Overcoming the Femininity Hurdle: Is Sport The Answer?

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‘And in sports, the goal is not to succeed independently of physical aptitudes: it is the accomplishment of perfection proper to each organism; the lightweight champion is as worthy as the heavyweight; a female ski champion is no less a champion than the male who is more rapid than she: they belong to two different categories.’ – *Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex*

SYNOPSIS

In the vast majority of sports in the West, women are marginalized and disadvantaged in their plight to have their achievements recognised as equally valuable. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate not only why women and men are considered unequal as athletes but also to illuminate sport's potential as a less explored terrain upon which to tackle sexism. It examines the reasons for the continued under-representation of women in sports and the trivialization of women's sports. It will first explore age-old myths about women which continue to inform our ideas about them today as well as our conception of them as lesser athletes than men. Overthrowing extremely durable ideas of what women are and should be has proven difficult, hence feminist scholars are still striving to debunk the numerous alienating and oppressive myths surrounding 'feminine nature.' In recognition of this, the dissertation then goes on to explore the constructed juxtaposition of 'femininity' and 'athleticism'. This is built upon by discussing how aestheticization and stereotyping of the feminine image conditions our perception of athletic ideals, ultimately contributing to sexist oppression within sport. Finally, I propose that the application of virtue ethics is key to the overthrowal of boundaries placed upon women in sport.

Up until now, sport is a topic that has been under-researched by feminist scholars in philosophy. However, sport demands the use of the body and the mind simultaneously, so it is a sphere with the potential to offer unique insights into the hurdles that women face in their quest to be recognized as men's physical and psychological equals. Critically, this dissertation focuses on the intersection of feminist philosophy and philosophy of sport, examining themes such as gendered myths, preservationism, femininity, aesthetics, implicit bias and stereotypes.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the efforts of women past and present have improved woman's status in society, women are still oppressed today. Philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have examined every social realm men and women impact and engage with and have discovered that the only realms which women are considered the superior sex[1] are those where women are caregivers or sexual objects (Manne, 2017, pp. 230-231). It has been shown that gender biases persist in our culture and both men and women are subject to sexist views that women are less powerful, agentic and/or strong (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989, p. 554; Rudman, 2000, p. 1326). These findings suggest that women are regularly stereotyped as less powerful in social realms dominated by men, this including sports. Interestingly, according to Robinson, 'sport is one of the last areas in society that is separated on gender lines' (2008, p. 98). Overthrowing the extremely durable ideas of what women are and should be has proven difficult, hence feminist scholars are still arguing for the elimination of alienating and oppressive myths surrounding 'feminine nature'. A general overarching aim of this thesis will be debunking the view that women are 'lesser' than men in the sporting context; I will aim to show, contrary to current attitudes, that they are of equal merit to male athletes and that from this we can learn of female physical and mental equality. I will also aim to show that rather than 'lesser' athletes women are altogether different, thus their unqualified comparison to male athletes is fruitless. This thesis argues that it is possible to correct the widespread assumption that women are 'lesser' athletes than men and makes some specific recommendations about how this may be achieved. These recommendations may shed light on how to proceed with anti-sexist strategies in Western society at large as sport and its impact forms a large part of human socialisation.

[1] I explain my conflation of sex and gender in the 3rd paragraph of this introduction.

Sport has been a human practice for thousands of years, and we are the only species to engage in this game play (Kniffin and Sculise Sugiyama, 2018). Although sports governing bodies have enforced certain measures in attempt to promote equality and diversity in sports competitions and participation, female athletes remain unequal in sport compared to male athletes because of social conditioning and unchallenged attitudes towards marginalised groups. By examining the treatment of female athletes in sports, I will show that these attempts have hitherto failed to tackle enduring myths surrounding the feminine nature and body which feed into female oppression.

The relation of sex and gender to sports is being increasingly discussed in feminist theory and in sport too (Cahn, 1993; Chisholm, 2008; Howe, 2003; Musto *et. al*, 2017; Robinson, 2008)[2]. In a recent interview between a reporter and tennis player Serena Williams, Williams stated 'the day I stop fighting for equality…will be the day I'm in my grave' (Indy 100 [online], 2019). I will however be primarily concerned with social justice in the context of sport. Therefore, I will not delve into metaphysical variations and interpretations of femininity and gender by defending a position in relation to the debates surrounding hyperandrogynous female athletes such as Caster Semenya and transgender female athletes like Veronica Ivy[3] who are at the fore of the media (see, for example: Magowan, 2018; Ingle, 2019a, 2019b) for it is beyond the scope of my enquiry[4]. However I do acknowledge that the impact of gender verification testing in sports has intensified the

[2] This list is by no means exhaustive of the literature which discusses feminist theory and sport, but highlights a few that I will discuss in this thesis.

[3] Ivy was formerly known as Rachel McKinnon until December 2019. Source: http://veronicaivy.com/ Accessed: 11/04/2020.

[4] It is, however, worth clarifying that hyperandrogenism and transsexuality are not biologically, socially, or politically the same. Hyperandrogenism refers to high levels of androgens in females, whereas transsexuality refers to a change in identity away from one's biological sex to another biological sex. Social and political discussion surrounding transsexuality has been what one can only describe as adversarial from the 1970's onwards (Ekins and King, 1995, p. 167). Hyperandrogenism has only been a coined term since (approximately) the 1950s (Bret et, al, 1950). It has generally had fewer political/social connotations until the recent debate of Caster Semenya's eligibility in the 2009 World Championships 800m race and subsequent testosterone rule changes in 2015 and 2018. Accessed: 23/05/2020.

debate of how we separate female athletes from male athletes (Cooky and Dworkin, 2013; Pape, 2019; Pastor, 2019). The implications that future changes in the rules about gender classification in sport could be radical, potentially leading to alternative, non-gendered means of ensuring the pursuit of fair, non-discriminative sporting competition by discarding the male/female binary at an elite level for a 'more nuanced approach' such as weight categories or testosterone levels (Knox et. al, 2019, p. 402). I therefore use the gender binary terms 'man' and 'woman' interchangeably with biological sex terms 'male' and 'female' only because this is how sports competitions and organisations mainly categorise athletes at present. I will use these as the standard terms for the sake of simplicity, without endorsing gender essentialism.

My thesis will follow three themes: *origins*, *problems and persistence,* and *solutions*. I will begin my inquiry in a chronological fashion by exploring *origins*. I aim to do this by exploring woman's inferior status and how women are physically and socially constrained by collective patriarchal attitudes that are sustained by patriarchal norms in the West in Chapter 1. Then, discussing the myths of male ownership, debt, the female body and virginity, and female frailty which create and perpetuate women's lesser status, I will look at why these myths remain and how their durability has maintained gender inequality in 21st century Western society. Following this, I will analyse the *problems and persistence,* beginning with athleticism and its synonymy with masculinity in Chapter 2. It will be suggested that the linking of athleticism and masculinity is due to traditionalism and cultural preservation, providing a response I will call the 'preservation of moral sport argument'. Chapter 3 will explore what femininity is and how its creation has caused polarity with the concept of competitiveness. With input from Young and Chisholm this chapter will examine how both positive and negative modalities of the female body have caused persistence of female bodily comportment but can also lead to a pushing of boundaries and eventual transcendence of the female situation in sports. Continuing the theme of *problems and persistence*, Chapters 4 and 5 will assess the issues

surrounding the feminine aesthetic, implicit biases and stereotyping. I will begin with analysing aesthetics and homophobia which reinforce the view that women are 'lesser' athletes. Leading on from this, I will discuss how implicit bias goes far beyond the athlete agent and affects a far-reaching network in the realm of sports. How we can overcome this collective of constraints - which will be referred to as the 'Femininity Hurdle' – will be examined in *solutions* in Chapter 6, where I will discuss virtue ethics as the best normative ethics response. This will lead me to the conclusion that although statistics show that we are on an upward scale towards increased representation of women in many realms, it is evident that attitudes towards the merit of female athletes is falling behind other fields in relation to gender parity. Aestheticization, homophobia, stereotyping and other various discriminative acts remain a constant part of women's lived experience. A safe space for women to be totally, unquestionably equal is required.

1. Subject and Other: beginnings, effects and the sporting realm

Prior to discussing how the feminine essence relates to and affects sports, it is vital to establish some of the problems women face in patriarchal society more generally, for it is important to look at the roots of the problem before assessing its consequences. The view that women are in every way – with the possible exceptions of physical beauty and care work – inferior to men is still present in 21st century Western societies. The collective attitudes towards women's sport and women's participation in sport are connected to and influenced by a wider social network of gender norms, expectations and practices which systematically disadvantage women. It seems shocking to me (and I imagine to many others who identify as female) that the female sex continues to face obstacles that the male sex does not in this supposedly progressive and modern era of social awareness and politics. There has undoubtedly been a great deal of progress made towards gender equality as a consequence of feminist political agitation yet the fight is not finished. In this chapter, *Subject and Other: beginnings, effects and the sporting realm*, I will look at Beauvoir's overarching analysis of woman as the 'Other' and how woman is physically and socially constrained by the collective attitude towards woman sustained by patriarchal norms in the West.

A key influence for my analysis is the feminist theory of Simone de Beauvoir and, specifically, her discussion of the 'Subject' and the 'Other' in *The Second Sex* ([1949] 2011). Beauvoir theorises that the subordination of woman is the effect of social structures put in place to favour man. Woman's lowliness forms her destiny as a crutch for man as he springboards into a world of opportunity beyond the home; she is his nurturer, his confidante, his sexual partner, and the mother of his offspring. At the most radical point on the spectrum of a woman's lowliness, the man is able to work and play whilst the woman makes sure his private life is 'ticking over'. It is of great benefit to the man that a woman holds a lower status when compared to him. One may define 'Other' as the inessential (in comparison to the

'Subject' which is the essential) or, in Hegelian 'master-slave dialectic'[5] terms, the slave, and Beauvoir used this term to label the oppressed group within society. Accordingly, man retains his status as 'Subject' and moves between public and private spheres, whilst woman is confined to the private sphere due to her self-perceived destiny as the 'Other'. The gendered norms that are prevalent in patriarchal societies are internalized by women and inform their perception of themselves as *women*. A subject's self-perception is crucial to the formation of her character and will have a large influence on her views and actions towards sexist oppression. Arguably, the self-perception a woman has as a result of her status as the Other in society tends to lead her to view herself as incomplete. As Beauvoir points out, a woman's being is defined in relation to man's: 'Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being', ergo 'woman's body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 5-6). She is a dependent being which cannot sustain life alone and is reliant on a master or subject, in essence, the essential. Her self-perception is one of lesser value and strength, thus when she is treated as such she does not question it and passively accepts her inferior role. Her self-perception dangerously creates the illusion that this is not an injustice, rather it is a biological dictation. The segregation presented forms both the social and the economic norm, whereby 'the hierarchical domestic division of labour is perpetuated by the labour market, and vice versa' (Hartmann, 1976, p. 139). Man generally benefits from this cycle for he gains higher wages whilst committing to less of the 'domestic division of labour' (Hartmann, 1976, p. 139).

Considering that the first publication of *The Second Sex* was in 1949, one may suggest that since then there have been some serious developments in the feminist movement. Various waves of feminism have

[5] Hegel's master-slave dialectic may be found in Hegel, G.W.F., 1977. Phenomenology of Spirit, translated by A.V. Miller with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay. Accessed: 31/01/2020.

come and gone, and, to some extent, women of the 21st century (at least in a legal context) have bettered from these movements: many have better access to contraception, education, greater property entitlement, more work opportunities and so on[6]. Most recently there have been feminist protests in the form of social media movements, namely the #metoo movement that began in October 2017 which highlighted the prevalence in sexual assault in the modern world (Manikonda *et al*., 2018). However, gender equality has still not been achieved: attitudes of women's inferior role in society[7] remain and statistics show that in many areas of society women remain outnumbered by men (Catalyst, 2017, 2018; Women's Sport Foundation, 2018-2019). I propose that whilst women in 21st Western societies are no longer viewed as slaves to men and have made significant progress in recent centuries, they are still perceived as the 'lesser'. This is a perception that some men have of women, but also a self-perception some women have due to social conditioning. By applying this insight to the realm of sports, I will then go on to explain why women are considered as lesser in a sporting context despite the contrasting evidence which supports the view that women are as worthy athletes as men.

1.1 - Woman as 'Lesser'

So what makes a woman? Biologically speaking, there are several factors which determine one's sex at birth; genitals, the hormones which are a consequence of these genitals and their genetic makeup (Penn State, 2005). One would thus assume that if born with a penis the being is biologically male, and if born with a uterus the being is biologically female. In recent years there has been continuous debate surrounding gender and sex binaries with strong arguments in favour of both gender and sex being social

[6] This is based on several landmark cases known to better the lives of many women in 20th century Britain: Married Women's Property Act , 1964; National Health Service (Family Planning) Act, 1967; Equal Pay Act, 1970; Sex Discrimination Act, 1975.

[7] The statistics used looked at parts of society such as the workforce, higher education and sports.

constructs ‘and therefore subject to change over time’ (Johnson and Repta, 2012). Beauvoir famously highlighted being a female and being a woman are not synonymous terms - rather, one is *born* a female but *becomes* a woman ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 293). From a young age, Beauvoir postulates, the girl is taught by those who influence her the most that she is an object who must please and entertain others before herself, thus renouncing her autonomy (2011, pp. 293-305). Because she is young and her self-perception is malleable, when pressed to undermine her own autonomy she obliges with little protest. For example, she objectifies herself as a doll and an object by submitting to trivial and materialistic pursuits to masquerade her exterior, rather than focussing on intellectual and spiritual development within. She is told that a constant well-kept exterior is the key to success and happiness, and by daring to not buy into this ploy and look basically human is the cause of her contempt. In the essay *Men are real, Women are ‘made up'*, Black and Sharma state the following:

> In a late 20th century European and North American context, what might be called the ideal of femininity and the accompanying beauty industry are systems that regulate and commodify the bodies of women to an extent and in a form not experienced by men. In this context, male bodies require a very different form of maintenance in order to conform to hegemonic masculinity - men are ‘real' without this work. This is not to deny that in the acquisition of varying forms of masculinity intensive work is done to the body; body building is an example. Young men too are under increasing pressure to obtain and maintain a specific ‘look'. However, on a routine day to day level men are not required to paint, moisturise, deodorise and de-hair their bodies in order to appear masculine. These activities, however, form part of the day to day routines of femininity (Holland *et al.*, 1994). In this sense then femininity is a state to be constantly sought. (2001, pp. 100-101).

As a consequence, women are regularly presented with the belief that femininity is not a given ability, but something to be obtained and maintained with physical constriction and grooming. Men fall victim to this too for 'men's sporting bodies are becoming more sexualised in a manner previously reserved for the spectacle of women's bodies' (Robinson, 2008, p. 97). The fact that both men and women are under pressure to conform to beauty standards of their given gender, 'self-policing' their image accordingly, shows that progress has not been made and signals that 'the problem has grown' (Saul, [2003] 2012, p. 168). In contrast with masculinity, femininity is presented as the ideal identity for the female sex which is best achieved through time-restrictive and expensive practices. Quite often this leads to dissatisfaction, as the regular upkeep of one's physical appearance is hindered by ageing, illness, and damage. The notion that a woman's body is her greatest asset is heavily emphasised in the West. Her body is the metric for female success and this is echoed by various movements within the fashion industry: famished Victoria's Secret models beaming in their lingerie whilst wearing angel wings[8], television shows such as Gok's Clothes Roadshow (2008-present) 'repair' women's wardrobes to look good, Extreme Makeover (2002-2007) and 10 Years Younger (2004 - present) change people's physical bodies to socially approved norms, and not to mention advertisements which imply happiness is caused by purchasing fashionable clothing or bettering one's body (Petter, 2017). Women frequently aspire to be like the models they see in fashion and beauty magazines on the basis of their appearance. However, the models we see are often stationary, passive clothes hangers in the name of consumerism. Women do not tend to aspire to be like them because of the personality, their achievements or their opinions. Women and men alike see beauty in their stillness and comportment as passive beauty exudes feminine

[8] I have chosen the example of Victoria's Secret Models or 'Angels' for their appearance is generally considered as aspirational for women: tall and thin, yet with an ample bosom and buttocks. The use of wings by Victoria's Secret suggest that these women are angelic, heavenly and the epitome of female appearance for they are both attractive with and without clothing.

character. This is troublesome as one's sex appeal, passiveness and objectification of the self is portrayed as correlative to success.

A woman is therefore more likely to shave her legs, wear makeup, tame her hair and wear clothing which is both flattering and reflective of what is trending in pursuit of femininity. In support of this claim a survey has shown that women spend considerably more on their appearance compared to men, stating 'The amount women spend on the face alone is nearly twice the amount men spend—a mere $51 average per month—a gap likely driven by makeup purchases' (Haynes, 2017). Contrastingly, for man to gain attention from his peers he need not renounce his autonomy. For the past millennia he has been considered the physically, mentally and intellectually superior sex. He is a complete being, thus independent. Regarded as his inferior, woman is trapped in a permanent child-like state. Because of the reinforcement that she is incomplete from a young age, she never really grasps how to think for herself ergo her focus is the pleasure of others. Triumph and victory (within or outside of sport) are considered 'reserved for men' so considering endeavours beyond performing whilst this mindset of incompleteness is present is futile ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 358). The results of this are damning: it leads to women 'take a back seat' in society by not going into or not being chosen for jobs with greater responsibility, not playing sports or engaging in politics compared to the male sex, thus reducing their representation significantly (Women In Sport, 2017).

Beauvoir rejects the hypothesis that it is the genitals which predetermine woman's anatomical inferiority to man. With reference to Freud's female castration anxiety theory, she rejects the idea that 'penis envy' is formative of a girl's identity whereby a woman feels that she lacks an organ which is overall more practical, extending into the world rather than being a concealed taboo ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 298-302). She does, however, highlight the impracticalities of the female body and its apparent lack of 'an organ than can be seen and held' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 303). Upon studying the etymology of human genitalia one is presented with the following definitions:

> Vagina - The basic meaning of the Latin word *vagina* was a sheath – or scabbard for a sword. By association, *Gladius* (sword) was a common term for the penis. (Dartmouth Medical School, 2008)

The woman is constrained by the definition of her anatomy for she is bound to the archaic view that she is lacking an organ responsible for human life. Her vagina is viewed as an inactive and secondary part of human anatomy, whereas the penis completes the physique. Without the sword the sheath has little purpose. Consequently this has determined how female anatomy has been viewed for past centuries. The vagina is likened to unnecessary bodily cavities such as a hole in one's tooth or a wound in one's leg: to be seen as useful it needs to be filled and made complete, otherwise it is symbolic of inferiority.

'Otherness', then, is forged by both the girl's childhood and the girl's anatomy. Because of her female body she is considered as weaker and of less importance. To seek attention from one's parents due to this pre-conceived image of physical inferiority, the girl reduces herself to an object which is to be admired and cooed at. The objectification of the self creates a role of passivity via the renunciation of one's autonomy and this becomes the key trait of femininity. Enforced passivity manifests itself in many ways – how she presents herself, her movement, her engagement with the matters other than the home. The oppression she experiences prevents her from seeking her full potential for 'she is more easily excused for not succeeding; success is made more difficult for her as another kind of accomplishment is demanded of her: she must at least *also* be a woman, she must not *lose* her femininity' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 306-307). This is not something a male will experience for he is encouraged by society to be active, sport being one of his outlets. He is allowed to explore his world with freeness, challenging himself and others with physical exploration as he will be ultimately valued for what he does and not how he looks. He posits

himself as a Subject which the world revolves around, whereas the woman posits herself as an object to serve the world.

Leading on from proposed origins of female inferiority one is inclined to discuss subsequent work which Beauvoir inspired. Dissatisfied by her husband's ability to enter the working world whilst she remained a housewife, journalist and author Betty Friedan conducted research into the lives of middle-class white housewives in the post-war era who felt equally unfulfilled by their roles. Strongly influenced by previous second-wave feminist writings, Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. *The Feminine Mystique* in summary highlighted the 'crisis of identity' which women undergo 'simply to become fully human' ([1963] 2010, p. 59). What one may deduce from its popularity[9] is that the book appealed to the generation because of the mutual dissatisfaction amongst American housewives. Friedan argued that this identity crisis was rooted in the fact that that the woman was portrayed as lesser, reduced to a child-like mental state yet with the physical capacity of an adult:

> The image of woman…is young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies and home. (Friedan, 2010, p. 23)

Friedan summarises the role and image of woman as a submissive being with limited concerns. This submissive, inferior nature is what encapsulates womanhood, and it is a construct which women are taught to abide by. If women do not make themselves physically and intellectually submissive, they are told that they will not achieve their ultimate end goals of caring for the home and producing children. By focussing on other pursuits such as academia, sports, careers, and so on the woman is diverging from what is

[9] According to The Guardian online, *The Feminine Mystique* sold over 3 million copies in its first 3 years of publication. Source: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/may/30/feminine-mystique-100-best-nonfiction-books-robert-mccrum Accessed: 31/01/2019.

expected of her. She challenges the gender hierarchy, but as the male's subordinate the move towards more intellectual or physically challenging pursuits sits uncomfortably with those who express alignment with a patriarchal ideology. Supporting this, Manne writes:

> A woman's perceived resistance to or violation of the norms and expectations that govern these social roles would naturally tend to provoke just these kinds of reactions. What could be a more natural basis for hostility and aggression than defection from the role of an attentive, loving subordinate? This could be expected to leave some of the characteristic beneficiaries of gender (viz., men) feeling both usurped and neglected. And, emotionally speaking, this combination could be disastrous. (Manne, 2017, pp. 49-50)

Women are effectively bullied by patriarchal societies, targeted insofar as that they will face social and possibly physical consequences if they do not conform to subordination. From a young age, women are told that the home is their vocation thus they must form themselves to be desirable to men, serving male needs and male transcendence[10]. To achieve the end goal of marriage and motherhood woman must behave and look a certain way so that she can be deemed successful by the society which forces this construct upon her. It does not require that she spends her time focussing on things which will push her physically or intellectually, hence the attitude tends to be that such pursuits are a waste of time, features of a man's world and a stray path from fulfilment. On the basis of the analysis above it may be summarised that in a patriarchal society not only do men perceive women as the inferior sex, but *women also* perceive themselves as the inferior sex: this is what we can denote as the notion of being 'lesser'. Women are viewed

[10] Here I understand male transcendence to be the ability to move and extend autonomously as both a social and physical being. To paraphrase Beauvoir, "transcendence is active, creative, projecting forward into the future". Source: Day & Fraser, 2018, p. 2. Accessed: 31/01/2019.

as ‘lesser’ in society due to the falsely perceived notion that they are, on the whole, less physically strong and less intelligent than men. The (often) unrealised truth is that women who do not generally participate in physically strenuous activities have the potential to be as strong and as intelligent as the male sex, and this dissertation will aim to show from a philosophical perspective that women’s increased involvement in sport has the potential to uncover this truth and provides empirical evidence of woman’s physical and intellectual equality.

