maintain them, she may reject them, deciding that she does not want to look like that. When an athlete chooses to reject the socially prescribed vision of femininity, she then redefines it in a way that is not influenced by appearance. She finds a way of defining femininity that fits her experience. She is able to learn through her experiences and address audiences without requiring a fixed position. She can be whomever she wants to be at that time. This seems to be the ultimate quest for young women in society, athlete or not, and the journey seems to vary as the goal is ever-changing for each individual. Exploring this topic has allowed me to further investigate how society treats female athletes and how these athletes cope with the pressure that being in the spotlight creates. Sport can be an amazing arena to learn about oneself, but it can also be a dangerous place to navigate. Sexualized images of female athletes encourage adolescent girls and women to self-objectify and focus on their physical appearance rather than their athletic ability, and women themselves already tend to self-objectify in response to exposure to sexually objectifying media (Daniels, 2012). A feedback loop is created, where the image creates reality and reality creates the image.

My final years at McGill allowed me to develop and construct a new version of who I was as a female athlete and of what I wanted my appearance and self-worth to be, separate from what was and is socially prescribed upon female athletes. After completing my degree, I went on to play professionally for the Montreal Stars women's team. I only played for a single season, the demand of juggling a job with weekends traveling on the road proving to be too demanding. When I decided I was finished, the old quips of my former high school classmates ran through my head. They were right in that I was not going to be able to make a sustainable living playing women's hockey, even professionally. However, what they nor I would never have imagined was that the entirety of my hockey career provided me the experience to continually challenge the

stigma that female athletes face when it comes to image and being female. Hockey provided me with friends, support systems, and life experiences that I will carry with me for years and years.

It is amazing to see how far women have come in the sport of hockey. When I return to McGill for alumni events, I am always impressed by how the current players openly express their femininity. When I played, game attire was black pants and a dress top. Now the girls walk into the arena expressing themselves through their fashion, working to stay true to who they are and what they want to represent, not limited to black dress pants that were supposed to indicate how serious we were as athletes. Ultimately, through my experiences, I was able to challenge what stereotypically being female looks like and specifically what being a female athlete means to me. I carry this understanding forward as I continue to participate in sport for fun. I also kept this in mind as I began working on my master's diploma here at Concordia University, trying to narrow down what I wanted to focus on as a thesis topic. I believe that there are parallels in the pathways women have taken towards equal education and equality in sport. Women lacked a place in education for a very long time and dominant contributions to the education field were disregarded because they came from women. Education can still be considered gender bound and biased, as is sport. As individuals, we need to strive to think without bias. Gender should make no difference in the ability of a person to contribute to any facet of society and culture.

## Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks, Limitations and Moving Forward

### Discussion

Within today's society, women face sexism, lack of opportunity, historical and hegemonic stereotypes, and societal expectations based solely on their gender. Women in sport face all these same issues with the addition of a constant internal battle regarding what they are willing to sacrifice and compromise in order to further their competitive career. According to Kane (2013), we should "never underestimate the significance of sports in preserving male power and privilege as well as the media's role in that regard" (p. 235). Media representations reproduce dominant ideologies and practices, which systematically position sport as a male terrain, a "cultural center of masculinity" whereby women's athletic achievements are either trivialized and marginalized or ignored altogether (Kane et al., 2013, p. 270). The duality embedded in identity construction and maintenance has been studied in a variety of sport settings, and although this has allowed researchers to identify default settings of mainstream media, it has little impact on shifting these settings or the discourses that inform them. Kane and al. (2013) found through their research that female athletes described oppositional feelings about their multiple identities, expressing pride in their sporty, muscular bodies while sharing apprehensions about how these same bodies would be interpreted when placed in social contexts outside of sports. Media portrayals of female athletes rarely focus solely on their athletic accomplishments; instead, the focus is often on physical appearance, femininity, or heterosexuality. Fink (2014) proposes that "these practices are so pervasive, and they have become so deeply woven into the fabric of the marketing and production of women's sport, that most consumers do not notice, let alone question, their insidious nature" (p. 3). Advancing women's sport today proves to be a vicious cycle; increasing media exposure, sponsorships, and

viewers seem only to be possible when female athletes degrade themselves or their sport, by focusing on their sexuality, and the physical appeal of their sport. Therefore, the importance of female athletes who push boundaries and demonstrate that women can be strong, muscular, beautiful, and successful is important for advocating the female athletic image. If females continue to be represented and promoted in ways that emphasize their physical attractiveness over their athletic ability, they will be stripped of their power not only in sport but in society as well.

