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# Gender inequality in sport: Perceptions and experiences of generation Z

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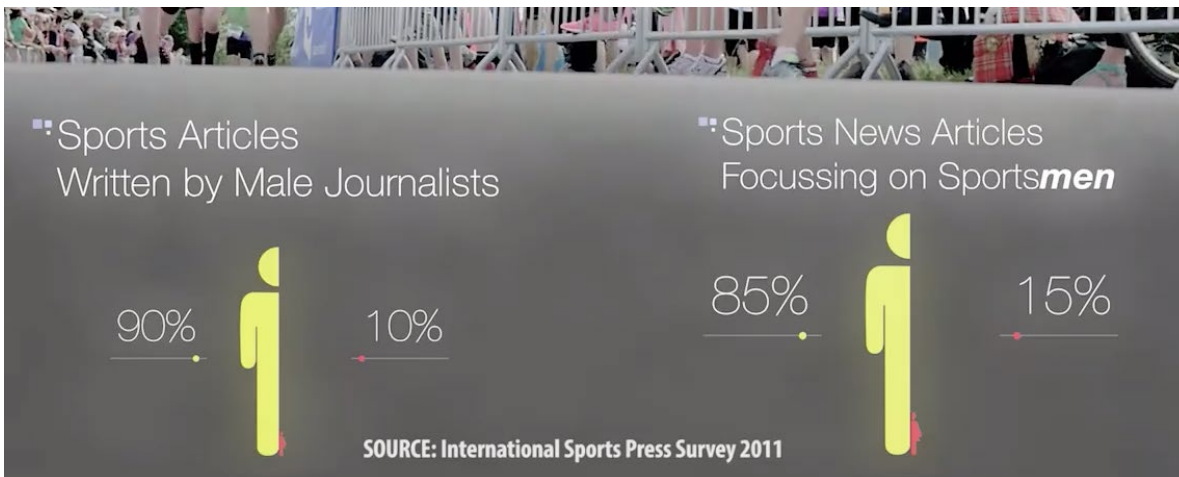
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# Gender equality in sport: ongoing challenges

- The implementation of top-down measures (e.g., quotas) through bodies such as the EU and the IOC is insufficient (Knoppers & Elling, 2017)
- Policy can help identify and facilitate change. However, to foster structural change the culture of sport should also be transformed
- The next step required to facilitate gender equality in sport is through educating and empowering the next generation of sport leaders.



# Gen Z's knowledge and identity construction

- Constructionist perspective: involvement in sport <-> Awareness level of gender equality in sport -> Shapes knowledge & influences identity
  - Knowledge and identity are dynamic; changing in time and depending on perceived experiences
- Students' learning opportunities within sports educational programs can hinder or stimulate their interest in social change
  - Majority of teachers reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Dowling, 2006)

# Research on Gen Z and Sport

... primarily focusing on Gen Z are all related to the use of technology, education and communication ...

(Turner, 2015; Loveland, 2017; Levak & Baric Selmic, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017)

# Research questions

- 1) What are current sport undergraduate students' considerations of gender equality in sport?
- 2) What areas of gender equality in sports are suffering from 'knowledge gaps' within this specific group of Gen Z students?

# Focus groups

- Convenience sample of undergraduate students in participating institutions
- 60-90 minutes
- Generation Z: Individuals born in the mid-1990s to early 2000s

	Male	Female	Number of FG
England	16	4	2
Netherlands	2	3	1
Norway	5	4	2
Belgium	6	14	3
Total	29	25	8



# Data collection & analysis

- First half of 2019
- Themes informed by MOOC units: Culture & Society, Governance & Law, Commerce, Media, Participation, Events
- Acker's (199) theoretical framework as a tool to shed light on (In)visible gendering processes and identify knowledge gaps

# Identity construction: or the individual acceptance of gender norms

- High awareness levels and critical about gender inequalities in sport

*Participants mentioned that sport*

*“is supposed to be equal but that there are big differences” (N5, M).*

*Examples given included*

*“the unequal gender split in the media” (E20, F), “the pay gap” (E17, M) “stereotypes related to type of sport” (N2, F) and “imposed sex segregation in competitions and during PE classes at school” (B9, F).*



# Generation Z is more accepting

- Progressive identity construction
- Certain beliefs and attitudes (e.g., male superiority, homophobia, stereotypes) were perceived as belonging to earlier generations

*“I think that now our generation, we are not as earlier generations, we don’t have such extreme views. We are more accepting different things now” (E19, F)*

*In a similar vein a participant (B13, M) stated that  
‘I think that I’m more open and have less restrictive ideas about what women might or should do’*

# Gendering structures: or rules and roles that promote one group over another

- The roles of women: Lower versus higher status job roles

*I think that saying everything in sport is male dominated is wrong. The top leaders in Norway are men, but in the middle leadership and in administrative positions is approximately 50-50. Or 40-60-ish so to say that everything is male dominated is wrong in my opinion. (N7, M)*

- Rules in sport governing boards: Use of quotas

*It is important that it is not only men that get to exert power. Women are looked down on. It is not always correct that men have more knowledge about this. Women should also be included because we also have opinions. (N2, F)*

# Gendering cultures: or slogans, symbols and metaphors emphasizing skills

Coverage and representation of female elite athletes in the media

- The way female athletes are profiled: as less hyped than men
- How they are labelled: as clumsy when making mistakes

The use of derogatory statements or metaphors as powerful tools in the process of stereotyping

*Another participant (N1, M) mentioned that “Women are still being looked down at in football and told that they’re not physically capable”.*

# Gendering interactions: or individual-level interaction that enact dominance and subordination and/or silence or privilege one group over another

The sex segregation in the school and sport system

*We had a female teacher for the girls and a male teacher for the boys. (...) The girls mainly did gymnastics and dancing and the boys went to play football, basketball, and hockey. (...) We did not really talk about these differences. This was just how we knew it. (B19, M,)*

Perceived differences related to the coaching approach often implying a more competitive-oriented coaching approach for boys than for girls

Altitudinal shift when compared to previous generations, but at the same time individuals of Gen Z are not immune to gender stereotypes and socialization

- Lack of understanding about the governance and leadership of sport: Roles of women
- The role that men can play in gender mainstreaming

Moving forward: Educating Generation Z

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## Moving forward: ongoing challenges

- Transforming inequity requires student-teacher collaborations (Oliver & McCaughy, 2012)
- Enhancing reflective practice among students and teachers
- Embedding gender equality throughout PE courses (mainstreaming)
- Building shared accountability for culture change throughout the entire teaching and learning community



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### GENDER EQUALITY TOOLKIT

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