1.2 – Myths

Due to my focus being solely on Western society, one must look back at where the idea of the woman as ‘lesser’ originated to understand the foundation of the beliefs and biases surrounding women in sport today. It seems likely that the influence of Judeo-Christian religious scripture has shaped our view of women and has continued through to this day, especially as there are over 250 million Christians in the US, UK and Ireland (Pew Research Center, 2010). The Bible from beginning to end portrays the woman as lesser than the male. In Genesis, God scorns the woman for going against his command, punishing her and making her under man’s control (Genesis 3:16). In Ephesians, it explicitly states that wives should submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22). Furthermore in 1 Timothy, it is stated:

> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (1 Timothy 2:11-15)

One may argue that the misogynistic nature of some Biblical verses are negated by contrasting statements about God's love and treating one another as one would like his or herself to be treated. On the contrary, a literal interpretation of the above can possibly, perhaps evidently, lead to the ongoing belief that women are lesser than men. There is no evidence that Judeo-Christian religion is to blame for the continued view that women are lesser, however one cannot measure the mass of influence it may or may not have on its followers. Regardless, the continued suggestion women are lesser irrespective of interpretation has persisted through the years.

A myth which has persisted through the centuries of Western culture is that women are owned by men. This gender hierarchy assumes that the male sex is of greater worth – the pinnacle of God's creation and the end-point of evolution. The male sex has often been portrayed as the complete human, free of bodily constraints and endowed with a curiosity for unlimited knowledge. The female sex is consequently rendered to a position of servitude, created for the benefit of man. Her creation in Genesis implies that she is the product of man or part of the man which he owns (Genesis 2:21-22). She is his companion, the vessel for his seed and his subordinate which elevates him to become and maintain superiority in society. The myth is problematic if it is persistent in the modern era as it reduces women's value to the value of their bodies as objects which the male sex feels entitled to. If she is classed as a possession she is objectified, thus her rights are not recognized when compared to the male sex. Male desire for the possession of a female is seen as justifiable as he is seen as both the owner and the necessary entity for her existence. The myth of ownership presupposes that a woman cannot function without a man. Her existence is sufficient as the carrier of the male seed but needs the male for completion. Male possession of the female body is also justified (by the male sex) as it is viewed that the male is doing her a favour in sparing her from the great responsibilities of the public sphere. It is even seen as a privilege opposed to a restriction that she is able to continue life frivolously and irresponsibly: 'without difficulties, without responsibility, without cares, she obviously has 'the best part'' ([de]

Beauvoir, 2011, p. 773). Male possession over the female is therefore viewed as a service to the female sex.

Male ownership over women today can lead to injustice regarding the rights to her body, education, certain freedoms and choices regarding her own destiny. Many socially conditioned males see themselves as entitled to a woman's body and may even become resentful of women if they resist his demands. In more extreme cases this leads to a culture of 'inceldom'[11] which leads (mainly heterosexual) men to believe that feminist systems are oppressive and deprive them of the female bodies that they deserve (Hauser, 2017). In addition to this it has been proposed that viewing a woman's body as a male property leads to a vicious cycle of fear and dependence. Discussing the topic of rape culture and collective responsibility, May and Strikwerda write the following:

> In a larger sense, men benefit from the prevalence of rape in that *many women are made to feel dependent on men for protection against potential rapists* …Whenever one group is made to feel dependent on another group, and this dependency is not reciprocal, then there is a strong comparative benefit to the group that is not in the dependent position. Such a benefit…support[s] the view that men as a group have a stake in perpetuating the rape culture in ways that women do not. [emphasis added] (1996, p. 188)

The above suggests that not only does the male sex perpetuate the myth of ownership but actively benefits from its existence. Endorsement of this myth allows society to sustain the view that the male sex is the 'Subject' whilst the female sex is the 'Other'. Hence any conscious or subconscious endorsement of this myth preserves both the male and female opinion that the woman's body is 'prey' and, when this is viewed as fact, it is worryingly used as justification for misogyny and violence towards women ([de] Beauvoir,

[11] 'Inceldom' is a blended coinage of 'involuntary celibacy' and 'kingdom'.

2011, p. 176, 394). Beauvoir highlights the male delight in destruction of the untouched and unconquered, relating the female body to untouched land and an unpicked rose: the myth of the woman's body is portrayed as mystical, unknown, desirable and above all a commodity which is 'destined to be possessed' (2011, pp. 178-181). From this one may infer that in some ways the male sex both benefit and enjoy viewing the female body as an object.

Endorsement of this myth is problematic for female sportspersons or those who aspire to engage in sport because women are preyed on in two different but equally derogatory ways. In one sense a woman's body is seen as prey in the sporting sphere; it is assessed, ridiculed and sexualised whilst playing sports (section 3.3 discusses this further). For example, a columnist for Fox Sports attacked Serena Williams' body composition in 2009 stating her body fat was 'an unsightly layer of thick, muscled blubber' before commenting 'I'm only knocking Serena's back pack because it's preventing her from reaching her full potential as an athletic icon. I am not fundamentally opposed to junk in the trunk, although my preference is a stuffed onion over an oozing pumpkin. (A stuffed onion is a booty so round and tight that it brings tears to your eyes).'[12] (Fox Sports [online]). Secondarily, a woman's body is preyed upon by larger institutions in the name of advertising and sales by using female insecurities of the sexualised body to push products but also reject healthy alternatives such as sport and exercise in favour of socially accepted bodily norms. By understanding women as prey ownership is not only exercised by males but by corporations which use advertisements such as Protein World's 'Are You Beach Body Ready' (Cuss, 2015; Jackson, 2016). Male ownership and the treatment of the female body as prey therefore leads to problematic and immoral practices. Severe degradation and mistreatment of the female body not only leads to the use of the female body as means to an end, but leads woman to live her body 'as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other' thus

[12] I understand both 'back pack', 'junk in the trunk' and 'booty' as derogatory slang to refer to Williams' buttocks.

reducing her autonomy over the only thing she really owns (Bartky, 1990, p. 101).

An implication of this myth is that women *owe* men. This is possibly based upon the view that women are incomplete beings compared to the complete male. It could also stem from the view that 'The temptations of the earth, sex and the devil are incarnated in her' due to the story of Eve in Genesis, thus they require men's leadership as saviours and regulators ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 191). The harbouring of this belief is also one which leads to the view that women are of a 'lesser' status, as it not only reinforces the subordination of woman but promotes men as the superior sex. Perhaps this is linked to the myth that a woman is an incomplete or failed man, thus her completion is only fulfilled when she forms a relation to him for 'woman is exclusively defined in her relation to man' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 166). It was originally thought that women were vessels for the male seed[13], therefore it was the man who was the creator of life rather than the efforts of both a male and female. This false belief not only enforced the view that the man was supreme but also that a woman needed a man more than he needed her in the fostering of future generations. Despite studies of the female anatomy advancing to discover that the male and female sex cells play an equal role in reproduction, it is still believed today that women owe men some sort of sexual service and their rejection of sexual advances are the fault of the female party involved, not the male, for it is a male's right over the female's body which he owns (Manne, 2017, pp. 79-105).

A myth which is frequently discussed in Beauvoir's *Myths* is the myth that the female body is a thing of unknown, an object which elicits mystery and seduction ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 169-205). The woman's body, prior to much anatomical knowledge, was considered a source of witchcraft, evil and valued in a form considered 'pure', ergo virginal. As a virgin, there are

[13] Soranus of Esphesus believed that "the principle of generation resided in the male. In his view, only the sperm is active. Its mobility permits it to enter the uterus, where it is retained and can coagulate to form an embryo. To be sure, the woman emits a kind of seed, but this is useless for generation and as a result is evacuated by means of the bladder" Source: Bonnard, 2013. Accessed: 14/05/2019.

connotations of innocence and holiness, the word virgin itself meaning ‘pure’ and ‘unspoiled’ (Cambridge Dictionary [online], 2019). The losing of one’s virginity has historically been a definitive event for the teenage female, the ‘deflowering’ process often being a public spectacle and initiation of female sexualisation. Woman’s virginal status has further led to how heteronormative societies characterise female beauty as paradoxically a sexual being and a pure virginal being.

Investigating further, it was revealed that this is still a relevant topic of discussion in the 21st century on internet forums. The thread ‘How do you guys feel about innocent girls?’ on the internet forum and news aggregation website Reddit demonstrates the myth’s immortality (2015). Responses which support the claim that the male sex desires women who elicit mystery and seduction via her virginal status were made by several users of the platform: user ‘vhmPook’ responded ‘If she's socially "normal" and it just hasn't happened for her yet, I'm interested. I like the idea of planting my flag and being her first, and teaching. I have a teaching fantasy.’ (Reddit, 2015). A similar sentiment was expressed by user ‘showmethebiggirls’, who responded ‘I prefer the innocent aura, I like teasing out her sexual side and/or doing things that corrupt that innocence. Pushing boundaries is more fun when she at least pretends to put up a fight.’ (Reddit, 2015). The comments made here serve as evidence for the claim that some males still idealise women who can fulfil their paradoxical fantasies of the female body. This construct of virginal purity highlights that women are highly valued when they present themselves as untouched, like a pristine collectable or a new car. Once ‘deflowered’, she is considered impure, unholy, spoilt and even a whore if this deflowering does not fall in line with social convention. However, her deflowering is generally considered a duty of the male, thus she loses her value at her expense for the male ownership of her sexual status. The perpetuation of this myth shows that the ideal female is unobtainable, yet heteronormative societies still enforce conflictual characteristics for females to aspire to. A woman’s sexual value (and

consequent overall value) as a being is decided by males rather than her autonomous self, something which males do not experience.

In addition to this myth is the myth of female frailty, posited by Nancy Theberge (1989). Theberge claims that according to the Victorian ideal of womanhood, women were viewed as 'morally and spiritually strong' yet 'physically and intellectually weak', however I am inclined to argue that this myth dates back considerably further than she suggests (1989, p. 507). It would appear that this myth has remained the crutch for many patriarchal societies when discouraging, or altogether banning, women from sport. It was famously stated in 1896 by the founder of the modern Olympics, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, that 'No matter how toughened a sportswoman may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks.' (Deshpande, 2016). Schweinbenz cited that the myth of female frailty 'supported male domination economically as well as ideologically' for it confined women to the home, rather than activities which could lead to over exertion and damaging one's dainty aesthetic through muscular growth (2010, p. 316).The belief that woman's body was a source of mystery arguably lead to its poorly understood anatomy, therefore fantastical tales were constructed claiming that women could not participate in sports as it would ruin their uterine functions and their fertility (Smith-Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1973, p. 335). Although certain advances in female biology and sports have led to increased female participation and challenges to the myth of female frailty, Western societies are evidently still reeling from the effect of endorsing the myth for so long.

The myths which are still present in Western culture suggest that a woman's social value today is still of a lesser value than a man's, much like it was over 1000 years ago. The continued sexual objectification of the female body by media, institutions, social groups and sometimes women themselves shows that the myths discussed above have managed to persist despite social change and evidence contradicting the myths. It is also suggestive that not much has changed since the initial publication of *The Second Sex*, and that Beauvoir's philosophical interpretation of the feminine

body and the attitudes towards it are still relevant today. A woman's value is placed upon her sexual worth and fulfilment of her feminine vocation in society as a virgin, as a mother, but overall as a service for the male sex. She is encouraged to demonstrate the feminine virtues of 'love (loyalty), fertility, and childbirth' rather than the masculine virtue of 'strength': 'her virtue lies in her looks and submission to male authority' (Weiser & Weiser, 2016, p. 20). This is perhaps why a woman's involvement in sport is deemed inferior, for sport does not - or rather, should not - have any relation to a woman's sexuality or sexual status. This is arguably the beauty of sport, that everything external to sport - politics, culture, status - does not affect the sport itself. Yet in reality, the focus on woman as a symbol of sex opposed to strength, courageousness or intellect acts as a large obstacle for female participation. In patriarchal societies we cannot see past the objectification of woman. Female participants are scrutinised for being too sexy or not sexy enough rather than a focus on their sporting prowess or achievements, their flesh seen as a spectacle rather than a collection of trained muscles. It is still unusual for observers in patriarchal societies to see women valued as sportswomen and not as a service of sex or care. Therefore, women's sporting performances are continually dismissed and compared to male performances as they are seen as a diversion from their male-given purposes.

1.3 Woman as 'Lesser' Today

From the above discussion we may infer that the writings of feminist scholars such as Friedan and Beauvoir are relevant to the modern-day woman in a Western society. It is suggested that, statistically, women have begun to move beyond the 'destiny' of housewifery – in terms of employment there has been a large rise in numbers of women in work. Yet to this date a female equivalent of the Tour de France does not exist, there are more men's events than women's and mixed events in the summer Olympics, and only men can play the best of five sets in tennis Grand Slams,

with women being reduced to a maximum of three (Skelton, 2019; Kuek Ser, 2016; Gander, 2017). Between April and June 2013 around 67% of women in the UK aged 16 to 64 were in work, an increase from 53% in 1971 (Office For National Statistics, 2013). However, despite women broadening their horizons into the public sphere of work their efforts are still hampered due to multiple factors linked with female sexist oppression. Further statistical evidence provided by the Office For National Statistics shows that 'the gender pay gap for full-time workers is entirely in favour of men for all occupations' (2018). Here it is rational to suggest that a possible factor of why women are not given equal pay is long-standing societal constructs such as femininity, perpetuating the ill-conceived notion that male attributes allow greater success in the workplace. Attributes which one would generally associate with male behaviour – competitiveness and aggression, power, strong leadership, assertiveness and confidence – leads employers to believe that, compared to female behavioural attributes, a male is a better employee and therefore requires higher pay. As a consequence, the 21st century Western woman is prevented from becoming independent in the workplace compared to her male counterpart. She cannot shake the passiveness, the childlikeness nor the frivolity which is associated with her biological sex, hence it is often easier to accept this preconception than challenge it.

The effects of society reinforcing the view that women are physically and intellectually inferior has dire effects on how the female perceives her body and its consequent value. Society has often dictated how a woman should appear through the means of fashion. Looking back to the 20th century one is presented with female fashion icons – these including Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Brigitte Bardot, Diana Princess of Wales and Twiggy. Despite these women being iconic in different decades they bear a physical similarity to one another: thin limbs, narrow waists, white skin, protruding cheekbones and collarbones. Their statures appeared not too far from malnourished. Regardless, their physical bodies were perceived as the 'ideal', sexually desired by the heterosexual male and aspirational for the

conforming female. Their success was in part due to their appearance. Therefore, one may assume that those who idolise these women may come to perceive that sex appeal is the only way of gaining value or success in a heterosexual society. This is clearly damaging, as it can often lead women to be submissive and voluntarily submit to a status as 'lesser'. On a deeper and more subtle level, this physical appearance connotes a physical weakness. By making oneself thinner, one is widening the gap between male and female physical composition. The lack of muscle, lack of health and lack of nutrition the female aims to achieve gives way to the male whose body ideal is overall stronger and healthier. The consequence of this is that the 20th century ideal for females reinforces the idea that a female is more successful as a woman if she physically diminishes herself. She is not only lesser to the physically stronger male but a slave to the society which dictates her desires.

The social movements of men and women have changed since the 20th century, as has the socially constructed body-image ideal. There has been a larger emphasis on the promotion of health, self-love and fitness. Nonetheless, there are still trends which dictate how a female body should appear. The rise to stardom of women such as Kim Kardashian, Amber Rose, Tammy Hembrow and Kylie Jenner has arguably influenced what modern females view as the ideal body: large breasts and buttocks, a small waist, large lips and minimal body fat. Whether these are natural physical traits or surgical enhancements does not matter. The promotion of this ideal, though, is what is damaging to women in general. The ideal is unsustainable – it is not necessarily healthy nor natural and the effects of trying the achieve this socially constructed perfect physical body is detrimental to female health. The result of enlarging one's breasts and buttocks effectively restricts the female's movement. To prevent discomfort women restrict their movements, submitting themselves to a less powerful role phenomenologically. The pressure of constant bombardment by social media on how one should aspire to look is merely a construction, for the reality is that physical flawlessness does not exist, nor does our exterior image represent our inner self: 'every woman who gives herself [to it] is

destined in some degree to fail', thus the cycle of self-hatred and inadequacy continues (Bartky, 1997, p. 139). Compared to the male (whose ideal body does not physically restrict him) the female is encumbered by the very flesh she is in, once again becoming 'Lesser'. This does not mean that the future of the female body is futile, however. Whilst socially constructed and unsustainable ideals are present, there is also resistance to the ideal. Examples may include, but are not limited to, media outlets highlighting the triumphs and diversity of female athletes such as Amelia Strickler, Jo Pavey, Khadijah Mellah, and the development of all-female competitions in male-centric sports such as the W Series[14] and The Magnolia Cup[15] (Middlemas, 2020; Wilson, 2020; Keogh, 2019). Attitudes are beginning to change towards the female athlete and this may influence perceptions of the female body. Nonetheless, there is an evident need for total overhaul of the feminine ideal to achieve gender equality within and beyond sports. I will hypothesise in the next chapter that the way of overcoming this constructed ideal is deconstructing female body composition and homophobia through the means of sport.

[14] W Series is a championship racing series for female drivers which began in 2018. Source: https://wseries.com/about-us/ Accessed 16/04/2020.

[15] The Magnolia Cup is a charity event featuring aspiring female jockeys at the renowned Goodwood Racecourse. However, prior to 2019, this event was primarily for charity and entertainment, not competitive purposes. Source: https://www.goodwood.com/horseracing/qatar-goodwood-festival/magnolia-cup/ Accessed 16/04/2020.

2. The Female as a Lesser Athlete – Problems and Preservation For Women in Sport

In this chapter I will discuss how women are considered lesser athletes in their relation to male athletes. Even at the pinnacle of athleticism, the sporting triumphs of women are considered as less worthy than their male equivalents. Although the male sex bears considerable physical advantages which often allow him to be bigger, stronger, and faster than the female sex, this, I argue, does not necessarily mean 'better'. I will begin this inquiry by outlining perhaps the largest obstacle for women athletes demanding gender equality: the social construct of femininity. Following this, I will discuss the argument in favour of conventional and cultural preservation. Then, I shall offer my response, which argues for the adaptation of traditionalist practices within sport. In particular I will maintain that, whilst preservation of tradition is important, the evolution of sports is necessary for their continuation. In summary, gender equality must not only be practiced for the evolution and continued relevance of a sport, but also prioritised.

In 2017, retired tennis player John McEnroe stated "If [Serena Williams] played the men's circuit, she would be like 700 in the world" (BBC Sport, 2017). Several questions arise from this statement, but what one may deduce from this statement is that McEnroe believes that the female is a lesser athlete in comparison to the male equivalent. Despite being the most successful female tennis player of all time[16], according to McEnroe, she does not compare to her male equivalents. His assumption is that females are never as strong and their performance not as impressive compared to male athletes. Perhaps this is why the statistics surrounding women in sports are so bleak: out of the top 100 highest paid athletes, there are no women (Badenhausen, 2018). Television broadcasts give more air-time to male sports, even if the sport is not currently in season (Chaffee, 2017). In the UK,

[16] Success being defined by her total of grand slam wins.

teenage women participate in sports less than teenage men (Women In Sport, 2017). A report by the Women's Sports Foundation stated that 'Leadership of women in the Olympic and Paralympic movements also lags behind that of their male counterparts, in membership on commissions, [IFs, and NGBs], as well as in salaries' (2017, p. 64)[17]. These statistics tend to mirror the societal values of gender equality in working and recreational environments, for 'Men have consistently higher employment rates than women above the age of 22' and 'Men make up the majority of workers in the top 10% of earners' in the UK (Office For National Statistics, 2013). Data also shows that despite progress towards a gender balanced work force in the UK, 'On average men do 16 hours a week of such unpaid work, which includes adult care and child care, laundry and cleaning, to the 26 hours of unpaid work done by women a week' (Office For National Statistics, 2016). This is indicative of a divide in gender roles whereby the male is more active in the realm of work, whereas the female is more active in the home. Given these figures, it is not controversial to claim that women are considered as lesser athletes in a Western society for it is not considered a suitable realm of 'work'. If we compare the viewpoint which McEnroe presents in 2017 to the verses found in the Bible which date from thousands of years ago, the view that women are lesser than men appears to have persisted through the ages and remains intact insofar as sport is concerned.

I dare comment that McEnroe could be correct, but only in the narrow sense regarding body composition (this will be discussed later in this chapter). In general, men are physically stronger than women; this is scientifically true (Miller, *et al*., 1993). Nonetheless, this does not make them superior to women – rather, this demonstrates that the human body differs in ability in a sporting context. This calls for discussion as to whether we have a foundation for comparing the male and female body, particularly when their capabilities are different and unquantifiable. It also calls for discussion on how we should define athleticism and how one identifies an athletic

[17] National Governing Bodies (NGB), and International Federations (IF).

person. There are many more components which contribute to athleticism. Collins English Dictionary defines athleticism as 'someone's fitness and ability to perform well at sports or other physical activities', yet it also defines athleticism as 'physical prowess consisting variously of coordination, dexterity, vigour, stamina, etc.' (Collins [online], 2014). It would appear athleticism, male or female, consists of more than just physical strength. In what follows, I will reject the common assumption that physical strength is the only key component of athleticism.

2.1 – What is Athleticism?

We must look carefully at how we define 'athleticism' when investigating why women are considered lesser athletes. It is undeniable that sporting feats which require athleticism – such as winning the Tour de France, breaking the world record in the 50m breaststroke, winning an Olympic gold in the heptathlon – require *both* physical and mental demands from the body. Whilst some definitions of athleticism may narrowly refer to physical traits such as fitness, strength, power, coordination, stamina, and so on, I argue for a broader definition which also emphasizes the 'mental' qualities of an athlete. An athletic mind is one which is determined, calculating, diligent, and ambitious whilst remaining calm during times of heightened tension or emotion. Examples of a display of mental toughness during a sports competition may be the Diamond Challenge Sculls at Henley Royal Regatta 2016, where underdog Hannes Obreno beat the five-time World Champion Mahé Drysdale. Drysdale weighed around 15kg heavier than Obreno for the race, thus he should have had a strong advantage with his higher potential wattage output. Although there may be questions surrounding Drysdale's fitness or tactics, Obreno's mental athleticism shone through as he was not ruffled by the odds of Drysdale winning nor Drysdale's decorated career. Without the combination of both mental and physical athleticism, one who engages in sports cannot become an athlete. Take for example Heather Stanning or Shannon Bobbitt – both women are

considerably shorter than their peers and their sports (rowing and basketball) are typically dominated by taller statures due to the athletic advantage height gives. Although one can have the physical specifications and discipline required of an athlete, the mental athleticism which they display is what allows them to achieve an athletic nature. Physical composure is a necessary possession for an athlete. However, mental composure is also necessary in achieving optimum results. Physical composition is therefore a necessary part of *athleticism* but not a sufficient condition for being an *athlete*. It would be incorrect to claim that the female is a lesser athlete, since to only consider the capability of one's body but not the capability of one's mind would result in a claim of partial accuracy. If we are to fully understand the problem of why the female is viewed as a lesser athlete, it is important that we fully understand what it means to be perceived as 'feminine'. Femininity has often been presented as a conflict in sport. Sport has originally been depicted as a realm the woman should not engage in nor be a part of for it requires exertion. It will result in the woman contorting her body in ways patriarchal societies prescribe it should not. Sport will cause the woman to sweat, become muddied and blistered, grow muscular, be aggressive and foul-mouthed - all which defy the ideal of a graceful, passive, and delicate woman. Yet this view is a falsehood. It is a construct to keep the woman in a metaphorical 'birdcage'. She is no more than an ornament for her master to possess, and the ability to exercise her true physical abilities and to spread her wings is something which she may not have the chance to encounter. Frye originally uses a different metaphor of a birdcage to illuminate the oppression of women by showing that many seemingly minor barriers are systematically connected in such a way that they confine women (Frye, 2005 [1983], p. 85). Although I am focussing on the confinement of the women's bodies to 'ladylike' practices and postures, Frye importantly highlights that the birdcage is a 'macroscopic phenomenon' (2005 [1983], p. 86). The birdcage cannot be seen from a 'microscopic perspective', yet when one assesses the larger scale of the oppression of femininity it can be seen as 'a network of forces and barriers

which are systematically related and which conspire to the immobilization, reduction and moulding of women' (Frye, 2005 [1983], p. 87). When we consider the full picture, the barriers posed by the feminine norms of grace and delicateness cross with the barriers of mainstream understandings of the female body. Thus, we understand the female body as burdensome and unfit for sport. Beauvoir comments on the female body that 'female organs are vulnerable, their functioning delicate; strange and uncomfortable, breasts are a burden; they remind her of their presence during strenuous exercise, they quiver, they ache. From here on, woman's muscle force, endurance and suppleness are inferior to man's.' (2011, p. 353). However, this is a problematic feature of Beauvoir's account as it seems to accept the view that the female body is *inferior* to the male's, rather than just different. Although some female bodies are not always suited to certain sports, they perform very well in others. For example, large breasts make running more difficult for some women, but for other sports such as shotput, discus, rowing, weightlifting, archery, kayaking and canoeing the breasts have considerably less impact on female performance. The female is therefore encapsulated by barriers which society creates and all she can do is look from inside the cage to the outside world, inactive, unless she realises that her body can be more athletic than society wills it to be.