Gender norms are often based on appearances; what appears masculine, and what appears feminine. Appearance is what gives humans a first impression. Thus it is imperative that our appearances project the image we wish to impart on others. The literature proposes that traditionally feminine appearances are those that are soft and pretty, with observable behaviors that display quietude and submissiveness. Therefore, the appearance of a female athlete is elementally different from what society has prescribed. Female athletes may be physically muscular, wear shorts or pants, get dirty, or be aggressive. This appearance makes them different and often leads them to be criticized or labeled with masculine traits and their sexuality questioned. Stereotypes of appearance are the main factor in determining whether a sport is considered masculine or feminine. As a result, sexualizing female athletes sends the message that physical appearance is more important than athletic performance, and dictates which sports are more feminine appropriate, resulting in a hierarchy of sports. It is imperative that all women continue to challenge constructions of femininity that divorce femininity from strength and power.

My interpretation of the images and their partnered articles in each case study reveal that female professional athletes have to contend with dated societal expectations while maintaining

traditional feminine appearances and attitudes while acting within the sphere of sports. Female athletes are framed by their status as both athletes and women, their athletic identity overshadowed by either their physical appearance or caregiving maternal abilities (Hardy, 2015). Female athletes are held to different standards and expectations than that of their male counterparts. Raw emotion and competitive drive are part of competition and play, but once the final whistle blows, these female athletes must return to their femaleness in shows of sportsmanship and socially prescribed and acceptable norms. Elite female athletes become the representatives for all women in sport and must behave in ways that will allow for the promotion and advancement of female sport to continue and thrive. This perpetuates the notion that female athletes feel the need to adopt multiple identities, catering to socially constructed concepts of femininity and sport in order to be successful.

### **Limitations**

Much of my preliminary notions regarding the stigma that female athletes face comes from my personal experiences as a former elite female athlete, and my ability to relate to the population of interest as an individual who experienced these identity struggles. I recognize the bias I already possessed on the topic and did my best to objectively deconstruct each media image and associated article, which is why I chose to employ Feldman's approach for analysis purposes.

This study was conducted as an autoethnography. It would have been interesting to conduct research with participants to see how they would have deconstructed the images presented in each case study and analyze their interpretation of what they believe to be the

definition of female athleticism, the construction of dual identities, and the recourse that society has on the advancement of female sport.

### **Moving Forward**

As a female athlete, I found myself incredibly invested in this project. My personal connection to the research questions and my participation in sport at the both the university and professional levels helped me in my exploration of the topic. However, my interest in the impact of sport goes well beyond its effect on athletes. Inequality and sexualization of women is not isolated to the world of sport but rather is experienced in every facet of our society on a daily basis. Globally, women are objectified and degraded based on their gender, and therefore their supposed inherent skill set and ability. Even though femininity is “produced, constructed, and experienced differently across bodies, hegemonic notions still frame depictions of feminine bodies” (Kramer et al., p. 718). We need to move forward by working to change the classification of ‘female athlete’ to simply ‘athlete’ in order to create spaces free from contested terrain. It may be a long and tough road to alter the focal point of ‘sex sells’ portrayed by the media industry. However, it is vital that we think critically to consider the difference that could be made in power, knowledge and desire just by how athletes and society address each other and themselves. Encouraging this mindset provides hope for upcoming generations of female athletes that their dreams are valid, and that talent and hard work is enough in order for a female to be successful in their sport.

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## Appendix A

### Case Study 1, Article 1

Jenkins, S. (2018, September 8). At U.S. Open, power of Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka is overshadowed by an umpire's power play. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/tennis/at-us-open-power-of-serena-williams-and-naomi-osaka-is-overshadowed-by-an-umpires-power-play/2018/09/08/edbf46c8-b3b4-11e8-a20b-5f4f84429666\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/tennis/at-us-open-power-of-serena-williams-and-naomi-osaka-is-overshadowed-by-an-umpires-power-play/2018/09/08/edbf46c8-b3b4-11e8-a20b-5f4f84429666_story.html)

Chair umpire Carlos Ramos managed to rob not one but two players in the women's U.S. Open final. Nobody has ever seen anything like it: An umpire so wrecked a big occasion that both players, Naomi Osaka and Serena Williams alike, wound up distraught with tears streaming down their faces during the trophy presentation and an incensed crowd screamed boos at the court. Ramos took what began as a minor infraction and turned it into one of the nastiest and most emotional controversies in the history of tennis, all because he couldn't take a woman speaking sharply to him.

Williams abused her racket, but Ramos did something far uglier: He abused his authority. Champions get heated — it's their nature to burn. All good umpires in every sport understand that the heart of their job is to help temper the moment, to turn the dial down, not up, and to be quiet stewards of the event rather than to let their own temper play a role in determining the outcome. Instead, Ramos made himself the chief player in the women's final. He marred Osaka's first Grand Slam title and one of Williams's last bids for all-time greatness. Over what? A tone of voice. Male players have sworn and cursed at the top of their lungs, hurled and blasted their equipment into shards, and never been penalized as Williams was in the second set of the U.S. Open final.

"I just feel like the fact that I have to go through this is just an example for the next person that has emotions and that want to express themselves and wants to be a strong woman," she said afterward.

It was pure pettiness from Ramos that started the ugly cascade in the first place, when he issued a warning over "coaching," as if a signal from Patrick Mouratoglou in the grandstand has ever been the difference in a Serena Williams match. It was a technicality that could be called on any player in any match on any occasion and ludicrous in view of the power-on-power match that was taking place on the court between Williams and the 20-year-old Osaka. It was one more added stressor for Williams, still trying to come back from her maternity leave and fighting to regain her fitness and resume her pursuit of Margaret Court's record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles. "I don't cheat," she told Ramos hotly.

When Williams, still seething, busted her racket over losing a crucial game, Ramos docked her a point. Breaking equipment is a violation, and because Ramos already had hit her with the coaching violation, it was a second offense and so ratcheted up the penalty.

The controversy should have ended there. At that moment, it was up to Ramos to de-escalate the situation, to stop inserting himself into the match and to let things play out on the court. In front of him were two players in a sweltering state, who were giving their everything, while he sat at a lordly height above them. Below him, Williams vented, “You stole a point from me. You’re a thief.”

There was absolutely nothing worthy of penalizing in the statement. It was pure vapor release. She said it in a tone of wrath, but it was compressed and controlled. All Ramos had to do was to continue to sit coolly above it, and Williams would have channeled herself back into the match. But he couldn’t take it. He wasn’t going to let a woman talk to him that way. A man, sure. Ramos has put up with worse from a man. At the French Open in 2017, Ramos leveled Rafael Nadal with a ticky-tacky penalty over a time delay, and Nadal told him he would see to it that Ramos never refereed one of his matches again.

But he wasn’t going to take it from a woman pointing a finger at him and speaking in a tone of aggression. So he gave Williams that third violation for “verbal abuse” and a whole game penalty, and now it was 5-3, and we will never know whether young Osaka really won the 2018 U.S. Open or had it handed to her by a man who was going to make Serena Williams feel his power. It was an offense far worse than any that Williams committed. Chris Evert spoke for the entire crowd and television audience when she said, “I’ve been in tennis a long time, and I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Competitive rage has long been Williams’s fuel, and it’s a situational personality. The whole world knows that about her, and so does Ramos. She has had instances where she ranted and deserved to be disciplined, but she has outlived all that. She has become a player of directed passion, done the admirable work of learning self-command and grown into one of the more courteous and generous champions in the game. If you doubted that, all you had to do was watch how she got a hold of herself once the match was over and how hard she tried to make it about Osaka.

'Still a win' for Osaka after controversial U.S. open final

Japan's Naomi Osaka held her trophy after beating her tennis idol, Serena Williams, in a dramatic U.S. Open final on Sept. 8. (Reuters)

Williams understood that she was the only person in the stadium who had the power to make that incensed crowd stop booing. And she did it beautifully. “Let’s make this the best moment we can,” she said.