The woman has also been portrayed as someone of less mental strength, too. Aristotle wrote:

> All females are less spirited than the males…the females are softer, more vicious, less simple, more impetuous…For man's nature is the most complete, so that these dispositions too are more evident in humans. Hence a wife is more compassionate than a husband and more given to tears, but also more jealous and complaining and more apt to scold and fight. The female is also more dispirited and despondent than the male, more shameless and lying, is readier to deceive and has a longer memory; furthermore she is more wakeful,

> more afraid of action, and in general is less inclined to move than the male, and takes less nourishment. (pp. 608b1-15).

Although Aristotle's claim is unfounded, it is a view which has been perpetuated. Women are steered towards 'softer' subjects when being educated, such as art and craft, home economics, English literature and modern languages rather than 'harder', more mentally demanding subjects like the sciences, maths, and engineering because they as women are seen as intellectually and emotionally inferior. This is supported by the statistic that less than 25% of those who work in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and maths are women (WISE, 2017). Even in philosophy, where one would believe there was greater insight to gender equality and the moral implications surrounding it, reports have shown that as women progress in academia their representation drops: only 22% of women were readers in philosophy in the UK, and only 19% were professors: 'Women, it has been said, are like oxygen: in shorter supply the higher you climb.' (Saul & Beebee, 2011; Finlayson, 2018, p. 776). It is here that the woman comes to believe that such a divide is justified, or worse yet, does not even question it. Some women may be subject to the conditioning that they do not possess the sufficient mental capacity to undertake the rigorous and unrelenting demands of sport. Consequently, many women may not aspire to become involved as sportswomen whatsoever. One may postulate that this is a keystone as to why there are fewer sportswomen compared to sportsmen in Western society. As a consequence, young women and girls do not have role models to give empirical evidence that the female is as strong an athlete as the male, creating a vicious cycle of wanting to be a sportswoman, not being able to identify with sportswomen due to a lack thereof, then failing to reach their goal of being a sportswoman. This cycle is hard to break. Without empirical evidence then, an equally strong female athlete is fantasy.

2.2 – Perpetuation of Oppression and the Philosophy of Cultural Preservation

The vicious cycle presented above is arguably perpetuated by the historical sexism which sport and its governing bodies has turned a blind eye to for centuries. One must highlight that whilst not all sporting institutions are sexist, there is almost always evidence of inequality. Sadly, the levels of sexism in some sporting institutions are extremely high and I will be focussing on these in particular. I will further postulate that a common reason why females are constantly seen as lesser athletes is due to the preservation of 'sports culture'. I will make this claim by building upon arguments presented by philosophers Jeffers and Matthes (2015, 2016). It is commonly thought that the preservation of sports culture forms the essence of sport (essence in its most simple form being 'play'), therefore one must not interfere with practices which stray from the original game. I will respond by presenting a case against preserving aspects of sporting traditions that discriminate against female athletes, concluding that change in sport is not only *good* for sport but *essential* to its nature.

The argument in favour of the preservation of sport and the rules, conventions and practices it encompasses follows as such:

P1. Historically and culturally significant practices are valuable
P2. Valuable things should be preserved
P3. Sport and its conventions are historically and culturally significant practices
C. therefore, sport and its conventions should be preserved

To an extent, this argument is sound. An analogous argument may be constructed about heirlooms. One may argue that a family heirloom has value because of the history of previous generations it represents and the statement it makes on behalf of the family. The family which owns the

heirloom thus sees the need for it to be passed on through the generations to remind the recipient of the bloodline, what they stand for, and what they have been through which has formed their family identity. Sporting practices are similar to the heirloom but on a considerably larger scale. Tomlinson and Young state that sporting practices are a source of 'cultural identity-formation, and forms of collective expression of public culture and civic society' which I think is strongly supported by the adoption of sporting practices by nations (2011, p. 209). Canada, for example, considers lacrosse and ice hockey as intrinsic to the culture to the extent that they are written into law as the national sports (National Sports of Canada Act, 1994). Sport is intrinsic to one's culture for 'sport is an arena in which processes of personal habitus/identity testing and formation are conducted. Sport plays an important role in embodying multiple notions of identity. Different sports represent individuals, communities, regions and nations, and a key feature of the sports process is that it is used by different groups…to represent, maintain and/or challenge identities' (Maguire, 2011, p. 999). Sport is something we consider historically and culturally significant, thus we consider its practice as something that we should preserve.

What is problematic for the sports preservationist is the morally culpable conventions which are encompassed within a sport. If one follows the above argument, one can understand the sports preservationist's dilemma: on the one hand, the preservation of sport requires that the sport's practices, conventions, statutes and traditions remain if the entire essence and widely shared values of the sport are to continue through time as the founders of said sport intended. As Robert writes, though sport may only 'mirror, reflect, or reinforce the values found in wider society' it is possible that 'sport has a significant degree of autonomy from the wider society and supports, stands for, or expresses a set of values of its own which may run counter to the values dominant in the culture' (Simon, 2000, pp. 1-2). On the other hand, as one may find with other culture traditions, there are some conventions and emphasised values which ought not to be preserved; such as the exclusion of certain races, religions, classes, and

sexes, an emphasis of patriotic values or maybe even capitalist values. An example which I shall explore is the conventions and rules of rowing with specific reference to Henley Royal Regatta (henceforth HRR), which began in 1839.

2.3 – Cultural Preservation in Sporting Competition

After 142 years of HRR, the first women's event was held at HRR in 1981 (Weil, 2000; Churcher & Graham, 2017). However, this event was an exhibition race, meaning that it was for show only. The race was not held over the full course distance of 2112m but over 1000m as it was believed that women were not capable of enduring the full stretch. Plus, it was not during the scheduled racing programme. Instead, the women raced during the intervals where spectators left for luncheon or tea. In 1985 it was decided that the women's international rowing races should be held over 2000m, the same format as the men's international rowing races (World Rowing, 2015). The first official women's race at HRR followed and was introduced in 1993, later titled The Princess Royal Challenge Cup in 1996 (Henley Royal Regatta [online], 2018). Subsequently, women's events have been added over the past twenty-two years, however the male events outnumbered the female events fifteen to eight[18]. In 2019 The Stewards of HRR announced that the event will be extended to six days from 2021 onwards to allow for two additional women's categories, thus bringing the ratio of women's to men's races up (Henley Royal Regatta, 2019). This shows that the attitude towards women's rowing is changing, however an equal opportunity in each boat class is yet to be created. The continuation of HRR as a male-dominated event is arguably due to the belief that the preservation of a sport creates and sustains events of cultural and historical

[18] This excludes the recent addition of the commemorative The Kings Cup, a mixed gender event for military athletes which took place at the 2019 HRR. Source: https://www.hrr.co.uk/henley-royal-regatta-2019-return-king%E2%80%99s-cup Accessed: 07/12/2019.

significance which are paramount to the identity and value of the sport and the identity and values of persons involved. However, one must question at which point the preservation of a sport trumps the importance of equality. Furthermore, one must enquire into the reasons why there are still more men's events than women's events at present.

The preservation of the 'rowing culture' is also supported by the continuance of the Steward's Enclosure at HRR. Since its beginning, the enclosure has enforced strict codes of conduct. The use of mobile phones is not permitted and can result in the forfeiting of one's 'badge' which gains one access (Henley Royal Regatta [online], 2018). Most interestingly, the dress codes are still enforced with men being required to wear 'lounge suits, or jackets or blazers with flannels, together with a tie or cravat', whilst being denied entry if wearing 'shorts or jeans' (Henley Royal Regatta [online], 2018). Women on the other hand 'are required to wear dresses or skirts with a hemline below the knee' and are denied access if they are found 'wearing divided skirts, culottes or trousers of any kind.' (Henley Royal Regatta [online], 2018).

In 2009, a regatta spokesperson stated that the reason for a strict dress code was to 'maintain the atmosphere of an English Garden party of the Edwardian period' (Wardrop, 2009). The use of dress codes in the Stewards Enclosure displays the value placed upon the practices of HRR in an attempt of maintaining an atmosphere similar to the roots of the sporting competition, yet this attempt is arguably morally culpable. The preservation of dress codes in the enclosures is a reminder of women's status in sporting events. The traditions which have been preserved by the Steward's Enclosure date back to when women were considered incapable of sports with a competitive purpose. Further to this, the period in which HRR began saw women's sport as offensive; a dangerous move away from the confined domestic role which drew cause of concern over a woman's femininity (Parratt, 1989, p. 143). Women's clothing during the Edwardian period was 'ornate, constrictive, and cumbersome', restricting the woman and emphasising her role as passive (Cosbey, *et al*., 2003, p. 104). The permitted

menswear however replicates the sporting jackets of college rowers to keep them warm in winter, hence they were practical and made for movement (Collier and Robinson, 2018). To continue this cultural practice suggests that not only should women be confined to the private sphere and away from sport, but also that women should cover themselves up at a sporting event. Alternatively, men are free to move at a sporting event as both competitor and spectator. This preservation of practices and conventions arguably leads to the morally impermissible degradation of women; 'while norms of dress retain much of the liberality [that emerged in the sixties], in recent years there has been a revival of 'feminine' styles which tend to make the female body inactive, both in appearance and reality' (Young, 2010, p. 14). The historical and cultural significance of HRR is of great value due to its impact on social expression and identity formation. Nonetheless, it is evident from the practices and conventions continued by HRR that the appeal to tradition is supportive and continuative of the belief that the female is a lesser athlete.

There are several responses to this dilemma which I shall explore. Firstly, I shall explore a hypothetical counter-argument if HRR were to respond, this being that HRR views females as equal athletes to males. It is admittedly relatively difficult for race organisers to schedule additional competitions from a logistical perspective when the competition spans so long itself, especially when one is aiming to preserve the original races. However, this argument is not sound. Sport evolves, and this does not exclude rowing at HRR. Originally the only event was the Grand Challenge Cup held over a day, but different events were added over the years such as The Ladies Challenge Plate, The Temple Challenge Cup, The Thames Challenge cup *et cetera* as did the number of days the competition was held over (Henley Royal Regatta, 2018). To extend the competition by an additional two days to accommodate for women's competitive events would not contradict the evolution of sports for sports continuously changes its rules, structure, athletes and significance. To adapt the competition in the

name of equality would not contradict tradition either, but rather it would begin tradition whilst adhering to the fluid nature of sport.

Additionally, even if one was to suggest that parity has been achieved for female athletes at HRR, one would be making an elitist claim. At HRR there are events for males at several levels: 'open', 'intermediate', 'club', 'student' and 'junior' (Henley Royal Regatta, 2018, pp. 6-17). As of 2020 the eight events for women are all 'open' level (three of which require 'senior' status and one requires 'student' status) with the exception of The Diamond Jubilee Challenge Cup which is 'junior' level (Henley Royal Regatta, 2018, pp. 9-17). Consequently, HRR excludes intermediate and club level female athletes[19]. One may refute this claim by arguing that because most of the events are open level, the intermediate and club level female athletes do have a chance of winning as they are eligible to enter. Nonetheless, this argument is flawed due to the decreased likeliness of a grassroot athlete being able to win against someone of superior experience who is also eligible. Examples of this are displayed by the entries of The Town Challenge Cup (then known as The Women's Fours) where entrants included club-level participants such as Llandaff Rowing Club (crew number 206) yet also participants such as Hollandia Roeiclub (crew number 203) who were the Dutch national team (Henley Royal Regatta, 2017). In layman's terms, women who must work alongside their sports commitments must compete against paid professionals who are more likely to have time to row as well as extra resources such as physiotherapy, nutritionists, and one-to-one coaching. It is thus extremely unlikely that grassroot female athletes would win compared to grassroot male athletes at HRR. Once again, HRR is faced with a cross-sectional divide: not only are male athletes given more

[19] With regards to categories of rowing: 'Open' means anyone can enter, 'intermediate' means anyone who has not had a significant competition win can enter (what this competition may be varies), 'student' requires the athletes to be enrolled at an institute of education, 'club' requires athletes to be a member of a club which is not an elite, private or student club, 'junior' requires that the athlete is of secondary school/sixth form age, and 'senior' requires that the athlete is above junior age but can be synonymous to those who are above club level but below elite. This system has since been replaced with a Personal Ranking Index, yet restrictions have not made notable changes.

opportunities than female athletes, differing levels of male athletes are given more opportunities compared to differing levels of female athletes. The evidence presented by HRR is an overwhelmingly supportive example of women being viewed and treated as lesser athletes than men.

At this point, it is relevant to introduce the event known as Henley Women's Regatta (henceforth HWR). HWR began in 1988 in response to the growing numbers of female participation in rowing which was not catered for at HRR (Churcher & Graham, 2017). The event is held annually a week before HRR and was introduced specifically and exclusively for women, encouraging female participation in the sport without being overshadowed by the predominantly male character that the sport struggles to shake. HWR is *prima facie* advantageous for women's rowing for two reasons. Firstly, it solves the problem of elitism which HRR has failed to eradicate. HWR caters for a full range of abilities, from 'development' categories for those who are new to rowing all the way through to 'championship'[20]. It also has category divisions for clubs, students, para-athletes and juniors (Henley Women's Regatta [online], 2018). Secondly, as a consequence of the broad spectrum of athletes it provides competition for, HWR has a strong focus of female empowerment and encouragement of female participation - something which had not been done before by a rowing event. By providing for all female athletes HWR creates an arena for women to deconstruct stereotypes and traits typically associated with 'males' and 'sport'. With the end goal of victory, made fathomable by a greater likeliness of winning by competing against those of similar abilities, females display aggression, determination, speed, and grit. Young states that 'Women often approach a physical engagement with things with timidity, uncertainty, and hesitancy. Typically, we [women] lack an entire trust in our bodies to carry us to our aims.' (Young, 2005, p. 27). When competing at HWR however, competitors

[20] These categories have a variety of rules and regulations regarding eligibility, however 'development' equates to 'novice', 'aspirational' to 'intermediate' and 'championship' to 'elite'. These categorisations have been a recent addition in rowing and are heavily debated on their fairness due to their broad nature. Source: http://hwr.org.uk/competitors/events-entry-criteria-2/ Accessed: 07/12/2019.

and spectators are presented with contrasting empirical evidence that women can engage with their bodies, allowing them to conquer the opponent and achieve the end-goal of victory by means such as courage, certainty and confidence. What is most beneficial is that, without male rowers, female rowers are not inappropriately compared to something they are different to. HWR emphasises that female athletes are not lesser than male athletes, but altogether a different category. They are nonetheless able to exemplify the virtues which sport requires and produces and this is key if we are to claim that male and female athletes attain the same merit in their sporting achievements. At that point in time and space where she crosses the finish line, she is the fastest, strongest and overall superior athlete.

Nevertheless, one may be critical of the advantages of HWR for women, on the basis that separatism does not create equality. The reality of giving women a competition of their own is that it allows woman to be seen as the 'Other' in the sport. In the introduction of perhaps her most famous writing, *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir writes:

> Women – except in certain abstract gatherings such as conferences – do not use 'we'; men say 'women' and women adopt this word to refer to themselves; but they do not authentically posit themselves as Subjects…Women's actions have never been more than symbolic agitation; they have won only what men have been willing to concede to them; they have taken nothing; they have received. (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 8)

As a consequence, the woman is seen as an inessential subordinate to the male (the Subject), a being which receives and cannot give, confined to a role of passiveness. What Beauvoir writes is still worryingly accurate and applicable to the discussion of HWR. Already one sees the separatism in the title of the event 'Henley Women's Regatta', where the woman must specify that the event is arguably a by-product of HRR. By specifying that an event is women-only through the title of the competition, female athletes are not

presented as the Subject but as bodies of differing (lower) status. HWR is seen as the 'other' Henley race, a competition that divides the sexes rather than uniting them under an umbrella of equality. HWR is consistently seen as less prestigious than HRR too. Evidence for this is the lack of history and culture surrounding HWR compared to HRR, the fact that HRR has a royal status and the greater amount of money put into it. It is also possible that this is due to the embedded state of Other in the history of HWR for the race was born out of agitation. The birth of HWR was granted to women but only after the 'approval of Stewards of Henley Royal Regatta'; a body which up until 1997 was made up entirely of males (Churcher & Graham, 2017; Dodd, 2017). This was because the Stewards owned the land and the installations, thus they were able to concede this to the demand of women. Whether the women at the fore of HWR's birth saw this as a taking or a receiving, what is most important is that the foundation of HWR has been founded upon the view that HRR and man is seen as the Subject whilst HWR and women has, and still is, seen as Other. What may be concluded from this comparison of HRR and HWR is that the female is seen as a lesser athlete due to the perpetuated separation of the sexes in competition. The need to separate woman from man when in sports does have biology-based reasoning, however the historical significance of competition appears to have dire effects for females who push for equal competition rights.

2.4 – A Response to the Cultural Preservationist Argument

The view that the female is a lesser athlete, although false, is perpetuated through a vicious cycle fuelled by historical practices, traditions, and efforts to preserve the past. The dilemma which I will now re-visit is this: on the one hand, it is important that sport and its socio-cultural practices are preserved for it is important in forming one's identity and culture but, on the other hand, the preservation of such practices can lead to unethical consequences such as sexism. Thus, I propose that an amendment is made to the argument in favour of the preservation of sport, forming what shall be known as the

'preservation of moral sport argument'. The amended argument in favour of the preservation of sport is as follows:

> P1. Historically and culturally significant practices are valuable.
>
> P2. Valuable things should be preserved.
>
> P3. However, things that are positively disvaluable, for instance, because they are morally culpable, should not be preserved.
>
> P4. If a practice is both historically and culturally significant and contains positively disvaluable features, it should only be preserved providing that the features preserved are not morally culpable.
>
> P5. Sport is a historically and culturally significant practice.
>
> P6. However, sport also contains morally culpable conventions (or morally disvaluable features).
>
> C. Sport should be preserved providing that any of its morally culpable conventions are not preserved.

By amending the above argument, those who govern sports and sporting institutions are required to review the effects of the preservation of sporting rules, conventions, and practices which are encompassed within said sport. Preservation is essential to a sport as highlighted in section 2.3 of this chapter. Notwithstanding this if preservation leads to exclusion, corruption, unfairness, degradation, elitism, or anything else considered immoral it leads to the contradiction of the nature and purpose of sport, not to mention the virtues it cultivates. Tradition should be valued if and only if it is beneficial to the sport in promoting *eudaimonia* – by complicity preserving immoral traditions the practice is rendered pointless 'except as a device for achieving external goods' (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 191). Once this is realised and practiced by sports preservationists the female athlete will be seen as equally strong, admirable and impressive as the male athlete.

Against the above amendment to the 'preservation of moral sport argument', one may one is presented with a similar problem to that of the 'ship of Theseus'. Like a ship having replacement parts over time, a sport has replacement conventions, rules and practices. In the end one is forced to question whether the sport that was originally formed has remained the same or become an entirely new sport altogether. If one takes a more absolute stance to the argument of cultural preservation one may be inclined to argue that by stopping the preservation of certain conventions, rules, and practices, one loses the essence of the sport. To lose the essence of a sport, then, would be extremely worrying as sport plays a vital role in not only the socialisation of humanity but is also highly formative of both physical and moral flourishing of social beings.

Nonetheless I believe that the refutation of the 'preservation of moral sport argument' is misguided as it denies the possibility of evolution in sport, which is arguably a concept of equal if not more importance. Sport evolves with time as it remains a central part of human life. It mirrors the advances which are made within society. An example of an evolving sport is Formula One, which has not only changed radically in terms of technology but also in terms of practices and conventions. Gary Anderson, BBC's technical analyst and former Jordan[21] designer, suggested that the early Formula One drivers would not recognise the sport as it is today, stating 'The regulations have changed, the cars, the circuits, the length of race…there are still winners and losers but it's a completely different world' (BBC Sport, 2013). What may also be suggested is that evolution of sport is more important than preservation of sport. If a sport does not evolve it is not an accurate representation of those who engage in it, and those who engage in it are necessary to the essence of sport. Without sport evolving to accommodate for the society it mirrors the sport will become an irrelevant pastime. From this discussion we may conclude that although traditions in sport are of great importance the abolition of immoral practices

[21] Formally known as Jordan Grand Prix between the years 1991 to 2005. Source: https://sidepodcast.com/f1-team/force-india Accessed 05/06/2020.

which remain to pacify preservationists is required. It is evident that, providing the key values and opportunities to flourish as an athlete which one gains from sport are kept alive, a sport can undergo change without becoming irrelevant as many preservationists fear. It may even be further argued that sport *needs* to change to reflect social values, however this is a topic for discussion beyond this dissertation. Building upon this I suggest the implementation of specific measures such as abandoning traditional dress codes which enforce heterosexual femininity (commonly found in tennis, netball, volleyball and lacrosse). I will also recommend that significant efforts are made in increasing female athlete visibility such as air time on television, and further efforts in increasing equal participation in recreational, competitive and elite sports which have traditionally remained a 'male sport' – football, rugby, boxing, wrestling, weightlifting and so forth. It is reasonable to henceforth claim that the preservation of rules, conventions and practices is a sufficient condition for a sport, yet evolution is a necessary condition.

3. Femininity and Sport

In this chapter, I aim to discuss how the construction of femininity precludes competitiveness. This aspect of femininity, in my view, has dire effects for women in sport, as well as outside, preventing many from achieving their full potentials. Femininity has historically been socially constructed so that it is mutually exclusive to athleticism; the fear of a woman overcoming her position as the physically and mentally inferior has perpetually threatened the patriarchy, thus by assigning characteristics to the feminine, it places athleticism beyond women's capabilities and interests. In the following sections, I shall critically assess Iris Marion Young's paper *Throwing Like a Girl* (2005) , furthering the debate in terms of bodily comportment and whether a feminine athlete is oxymoronic. Finally, I will discuss how engaging in competitive sports can help women overcome the limiting effects of the construction of femininity, especially with regard to bodily comportment.

3.1– Femininity and Sport as incompatible

Gendered norms and expectations have had a significant role to play in the development of attitudes towards female athletes. They have prevented woman's flourishing as a female athlete by restricting views about herself and how a woman ought to be physically and characteristically. When women first began to engage with sport it was generally for the purpose of leisure, with greater emphasis on socialisation with peers and minimal emphasis on competition. Contrastingly, male sports competition dates as far back as Ancient Greece where men would compete in the Olympics. Until the late 20th century, women competing for prizes were unusual and the larger, more prestigious events were reserved for men. Sport appeared to mirror the educational system women engaged with which was highlighted in section 2.2: women were steered towards the 'softer' subjects and men the 'harder' because of their incorrectly perceived intellectual inferiority.