The tumultuous emotions at the end of the match were complex and deep. Osaka didn’t want to be given anything and wept over the spoil. Williams was sickened by what had been taken from her and also palpably ill over her part in depriving a great new young player of her moment. The crowd was livid on behalf of both.



Ramos had rescued his ego and, in the act, taken something from Williams and Osaka that they can never get back. Perhaps the most important job of all for an umpire is to respect the ephemeral nature of the competitors and the contest. Osaka can never, ever recover this moment. It's gone. Williams can never, ever recover this night. It's gone. And so Williams was entirely right in calling him a "thief."

## Appendix B

### Case Study 1, Article 2

Fox Sports. (2018, July 11). Double standards': Fuming Novak Djokovic unleashes on chair umpire. Retrieved from <https://www.foxsports.com.au/tennis/wimbledon/double-standards-fuming-novak-djokovic-unleashes-on-chair-umpire/news-story/b5a0be8b07cb91eda69c38a5114661a1>

The three-time champion's emotions boiled over on several occasions in a spicy 6-3 3-6 6-2 6-2 quarter-final victory over Japan's former US Open finalist. Djokovic had to overcome a series of rows with Carlos Ramos to book a date on Friday with world No.1 Rafael Nadal or Argentine fifth seed Juan Martin del Potro.

There are two matches simultaneously happening on Center Court

Djokovic vs Nishikori  
Carlos Ramos vs Djokovic

The Serb gets a time violation warning but that doesn't deter him from holding, 5-2

Nishikori bounced his racquet and was not given a warning by Ramos.

Djokovic was picked up by the on-court microphone, saying, "Double standards." He's not wrong.

His troubles began when he copped a code violation for unsportsmanlike conduct for bouncing his racquet into the grass behind the baseline on tennis's most famous centre court early in the third set. He then let rip at Ramos for failing to sanction Nishikori for a similar act of frustration in the fourth set.

"Double standards, my friend. Double standards," the steaming Serb said after approaching Ramos and pointing his finger angrily at the Portuguese judge. "To be honest, I thought it was unnecessary to get a warning. I didn't harm the grass. I knew how I threw the racquet," Djokovic later explained. "(Nishikori) even threw the racquet in the fourth set. (Ramos) said he didn't see it.

"It's not fair, but it's the way it is. In the midst of emotions in a tough match, it happens." Djokovic also appeared to feign throwing the ball at Ramos after being handed a time violation for exceeding the 25-second limit between points. But the 12-times major winner regained his cool sufficiently enough to safely take his place in the semi-finals for the first time since snaring his third title at The All England Club in 2015.

“It’s feels great to be in the last four of a slam,” Djokovic said. “I’ve been building the last couple of weeks on the level of tennis that I’ve played the last couple of month, the last couple of clay-court tournaments and Queen’s.

“I felt like it was getting better and better as time went on. I feel like I’m peaking at the right moment.”

## Appendix C

### Case Study 2, Article 1

Alize Cornet's US Open code violation sparks reaction, policy change. (2018, August 29).

Retrieved from <https://www.tennis.com/pro-game/2018/08/alize-cornet-shirt-us-open-code-violation/76420/>

NEW YORK—Alize Cornet had brushed aside the code violation she received when she briefly took off her shirt during her first-round match at the US Open, but she couldn't ignore the reaction it got.

"When I woke up this morning, I didn't think that this code violation would become so famous in less than 24 hours, and I'm very surprised about it, actually, to be honest," the Frenchwoman told press the following day. "Because on the court, it really seemed like a mistake from the umpire and nothing else."

Cornet had returned from changing clothes on a break and had been standing on the baseline when she switched her shirt around, because it was on backwards. She was given a code violation for unsportsmanlike conduct. The USTA subsequently issued a statement, saying, "All players can change their shirts when sitting in the player chair." It also said of the code violation given to Cornet, "We have clarified the policy to ensure this will not happen moving forward."

The WTA also issued a statement, saying the code violation "was unfair and it was not based on a WTA rule, as the WTA has no rule against a change of attire on court. This code violation came under the Grand Slam rules and we are pleased to see the USTA has now changed this policy."

There was no fine issued.

Cornet did not criticize the tournament, saying, "But I don't involve the USTA in all this, and they apologized very quickly to me, so no problem."

But she did say that the incident that got a big reaction from the other players.