Similarly, in competitive sport, the sports considered more physically and/or mentally demanding are dominated by males. Football, rugby, cycling, rowing, and motorsports to name few, match this rubric. As a consequence, the recent centuries of sporting competition have caused women to be steered towards sports which are considered 'less harsh' on the body or aesthetically pleasing. It is also notable that women were allowed to engage in sports one would consider more physically demanding but the end goal was dependent on one's sex – in essence, rowing was always considered a competitive display of masculinity for the male sex yet it was a non-competitive sport for the female sex up until the mid 1900s (Schweinbenz, 2010, pp. 313-318). Prior to rowing competitions women engaged in what was known as 'style rowing', where women were evaluated on the aesthetic movement and skill. Style rowing allowed women to 'develop the essential strength and endurance that was required to be a wife and a mother' but not disrupt their feminine essence by developing 'manly' muscles or damaging their reproductive organs which made them an unfavourable candidate to fulfil the societally pre-determined role of a housewife and mother (Schweinbenz, 2010, pp. 315-317). Thankfully, 'style' rowing is no longer the focus for female competitive rowers.

It has recently been hypothesised that the gender gap in sports is beginning to narrow (Capranica, *et al*., 2013). The opportunity for female competition has greatly broadened too with the Olympics – often considered as the pinnacle of elite sports competition – for the number of female participants has steadily increased from 13% in the 1964 Olympics to over 45% in the 2016 Olympics (International Olympic Committee, 2018). Nonetheless, the Olympics provides a narrow insight into the state of women's sports generally for it only skims the surface of a deep and complex network. It is not accountable for the gender divide in participation, nor does it account for popular sports which are not included in the Olympics such as cricket, lacrosse, polo, rugby union, and rugby league. It also only accounts for the elite tier of sports, disregarding all levels of sport below elite through to grassroot where statistics tend to show larger gender participation

divides[22]. The foundation for women's sport was set in concrete from its origination, making the quest for gender equality in sports a constant uphill struggle. Even if women's sports were to progress at the same rate as men's, they have been disadvantaged for so long that the only way the gap could be narrowed at every level of the sports is an acceleration in research, initiatives, and funding. Without acceleration through various means women will still be considered as lesser athletes.

3.2 – Competitiveness and Objectification

Assessing the results given by several modern dictionaries[23], the definition of competitiveness has little variance. When relating to human character, competitiveness may be defined as 'Having or displaying a strong desire to be more successful than others' (English Oxford Living Dictionaries [online], 2016). The desire to be more successful than one's peers is arguably something that comes from within; it is a natural display of human pride, whether this be in the home, the workplace or in a sporting context. To be successful is often equated to happiness, too, however it is not necessarily the case. More often than not, men and women are held to different standards of success. This is arguably due to woman's 'Otherness', and her success is measured in relation to the sphere that she is limited to: the private sphere of the home. In direct contrast to this, man's status as 'Subject' allows his success to be measured in relation to the public sphere of work, politics and competitive sport. A woman's success is viewed as a lot more trivial for it is so much more limited and confined, and competitiveness

[22] The Culture, Media and Sports Committee reported in 2014 that at elite sport levels 'women's sport gains much less sponsorship and media coverage, and prize money is lower" whilst "at the grassroots level, participation by women is significantly lower than by men". Source: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmcumeds/513/51303.htm Accessed: 26/10/2019. Interestingly, charity Women In Sport reported that sports clubs are perceived by both club members and non-club members as male dominant. Source: https://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Ideal-Sports-Clubs-Web-Ready.pdf Accessed: 26/10/2019.

[23] Dictionaries taken into consideration were the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, the online English Oxford Living Dictionary and the Collins Free Online Dictionary.

beyond her designated sphere leads to criticism, disregard or trivialisation of said achievement. For many years, competitiveness has been a limited expression for women as they have been unable to compete beyond the home. Rather, their competitiveness was restricted to one another within institutionalised walls. Yet this is beginning to change. This is perhaps supported by a national study in the US which has found the following:

> In 2014, forty-two years after the enactment of Title IX[24], there are over 200,000 female intercollegiate athletes. There is an average of 8.83 women's teams per NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] school. In short, there are more intercollegiate female athletes than ever before. In 1970, prior to the 1972 enactment of Title IX, there were only 2.5 women's teams per school and a total of only about 16,000 female intercollegiate athletes. In 1977/1978, the academic year preceding the mandatory compliance date for Title IX, the number of varsity sports for women had grown to 5.61 per school.[25] (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014)

Now that women's sport has become a more popular pursuit, we must explore competitiveness more thoroughly so that we can gain a better hold on the argument in favour of women's equality within, and eventually beyond, sporting competition.

Competitiveness has come to be considered a more masculine than feminine trait in a sporting context. In Cashdan's paper on male and female competitiveness, the results of the psychological study concluded that although both men and women have competitive traits, men tend to be

[24] The report states that "Title IX is federal legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs that receive federal money." Acosta/Carpenter. "Women in Intercollegiate Sport. A Longitudinal, National Study, Thirty Seven Year Update. 1977-2014". Unpublished manuscript. Available for downloading at www.acostacarpenter.ORG Accessed: 22/08/19.

[25] Although this is only indicative of one part of the Western hemisphere (the US) and is limited to a particular age (college students), this source is arguably a strong reflection of increased female participation in sports due to federal legislation attempting to remedy institutionalised sexism.

more competitive in both competition for sexual interest and sporting competition (1998, pp. 11-15). I hypothesise that this is due to the conditioned natures of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is very much focussed on the physical; the size of the body is an indication of physical power, thus, the bigger the better. The larger sized body which yields more power directly translates to one's physical ability and dominance in the sporting sphere, thus adding to their social status for one who can perform physical tasks suggests further biological indicators: the ability to protect, attack, reproduce, and so on. Femininity focusses on the physical body also, however 'the bigger the better' rule does not apply. Feminine bodies are characterised as lissom, not powerful. We therefore come to two ideals: the large and powerful masculine body which greatly accustomed to sports, and the small feminine body which is less capable than the male body in achieving physical feats. These ideals have been heavily sexualised by Western media and athletes do not escape this. The infamous *Sports Illustrated* magazine produces an annual *Swimsuit Issue,* which features a large quantity of photographic spreads of models and athletes in swimwear. The *Swimsuit Issue* is a contentious issue for many feminists who cite its objectification of women. What is less regularly focussed upon is that in addition to its objectification of women, the issue promotes women as athletes second to their sexual iconicity. This is perhaps supported by the fact that Ronda Rousey, mixed martial arts and Ultimate Fighting Champion wrestler, was the first female athlete to be featured on the front cover in 2016, fifty-two years after the issue's first publishing (see Figure 1.0 below).

Figure 1.0 - A photograph taken of Ronda Rousey from the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit edition cover 2016

Although it is possible that female athletes see this photoshoot as a celebration of beauty, it also arguably objectifies the women pictured. The women photographed are regularly in passive, inactive positions contrasting the overall theme of sports which the magazine promotes. In Figure 1.0 there is no reference whatsoever to Rousey's national and international titles in judo or mixed martial arts. Further to this the lack of clothing (Rousey actually wore no clothes at all but was painted on instead) suggests a relation to soft-core pornography rather than sport, diminishing the athlete's sporting success when making a comparison to her sexual worth.

Statistics show that between the years 1998 and 2003 the majority of females featured in *Sports Illustrated* were photographed in passive roles, yet the majority of males were photographed in active roles (Martin & MacDonald, 2012). The significance of these statistics become intensified by the further revelations that '4.88% of the [Sports Illustrated] covers from

2003-2009 featured women' (Martin & MacDonald, 2012). In the 2018 Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition, only 5 of the 36 women featured were athletes and all 5 athletes were photographed in passive and contorted positions, the only exception being that of USA Olympic gymnast Aly Raisman who had one photograph in a powerful pose which seemed to relate to her gymnastic performance (see figure 1.1) (Sports Illustrated, 2018).

Figure 1.1 - Aly Raisman in a contrastingly powerful pose in the 2018 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition photoshoot.

Feminist philosopher A. W. Eaton argues that the sexual objectification of the female nude is an 'important source' of heteronormative eroticism which contributes to 'a significant part of the complex mechanism that sustains sex inequality' (2012, p. 280). Relating to Figure 1.0, Eaton highlights the common pose that a woman is painted or

photographed in in attempt of exuding feminine beauty: 'The classic pose for the female nude is (a) recumbent, (b) frontal (so that the pubis and breasts are in full view) and (c) often with one arm raised above head. The pose is passive, unprotected, vulnerable and suggests sexual availability.' (2012, pp. 291-292). On the basis of Langton and Nussbaum's influential work on objectification, feminist scholars have compiled a list of criteria to identify objectification of a person:

1. instrumentality: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
2. denial of autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
3. inertness: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;
4. fungibility: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
5. violability: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;
6. ownership: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);
7. denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.
8. reduction to body: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
9. reduction to appearance: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
10. silencing: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy [online], 2015)

The most striking of the above criteria is number 3, inertness, as this is potentially one of the most de-humanising ways of objectifying the body. In

both Figure 1.0 and 1.1 Rousey and Raisman are presented as inactive beings, despite their professions being active in nature. As a consequence, they trade their status as sportswomen for that of objects and spectacles. Compared to Figures 1.2-1.4, it would appear that the female athletes in the *Swimsuit Issue* undergo professional and personal degradation. According to the above criteria, the women photographed for the *Swimsuit Issue* are regularly portrayed as objects instead of athletes. This is problematic as they are being used as means to an end; they are there primarily for our visual pleasure and their sporting achievements are secondary to this.

There have been some responses to Sports Illustrated's *Swimsuit Issue*, most notably that of ESPN. ESPN first published *The Body Issue* in 2009 focussing on the naked bodies of both male and female athletes. However, the women who have been featured in *The Body Issue* have arguably been subject to more subtle sexism than in the *Swimsuit Issue*, for example they were 'portrayed more in frames that de-emphasize their athleticism and sexualized them' (Cranmer, *et al.*, 2014, p. 159). The research conducted by Cranmer *et al*. concluded that, in the media, it is communicated that 'women and men can both play sports, but male athletes are athletic and female athletes are aesthetic' (2014, p. 159). However, it is also suggested that ESPN's *The Body Issue* has moved away from Cranmer's claims, portraying men and women in similar poses, lights and angles in their most recent issue (see Figures 1.2-1.4 below) (ESPN, 2018). Sport is often presented in the media as the perfect arena for a male to display his power and superior social status, with Messner stating that 'sport has been a primary arena of ideological legitimation for male superiority' (1988, p. 198). The sportsman has the opportunity to display raw power, stamina, strength, skill, and mental athleticism through influential visual portrayals. A recent performance of note is that of Usain Bolt at the Rio 2016 Olympics who, once the camera was focussed on him, winked, pouted, and brushed off his shoulders, in a display of what may be interpreted as sexually charged confidence and egotism. After winning the 100m final in world record breaking time of 9.8 seconds, Bolt immediately ran to the crowd to

showboat. Compared to the women's 100m final at the Rio 2016 Olympics, the men's 100m showed a greater display of excessive crowd-pleasing and performing which perhaps suggests that there is a conscious feeling of entitlement and display of superiority in the male events[26].

These portrayals may have the ability to form how men and women view the roles of the sexes in sports. This may indicate why the female comparatively lacks competitiveness as a trait, for as a sexual being she is understood as no more than a vessel which is to be won like a prize, then conquered in her passive state for she is 'prey to the species, whose interests diverge from her own ends' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 395). The female athlete is also commonly seen as an athlete secondary to her status as mother or potential mother. Due to her biological sex her body is viewed as a baby-making machine, often cornered into the destiny of motherhood as it is likened to essential female completion rather than a choice she may freely make. We have already established that sport is not traditionally viewed as a woman's destiny and is often seen as the lesser of achievements if she were to be both an athlete and a mother. Recently, the world's most decorated female champion Helen Glover stated 'I was proud of what my body could do as a rower but I am even prouder of it as a mother' which the tabloids interpreted as Glover stating that motherhood was a greater achievement than rowing - however this can be understood in various ways (Griffiths, 2019). Additionally, an anonymous survey conducted by ESPN reported that once becoming mothers, 41% of female athletes' earnings decreased (espnW.com, 2018). This presents a challenge for female athletes as not only are they sexually objectified whilst competing, but their sporting achievements are seen as inferior to motherhood. If true, there is possibly a diminished drive for women to become successful athletes if they can be

[26] However this comparison does not focus on other displays of celebration and the differences between male and female athletes in other sports. I suggest that this would be something worth investigating further for a greater insight into male egotism and entitlement in elite sport.

more successful in domains such as motherhood[27]. Furthermore, this may also mean that female athletes who do not become mothers are seen as lesser athletes despite their choice to remain childless often being a decision taken to advance their career.

The findings presented above are problematic. The sexual glorification of female athletes overshadows their success in sport, promoting a status of inferiority in a heteronormative society by emphasising sexual worth and de-emphasising athletic merit. Because of the construct of femininity, women cannot be simultaneously sexual icons *and* athletes as men can; they must be one or the other. Whilst women are painted as submissive sexual prey, male athletes are portrayed as sexually dominant and competitive. Consequently, girls and women fear 'a deviation from the norm' as the adherence to a white, heterosexual aesthetic treats women who are fast, muscular and active as suspicious or not real women (Weiser & Weiser, 2016, p. 213). Beauvoir suggests that it is possible that femininity creates an inferiority complex where woman doubts herself in the presence of the male sex in a professional or academic situation (2011, p. 754). The catastrophic consequence of the woman believing she has limited capacities, Beauvoir claims, is that the woman adopts a defeatist attitude and fails to compete with the male sex thus feeding into her own 'jail' (2011, p. 755). Sexual glorification of the female athlete can lead to women believing that their accomplishments are secondary to their attractiveness. Henceforth, the female athlete either resigns to her sexualisation and promotes it uncritically, or she removes herself from sport altogether: 'She does not experience those rich moments…where adventures of the mind acquire living warmth.' (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 755)

The purpose of participation and competition in sports has broadened in the modern day too. Rather than 'peacocking', there is greater emphasis on participation, wellbeing and fitness. Women in sport are consequently

[27] This also calls for greater research into feminism, motherhood and sports and the anti-patriarchal efforts of women who retire as athletes to become mothers by choice and female athletes who return to sports after childbirth.

presented with a dilemma: on the one hand, women are viewed as inherently uncompetitive due to their sexual role and the objectification of their bodies, yet they require competitiveness if they are to be successful athletes. They are presented with a choice of being either a feminine woman or an athletic woman, but the two natures cannot be combined as society presents them as polarised. It is at this point that we need to look at the phenomenology of women to gain further understanding as to why femininity and sport continue to be portrayed as incompatible.

Figure 1.2 –Basketballer Sue Bird and soccer player Megan Rapinoe featuring in ESPN's Body Issue 2018. Photo by Radka Leitmeritz. Source: http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/23851669/espn-body-issue-2018#!bird-rapinoe Accessed: 22/06/2019.

Figure 1.3 – Soccer player Crystal Dunn featuring in ESPN's Body Issue 2018. Photo by Marcus Smith - http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/23851669/espn-body-issue-2018#!dunn Accessed: 22/06/2018.

Figure 1.4 – Lauren Chamberlain featuring in ESPN's Body Issue 2018. Photo by Hana Asano - http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/23851669/espn-body-issue-2018#!chamberlain Accessed: 22/06/2019.

3.3 - Feminine Constraints: a Phenomenological Analysis

The differences between masculine and feminine movement can sometimes be subtle; women tend to cross their legs almost in a tight knot or close their legs altogether whereas men tend to space their legs out. Men are more likely to present themselves in power poses, occupying more space and exhibiting their confidence, whilst women are more likely to make themselves smaller and move in a timid manner (Cuddy, 2012). Notably when it comes to sports at lower levels, for example physical education lessons, it has been noted that young girls tend to minimise their movement, yet young boys contrastingly maximise. Halverson *et al.* reported that when throwing a ball, the velocity at which the ball was thrown was dependent on anatomy - in essence, boys threw the balls at a higher velocity than girls

despite neither being shown explicitly how to throw a ball (1973). This claim has been since disputed and it is theorised by Young (2005) that it is not anatomy which dictates female bodily movement.

Young's paper 'Throwing Like a Girl' (2005) is what can be described as ground-breaking for not only feminist philosophy but the philosophy of sport, too. In her analysis, Young focusses primarily on female bodily movement 'in which the body aims to accomplish a definite purpose or task' (2005, p. 30). A woman's physical freedom is hindered not by her anatomy, as suggested by Halverson (1973) and Beauvoir (2011) – rather, her anatomy is hindered by a false image which society inflicts upon women. Young theorises that the modulated motility female bodies display is due to the women's social conditioning and their consequent understanding of themselves as fragile and incapable. Young builds upon Beauvoir's insight that women perceive themselves as 'lesser' by showing that this prevents them from breaking from the feminine style of bodily comportment, which constricts almost every motion.

A focal point of Young's hypothesis is the modalities of feminine movement which are based on Beauvoir's account of immanence and transcendence in feminine experience. Transcendence, for Beauvoir, is the negation of a present fact of one's existence, opposing immanence whereby something by its very nature does not initiate change. As human beings we have the ability to transcend our situations, however, the pressure to embody femininity often prevents women from achieving full transcendence of the situation they are in. To an extent, women are not full agents when aligning themselves with traditional ideals of femininity. Hence, Young describes the three modalities of female motility: i) ambiguous transcendence ii) inhibited intentionality and iii) discontinuous unity. It is strongly suggested that women's experience and engagement with the world is what prevents females from achieving equality in every realm (Young, 2005, pp. 42-43). It is something beyond her control as it is subconscious, however I will build upon Young's modalities and her claim that women are able to 'escape or transcend the typical situation and

definition of women in various degrees and respects' by postulating that the constant engagement in sports activities allows a remoulding of woman's self-perception in a patriarchal society (Young, 2005, p. 31).

Analysing the three modalities Young presents helps us to understand why femininity and athleticism are generally considered as incompatible concepts. The first modality which Young presents is 'ambiguous transcendence', whereby 'feminine bodily existence remains in immanence or, better, is overlaid with immanence, even as it moves out toward the world in motions of grasping, manipulating, and so on' (2005, pp. 11-12). The feminine subject, unlike the 'normal' (male) subject discussed by male phenomenologist such as Merleau-Ponty, experiences conflict when attempting to execute an action, for example jumping as far as possible into a sandpit. Ever conscious of their bodies, women try to transcend their situation whilst being laden with immanence. Generally, then, a woman's body will only half-commit to the physical task in hand. When trying to jump as far as possible into the sandpit, a woman is likely to do a run up and jump but unlikely to swing her arms and propel herself with the legs (or vice versa), which is required for optimal distance. Women are thus seen as incapable from an exterior perspective as the lack of fluidity in transcendence compared to men creates the inaccurate perception that women are lesser athletes than men. What is even more pernicious is that if this exterior perspective is that of a female onlooker, she may falsely associate this incapability with the gender she aligns with, reinforcing the view that femininity and sport are incompatible concepts. Women's self-perception is impacted by this, for the female body is measured against the male body which is perceived as the norm. The perspectives which women develop as both the athlete and the spectator alienates them from the possibility of being a successful sportswoman. Women do not overcome this ambiguous transcendence which Young identifies and there is perpetuation of a forceful conflation between 'feminine' and 'incapable'.

Evidence of a woman overcoming ambiguous transcendence (but being criticised for it) is Australian Rules footballer Tayla Harris (see Figure

1.6 below), whose in-game photograph led to trolling on Twitter so graphic that it was likened to sexual abuse (BBC Sport, 2019). Social commentators contributed to the debate with a mix of misogynistic or supportive comments, such as that of Coral Lester in the Tweet below (Figure 1.5). Critics suggested that the image of Harris was sexual as her leg was raised in a kicking position but it was interpreted as if she were posing in a sexually provocative position. However, those supportive of the image of Harris pointed out that the kick she is performing is no different to that of a male Australian Rules footballer (see Figure 1.7 below of Australian Rules footballer Drew Petrie) and she is being trolled and objectified on the basis that she is a woman and her physical motion does not align with feminine motility. There is also the implication that a woman cannot contort her body in such a way unless she is engaging in passive sexual activity. The contradiction of nature portrays women as incapable of executing physical tasks with an end goal, particularly sporting ones where such actions are exhibited, reinforcing the conflation of 'feminine' and 'incapable'. In some scenarios, this also strengthens a woman's self-perception of being physically incapable, thus she retreats into what she believes she is better at: being an object. Here, it is suggested that success for females lies in physical passivity whereas success for males lies in physical activity. It feels like an outdated concept; however we may attribute this truth as to why fewer females engage in sports.

The second modality Young introduces is 'inhibited intentionality', whereby feminine motion severs the mutually conditioning relation between aim and enactment (2005, p. 36). There is an experience of self-doubt in the body due to the subject having internalized their objectification. Women are told that they are more easily hurt, physically and mentally less robust in comparison to the male sex. Their bodies are likened to dolls[28] – rigid, small, smooth – ergo, they withhold full bodily commitment when carrying out a physical action with an end goal in mind as this is simply not

[28] For further discussion on this, see *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism* by Natasha Walter, 2010, Virago Press: London.

how an object moves. Humans were, and to some extent still are, required to move quickly away from danger and use bodily strength to overcome obstacles. A female body thus experiences a contradiction. On the one hand she is a human whose physical movement is a tool for survival, yet on the other she is an object with limited movement.

Now that survival via physical movement is of lesser need in modern Western society, continuous physical movement and exertion tends to be limited to self-transportation - walking, jogging, cycling - and sport games. Objectification of the female body however remains prominent in our society, thus there is translation of female bodily comportment when it comes to physical exercise: 'In performing a physical task the woman's body does carry her toward the intended aim, often not easily and directly, but rather circuitously, with the wasted motion resulting from the effort of testing and reorientation, which is a frequent consequence of feminine hesitancy' (Young, 2005, p. 37).

Figure 1.5 – Tweet by social commentator against Tayla Harris' sporting display (2019). Source: Twitter. Accessed 29/03/2019.

Figure 1.6 - The image of Tayla Harris (pictured) which was posted but subsequently taken down by AFL broadcast partner Channel 7 after sexually explicit online trolling. Source: Michael Wilson/AFL Photos, 2019 Accessed: 29/03/2019.

Figure 1.7 – Australian Rules footballer, Drew Petrie, executing a drop kick. Source: Driscoll, 2018. Accessed: 29/03/2019.

The final modality Young presents is 'Discontinuous Unity' (2005, p. 38). Building upon Merleau-Ponty's proposed relation between the body and the external world, Young proposes that a woman's default experience is an uncertainty with the world and objects she experiences - there is a lack of harmony when trying to complete an action with good execution. This is, Young theorises, normality for women: 'feminine bodily existence is self-referred in that the woman takes herself to be the object of the motion rather than its originator' (2005, pp. 38-39). Similar to a heliocentric astronomical model, women see female existence as a circular system orbiting something of greater power. Due to the infliction of femininity, women do not view themselves as the central power that controls their motions and reactions to the external world. This reinforces a woman's self-perceived objectification, encouraging her to retreat to passivity. She

believes that actions and events happen *to her*, rather than her *causing* the actions and events.