"When I came in this morning in the locker room, like, many players came to me. Even former players, like Tracy Austin, I was very honored to be actually approached by her like that," said Cornet. "So all the players were supporting me for that, and were telling me that if I get fined, we would all be together and see the WTA, you know, and make a revolution and stuff. I was, like, Calm down. I'm going to get the information first and then we see, if we make a revolution or not."

Ridiculous! Voice of reason should prevail. Look at circumstances. We see a full covering sports bra-big deal. Men change their shirt multiple times a match. #sexist <https://t.co/IqSPFsCL2Y>

— Tracy Austin (@thetracyaustin) August 29, 2018

Other players agreed no warning should have been issued.

"I believe that should never happen. If I would say my true feelings, it would be bleeped," said Victoria Azarenka. "I think it was ridiculous. It was nothing wrong. Nothing wrong. It wasn't anything disrespectful. She literally changed her shirt because it was backwards. So I couldn't believe this was a conversation.

"I'm glad they apologized, and I hope this never happens again."

"I think the chair umpire did a mistake. That's what happened," said Elina Svitolina. "It happens, you know. He's human, as well. You know, everyone is allowed to do mistake."

"I think the USTA, and, obviously, they all met and it was a mistake. Cornet won't be getting a fine or whatever," said Sloane Stephens.

Venus Williams declined to comment.

On the same day as Cornet's first-round match, Timea Bacsinszky told press from Switzerland that she had been escorted to a public bathroom to change her clothes, with fans asking for photos. She added that she had to argue with tournament personnel to use a small room beside the bathroom, though a better location was found for the 10-minute break following the second set.

Timea Bacsinszky had THOUGHTS about the change of attire rules. Said she'd prefer to change at chair, but yesterday was escorted to public bathroom to change her dress, fans were asking for autographs, cleaning personnel yelled at her, came back to court mad and couldn't focus.

— Courtney Nguyen (@FortyDeuceTwits) August 29, 2018

The controversy follows recent comments by French tennis federation president Bernard Giudicelli about Serena Williams' 'catsuit' worn at the French Open, which he said was an instance of players going "too far," illustrating the need for a dress code.

"What Bernard Giudicelli said about Serena's cat suit was 10,000 times worse than what happened to me on the court yesterday, because he's the president of French Federation and because he doesn't have to do that," Cornet said.

The two issues have been cited as highlighting different standards for men and women.

"But I don't think it's just a problem on the tour. I think it's a problem in the world, unfortunately," said Azarenka. "When things and issues like this, it needs to stop at the beginning. It cannot develop anymore. It's enough. You know, the things with the cat suit, I personally don't understand it.

"There is always a double standard for men and women. But we need to push those barriers. And as players, as representatives of the WTA Tour, I believe we're gonna do the best we can to make sure that we are the most progressive sport."

Cornet also commented. "But, yes, for sure the women are treated a little bit differently," she said. "I think we are very lucky as WTA players because we have a lot of equity in this sport, and I really appreciate it."

Both the US Open and WTA have issued statements after Alize Cornet was issued a Code Violation on Tuesday, for briefly removing her shirt on the court because it was on

backwards. In doing so, the Frenchwoman revealed her sports bra, which apparently prompted the chair umpire on Court 13 to issue the violation. Cornet was incredulous at the decision, which was met with widespread criticism around the sports world.

With the Extreme Heat policy in effect, Cornet had just returned from 10-minute break after the second set of her first-round match against Johanna Larsson, which she lost in three sets. When she realized that her shirt was on backwards, she quickly took it off and made the adjustment, rather than asking the chair umpire to do so elsewhere.

ATP players regularly remove their shirts on court, and it was common in yesterday's oppressive heat:

On Wednesday morning, the USTA issued a statement of regret about the Code Violation, saying that it "clarified the policy to ensure this would not happen moving forward."

The WTA sharply denounced the violation in a statement of its own, saying that it came under the Grand Slam's rules—not the WTA tour's—and that "Alize did nothing wrong." The tour added that it was pleased with the USTA's quick response to the matter.

Judy Murray, mother of Andy Murray, tweeted out her displeasure with the ruling, and commended the USTA for its quick action on Wednesday.