Together, these modalities suggest that women are both externally perceived and perceived by themselves as physically handicapped. If true, the quality of being a woman and the quality of athleticism are seen as two opposing ends of a spectrum. Yet some women, albeit no more than a handful, appear to overcome this predetermined destiny. In the following section, I will explore whether engagement with sports is a possible answer and proposals made in Diane Chisholm's paper 'Climbing Like a Girl' (2008).

3.4 – Pushing Boundaries and Positive Modalities

Beauvoir states in her chapter 'The Girl' that women are not taught to push the boundaries of their mental nor their physical capacities, thus they have no exploration of 'affirming one's sovereignty over the world' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 354). Contrastingly, women in sport constantly push these boundaries. In 1966 Roberta 'Bobbi' Gibb became the first ever woman to run the Boston Marathon unofficially (JSTOR Daily [online], 2018). Gibb was denied at the application stage for it was believed that women could not complete more than 1.5 miles at a competitive level and were thus 'beneath recognition' (Benyo & Henderson, 2002, p. 124). In the following year Kathrine Switzer ran the Boston Marathon with an official race number as she entered under her initials, surpassing the application stage (Benyo & Henderson, 2002, p. 338). There were physical efforts to stop her, however she continued. In her memoir, *Marathon Woman*, Switzer stated:

> I knew if I quit, nobody would ever believe that women had the capability to run 26-plus miles. If I quit, everybody would say it was a publicity stunt. If I quit, it would set women's sports back, way back, instead of forward. If I quit, I'd never run Boston. If I quit, Jock Semple and all those like him would win. My fear and humiliation turned to anger. (Switzer, 2017)

Perhaps inspired by Gibb, Switzer's illegal infiltration of the race had positive effects for women. Now, women make up over 40% of the Boston Marathon entrants (Boston Athletics Association, 2018). The actions of Gibb and the subsequent actions of Switzer show that not all women are physically handicapped. Further to this, the steady increase in female participation since 1966 suggests that the positive actions and the rebellion of women inspires confidence in others to challenge gender barriers in sport, thus the handicap is not a permanent state for a woman's body but a socially conditioned state which can be overthrown by engaging with one's natural bodily motions.

The crux of Chisholm's argument claims that Young over-emphasises gender and reduces female movement to only a negative experience whilst idealising male motility as the 'norm' (Chisholm, 2008, p. 11). This is partially true, and perhaps indicative of women's position in sports in the 1980s when Young's paper was first published. Over the years an increasing number of women have begun to expand their motility and break the mould by engaging in sports which do not comport the body to a limited space despite masculine domination in the field; examples may include prominent sportswomen such as boxer Nicola Adams, wrestler Erica Wiebe and kayaker Lisa Carrington. *Prima facie*, it would appear that Young has ignored the women who have slipped through the net and defied the physical destiny that society has steered women towards. Young did claim that some women do escape this pre-determined feminine bodily comportment, however she fails to fully expand on how this can be done and in what scenarios (2005, p. 35).

Chisholm's main focus is placed upon free-climber Lynn Hill for she is a prime example of 'how a woman lives her body as a primary situation of being-in-the-world' (2008, p. 12). Despite the masculine status of rock climbing and free climbing (and sports in general), women such as Hill began to progressively dominate the scene in the 1980s (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010, p. 136). Most importantly, Hill actively and physically displays physical

modalities that are not, in the eyes of Young, the typical negative modalities of a woman. Thus, Chisholm highlights the positive modalities of 'reach', 'crux coordination', 'flow', 'freedom' and 'synaesthesia' (2008).

These modalities, argues Chisholm, are typical of women who exercise and engage with sports on several levels. Not only do the women concerned aim to conquer the field or the game of their sport, but they are also concerned with conquering the sport on metaphysical and gendered levels: they are able to 'demonstrate agency through increasingly challenging men's sporting prowess with their own achievements when they participate' (Robinson, 2008, p. 98). The sporting realm is unique according to Chisholm in that women are enabled to practice the positive modality of 'flow', whereby women achieve unity with their body through the exercise of intuition and 'training extensively' (2008, p. 26). This directly contrasts Young's modality of 'discontinuous unity' where 'women tend to locate their motion in part of the body only, leaving the rest of the body relatively immobile' (2005, p. 38). This habituation of movement, reaching and adapting to overcome the hurdles which she must triumph as both a physical being and then as a woman allows females to continue practices of crux coordination beyond sport. Women are in a constant situation where they must plan how they will solve the situation she is in without relying on the male sex. The experience of 'taking over where others cannot go' is applicable to life external to sports and mandatory for the vanquishing of the sexist oppression women experience (Chisholm, 2008, p. 24). Women are constrained, but these constraints are not as binding or as permanent as Young argues. They are, Chisholm suggests, temporary, non-binding and easily overcome: 'women can, by cultivating the body's full and free movement, surmount the gender limits of their situation' (2008, p. 35).

Chisholm offers a strong argument against Young's theory of feminine bodily comportment, and one is inclined to believe that her view is the correct and updated perspective to take in a 21st century Western society. Statistics suggest that as the years have advanced, women's participation in sport has increased, further indicating that women are

continually overcoming patriarchal gender conditioning (Sport England, 2016). However, in opposition to Chisholm's claim that Young's theory is 'radically outmoded' (2008, p. 33), one may also argue that Chisholm's scope of the females analysed in the paper is far too narrow to be applied to the female gender as a whole. Chisholm's focus is primarily on elite athletes who have had the time and support to habituate and refine their skills as climbers. The mind-set of these athletes is somewhat different to a vast amount of the female population as there is an advanced understanding of their body's capacities and capabilities. They are quite often unphased by their body, unaware of it as a burden and have a healthy, admirable confidence in their body as a sporting tool. Hence, they are able to push their bodies to the limit regardless of external sexual objectification and negative feminine modalities. I am not arguing that elite female athletes are unaware of the feminine constraints society enforces upon women – this has been refuted by Olympic swimmer Rebecca Adlington when she stated that even as an elite athlete she was criticised for her appearance on social media platforms (BBC News, 2013). What I am claiming, though, is that elite athletes such as Hill can be the exception; an unusual group of women that have overcome social constraints in order to perform at the highest levels possible. In doing this, they have managed to transcend the feminine relation to their body and its socially engineered phenomenology. The evidence which Chisholm presents is positive, for it shows that female bodily comportment can be escaped. Yet it does not account for women who are engaging in sport in a physically comported[29] manner, or those who are not even engaging in sport. It is too often only the cream of the crop who experience breaking the mould and successfully go against the grain, thus it is paramount that we consider both positive and negative modalities if we want to recreate femininity as compatible with sport. The consequence of this recreation of femininity would not only allow women to transcend

[29] One may consider artistic gymnastics and synchronised swimming as sports which practise female bodily comportment, however this is a lengthy debate best discussed by those who practice the sport.

beyond their situation *in* sport, but also *beyond* sport. Further effects could lead to a more powerful and fulfilling self-perception of woman as well as public perception. This would, I believe, begin a strong pathway towards gender equality.

3.5 – Female Athletic Role Models: Visibility and Boundary Breaking

Chisholm presents a phenomenology where women have managed to transcend the feminine relation to their body and its socially engineered phenomenology. However, something which we must overcome to move forward is how and when these women are seen by aspiring young girls and adolescents. A potential opposing view is that female participation in sport will never be able to overcome the patriarchal grip which controls female phenomenology, thus the vicious cycle of sexism is impenetrable. Female role models are, one may argue, required for women to enter the sporting realm and attract future females with athletic potential. Those who have lesser opportunities in sports in a 21st century Western society – perhaps due to class status, disability, access to education – are considerably less likely to see female sports role models in action at an accessible level. As a consequence, young females do not continue sports as they are not inspired to do so, nor are they aware of the benefits sports can have. This is arguably a cause of the low number of females in sports, thus there are fewer female sport role models. This cycle continues and remains difficult for female participation numbers to increase to a healthy number whereby visibility of women who have broken the mould of constrained body motility is on par with that of male athletes who have no bodily constraints at all.

This criticism, I will argue, is not strictly true nor totally problematic. Firstly, as highlighted by Finlayson, it is possible that we are holding too tightly onto the politics of representation (2018). We have already established that there is a distinct lack of women in sports, may this be on the pitch or behind the scenes as managers and coaches. The 'role model effect' of aspiring women is definitely problematic, but it is also possible that

the above argument hones in on representation as something that we have to have to make progress, however 'we know from bitter experience that the presence of a female prime minister does not necessarily enhance the lives or nourish the political aspirations of women in general, just as we know that the impact of sporting heroes—no matter how inspirational—cannot fully survive the closure of local swimming pools or the sale of playing fields and public park- land to private developers' (Finlayson, 2018, p. 781). Clearly, numbers of women at the top should not be focussed upon too heavily if we are to avoid an elitist feminist philosophy. Additionally, if the cycle were true, there would be no women who push the boundaries and become first-time female athletes in their achievements. Females such as Bobbi Gibb, Ayling and Hart, Edith Houghton, Manon Rhéaume, and Emma Clarke all broke the boundaries of sports, becoming the first female athletes in their chosen sport[30]. Arguably, these women could see beyond the unconstrained female body; they may have been inspired by reasoning other than the desire to be like other women they idolise. In an interview with newspaper The Indianapolis Star online, Janet Guthrie, the first woman ever to compete in the Indianapolis 500 and the Daytona 500, commented on competing in an all-male circuit that 'If your desire is strong enough, anything is doable' (Litman, 2017). It is likely that the first female athletes' desire to break the mould grew from frustration or simply an attitude of 'why not?'. Nonetheless, it is possible that this highlights a greater need for female role models who exemplify positive modalities at every level of sports, particularly in the formative years when a young woman's world-views are heavily shaped by her external influences. This further indicates that women in sports need to have a higher level of representation and a broader range of backgrounds to appeal to *all* women in a Western society.

[31] Emma Clarke was not the first British female football player but rather the first female footballer of black ethnicity. Source: (https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2018/10/30/important-story-ofemma-clarke-britains-first-black-female-footballer/) Accessed: 02/01/2019.

By increasing accessibility and coverage of women's sports which present women demonstrating positive modalities and unconstrained body motility, those who would not originally participate in sports may feel inclined to explore their body through the medium of physical exertion, thus allowing them to have the opportunity to push the boundaries of their physical and mental capacities as well as feminism in sport itself.

4. – The 'Femininity Hurdle': Aesthetics

Leading on from how positive and negative modalities contribute to female sexist oppression in sport, this chapter will focus on how aesthetics within sports create the first pillar of the Femininity Hurdle. The woman has perpetually found her body *aestheticized* – that is, perceived as being primarily an object of aesthetic value by herself and onlookers. I will identify two broad aesthetic categorisations which perpetuate woman's 'lesser' status which can be attributed the operation of the 'male gaze' within women's sports and the media's coverage of it: the *feminine athlete aesthetic* and the *lesbian athlete aesthetic*. I acknowledge that these categories are very broad and, in many circumstances, exclusionary of some sporting aesthetics which women may or may not choose to align with. However, I believe that these two categories are reflective of the dominant socially mediated ways of 'reading' the bodies of women athletes in Western society and therefore require particular focus. I will suggest that the *feminine athlete aesthetic* corresponds to the 'desirable' and the *lesbian athlete aesthetic* as the 'undesirable' in a heteronormative society, and I will argue that these categorisations put pressure on female athletes, current and aspiring, to conform to rigid labels dictated by social conventions and attitudes of heteronormativity. Then, I aim to show that the consequences of these dominant aesthetic categorisations are the fetishization of female athletes, homophobia, and stereotyping (the latter being discussed in Chapter 5). Finally, I will propose that a potential solution to the problem of women's aestheticized bodies in sports is the deconstruction of symbolic boundaries between heteronormative cultures and individuals, which can be achieved through the practice of Virtue Ethics discussed in Chapter 6.

4.1 – The Conditioned 'Feminine' Body Aesthetic

What women often find is that two parts of their 'nature' contrast more once she enters her teenage years and progresses into adolescence. On the

one hand, she has the conditioned nature of femininity. On the other, she has the nature of her body. The body of a woman is designed to endure pain, for throughout its life it will possibly encounter painful physical events such as menstrual cramps and pregnancy[31]. Some studies have even shown that women have a higher pain threshold compared to men (Martin, *et al*., 2019). Not only is the body designed to endure pain, it has evolved over thousands of years to move freely, lift heavy objects, contort, stretch, minimise and maximise, speed up or slow down with an end-goal in mind. Whilst the nature of the male body and the nature of masculinity complement each other, the nature of the female body and the nature of femininity contrast. By breaking a sweat, dressing functionally and exposing skin, rather than concealing oneself in restrictive clothing, and limiting her movement, the female presents herself as 'unfeminine'. By engaging in a strenuous physical activity, she is perceived as less of a woman and more like a man which brings about confusion as she is defying what she has known and been told to act like. This leads to the woman being dissuaded from physical activity and denying the nature of her body. She fears that by presenting herself as something considered 'masculine', she becomes undesirable to the heterosexual male gaze (and consequently society at large). The overall impact is that the woman believes that the conditioned nature of femininity is the correct nature and one that must be followed, whereas the nature of her body is to be denied.

This is supported by scholars such as Markula and Bordo, who argue that women commonly exhibit body image distortion (BID)[32] due to social pressures and publicised expectations that the female body must remain feminine; Bordo posits that 'anorectic' women fall victim and bear 'very distressing tidings about our culture' but I am inclined to argue that it is

[31] In 2016, there were an estimated 862,785 conceptions to women of all ages in the England and Wales alone according the Office for National Statistics. Source: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/bulletins/conceptionstatistics/2016 Accessed: 18/12/2018.

[32] Body Image Distortion (BID) is a condition whereby a subject perceives their body to be in a different shape or size to what it actually is. BID commonly leads disordered eating and/or significant efforts to change one's physical body.

possibly women on the whole, not just anorectics, who must bear the weight of social expectations (Markula, 2001, p. 176; Bordo, 2003, p. 60). An example which Bordo uses is how many women risk the illness of silicone breast implants 'not because they have been passively taken in by media norms of the beautiful breast (almost always silicon-enhanced), but because they have correctly discerned that these norms shape the perceptions and desires of potential lovers and employers' (2003, p. 20). In support of this claim, The American Society of Plastic Surgeons reported that 'Breast augmentation continues to be the top cosmetic surgical procedure and has been since 2005', with the procedure's popularity increasing by 4% since 2017 and buttock augmentation procedures increasing by 10%, which further suggests that women are continuing to harm themselves and diverge from their natural body with the aim of satisfying social expectations of the feminine body (2018). Despite woman's natural body being a source of strength, beauty and being capable of undertaking physically demanding tasks, she frequently finds that it is easier for her to not explore its potential in order to satisfy society's expectations and ultimately, herself.

Markula and Bordo's claims are relevant to how female athletes perceive themselves today, often experiencing unnecessary suggestions of how they *should* look as, first and foremost, women, and secondarily athletes. After running the 200m sprint in 21.63 seconds at the World Championships in Beijing (2015), Dafne Schippers (Figure 1.8) was questioned by journalists about her physical appearance. They speculated that because she had acne, often a result of heightened testosterone levels in the body, Schippers was using illegal doping methods. In an interview with The Guardian, Schippers stated:

> 'When they talk about my skin it is painful. I don't like the fact my skin is like this. *For a woman, to have this problem, it's not very nice*. People say things too easily. They say this means this or that and people don't know.' [emphasis added] (McRae, 2016)

The focus on Schippers' body over her performance suggests that the journalists had an underlying discomfort towards her appearance. Although the explicit questions surrounded the issues of doping, the journalists implicitly indicated that it is expected that a woman should have an unblemished, feminine physical appearance for her victory to be considered unquestionable or worthy of a European record. Another example of an unnecessary comment on athletic females physical appearances was the since-deleted tweet from a (now suspended) account, which in response to a photograph of the physiques of Simone Biles, Aly Raisman and Madison Kocian (see Figure 1.9) which stated:

> Y'all find this attractive? lmaaoo (@UWantMyD_aniel, Twitter, 2016)[33]

Decoding the colloquialisms[34], the tweet implies that women who have muscular physiques are unattractive and those who find them attractive are comically wrong to do so. Once again, the sporting performance of the women is overlooked; their worth is evaluated on their ability to display physical femininity. In a survey conducted by BT Sport, 97% of respondents agreed that the pressure to conform to a certain body image was due to widespread societal ideals of women (2014). It may therefore be suggested that the idealised aesthetic of the female body in a modern Western society (slim, unblemished, neither short nor tall, sometimes curvaceous but only proportionately and low levels of body fat elsewhere) directly contradicts the athletic aesthetic (a varying body type with increased muscle) required of sportswomen who want to be competitive.

[33] Although this Tweet has since been deleted, opinion website and blog HuffPost reported on the image in question, the Tweet and its responses. Source: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/guy-big-mistake-body-shamed-us-gymnastics-team_uk_57bc2951e4b0b8a585b600c6 Accessed: 06/08/2019

[34] I understand "y'all" to mean 'do you all' and "lmaooo" as a type style of 'lmao', an acronym of 'laughing my ass off'.

Figure 1.8 – Dafne Schippers, Dutch 200m sprinter at the IAAF World Championships in Beijing, 2015. Source: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/othersports/article-4733220/Dafne-Schippers-Acne-doesn-t-mean-dope.html Accessed: 03/08/2019.

Figure 1.9 - The image posted on Simone Biles' Instagram, 20/08/2016, which lead to online trolling regarding the athletes' muscularity. Pictured left to right: Madison Kocian, Simone Biles, and Aly Raisman Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BJWHFZxD0DG/ Accessed: 06/08/2019.

4.2 – The creation of the 'feminine' athlete aesthetic

As the centuries have passed the 'male gaze' has depicted a variety of female bodily shapes which constitute their vision of beauty (Mulvey, 1999). Time has shown that what a heteronormative society considers as beautiful changes. Compare the Venus de Milo statue (Antioch, 101 BC) to The Judgement of Paris by Paul Peter Rubens (1636), or the photograph of Marilyn Monroe shot by Sam Shaw (1954) in comparison to Mario Sorrenti's photographic portrait of Kate Moss (1993). Together, these paradigms of feminine beauty count against the view that there is a permanent ideal for the female body, yet they do imply that patriarchal norms dictate what feminine beauty is. A woman, more specifically her body, is conditioned by

the male gaze to be the focal point of the picture. Patriarchal norms may dictate what a woman's concept of physical beauty is. Heteronormative aesthetic pleasure is caused by a woman's presentation as conformist and reflective of society's values. It may be suggested, contrary to section 4.1, that a sub-category of the feminine body aesthetic has emerged; this being the *feminine athlete aesthetic*. This aesthetic requires that a female athlete has a particular athletic stature (low body fat, muscular definition) which is well balanced with typically feminine attributes (slight in stature and a made-up exterior). The feminine athlete aesthetic treads a very fine line between unconventional feminine athleticism and the traditional masculine athleticism, whereby her categorisation as a feminine athlete is dependent on her muscle mass, presentation of her hair and makeup, her perceived sexuality and, sometimes, her skin tone. It is an aesthetic which accepts women have the right to participate in sports on the condition that their feminine essence is not relinquished by their involvement. This is supported by Cahn, who states that 'The image of the athlete as beauty queen and the commercial atmosphere that characterized much of working-class sport ensured that the sexual debate surrounding the modern female athlete would focus on her heterosexual charm, daring, or disrepute' (1993, p. 347). Thus, the 'stability of society' goes uninterrupted by the threat of blurred genders, lesbianism and a rejection of the female destiny outlined in section 3.1 which sport arguably creates (Cahn, 1993, p. 345). There is evidently a prominence of this aesthetic in sports today. Athletes such as Eugenie Bouchard and Amanda Beard all fulfil this aesthetic: Bouchard often being photographed in designer clothing or in suggestive poses, Beard modelled for magazines such as FHM and Playboy. Female athletes also strive to fulfil this aesthetic during competition too, most notably Jamaican sprinter Elaine Thompson who frequently dons floral headbands, lipstick, a choker necklace, bracelets and manicured fingernails during broadcasted competitions (see Figure 2.0).

In an interview discussing why she chooses the particular aesthetic Thompson stated the following:

> Whatever gear you put on will give you that boost to compete. Before the track meet, you have a little time to say, 'Okay, I am going to wear this sneaker, this spike, this headband.' I am that person, I want to pick everything out. I say, 'I want to wear this because it's going to give me that energy.' There is even a certain type of music that's going to give me more energy to go out there and compete, too. *It's all in the uniform.* [emphasis added] (Lehava, 2017)

'It's all in the uniform' can be interpreted as a statement about the female dress-code in sports competitions. It may be suggested that Thompson views her 'uniform' as a symbolic representation of confidence and feminine authenticity. This is supported by Krane's theorisation that women go out of their way to show that femininity and athleticism are compatible, rather than contradictory (2001, p. 116). The decision to portray oneself in a hyper-feminine manner, Krane argues, is survival strategy for women in competitive sports. Adherence to hegemonic feminine ideals via a feminine athletic aesthetic allows female athletes to 'become privileged over females who are not perceived as fitting these standards' providing that they 'preserve their heterosexual attractiveness' (2001, p. 118). According to Krane, the feminine athlete aesthetic opens women up to privileges such as 'media attention, endorsements, fan approval, and reduced heterosexist discrimination' (2001, p. 118). Fulfilment of the feminine athlete aesthetic also promotes heterosexism: this being 'discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, practised by heterosexuals against homosexuals' (Collins English Dictionary [online], 2019). Women who fall outside of the feminine athlete aesthetic categorisation tend to be labelled as lesbians, regardless of their sexual orientation. If the female body appears to replicate a physique which is considered masculine – large muscle mass, a flat chest, low body fat around the abdominal area and arms – the athlete is ridiculed for being a lesbian, not being sexually appealing, or in some cases a cheat with higher than average testosterone levels. The grouping of lesbianism, lack of sexual

appeal and cheating is a dangerous foundation for a stereotype, as it suggests that there are associations with one's aesthetic, sexuality and intentions of which there is no necessary link. In circumstances such as these, female athletes may try to avoid the lesbian athlete aesthetic, for their likability and marketability is severely reduced: as Krane notes, 'a masculine appearance impedes their ability to make a living in sport' (2001, p. 119).

Figure 2.0 - Elaine Thompson at the 2017 IAAF Diamond League Athletics Championships in Rabat, Morocco. Source: https://shanghai.diamondleague.com/news/single-news/news/detail/News/christian-coleman-elaine-thompson-withdraw-from-shanghai/ Accessed: 04/08/2019.

4.3 – The Lesbian Athlete Aesthetic

Although sexuality, and particularly homosexuality, has no definite exterior aesthetic the heterosexual practices of sport have formed an image of the lesbian athlete best described by Cahn as an 'Amazon' aesthetic (1993, p. 348). Due to the hyper-masculine realm sport used to be (and arguably still is) women whose physical stature was bulkier, more muscular and less conforming of feminine ideals were derogatorily lumped into category of 'mannish, failed heterosexuals' irrespective of their sexual identity (Cahn, 1993, p. 343). Although lesbianism has become more widely accepted in the 21st century[35][36] the categorisation of women into 'feminine', heterosexually appealing athletes and 'unfeminine', heterosexually unappealing athletes continues to unnecessarily splinter feminist movements in sport. Referring back to the discussion in section 4.1 regarding the bodies of Biles, Kocian and Raisman, the trolling on Twitter they were subject to could be understood as homophobic. For a male to find a body which embodies masculine-coded physical characteristics suggests homosexual desire. It may be interpreted (I add, falsely) that if a female embodies masculine-coded physical characteristics she is presented as more of a male than a female. Thus, if a male finds the masculine-coded physical characteristics desirable over, or as well as, the feminine-coded physical characteristics of the female body, it is suggested that he is homosexual.