Alize Cornet came back to court after 10 minute heat break. Had her fresh shirt on back to front. Changed at back of court. Got a code violation. Unsportsmanlike conduct..... ????

But the men can change shirts on court.

—judy murray (@JudyMurray) August 28, 2018

There was plenty of reaction on social media and on site in New York from players, including Victoria Azarenka. After her second-round win, the former No. 1 commented on the Cornet incident as well as the recent position by the French Tennis Federation to ban the style of "catsuit" Serena Williams wore at future Roland Garros tournaments.

“As a player and a representative, we’re going to do everything we can to make tennis the most progressive sport and keep pushing against barriers and double standards.” - @vika7 on Cornet and Serena’s catsuit. #usopen

We'll continue to update this story with more reaction and news as it develops.

## Appendix D

### Case Study 2, Article 2

Reed, S. (2018, September 6). A Sweaty, Shirtless Tennis Player at the U.S. Open Has Fans Crying Double Standard. *In Style*. Retrieved from <https://www.instyle.com/news/novak-djokovic-shirtless-double-standard>

Before we dig into it, we are pleased to report Novak Djokovic — a Very Sweaty Man — was looking like an absolute snack last night.

Behold, the shirtless photos in which the Serbian tennis player is seen completely *feeling himself*: Summertime, and the livin' is easy...

Some context for the curious: During a match against Australia's John Millman on Wednesday evening, Djokovic had some time to himself while his opponent asked to please be excused as he swapped out his sopping wet look for some fresh attire (anyone in New York knows that last night was steamy as hell, but unfortunately the rest of us were not afforded the luxury of pressing pause on our work obligations to freshen up). He was so sweaty he reportedly couldn't get the extra balls out of his pocket.

Meanwhile, Djokovic chilled shirtless on the sidelines, as discussed above. A reminder:

If you've been paying attention to the U.S. Open, you'll recall that last week, French player Alize Cornet was cited for "unsportsmanlike conduct" after she returned to the court following an outfit change, realized her top was on backwards, and switched it around. If you haven't been paying attention, we'll sum up in one word the outcry from the general public (but particularly the feminist corners of the general public): Rage.

"the fact that it happened in the first place is a joke, considering male tennis players are allowed to take their shirts off and put on fresh ones as often as they want during a match, without leaving the court." <https://t.co/BSE7dk1548>  
— nora bouazzouni (@norabz) August 29, 2018

"Ridiculous!" cried Tracy Austin, a former U.S. Open champ. "We see a full covering sports bra — big deal. Men change their shirts multiple times a match."  
Ridiculous! Voice of reason should prevail. Look at circumstances. We see a full covering sports bra-big deal. Men change their shirt multiple times a match. #sexist <https://t.co/IqSPFsCL2Y>  
— Tracy Austin (@thetracyaustin) August 29, 2018

Which brings us back to Djokovic. Following his thirst-trap shirtless display on the court, many fans were left wondering, "whoa, wait a sec, how is that okay, when Cornet's mid-match switcharoo is not?"

Jill Ciminillo put it more eloquently. "So @usopen this is ok, but a girl in a tank top raises eyebrows?" she tweeted. "@DjokerNole is attractive and all, but #doublestandard." Others echoed the sentiment.

So @usopen this is ok, but a girl in a tank top raises eyebrows? @DjokerNole is attractive and all, but #doublestandard #notok [pic.twitter.com/DUogzCCUtR](https://pic.twitter.com/DUogzCCUtR)

— Jill Ciminillo (@jillciminillo) September 6, 2018

So Novak Djokovic can lean back in his chair, grinning and shirtless, during a spontaneous costume-change break, but Alize Cornet cannot flip her top around swiftly whilst wearing a sports bra without suffering a code violation. Got it. #usopen

— Jonathan Scott (@jonscott9) September 6, 2018

In case you missed it, this isn't the first time that various international tennis associations have come under fire for sexist policing of women's ensembles. Just last week, the President of the French Open, Bernard Giudicelli, issued a statement revealing that the tournament would be changing its dress codes for the 2019 event, specifically citing Serena Williams now-infamous catsuit as an example of what wouldn't be allowed. "You have to respect the game and the place," he told *Tennis Magazine*.