There are deeper homophobic biases underpinning this view as it is suggestive of not only rigidity of heterosexuality and homosexuality but hatred towards a specific association with lesbianism. For a woman's body

[35] According to a 2011 report by the Pew Research Centre "Acceptance of homosexuality has increased in recent years" in the US and Western Europe. Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/#homosexuality Accessed: 06/08/2019.

[36] In 2013 a poll by Washington Post-ABC News showed that " 58 percent of Americans now believe it should be legal for gay and lesbian couples to get married; 36 percent say it should be illegal. Public attitudes toward gay marriage are a mirror image of what they were a decade ago: in 2003, 37 percent favored gay nuptials, and 55 percent opposed them". Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2013/03/18/gay-marriage-support-hits-new-high-in-post-abc-poll/?noredirect=on Accessed: 06/08/2019.

to exemplify what Western society considers traditionally a male physique, it is assumed that they have rejected femininity in the name of wanting to be corporeally male. In addition, it is assumed that because they have a traditionally masculine physique they must have a traditionally male sexual orientation which is, in accordance with heteronormative culture, that the masculine belongs with the feminine. Therefore, one assumes that if a woman displays physical attributes of a stereotypical male she is attracted to women. This assumption is however a falsehood for 'sexuality is not determined by anatomical "destiny"' (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 429). Building upon this claim, Cahn suggests that the paradox of female masculinity made social conservatives fear that 'the excitement of sport would cause women to lose control, conjuring up images of frenzied, distraught co-eds on the verge of moral, physical, and emotional breakdown' (1993, p. 345). It would appear that these views are assumption-based falsehoods with a dual purpose of dissuading women from participating in sport to preserve the sporting realm as male-only and also to reinforce heteronormativity. One may even go as far to suggest that this is another form of preservationism in sport as discussed in Chapter 2.

As a consequence of categorising female athlete's bodies in this way, we are inappropriately and needlessly assigning unrelated sexual characteristics to athletes on the basis of physical aesthetics. It also leads to increased homophobic discrimination: research by Krane revealed that those who were labelled lesbian were subject to 'verbal harassment in sport, classroom, and social situations' as well as coaches and administrators 'cutting them from teams' and 'dictating' dress codes (2001, p. 119). It is possible that women purposely avoid a butch aesthetic and its homophobic repercussions by increasing their commitment to femininity in movement, characteristics and physical appearance (Krane, 2001, p. 120). If true, this is highly detrimental to a cohesive feminist movement in overcoming patriarchal standards within sport as it redirects the focus of the game onto irrelevant and distracting factors such as one's heterosexual appeal and/or sexual preference, rather than one's performance in the game. Rather than

challenging heterosexism and homophobia, female athletes may be complicit in their perpetuation if they choose to passively reject a more genderless aesthetic in the name of heterosexual appeal.

The continuing and increasing tolerance of homosexuality in Western societies has created greater visibility for those who identify as LGBTQ+[37]. However, this has allowed statistics to more accurately demonstrate and highlight a need for further change. According to the LGBT SportSafe Inclusion Program based in the US, 70% of student-athletes find homophobia worse in sports than society, whilst 84% of student-athletes witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports (2019). On the other hand, a 2018 report by British charity Stonewall found that 'More than half of British people (58 per cent) believe it is important anti-LGBT language like calling someone or something 'gay' in a derogatory way is challenged at live sporting events. A further 53 per cent agreed we all have a responsibility to call out anti-LGBT abuse', signalling that there is evidence of a cultural shift in sports towards anti-homophobia and acceptance of non-heterosexuality in the UK[38][39] (Stonewall, 2018). Whilst it is evident that homophobia is still rife in sport the statistics suggest that there is acknowledgement of such discrimination. At first glance this may seem distressing but more positively it may indicate that socially we are less likely to bury and disregard homophobia and more likely to confront it. The cultural shift Western societies seem to be experiencing calls for greater visibility of other sexualities and consequent creation of safe spaces and sports clubs for members of the LGBTQ+ communities, such as the London Otters Rowing

[37] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and more.

[38] Contrasting statistics have recently been reported in the US by non-governmental organisation GLAAD which suggest a decrease in LGBTQ acceptance among Americans Ages 18-34. However, American Values have also shown greater polarity due to ideology and demographics as suggested in the Pew Research Centre's 2011 report. Source: https://www.glaad.org/blog/glaad%E2%80%99s-2019-accelerating-acceptance-index-results-show-further-decline-lgbtq-acceptance-among Accessed: 08/08/19.

[39] Stonewall also reported that only a quarter of people (25 per cent) said they would feel confident enough intervening when they hear this abuse, indicating that there is still a long way to go in creating social harmony for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Club[40] and Cardiff Dragons FC[41], to prevent the marginalization of those who identify as lesbian (or LGBTQ+). An increase of lesbian visibility theoretically provides positive long-term effects in combatting sexism in sports. Regardless of one's sexual orientation and chosen bodily aesthetic, to present oneself either as 'butch', 'lesbian' or a combination of the two challenges patriarchal hyper-masculine norms which sport has traditionally been founded upon. Sociologist Helen Lenskyj has suggested that although lesbians occupy an intersection of marginalization in society - in that they 'are not male' and 'not heterosexual' – lesbians may in fact 'occupy a central space in sport because lesbianism and female sporting participation share common ground as activities which are incompatible with notions of hegemonic femininity' (Lenskyj, 1994, pp. 360-361). A prominent example supporting Lenskyj's claim is the statistic that '38 players, one coach and a trainer' out of roughly 480 participants[42] at the 2019 Women's World Cup for football identified as out LGBTQ participants – as 2019 World Cup winner Megan Rapinoe stated, 'You can't win a championship without gays on your team' (Outsports, 2019; Molloy, 2019). To some extent lesbian sportswomen 'transform and recreate what it means to be female and athlete' by demonstrating an aesthetic exhibiting strength and power, two major qualities associated with dominance as outlined in section 3.2 (Lenskyj, 1994, p. 361). Lesbianism in sports arguably challenges us to redefine how we expect females to present themselves as athletes in sport, physically and mentally. After all, femininity and athleticism are 'products of social construction', ergo are 'amenable to redefinition' (Lenskyj, 1994, p. 361).

[40] London's "LGBTQI-friendly rowing club" with an emphasis on inclusivity. Source: https://www.londonotters.org/#our-mission Accessed: 10/11/19.

[41] Wales's first and only LGBTI+ football team who "set up in 2008 by a group of guys who love football and wanted to create a team free from homophobia and play football in a safe and supportive space." Source: http://cardiffdragonsfc.co.uk/about/ Accessed: 10/11/19.

[42] This statistic does not include those who identify as out LGBTQ members but have not made a public declaration about their sexuality. Some countries who competed in the 2019 World Cup (Nigeria, Jamaica, Cameroon) still see homosexuality as illegal. According to Outsports, this is a major increase in number since the 2015 World Cup where only 18 participants were 'out' LGBTQ members.

By evaluating female athletes on their heterosexually appealing (or unappealing) aesthetic rather than their strength, agility, technique and competitive edge[43] we are degrading women's sports in ways which men's sports are not. Men's sports have much less focus on the aesthetic and beauty of the athlete altogether – we do not see them in smaller items of clothing or as many pieces of jewellery or makeup, nor do we see them in provocative positions which allude to soft core pornography. It would be too great a claim to state that heterosexual appeal of the male athlete is not focussed upon, however heterosexual appeal appears to be a greater priority for female athletes who wish to be successful opposed to male athletes[44]. This acts as another blow to feminist movements striving for gender equality in sport as it divides the sport into various factions of sexy, not sexy, straight, gay *et cetera* rather than unifying women against the larger problem of homophobia, heterosexism and consequent fetishization. Marginalization of minorities through aesthetic categorisation in sport is something which needs to be addressed and overcome to create a more cohesive movement in favour of gender equality, and this is true within and beyond sport.

4.4 - Fetishization of Athletes

[43] At present, the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) states that to be classed as an eligible female in competition, testosterone must be 'below five (5) nmol/L' continuously (IAAF, 2018). However, there is some variation with rulings on testosterone levels, for example, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) state that athletes who have transitioned from male to female 'must demonstrate that her total testosterone level in serum has been below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to her first competition' (IOC, 2015). Arguably, the rulings have allowed athletes to compete as females irrespective of their physical appearance and consequent heterosexual appeal. However, the debate continues as the tipping point for hormonal advantage remains disputed (Wood and Stanton, 2012). It is also debated as to whether hormones alone can determine gender (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014). Irrespective of the issues presented, many athletic experiences are criticised and marginalised, thus causing a continuing theme of heterosexism in sport today.

[44] Homophobia and heterosexism are rife in men's sports too, but it manifests itself differently to what is discussed above.

A major problem which the feminist movement in sport faces is the unchallenged fetishization of female athletes which portrays women as sex symbols rather than athletes in sport. The overall effect of this leads to women accepting this fate and often desiring to be featured as sex symbols, yet female athletic merit is undermined in doing so and the contrast between the male and female sports remains. Research suggests that in the Spartan Era, female participation in sport was encouraged with the aim of producing strong offspring and preparing them for a healthy pregnancy (Christesen, 2017, pp. 12-13). The male gaze placed on women who participate in sports today does not differ greatly from that of which was placed on Spartan women. Female athletic merit is not based on her physical accomplishments nor technical splendour for this is secondary to one's contribution to motherhood and male pleasure. A prominent example of fetishization of female athletes is the rise to fame of Allison Stokke. In 2007, photographs of the then-17-year-old Stokke (Figure 2.1) were posted on the internet whilst she was competing in a pole-vaulting competition. In reaction to her feminine athletic aesthetic, Stokke was highly sexualised on various internet platforms to the extent that she could not leave her house without unwanted media attention (Anand, 2007). In an interview with Washington Post, Stokke stated:

> Even if none of it is illegal, it just all feels really demeaning. I worked so hard for pole vaulting and all this other stuff, and it's almost like that doesn't matter. Nobody sees that. Nobody really sees me. (Alcorn, 2007)

Although Stokke did not consciously choose this aesthetic to conform to, her appearance brought about an unwanted focus upon her body and diverted attention away from the athletic merit she deserved as a pole-vaulting champion and record holder of her time. The categorisation of female body aesthetics thus presents female athletes with a serious problem: women do not have a choice over how their body is perceived by society. Regardless of

how she desires her body to be perceived (as a fine-tuned tool for athletic feats), the existence of the male gaze in sport greatly hinders how the self and the public perceives the female body, consequently reducing the female athlete to an object and a consequent 'lesser' status.

Examining agency and its relation to aesthetics, one must consider whether our recognition of beauty in female athletes is unavoidable. Although the recognition of beauty in sports and its agents may be unavoidable, with the discussion in section 3.2 in mind, I will argue that the aestheticization of female athletes physical bodies and consequent fetishization is avoidable. Because of this, I will suggest that the recognition of functional, athletic beauty is moral, whereas aestheticization and fetishization of feminine beauty is immoral. Adopting a Kantian view of beauty, one may understand the recognition of beauty as a stimulation of thought where our understanding and imagination engage in 'free play' (Kant, [1790] 2000). Thus, when we witness feats of athleticism that convey effort, pain and struggle as well as technical execution of physical tasks, we may recognise the sport in play or the agent performing a sporting task as beautiful or exemplifying beauty – 'the highest aesthetic satisfaction is experienced and given by the sportsman who not only performs with graceful economy but who also achieves his purpose' (Best, 1974, p. 205). However, to understand athletic beauty we need to gain a deeper understanding of what truly constitutes athletic beauty and look beyond more traditional, Kantian theories of beauty by examining 'functional' beauty.

Functional beauty can be defined as 'a late modern tradition of judging an object beautiful if fit for its intended function' which derives from Kant's concept of dependent beauty (Fisher, 2015). By recognising functional beauty, we see beyond the fetishized body and appreciate its utility. Consequently, spectators witness the body as a sculpted and disciplined tool. As this stimulation is engaging our higher faculties of intellect - understanding the body in terms of physiology, mechanics, ergonomics - rather than our lower hedonistic faculties of pleasure,

according to a Millsian style of utilitarianism we are bettering ourselves via the medium of sports (Utilitarianism, X: 211-215 [1861] 1963; On Liberty, XVIII: 262 [1859] 1963). The recognition of the beauty in sport and sporting performance of the athletic agents is arguably moral, for we are bettering ourselves in terms of knowledge and understanding in its appreciation. If we learn to appreciate the athletic body in terms of its functionality we engage with the 'essence of one species of beauty' (Parsons and Carlson, 2008, p.102). Not only does the body 'look fit' for the task it is going to undertake, it has been trained intensely to execute the task: the female body is no longer purely a spectacle, but a corporeal representation of cultivated virtuous athletic qualities. By recognising the functionality of the athletic body we are in admiration of what the body can accomplish, not as an object but as 'the expression of our intentional relation to the world' and therefore 'an activity or the possibility of an activity' (Howe, 2003, p.102). This is the most phenomenologically pure way of understanding the athletic body for it avoids immoral objectification. From this, we may deduce that fetishization and consequent aestheticization are immoral practices as they reduce the body to an object. Furthermore, fetishization of the female athlete's body through objectification, homophobia, aestheticization and the like uses the bodies in question as a means to an end in achieving our sexual gratification, viewing the body simply an object. Fetishization and consequent aestheticization of the female athletic body should be avoided at all costs in favour of the recognition of beauty. We may thus conclude that if we are to move towards gender equality in sport we need be able to distinguish between appreciation for the athletic body as a product of physical accomplishment and feminine beauty as a product of the male gaze.

What we have discovered in this chapter is that when it comes to one's aesthetic the female lacks agency: her body's perception is at the mercy of the onlooker and the male gaze. As demonstrated by this chapter, categorisations of the feminine athlete aesthetic and the lesbian athlete aesthetic perpetuate a dangerous cycle counterproductive to feminist action within sport. The aestheticization of the female athlete perpetuates

her position as an inferior athlete by promoting her position as an object first and an athlete second. Our perception of the female athlete appears to be bifurcated into two broad and false concepts; either she is a heteronormative sex symbol or an undesirable homosexual and these become a woman's most salient features regardless of achievement. In the avoidance of fetishization and homophobic insults women conform to the feminine aesthetic as a survival mechanism, passively accepting sexism rather than challenging it. As a result, women may embrace the categorisation of 'lesbian' to avoid being fetishized and objectified. From this we must look at how women can regain control of how their body is valued by themselves and by others. This leads on to the analysis of the final pillar of the Femininity Hurdle: implicit biases and stereotyping. Implicit biases and stereotypes are inextricably linked to homophobia and aestheticization; they reinforce our beliefs and opinions towards the female athlete. I believe that we need to closely examine implicit biases and stereotypes to understand the Femininity Hurdle as a whole. In doing so we can move towards a solution and tackle what strengthens gender inequality in sport pillar by pillar. The following chapters, 5 and 6, aim to discuss this in further detail.

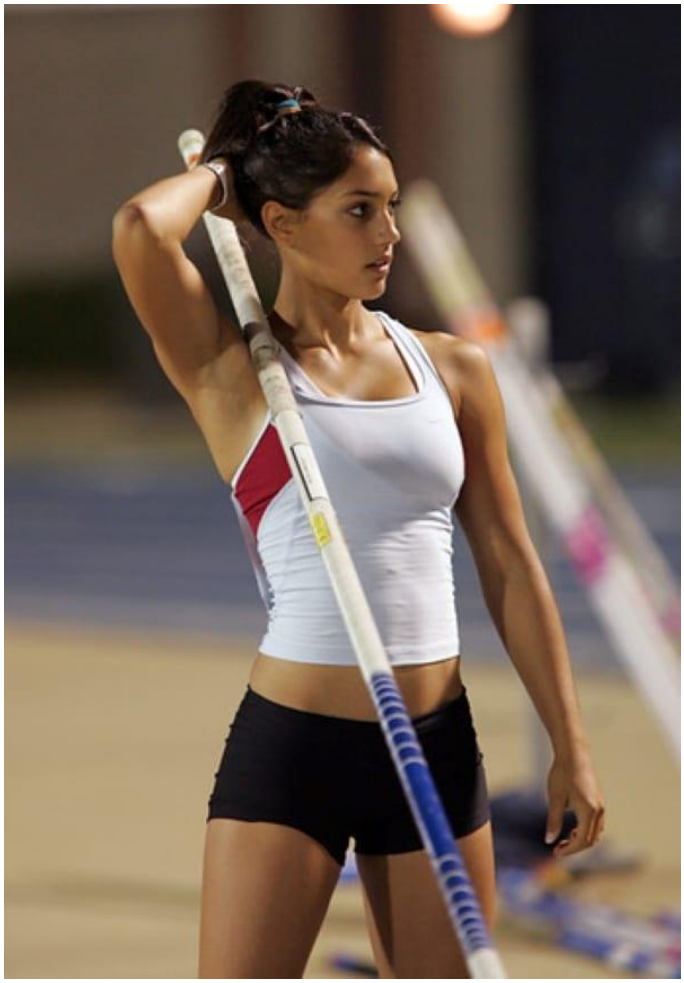

Figure 2.1 - The original photo of Allison Stokke which originally circulated the internet in 2007. Source: https://www.tiebreaker.com/young-pole-vault-star-almost-ends-allison-stokke/ Accessed: 10/08/19.

5. The 'Femininity Hurdle' Part 2: Implicit Biases

In this section I will be discussing the existence of implicit bias and whether it affects our assessment of attitudes surrounding women in sport. What an implicit bias is, however, is hard to pin a definition to and has been debated by scholars of recent (Levy, 2015; Rees, 2016). For the sake of simplicity and to not divert our attention away from the topic in question I will understand implicit biases to be *sui generis* mental states which 'have propositional structure' but are not responsive to reasons in the way that our other attitudes, such as beliefs, typically are (Levy, 2015, p. 800). I will also understand explicit biases to be beliefs held by an agent which they acknowledge exist and can be changed by active and passive techniques. For example, when an agent states 'women belong in the kitchen', it may be actively combatted by someone explaining why this belief is discriminatory and falsifiable. It would appear that we do not endorse the discriminatory attitudes which we hold (unlike our beliefs) therefore they are tricky to overcome, especially if we do not realise that we are practising them. Although there have not been any (known) tests focussing specifically on implicit biases towards women in sport, there have been studies which have shown that both implicit and explicit biases towards the female gender exist (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Assuming that there are both implicit and explicit biases facing women engaging in sport we have strong reasoning for their overhaul. In section 5.1 I will discuss the continued existence of implicit bias and stereotyping and how it is perpetuated today. Following this in section 5.2 I will discuss why the implicit biases caused by stereotypes are a morally reprehensible but cognitively unavoidable phenomenon, discussing who is responsible for overcoming implicit bias and stereotypes (if anyone at all) which will lead us into the final chapter on how we should try and overcome the Femininity Hurdle.

5.1 – The Continuation of Implicit Biases and Stereotyping Today

So how do we tell what an explicit belief is and what an implicit bias is? Firstly, as highlighted above, we must look to how one endorses their viewpoints. Recall the controversial comment made by McEnroe that was highlighted in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The claim that Serena Williams 'would be like 700 in the world' if she were to play in the men's circuit is quite apparent of McEnroe's explicit beliefs that a) men's tennis is harder, b) women's sports does not hold equal merit to men's and c) Serena Williams, on the basis that she is a woman, could not compare to even mediocre male tennis professionals despite being considered the best female tennis player of all time. It is true that due to the physiological advantage men hold over women, the top male athlete and the top female athlete will have physiological differences which give the competitive edge to the male – even Williams acknowledged this in an interview with David Letterman in 2016 (Youtube).

Nonetheless this view persists beyond the likes of McEnroe, with The Guardian reporting that 'one in eight men – in the general population, that is, not necessarily people who enjoy playing tennis – said they thought they could win a point against Williams' (Saner, 2019; YouGov, 2019). I hypothesise that implicit gender biases partially exist due to the myths surrounding women. As highlighted in section 1.2, it would appear that despite the empirical evidence falsifying myths regarding femininity, myths which suggest male ownership, female indebtedness (towards the male sex) and mystical female bodies still exist in the modern era. In the West there is a general consensus that an explicit belief in a myth or phenomenon is falsifiable. By definition, myths are understood as hearsay, expressions of analogies, lessons or stories. Because of this definition, there is no empirical foundation upon which we can verify these myths. However, there is still room for people to have implicit biases based on these myths whilst holding explicit beliefs that they are not true. For example, there is no medical definition of virginity or how one loses one's virginity. Although it may have

cultural meaning it is solely based on the destruction of the hymen and the sexual initiation of the female. There is no spiritual change in a woman when she is 'deflowered', only a minor physical change which may not even occur depending on one's hymen. Despite this anatomical fact of the hymen being a medically verified truth, the myth that the female body is a mystery and the virginal status implicating purity and ultra-femininity persists. Without cultural myths, religious and social conventions once considered an important part of our culture no longer have a foundation. For some reason societies seem to cling to damaging and morally reprehensible myths without a rational justification, therefore it is possible that these implicit biases are the cause of our limited progression towards gender equality and amplify the reason to analyse implicit gender biases further.

In a study conducted by Musto *et al*., it was found that although explicitly sexist comments now feature less in the commentary of women's sports it has been replaced with what they have coined as 'gender bland sexism', whereby sexism is disguised by a presentation of inattentive and monotonous commentary during women's sport competitions (2017). The effect of this causes women's sporting performances to 'appear lacklustre compared to men's.' (Musto, *et al*., 2017, p. 573). The research undertaken has showed that women's sport is consistently presented with bland language compared to men's sport, thus viewers are left with the negative association of boringness and lacklustre to women's sport, whilst positively associating excitement and interest with men's sport. Although we do not know the endorsed beliefs of the commentators studied by Musto *et al*., it is rational to assume that the behaviour that they expressed via the language they used fulfils Kelly and Roedder's criteria that an implicit attitude is often expressed in a 'rapid, automatic and uncontrollable fashion' (Kelly & Roedder, 2008, p. 532). Considering that commentary is most commonly spoken during live action, and sports games generally being non-routine and unpredictable, the language used by commentators is often spur-of-the-moment and automatic. It may not be said in an uncontrollable

fashion as this is quite an extreme description, but live commentary is certainly rapid and automatic. We may thus assume that some sports commentators who fulfil the 'gender bland sexism' contemporary gender framework hold implicit biases towards female sports competitions and the sportswomen who compete within them, despite their explicit and endorsed beliefs which suggest they are in favour of gender equality.