The debacles have led some to decry the tennis court as the next battleground for feminism. If it means more Serena in catsuits and/or tutus, plus, you know, advancing the feminist agenda, we're game.



## Appendix E

### Case Study 3, Article 1

CBC Sports. (2010, February 26), IOC rep downplays women's hockey party. Retrieved from

<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/2.722/ioc-rep-downplays-women-s-hockey-party-1.952525>

Hockey Canada apologizes for party on ice

An International Olympic Committee spokesman said Friday that no formal investigation is planned into the on-ice party held by members of Canada's gold-medal-winning women's hockey team.

Mark Adams told a briefing Friday, a day after the Vancouver Games hockey final, that he wasn't sure how a story spread that a formal investigation was underway. Adams said Hockey Canada had already apologized for the incident, and that the IOC was just seeking clarification on how it happened.

"To be honest I think people are in search of a story that doesn't exist," said Adams. "There were pictures all over the front pages and so on this morning, and I think people are looking for someone to say it's terrible.

"At the moment, we just are going to write a letter and I guess we will just be asking for some clarifications, some explanation of what occurred. For the time being, until that letter is written and a response is got, I can't really comment any further."

The players drank cans of beer and bottles of champagne, and smoked cigars with their gold medals draped around their necks on the ice surface at Canada Hockey Place after their 2-0 win over the U.S. on Thursday night.

Among those drinking were Quebec City's Marie-Philip Poulin, the youngest player on Team Canada and its fourth-line centre, who scored twice in the first period. The 18-year-old Poulin turns 19 next month, but right now would be under the legal drinking age in B.C.

"I'm really sorry for what happened," she said. "I think we just wanted to enjoy the moment and that's just what happened. And it won't happen again. We've learned from that. We're just going to enjoy that medal right now."

Some members of the team commented publicly on Friday.

Captain Hayley Wickenheiser said the players took to the ice two hours after the game ended — although that lengthy time period is disputed by others — and that there was a double standard at work.

Wickenheiser said if it were a men's team, there wouldn't be a hint of controversy.

"I don't brush it off, the underage [part] and being on the ice," said Wickenheiser. "Those things maybe could have been done different. But at the same time, it's celebrating, it's hockey, it's a

tradition we do. When we see a Stanley Cup winner, we see them spraying champagne all over the dressing room, you see 18-year-old kids there and nobody says a thing."

Goalie Shannon Szabados, who earned the shutout in the gold-medal game, was a bit more conciliatory in her comments.

"We did a poor job keeping it out of the public eye," said Szabados. "It was more of a team celebration that we kind of got caught up in, something we definitely didn't want to get out. We're supposed to be role models for young players growing up. It's unfortunate, but it's something that we'll have to deal with and regret happening.

"It's unfortunate we come here today and instead of talking about our gold medals, we're talking about the on-ice celebrations. But we brought it on ourselves."

Steve Keough, a spokesman for the Canadian Olympic Committee, said the COC had not provided the alcohol, nor instructed the players to celebrate on the ice.

"We condone celebrations. ... We don't condone actions of irresponsibility," Keough said. "I think Canadians understand it's quite an emotional moment for our team. It was not our intention to go against any IOC protocols."

In a statement released late Thursday, Hockey Canada apologized for the on-ice party.

"The members of Team Canada apologize if their on-ice celebrations, after fans had left the building, have offended anyone," the statement read. "In the excitement of the moment, the celebration left the confines of our dressing room and shouldn't have. The team regrets that its gold-medal celebration may have caused the IOC or COC any embarrassment.

"Our players and team vow to uphold the values of the Olympics moving forward and view this situation as a learning experience."

IOC member Dick Pound of Montreal handed out the medals to Team Canada, and told CBC News that he had no problem with the women celebrating.

"I think it's kind of like killing a mouse with an elephant gun," Pound told Peter Mansbridge on Friday. "These kids have worked like dogs for years and months, and the pressure is off. They had a huge game and a great win.

"Hey, let them have some fun."

## Appendix F

### Case Study 3, Article 2

Wright, M. (2018, June 9). Ivanka and Jared bump into the partying Washington Capitals at a restaurant and pose with the Stanley Cup-winning captain Alex Ovechkin - hours after he swam topless in a fountain and did a keg stand with the trophy. *The Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5825857/Washington-Capitals-captain-Alexander-Ovechkin-swims-DC-fountain-drinks-Stanlry-Cup.html>

Washington Capitals star Alexander Ovechkin ran into Jared and Ivanka Trump at a D.C. area eatery while celebrating his team's first Stanley Cup win.

The Russian player had been swimming in a fountain with his shirt off, danced away at nightclubs, thrown the first pitch out at a Washington Nationals ball game and has even drunk from the historic trophy.

All before stumbling on Jared and Ivanka Trump at Cafe Milano, who were eating with Yousef Al Otaiba - Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the United States of America.

A picture has also surfaced of him passed on on the team's plane, hugging the Stanley Cup.

Throwing the first pitch with the cup nearby on Saturday, the team captain overshot his toss and the ball goes flying above Max Scherzer's head.

After the game, however, Ovechkin really let loose and was filmed doing a keg stand out of the Stanley Cup.

He then led his teammates and spectators into chants of his own name.

The rascal continued with his fun, scaling the fence of Nick's Riverside Grill.

But that was truly just the beginning of his postgame antics, as Ovechkin then darted into Georgetown's waterfront fountain for a swim.

Ovechkin ditches his shirt at one point as he wallows in the water.

The team continues their screams and celebration before getting on their bus and jetting off to their next location.

President Donald Trump took time to applaud the Washington Capitals captain on Friday morning after the franchise captured won its first championship in 43 years.

'Congratulations to the Washington Capitals on their GREAT play and winning the Stanley Cup Championship,' Trump's Tweet said. 'Alex Ovechkin, the team captain, was spectacular - a true Superstar! D.C. is popping, in many ways. What a time!'

Ovechkin is a staunch supporter of Russian President Vladimir Putin, hence why Trump may have sent out the tweet.

Ovechkin, who won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the MVP of the 2018 NHL postseason, has said his praise of Putin is somehow non-political, stressing that he hopes for better relations between the two countries - a desire Trump has expressed publicly as well.

Trump's tweet also shows a contrast to how his relationship has been going with mostly black athletes from the NFL and NBA.

Ovechkin's teammate, Devante Smith-Pelly, has already said he would not be visiting the White House when invited over an objection to Trump's rhetoric.

'The things that he spews are straight-up racist and sexist,' Canada's Postmedia quoted Smith-Pelly as saying Wednesday as the Capitals prepared for Thursday's Game 5. (Both Smith-Pelly and Ovechkin scored in Thursday's clinching victory)

'Some of the things he's said are pretty gross. I'm not too into politics, so I don't know all his other views, but his rhetoric I definitely don't agree with. It hasn't come up here, but I think I already have my mind made up.'

Smith-Pelly, one of two black Capitals players, is from the Toronto area.

Trump, of course, has not been silent on the subject. He has referred to protesting NFL players as 'sons of b\*\*\*\*\*' and suggested anyone who stayed in the locker room rather than stand on the field during the anthem should leave the country.

## Appendix G:

### Media Representation Rules for Sportswomen

| Rule   | Status                 | Focus                              | Primarily defined by |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Lower broadcast production values                 | <i>Older</i>           | <i>Difference</i>                  | <i>Men</i>           |
| 2. Gender marking                                    |                        |                                    |                      |
| 3. Infantilization                                   |                        |                                    |                      |
| 4. Non-sport-related aspects                         |                        |                                    |                      |
| 5. Comparisons to men's sport                        |                        |                                    |                      |
| 6. Sportswomen don't matter                          | <i>Persistent</i>      |                                    |                      |
| 7. Compulsory heterosexuality/Appropriate femininity |                        |                                    |                      |
| 8. Sexualization                                     |                        |                                    |                      |
| 9. Ambivalence                                       |                        |                                    |                      |
| 10. Athletes in action                               | <i>Current</i>         | <i>Similarity</i>                  |                      |
| 11. Serious athletes                                 |                        |                                    |                      |
| 12. Model citizens                                   |                        |                                    |                      |
| 13. Us and them                                      |                        |                                    |                      |
| 14. Our voices                                       | <i>Emerging online</i> | <i>Difference &amp; Similarity</i> | <i>Women</i>         |
| 15. Pretty and Powerful                              |                        |                                    | <i>Both genders</i>  |