If true, Musto *et al.*'s theory of gender bland sexism could be extremely damaging to gender equality in sports. It is arguable that implicit bias is sufficient for the effect which Musto describes, regardless of whether the commentators hold explicit and/or implicit biases. The position which commentators hold is one of great power, even if their involvement with the actual sport is minimal and from afar. The role of the commentator is to make the sport entertaining, to convey the difficulty of what is being achieved and ultimately to describe the sport to the spectators in a particular light or frame. Exciting commentary by a commentator implicates that the game is not only enjoyable from a spectator's viewpoint, but one which warrants recognition of skill, strength and athletic merit. Musto *et al*.'s research also showed that there was a lack of dominant language in women's sports commentary compared to men's, thus suggesting that male sports performances were framed as athletically superior, yet women's as athletically inferior:

> Commentators also regularly used dominant language when describing events that transpired during men's games. For example, a SportsCenter segment described NBA basketball player Andrew Wiggins as putting two players "in the spin cycle" as he completed a "monstrous two-handed jam." But when women's sports were covered, dominant language was almost always missing from commentators' analysis. For example, SportsCenter awarded an ESPN "Star of the Night" to Shannon Szabados, an Olympic gold medallist and the first woman to play in a Canadian men's professional hockey league. The commentator

> explained, “She had 27 saves, it was a 4-3 loss for her Columbus Cottonmouths to the visiting Knoxville Ice Bears in the Southern Professional Hockey League, but Shannon Szabados did work.” Despite Szabados’ historic accomplishments, the discussion of her performance could not have been more literal. The commentator blandly concluded that she “did work” (Musto, *et al*., 2017, p. 587).

We are thus presented with a problem: women’s sport is being presented as ‘lesser’, yet it is possible that the commentators are presenting in this manner due to biases which they are unaware of and not in direct control of. The implicit gender biases held by commentators feeds both explicit beliefs and irrational implicit biases held by listeners and spectators of women’s sports games, creating a vicious cycle that perpetuates women’s status as a ‘lesser’ athlete.

Stereotyping causes implicit biases which have been perpetuated through to the present day. It is a natural phenomenon in human nature, created by beliefs, biases, universalisations and instinct held by a person. They are, according to Beeghly, ‘a subclass of generics that make claims, specifically, about social kinds’ (2015, p. 676). Generally, we use stereotypes as a way of categorising social groups which formulate universalisations about the social collective, for example the claim that ‘all young male athletes are dumb’, hence the stereotype which is known in pop culture as a ‘jock’. According to the etymology of ‘jock’ the term was originally a shortening of the male sports accessory ‘jock strap’, thus we may liken a male sportsperson as someone who has little purpose other than sporting activity and minimal intellectual interests (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019). There are further associations which stem from the ‘dumb jock’ stereotype, these being of Caucasian ethnicity, homophobic, egotistical and belittling behaviour. Like all stereotypes these are falsehoods based on a universalised character, yet we commonly believe in stereotypes and may even use them to form our interactions with people who fit the moulds which social conditioning forms. Stereotypes are,

generally, oversimplified framing concepts which have predominantly focused on rigid gender binaries, casting any alternative genders into an anomalous region of unknown. Consequently, people struggle to understand or frame genders which fall between or outside the binary, causing further gender segregation and confusion surrounding Western preconceived gender identities. Sport arguably is the perfect arena for the formation and reinforcement of binary gender stereotypes due to its strict classifications of 'men' and 'women'. On the contrary, it may also be a useful arena for the deconstruction of stereotypes and consequent implicit biases which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Gender stereotypes are highly common in Western culture. Planned Parenthood identify four general categories of stereotyping: personality traits, domestic behaviours, occupations and physical appearances (2019). Women, henceforth, are likely to face some sort of positive or negative discrimination primarily towards their physical appearance which dictate their assumed personality traits, their occupations and domestic behaviours. For example, a woman with long blonde hair and large breasts may be stereotyped as a 'bimbo' who has materialistic and trivial interests, low levels of intellect, a short attention span and a yearning for male attention. There is no correlation between one's physical appearance to their personality traits, occupation or domestic behaviours, yet the stereotype persists as universalised partial or full truth. Under the umbrella of gender stereotyping falls athletic stereotyping, whereby a person is stereotyped as an athlete based on their physical presentation. As explored in Chapters 3 and 4 there is a very narrow scope of what constitutes a female athletic body in accordance to Western heterosexual ideals, creating broad categorisations in accordance with heterosexual appeal. Whilst the male athletic stereotype may have positive associations, especially surrounding their physical attractiveness, the female athletic stereotype is a lot more varied depending on whether she fits into the *feminine athletic aesthetic* or the *lesbian athletic aesthetic*. A broad understanding of the female athletic stereotype on the whole is that she is either a) more of a sex icon than an

athlete or b) a heterosexually unappealing lesbian. On the latter stereotype, Cahn writes:

> The figure of the mannish lesbian athlete has acted as a powerful but unarticulated 'bogey woman' of sport, forming a silent foil for more positive, corrective images that attempt to rehabilitate the image of women athletes and resolve the cultural contradiction between athletic prowess and femininity. As a stereotyped figure in U.S. society, the lesbian athlete forms part of everyday cultural knowledge. (Cahn, 1993, pp. 343-344)

From the above we may deduce that stereotypical lesbian athlete is larger than the supposed 'average' woman, muscular, short haired and therefore exemplifies personality traits that we associate with the male gender; aggressive, assertive, dominant and egotistical. Stereotypes are, on the one hand, a foundational basis for sexism within sport and beyond sport. In a report by the Office of the High Commission of Human Rights (OHCHR) it is stated that stereotypes are 'harmful' obstacles (2019). However, philosophers and psychologists remain divided on this view with some arguing that stereotypes are not as harmful as they may seem, rather they may be 'morally and epistemically permissible in some cases' (Beeghly, 2015, p. 688).

To understand why female athletic stereotypes exist we must look to the beginning of the formation of these stereotypes. It is logical to claim that the assumedly lesbian athlete mentioned above is a stereotype which some consider true. Even if we explicitly state that we believe the stereotype is not true, our tendency to stereotype may lead us to implicitly associate muscular bodies, homosexuality, short hair and aggressive personalities to sportswomen. The stereotype which has been formed appears to be based upon a very small proportion of women from Soviet

countries of the Cold War Era[45]. During this era the successful female athletes tended to be much larger than their opponents and exemplified typically masculine traits. Examples of the athletes which we have formed our stereotype on are shown in Figures 2.2-2.5.

Due to the systematic doping of their athletes, many female athletes suffered from side effects such as facial hair growth, deepening of the voice, increased muscle power, acne and more (Kalinski, 2017; Dimeo & Hunt, 2011). Most notably, Krieger (Figure 2.2) transitioned from female to male after the use of the steroids (which were prescribed to her without her knowledge) as the hormone disruption caused her to experience severe gender dysphoria and 'destruction of an entire identity' that they were born with (Brown, 2015). In comparison to the images above of the female athletes in the Cold War Era (Figures 2.2-2.5) to images of female athletes in the present day (Figures 1.8-2.0) we are likely to recognise a vast difference in their physical appearances. However, our stereotypical image of the female athlete appears to be not only wrong but outdated. The perpetuated stereotype which we have held onto as a Western society is of very narrow scope from a particular time period.

The stereotype discussed above however directly contrasts to another stereotype surrounding the female who engages in sport: the 'feeble' stereotype. From this stereotype we assume that the imagined female engaging in sport is foppish, limp-wristed and cowardly, despite finding herself in a sporting realm which requires opposing characteristics. She maintains an effeminate appearance and fulfils the pejorative term 'to throw like a girl'. These stereotypes are confined to the typically female sports such as cheerleading, where the female is the half-time entertainment which boosts the male ego as he does the 'real' sporting task. This stereotype is certainly more troubling than the lesbian athlete stereotype, as it confines women to the side lines – at least the lesbian

[45] This is not to say that *every* Soviet country had women who conformed to such a stereotype. Rather, the examples of women who fulfil this stereotype predominantly come from the Soviet countries of East Germany and the USSR.

stereotype allows women to be competitive on the athletic field. A major concern with these stereotypes is that they are polarised. There is no in-between, a woman cannot throw like a girl and display aggression simultaneously, nor can she be gay and effeminate or strong and attractive. Success for a female athlete is coupled with an undesirable level of unattractiveness in the West, thus we find a reoccurrence of the Beauvoirian theory of female existential conflict: 'there is a divorce between her properly human condition and her feminine vocation', ergo, 'a conflict breaks out between her originary claim to be subject, activity and freedom, on the one hand and, on the other, her erotic tendencies and the social pressure to assume herself as a passive object' ([de] Beauvoir, 2011, p. 359). Despite the empirical evidence before us that women can display contrasting Westernized heterosexual traits we hold onto the polarised stereotypes perpetuated in Western society, fulfilling the claim that a quality of a stereotype is their 'extreme durability' (Fallin Hunzaker, 2014, p. 166). According to Fallin Hunzaker, a possible reason for the perpetuation of stereotypes is due to 'negative stereotype–based schemas' which 'provide a readily available resource to justify low-status others' adversities in the victim redefinition process.' (2014, p. 167). Applied to the female athlete, when we see a female who does not perform in a sports task very well – she may slip off her surf board, miss a shot at a hoop, skew a drop-kick goal – we attribute this to the 'feeble' female stereotype rather than other possible explanations, such as a lapse in concentration, muscular cramp or a lack of practice. The socially conditioned stereotype is almost a kind of laziness or cognitive override, something we can fall back onto as an explanation rather than sourcing the true reason for a failure. It is possible that this could also be applied to the stereotype of the lesbian athlete who displays herculean amount of power. We may be sceptical of the naturalness of her strength (in essence, we suspect that she has illegally doped to increase her sporting performance) thus when she performs much better than her opponents we fall back onto the negative stereotype–based schemas that the athlete must be a man or must be a

cheat if her performance aligns with that of the Cold War Era female athletes. In 2016 when competing against Caster Semenya, 800m runner Lynsey Sharpe claimed that "Everyone can see it's two separate races", suggesting that Semenya was of another level or even gender hence why she (Sharpe) was unable to medal at the Olympics (Morgan, 2016). This sentiment was echoed by Polish athlete Joanna Jozwik who stated she felt like a 'silver medallist' and was proud to finish as the 'first European' and 'second white' after losing to Semenya, Niyonsaba, Wambui and Bishop at the Olympics in Rio (Critchley, 2016). These criticisms of female sports performances arguably rely on these stereotypes, even if the accuser does not know it.

It is perhaps arguable that gender stereotypes surrounding female athletes can be countered if we look beyond popularised sports – these being sports which are regularly televised in the West, commented on in news articles and taught in standard physical education – and turn our attention to extreme sports such as ultra-endurance racing. In recent research it has been found that as men and women increase in age the performance gap between genders is significantly narrowed (Knechtle et al., 2016; Waldvogel et al., 2019). In some ultra-endurance sports, such as ultra-swimming, it has been shown that women have the ability to outperform men (Knechtle et al., 2014). There are even some suggestions that women are 'better' [sic] ultra-endurance athletes altogether with recent victories of female ultra-athletes Fiona Kolbinger, Jasmin Paris and Katie Wright making the headlines after beating male opponents in ultra-endurance races (Williams, 2019). Women who compete and outperform their male opponents in ultra-endurance races appear to directly contradict stereotypes of the 'feeble' female athletes, nor do they fit other stereotypes such as the 'lesbian' athletic stereotype for the sport type is niche, leaving many of its participants out of the spotlight. The nature of closely contested ultra-endurance races challenge gender stereotypes as we know it, suggesting that stereotypes are not only unnecessary but

falsifiable. This consequently highlights a need for further research into the narrowing gender gap for ultra-endurance racing presents as a possible model for eliminating stereotypes and implicit biases surrounding female athletes.

It has also been theorised that stereotypes are formative of the way we are and the way we perceive the outside world and how it should be. In this case, we are influenced by the society which we are surrounded by and this conditions our worldview which is essentially a Beauvoirian theory which stems from *The Second Sex*: 'It is clear that woman's whole 'character' – her convictions, values, wisdom, morality, tastes and behaviour – is explained by her situation' (2011, p. 677). The stereotyping which woman, and ultimately humanity, endures is due to the influences surrounding us, and we perpetuate these ourselves as much as one another by internalising the stereotypes we see without questioning them. Take, for example, a young woman who grows up during the 70s and 80s when the state doping of athletes in Germany and Russia had become the norm. Although she may not have explicitly endorsed the view that the larger, more masculine statures of the female athletes were contradicting Western social constructs of femininity, it is likely that this perception of female athletics was formative of her view that sports was reserved for men, or, women who were more resembling of men than women. Combined with a lack of visibility of female athletes in other domains at this time (such as motorsports, rowing, football, rugby) one can understand why these stereotypes may lead to implicit biases.

Nonetheless, women are more present than ever in sport and they use sport to take control of their bodies, as well as the meaning of their bodies. Sport offers athletes a unique opportunity to take control of their *body as situation*. In particular, it enables women to defy social expectations and deconstruct stereotypes about their bodies. Take, for example, boxer Nicola Adams who appears to fall outside the perimeters of many female athlete stereotypes: 'As a black, working-class, openly

bisexual woman boxer she does not fit within heteronormative ideals of acceptable sporting femininity' (Dashper, 2018, p. 1747). Since Adam's gold medal win in London, it is reported by The Telegraph that 'The number of female boxers in the UK doubled within months' and an 'estimated surge of tens of thousands' of new female boxers followed after her gold in Rio (Morgan, 2020). It is entirely possible that the present social situation, which generally discourages females from defying feminine ideals, diverts some women towards sport as a means of reclaiming their bodies and of showing that their bodies are irreducible to objects. Sport provides an alternative interpretation of the female body as a tool, 'crucial to an understanding of selfhood and the processes through which people position themselves and are positioned within the social world' (Woodward, 2008, p. 543). Evidently, stereotypes play a role in shaping how women understand their bodies: either they choose to reject the stereotype in rebellion, or they accept the stereotype. If the latter, it is possible that women may avoid physical pursuits as a consequence of sport being stereotyped as a 'men's game' and only associated with butch, gay women who are cast as 'unfeminine' and 'undesirable' in a heteronormative society. This means that sport is a key site for the reclamation of the meaning of the female body. It is a global stage for the demonstration of many, counter-stereotypical ways that women can *live* their bodies with 'perfect immediacy between body and mind' (Howe, 2003, p.99).

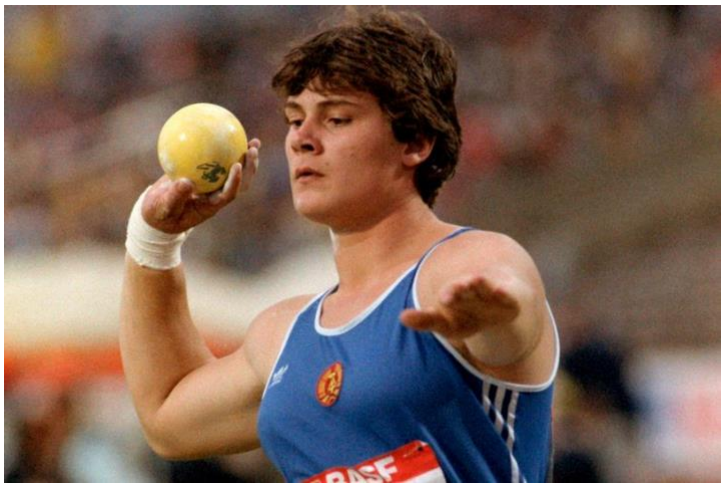

Figure 2.2 - Heidi Krieger, East German shot-putter. Source: https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/east-germanys-forgotten-olympic-doping-6949436Accessed: 17/06/2019.

Figure 2.3 – Renate Stecher, East German sprinter. Source: http://www.sporting-heroes.net/athletics/east-germany/renate-stecher-1329/silver-and-bronze-in-the-sprints-at-1976-olympics_a10021/ Accessed: 17/06/2019.

Figure 2Figure 2.4 - Nadezhda Tkachenko, Soviet Union shot putter. Source: RIA Novosti archive, image #399455,

Figure 2.4 - Nadezhda Tkachenko, Soviet Union shot putter. Source: RIA Novosti archive, image #399455, http://visualrian.ru/ru/site/gallery/#399455 35 mm film Accessed: 17/06/2019.

Figure 2.5 - Irina Meszynski, East German discus thrower. Source: https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/sportlerin-leichtathletik-ddrddr-meisterschaften-in-news-photo/541767893?adppopup=true Accessed: 17/06/2019.

5.2 – Stereotypes: Morally Reprehensible But Cognitively Unavoidable

As the above discussion suggests, stereotyping is a cognitive phenomenon which is unavoidable as stereotypes are formed by essential cognitive practices such as belief-formation, bias-formation and instinctive practices (such as identifying when one is in danger or not). Therefore, when we try avoid making assumptions about how someone behaves, presents themselves, their occupations or their personality traits we are likely to fail as we can only combat the explicit beliefs that we hold when forming a stereotype but not the implicit biases. Hence, we may understand that female athletes come in many different shapes, skin tones and sizes depending on their discipline, yet our socially conditioned biases caused by advertisement, media and past beliefs causes the toned, Caucasian blonde to be the stereotypical female athlete in one's mind. One may pose the argument that if stereotyping is unavoidable, it is not morally reprehensible. I beg to differ, arguing that cognitive unavoidability does not equate to moral permissibility. First, however, we must discuss why stereotypes are morally reprehensible in the first place. I will argue that stereotyping and implicit bias forms one of the three pillars. Furthermore, I will suggest that stereotyping and implicit bias heavily influence the other pillars, aestheticization and homophobia, in upholding the Femininity Hurdle.

Supporting the view that stereotyping is morally reprehensible is philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky. In her paper *On Psychological Oppression* (1990) Bartky argues that 'Stereotyping is morally reprehensible as well as psychologically oppressive' on the basis that it threatens our self-determination by forming a 'depreciated alter ego' which gets in our way (1990, p. 24). As a consequence of a depreciated alter ego the 'prefabricated self triumphs over a more authentic self', therefore it may be suggested that women reject their own beliefs on how one should act and present oneself to fulfil a stereotype which they consider as favourable. Alternatively, the depreciated ego causes women to act in ways that they aren't aware of, perhaps steering them away from 'masculine' pursuits and aesthetics in

favour of the 'feminine'. The pressures which occur when one participates in masculine pursuits over the feminine creates fears of social rejection. It would appear that stereotypes can cause a lack of autonomy when they have influence on a person for they prevent an 'autonomous choice of self, forbidden cultural expression' and cut us off from activities which we may originally choose had we not been exposed to social constructions such as stereotypes (Bartky, 1990, p. 31). To put this into context of this thesis, what Bartky is suggesting is that stereotypes alienate women away from sports because they either implicitly or explicitly associate particular sports and pursuits as strictly for jocks, gays, androgynous women and other marginalized persons or cultures. As a result of this, stereotyping will also prevent women from achieving self-realisation. Denial of the authentic self via adherence to patriarchal norms and stereotypes causes woman to reject full exploration of her body through sports or pursuits reserved for the male sex whilst maintaining the impression that this choice is being freely made. The daunting prospect of social rejection and scrutiny creates fear for those not willing to deviate from the norm, thus women remain confined to the social parameters which stereotypes reinforce. Stereotypes are therefore morally reprehensible because they cause women to be 'victim of alienation', preventing their autonomous choice by sustaining social constructs which limit their phenomenological flourishing (Bartky, 1990, p. 32).

This view is also supported by Webber, who aligns with a Beauvoirian theory of stereotypes in that 'internalised stereotypes shape the goals we pursue in childhood, adolescence and adult life.' (2019). It is how we are exposed to associations (negative and positive) which are formative of who we become. Take, for example, a girl who wants to take up women's rugby, but due to prevalent homophobia in her society she is told that 'rugby is for gays'[46]. Depending on the girls understanding of homosexuality and

[46] A recent opinion column by Eleanor Trezise for Stonewall wrote "women's and girls' rugby players can be stereotyped as 'masculine' lesbians and/or man-haters. I would love to say this stereotype is as dead as it sounds archaic and people only mention the

homophobia, it is likely that this would dissuade her to take up rugby and search for another sporting interest which is considered 'feminine' by the society she is surrounded by. The homophobia which the girl experiences is formative of her decisions and deprives her of the choice of playing a certain sport, thus we are revisited by the problem of the rejection of the authentic self in favour of avoiding negative stereotypes and associations. The opportunities and abilities the girl may have had had she been able to take up rugby free of homophobic stereotyping are consequently unknown and she is arguably a victim of what is essentially psychological oppression via stereotyping as it impacts her freedom of choice in an implicit way.

Contrary to the argument presented by Bartky is the possibility of positive stereotypes and their impact on one's formation of the self and choices they make. It is arguable that if positive stereotyping offsets negative stereotyping there is a need to re-evaluate the moral reprehensibility of stereotyping, making efforts to distinguish between positive stereotyping (the morally permissible) and negative stereotyping (the morally reprehensible). Research by Czopp *et al.* provides in-depth research on the effect of the positive stereotype, these being 'subjectively favourable beliefs about social groups' (2015, p. 451). Czopp *et al*. argue that the existence of positive stereotypes such as 'all Asians are good at maths', 'all black men are good at running' and 'all women are nurturing'[47] can have beneficial effects upon the stereotyped group, but acknowledges that the stereotypes may also have limiting effects on society and contribute equally as much in their reinforcement, if not more, than negative stereotypes groups face. The research also notes that negative stereotypes are on the

stereotype for the lols (actually many committed female players do) yet I've seen the stereotype put off potential new players, straight and lesbian or bi ("I don't want to be seen as butch!")." Source: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/node/21874 Accessed: 14/07/2019.

[47] It is not clear whether Czopp *et al*. endorse stereotypes as universalisations or as generics. It is reasonable to assume that when we stereotype we believe that a vast majority of the group in question hold a certain quality. Other scholars may disagree however, arguing that stereotyping requires a universalised belief about the group in question. I suspect that if stereotypes require a universalised belief it is possible that the disadvantageous effects of positive stereotyping would be amplified, however this is purely hypothetical.

way out which is consistent with the findings of Musto *et al.* mentioned in 5.1:

> The emergence and prevalence of positive stereotypes seems to correspond with a shift in the sociopolitical climate regarding the inappropriateness of negative stereotypes. As a result, people may have compensated for the omission of negativity toward outgroups by emphasizing groups' positive traits (Czopp, *et al.*, 2015, p. 453)

The benefits of positive stereotyping which Czopp *et al*. outlines are as follows:

i) Positive stereotyping as a compensatory coping strategy – there are suggestions that those who face discriminatory stereotyping shift towards a positive stereotype paradigm as a response to stigmatization. As a consequence the stereotyped persons excel in their chosen categorization: 'Internally accepting positive stereotypes of their group may be a way for women to pre-emptively shield themselves from the potential antagonism and aggression of hostile sexism' ergo 'group members may come to perceive and accept themselves and their group as manifestations of the stereotype' (2015, p. 454)

ii) Positive stereotypes counter negative stereotypes: 'Women who exemplify the positive stereotypes of benevolent sexism may benefit from men's greater romantic interest under conditions that threaten the stability of the status quo' (2015, p. 454). Additionally, we may find that the stereotype of the 'hero/heroine' commonly found in sport overrides negative stereotypes. An example of this may be Wilma Rudolph, who

overcame serious childhood illnesses and overrode many stereotypes surrounding black women in athletics due to her success heroine status (Lansbury, 2014).

iii) Performance is boosted when positive stereotypes are activated: 'target group members may demonstrate benefits in performance and well-being from the implicit or explicit reliance on the favourable associations and outcomes of positive stereotypes.' (2015, p. 454) For example, the racial stereotype of the black runner in athletics may boost the overall performance of the athlete in question if they align with this stereotype.

Despite the advantages of positive stereotypes, Czopp *et al.* are careful to clarify that there are disadvantages to positive stereotyping too, citing feelings of 'marginalization', 'depersonalisation' and 'greater self-objectification and body shame' when positive stereotypes were attributed to the persons in question (2015, p. 454). Furthermore, it was reported that positive stereotyping lead to the avoidance of achievement-related opportunities. Czopp *et al.* reported the following:

> Among Black college students, implicit positive self-stereotyping (i.e., associating Black faces with stereotypic traits such as athletic, rhythmic, cool) predicted less interest in and perceived importance of a college education (Czopp, 2008a). Similarly, women who avoid STEM-related majors and careers because of internal or external pressure to conform to expectations of positive stereotypes lose their voice within an increasingly powerful and prestigious intellectual domain (2015, p. 454).

Applied to the current discussion as to why the gender imbalance remains both inside and outside of sport it would be logical to suggest that positive

stereotyping of women as calm, nurturing, communal but not agentic and emotional prevents women from achieving goals in a sporting context. Because sport can lead to more negatively (but sometimes falsely) stereotyped traits such as aggression, egotism and competitiveness it is possible that women purposely avoid sports in favour of excelling within their positively stereotyped role, also as a survival strategy outlined in section 4.2. Applying Krane's survival strategy theory to stereotyping it may be suggested that by fulfilling a negative stereotype in a patriarchal or homophobic society, women fear that they will 'lose their voice'. Thus she may be inclined to fulfil traits associated with positive stereotypes to avoid marginalization and abuse, yet she contributes to the conformist nature of a heterosexist society as an indirect result (Krane, 2001). This is purely hypothetical, but perhaps points us in an area which should be researched further to fully understand why many women reject the sports stereotype in favour of a stereotype which perpetuates gender inequality. Alternatively, it would also be of equal importance to explore why women defy the norm and align with heroic, anti-heteronormative, sports-based stereotypes fulfilled by the likes of Megan Rapinoe and Nicola Adams over typical 'feminine' stereotypes. It may therefore be argued that positive stereotyping is just as morally reprehensible as negative stereotyping, pushing towards the conclusion that stereotyping, regardless of its connotations, is objectively morally wrong.

5.3 – Taking Responsibility For Stereotypes

It is paramount that, in our journey towards the overall end-goal of overcoming the Femininity Hurdle, we distinguish how to proceed with making the jump. We need to make this jump, I argue, by identifying who and who is not morally culpable when implicit biases cause wrongful stereotyping and prejudiced behaviour. By including arguments made by Holroyd, Scaife and Stafford, as well as Sie and van Voorst Vader-Bours I will come to the conclusion that we have both individual and collective responsibility in tackling stereotypes and prejudices, rather than a

Beauvoirian sense of personal responsibility for liberation which she outlines in *The Second Sex*.

In her paper Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat and Women in Philosophy, Jennifer Saul argues that in many cases where stereotyping and prejudiced behaviour are exercised the perpetrator is unaware and thus morally not responsible for the implicit biases that they hold:

> A person should not be blamed for an implicit bias of which they are completely unaware that results solely from the fact that they live in a sexist culture. Even once they become aware that they are likely to have implicit biases, they do not instantly become able to control their biases, and so they should not be blamed for them. (They may, however, be blamed if they fail to act properly on the knowledge that they are likely to be biased—e.g., by investigating and implementing remedies to deal with their biases.) (2013, p. 55)

Saul makes a fair point: if the perpetrator is not complicit in the act to the extent that they are unaware and unable to exercise control over their prejudices we should not subject them to punishment on the basis of moral responsibility. Take, for example, a getaway driver *D* who is the accomplice in a crime. *D* was told that they were going to a supermarket to get groceries yet unbeknownst to him the passenger *P* was actually robbing the supermarket. When *P* calmly returns to the parked car with a bag of shopping (and a wad of cash hidden in his coat lining) and requests *D* to drive, *D* has no reason to think that he is committing a crime. He is not complicit; therefore he should not be tried as morally responsible for the crime. However, if *P* presented a gun as he exited the car, *D* may have had reason to think that a crime was about to be committed and arguably should have questioned *P*'s motives. By suspecting that *P* was about to act immorally, *D* should have made an effort to prevent the immoral act as they were able to exercise control over the situation once they had been made aware, otherwise *D* would become an accomplice. As we can see, there is a

fine line between being complicit in one's immoral behaviour and being out of control of one's moral acts if the information to them is not present.

In accordance with Saul's claim, Holroyd et. al suggest that there are three components to deciding who should have moral responsibility over implicit biases, these being awareness, control and revisionism (Holroyd, et al., 2017). For the purpose of this discussion I will only analyse the elements of awareness and control for revisionism is not fully relevant to the following discussion[48]. It is arguable that, if an agent is unaware of their actions caused by implicit biases that they hold, to some extent, they are not morally responsible (Sher, 2009). However, Holroyd argues that agents have a responsibility to introspect and assess their behaviour towards others - Sie and van Voorst Vader-Bours call this attitude 'self-ascribing responsibility' (2016, p. 108). In particular, those who have authority and have power over impactful decisions should understand their role in this and what would happen if these biases were to exist. Understanding and monitoring these actions are also important, and failure to understand any patterns which they may be creating could lead to ignorance. Thus we may suggest that whilst one's (lack of) awareness leads to a lessened sense of moral responsibility, ignorance of one's impact and actions in specific epistemic contexts through a lack of introspection leads to moral culpability when implicit biases are a possibility.

Holroyd also highlights the element of control when assessing moral responsibility of implicit bias, questioning what forms of control are necessary for moral responsibility and whether we can handle these controls (2017, pp. 7-8). She argues that 'rational control may not be necessary for moral responsibility', rather, we can gain some control over the implicit biases we hold via techniques such as habituation and 'implementation intentions' to redirect processes which may lead to discriminatory or prejudiced actions (Holroyd, et al., 2017, p. 7). Clearly, our ability to practice

[48] Revisionism focuses on an analysis of *what* it means to be morally responsible, therefore it does not focus on the debate of this dissertation on *who* is morally responsible.

such techniques is dependent on one's awareness of the possible implicit biases that we manifest, however it could also be suggested that these techniques are standard of those trying to live virtuously and exercise egalitarian practices. Moral responsibility is therefore hinged not only upon one's self introspection but also one's desires to be a better person. Lack of these two properties would suggest that the agent is morally culpable for the behaviour caused by unrecognised implicit biases.

What is also a key factor on deciding moral responsibility of implicit biases is whether the responsibility is individual or collective. I will argue that although institutional change has the greater power for bringing about the overall elimination of implicit biases (and therefore prejudiced and stereotyped behaviour) individual moral responsibility is key and must feed into this collective responsibility. Firstly, one must assess the arguments in favour of individual responsibility in relation to the above elements of awareness and control. Individual responsibility of implicit biases is extremely important for the end-goal of eliminating discriminatory behaviour. Mathematically, if many individuals make a group effort in overcoming discriminatory behaviour we are more likely to eradicate such behaviours. However, the problem which stands in the way of individual responsibility is Holroyd's proposed elements of awareness and control. Take, for example, a hermit society which has little to no interaction with societies which border it. The individuals of this society all have the same explicit beliefs and implicit biases due to the exclusivity of their group and lack of outsider influence, thus they do not go unchallenged by one another for they cannot see the moral wrongs of the biases which they harbour and consequently inflict. Where views and biases are unchallenged, it is far from likely that those who harbour these biases will ever become aware unless they go beyond their society and have their views challenged.

Another question which stems from this issue follows: why should we have personal responsibility over something which we have little control over? The answer I believe, for such a complex question, is relatively simple.

Although we do not have active control over these biases, we may have indirect control. We can explicitly believe that we are egalitarian and fair in our views, yet wishing away any biases, turning a blind eye or actively trying to get rid of these biases can be fruitless. However, introspection of our behaviour and indirect techniques allow us to exercise these controls, minimising the damage of our biases and limiting the stereotyping which we are socially conditioned to form. Personal responsibility for the biases that we hold is important because, although we (hypothetically) may have never been limited by the discriminatory behaviour of others, other people certainly have. By taking personal responsibility we are contributing to a larger picture of anti-discrimination, and we are more likely to produce a ripple effect. By attuning ourselves to the exhibited behaviour of others we are going to become more likely in recognising behaviours which display possible implicit biases, thus we are able to go forward and knock these social constructs down through both education and practice of anti-discriminatory behaviour. Sexism in society cannot be demolished until we endorse anti-sexist views personally, otherwise meaningful change and the end goal of gender parity cannot be established as implicit biases are only perpetuated when they are still in existence.

If personal endorsement is not engaged with by an individual, nor are anti-implicit bias techniques practiced, it is most unlikely that an individual will exercise responsibility as a sole agent, nor will they exercise responsibility in a group collectively i.e. speaking up when they believe stereotypes and prejudices are being expressed. Stereotypes and prejudices, Sie and van Voorst Vader-Bours argue, are 'collective construals' which are perpetuated by being 'collectively upheld' in groups (2016, p. 94). Much like a domino effect, the debunking of stereotypes requires individual deviation before group rejection of the stereotype, hence it is extremely important that we claim individual moral responsibility for the biases which we hold and display. Only at this point can we contribute and form a group effort to debunk stereotypes: 'For a stereotype to 'survive' it needs to be regularly employed and affirmed by a sufficiently large group. Only then will we

attribute this specific trait to members of the targeted group so that our everyday associations will remain imbued with this stereotype.' (Sie & van Voorst Vader-Bours, 2016, p. 95). To summarise, everyone must buy into anti-bias methods and debunking before it can become a group effort, and this must begin with individuals taking moral responsibility for their own implicit biases.

Collective responsibility is ultimately how stereotypes are overcome once and for all. It is strongly argued that collective responsibility for our biases is key, especially by influential groups for they are seen as the 'gatekeepers' to society and institutions which they influence (Washington & Kelly, 2016, p. 31). By expressing anti-bias beliefs, institutions are able to give empirical evidence that discriminated groups are of equal worth, value and talent in the societies which they contribute to yet are beaten-down by. A striking example of this in the 21st century is the Women's Boat Race, a varsity rowing match between Oxford University and Cambridge University which only took to the same course as the men in 2015 despite the men's races beginning in 1829 and the women's in 1927. Arguably, this was due to the arrival of Helena Morrissey, CEO of the head sponsors Newton Investment, who aimed to dispel any gender differences in the academic rowing sphere by pushing for equal sporting rights for the women's team (Harris, 2015; Winton, 2015). The individual moral responsibility Morrissey expressed when faced with the task of debunking female sexist oppression in sport is not only commendable, but suggestive of a top-down approach when tackling implicit bias. Although Morrissey was an individual who brought about this change, she was also acting with a substantial force behind her: a corporate name and a great deal of money to invest. Cynics may deduce from this that if we are to go forth in eliminating implicit biases and social stereotypes in a Western society money and power are required, however I believe that this is only a half-truth for Morrissey is, regardless of her position in employment, an individual who recognised the importance of female sport and gender equality. Granted, whether she could have made this happen without the force of the company behind her is another topic

for discussion, yet the moral responsibility which she exercised as a 'gatekeeper' resulted in the abolition of a very large hurdle in female competitive rowing. Individual and collective responsibility feed into one another and are co-dependent, thus the recognition of both are required if we are to take the plunge and deconstruct female sexist oppression in sport once and for all.

This chapter has discussed stereotypes and implicit biases at length, showing that they are a crucial pillar that upholds the Femininity Hurdle. Additionally, this chapter has given us greater reason to seek abolition of stereotypes altogether on the basis that they are morally reprehensible and detrimental to current and aspiring female athletes. We must now turn our attention to how we can knock down the Femininity Hurdle via philosophy. In the following chapter I will propose that virtue ethics is the best ethical theory in combatting female sexist oppression in and beyond sport.

6. – Overcoming the Femininity Hurdle

Through Chapters 3-5 we have identified the Femininity Hurdle: a collective of interlinked constraints which prevent gender equality for female athletes in the realm of sport. I argue the three pillars which buttress the hurdle are aestheticization of female athletes' bodies, homophobia, stereotyping and implicit biases. I have argued so far that these three pillars form a major barrier for women who want to be seen and treated as equals to their male counterparts. I have also argued that if these three pillars were demolished female athletes would no longer face a hurdle which prevents them from gaining equal status to male athletes in sports. It is necessary that all three pillars are eliminated rather than just one in order to gain total gender equality within sports. In this next chapter I will discuss how identifying the pillars only forms the run-up towards the hurdle, therefore, to begin demolition we need to adopt a moral theory which has the flexibility to address the three major problems that female athletes face. In the first part of this chapter I will propose that virtue ethics is the best moral theory to adopt as opposed to deontological or consequentialist normative ethical theories, on the basis that prescriptivism does not necessarily promote what is good and focuses too heavily on what is right. I will also propose that a eudaemonist, Aristotelean form of virtue ethics is favourable in this context. By adopting this moral theory, I argue that we will be able to begin the deconstruction of aestheticization, stereotyping and homophobia. I will address these issues of deconstruction and construction sequentially. Finally, I will discuss how we can apply the practice and habituation of sport into life beyond sport, postulating that sport can overcome sexism via virtue ethics within and beyond the game.

6.1 – Virtue Ethics as the Best Way Forward

In this section I will argue that virtue ethics (henceforth VE) is the best way forward in response to the deconstruction of the Femininity Hurdle on the

basis that i) legislative ethical theory is devoid without a law-giving omnipotent presence and ii) it allows for an environment where agents can habituate and automatize implementation intentions in response to implicit biases. I will refer to two papers in particular as the foundation of my arguments: G.E.M. Anscombe's 'Modern Moral Philosophy' (1958) and C. Rees' 'A Virtue Ethics Response to Implicit Bias' (2016). I believe these papers represent both past and current VE debates which philosophers face, hence it seems reasonable to focus on the two arguments that they propose in favour of VE.

Anscombe's paper is arguably one of the most prominent ethical theory papers of the 20th century, with few scholars in English-language philosophy prioritising VE theory prior to her revival of it. Stimulating debate as to why one should reject modern moral ethical theories, Anscombe argued the following:

(1) we should stop doing moral philosophy,
(2) seemingly essential moral concepts, such as moral obligation and the moral sense of 'ought', are incoherent, and
(3) all modern moral philosophy is basically the same (Richter, 2001).

My focus will be on claim (2). Anscombe argued that moral obligation and sense of 'ought' are incoherent on the basis that they are wholly reliant on one's belief of a 'God as a law-giver', thus if one does not believe in a God - or there is no proof of a lawful God's existence - moral concepts are void (1958, p. 5). In a realm where agents of multiple faiths, agnosticism, atheism, cultural differences and contrasting social values compete against and alongside one other, it is strongly arguable that an ethical theory with monotheistic foundations is unsuitable to address the varying concepts of morality presented by multiple moral agents engaging in sport. Rather, we are in need of an ethical theory where moral flourishing is the focal point, as this is a common denominator amongst all athletes: the desire to be the best version of the self that they can be in a sporting context. Therefore, one may

favour VE's focus on the development of character rather than moral obligations as it allows for a broader spectrum of agentic social backgrounds to be united under a singular theory.

The second reason for choosing VE as the prime ethical theory in addressing the overcoming of the Femininity Hurdle is that it allows for an environment where agents can habituate and automatize 'implementation intentions' in response to implicit biases. As identified by Chapter 5, implicit biases and the stereotypes which cause them are highly detrimental to females who strive to be seen as athletes of equal merit in comparison to male athletes. Although stereotypes and implicit biases stand as a single pillar upholding the Femininity Hurdle they feed into aestheticization and homophobia too. Women all too often face biases against certain ways of dressing and acting, as well as biases against those who identify as LGBTQ+ despite there being no logical reason for such discrimination[49]. Ergo, it is extremely important that we try combat stereotypes and biases. Rees suggests that VE does exactly this.

Rees argues in her paper that indirect mitigation strategies are only proven effective when we act out of habituation of what is right, not when we think behaving in a certain way will lead to virtuousness:

> It is not sufficient for virtue that one reflectively endorse the right values and that one's behaviour reflect those values. What matters also is that one's habituated, automatized motivations embody them. This is the grain of truth in the myth that true virtue is effortless: alleviating another's distress may require considerable effort, but being moved to do so should not. (2016, p. 197)

[49] It may be argued that we may have biases against those who act and dress differently to us as it is a reaction to potential danger- for example, I am likely to have a bias against someone who wears a t-shirt with white supremacist slogans and is acting violent or erratically. I agree that these are biases which are a product of survival instincts, however I am solely referring to appearances and dispositions which do not correlate to harmful behaviour but still yield biases.

Hence, it is important that we not only believe that we hold certain values – may these be selflessness, loyalty, patience, conscientiousness – we must also try to practice them and exemplify them so that we readily act virtuously without constant, lengthy deliberation of what is right and wrong. This is important, Rees argues, because this is how we avoid 'external motivation' when responding to prejudice (2016, p. 203). ''External' motivation stems from a concern with self-presentation: the individual wishes to avoid others' disapproval of prejudiced behaviour (EMS)' hence the agent acts virtuously not because she *believes* she is doing the right thing, but because she *wants* others to view her as virtuous (Rees, 2016, p. 203). It is a sceptical view to hold but is perhaps evidenced by agents such as celebrities who associate with, and promote on behalf of, charities which have little personal connection to them in the hope that they will be seen as virtuous agents, only to contradict themselves after this externally motivated act of good[50]. For this reason, Rees argues, it is preferable that we have greater 'Internal Motivation' (IMS) to respond to situations without prejudice, where motivation 'stems from a concern about prejudice itself: the individual's values are inconsistent with prejudice, and not being prejudiced is considered personally important' (2016, p. 203). It is reported that not only do those considered high-IMS low-EMS show the least bias, but also it is suggestive that 'the adoption of explicit egalitarian commitments enables individuals to change their implicit motivations by automatizing control of implicit bias' and these agents 'are able to inhibit the influence of implicit stereotypes on cognition through automatized conflict-monitoring.' (Rees, 2016, p. 204). However Rees does not expand on ways in which we can achieve IMS over EMS other than the statement that an agent's practice of IMS over EMS depends on 'hospitable environments' where 'egalitarian

[50] An example of this may be supermodel Naomi Campbell who advocated for animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) but later uploaded an image expressing her delight of a gift of furs and snakeskin onto her social media. Source: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/11309725/Former-PETA-campaigner-Naomi-Campbell-sparks-fury-over-fur-Christmas-gift.html Accessed: 07/09/2019.

commitments will be strengthened by the process of modification and refinement which is essential to automatizing them' (Rees, 2016, p. 209).

Leading on from Rees' argument that hospitable environments are required for a successful implementation of VE, I will examine S. Olivier's paper '"Your Wave, Bro!": Virtue Ethics and Surfing' and his supporting theorisation that some sports not only form a hospitable environment for VE practices but VE is the preferred ethical theory over deontological and utilitarian theories. In his direct application of VE to the sport of surfing, Olivier proposes the overarching claim that VE 'holds the most likely chance of reversing moral decline' in the sporting sphere (2010, p. 1223). He makes this claim on the basis that a) deontological or utilitarian codes of conduct fail in some sporting contexts, this including surfing, and b) sport is a hospitable environment for a successful implementation of VE. Like the sports which have been examined thus far, surfing also falls foul to immoral practices (Olivier particularly focuses on surf localism[51]). To verify Olivier's overarching claim we shall consequently apply claims a) and b) to the pillars of the Femininity Hurdle. We shall begin by examining Olivier's first argument in favour of VE and against deontological and utilitarian ethical theories in sport. The argument is presented thus:

i) 'codes [of conduct] offer apparent clarity and simplicity in a confusing world'

ii) codes of conduct 'offer a neutral framework for resolving disputes or allocating blame'

[51] Localism in the context of surfing can be defined as "an attempt to deter outsiders from enjoying coveted and choice waves" through hostility, intimidation and violence. Source: https://www.swimoutlet.com/guides/understanding-localism-in-surfing Accessed: 08/09/2019

iii-a) ‘with different aspects of the code or guidelines carrying different weight in different situations’ of competition and practice, it is difficult to apply universally

iii-b) ‘people differ in intensity, duration, and the extent of their felt satisfactions. Not only do they differ, but the relative contribution that sensations associated with a particular activity make to overall happiness differs between individuals, and even within individuals at certain times’

iv) non-universal application of codes of conduct undermines deontological codes of conduct

v) unquantifiable application undermines utilitarian codes of conduct

C) Neither deontological nor utilitarian ethics can provide a reliable framework in the realm of sports as they do not fulfil their sole purpose of neutrality and universalizability. (Olivier, 2010, pp. 1228-1231)

To aid the analysis, I propose that we imagine the implementation of the code ‘All those involved [in basketball] must treat everyone equally and sensitively’ taken from Basketball England’s Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018, p. 1). Basketball England’s code aims to fulfil i) and ii) as demonstrated by the quantifier ‘all’. Yet, Basketball England does not define the term ‘sensitively’, thus it falls victim to iii-a) and iii-b). Even if it did define it, the regulations would become rigid to the extent that the game would become unplayable. Sensitivity is a notion which agents act out and understand differently, therefore its application in competition and in practice becomes non-universal and unquantifiable. Ergo, the code which England Basketball set out to implement does not fulfil its sole purpose of providing a neutral, universalizable set of rules.

Next, we turn to claim that b) sport is a hospitable environment for a successful implementation of VE. Olivier expands upon this claim by arguing that by the very nature of sport we are required to fine-tune the sport in social environments: be this in rehearsals, in competition, or even practicing elements of the sport[52] in the pursuit of excellence and flourishing as an athlete. This observation can be dated back to Alasdair MacIntyre's interpretation of Aristotelian VE and its acquisition via social practice, where he stated the following:

> By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 187)

By MacIntyre's interpretation, and consequently Olivier's, sport is an ideal realm for the fine-tuning, acquisition, habituation and eventual automatization of virtues in the quest of eliminating vices: 'we learn by observing and emulating experienced and respected practitioners, by internalizing the conventions, norms, values and traditions [of surfing]. The experienced practitioner fulfils the role of moral exemplar, and his or her acts are internalized and replicated' (Olivier, 2010, p. 1230). Not only is the physical aspect of the human body considered at peak performance, but the moral venture which the athlete undertakes to fine-tune virtues via human social practices in their chosen discipline leads to eventual moral flourishing, or perhaps as close as we can get. Opposed to following codes which promote what is right, VE practised in a hospitable environment such as sport allows agents to practise what is good. Therefore, it is arguable that

[52] This may be achieved by weight lifting, simulations, plyometrics, and yogic exercises to name a few.

VE is the best ethical theory to adopt in the pursuit of moral good. In turn, we shall examine the possible downfalls of trying to implement VE in a sporting arena before applying the framework to each pillar of the Femininity Hurdle.

6.2 – Reconsidering Virtue Ethics as the Best Way Forward

If we are to overcome the Femininity Hurdle one may suggest that we explore the full extent of adopting VE as the ethical theory of choice. Although the above arguments present a strong defence of the theory, we must also discuss the pitfalls the theory presents in its application. In doing this, we will first explore Sarah Conly's article 'Why Feminists Should Oppose Feminist Virtue Ethics' (2001). Following this, we will examine Olivier's refutation against sport being an inhospitable environment for VE to be practised. In support of this stance we will then look at Graves' theory of mutualism, concluding that sport is a hospitable environment for VE to be practised, contrary to deontological criticism.

Although VE aims to bring about the best possible character in each agent, Conly argues in her *Philosophy Now* article that VE is distinctly anti-feminist for it encourages women to practise the virtues of care, selflessness and nurturing over the virtues of self-care and putting oneself first, the latter being a trait essential to females seeking to escape their social roles as sexual and caring services to men. Conly thus highlights the following major flaw of VE, stating that 'VE is oppressive as it lures us into 'developing the wrong virtues' which cause 'subjection of the self to the demands of others rather than its flourishing.' (2001). Although Conly's critique presented above may *prima facie* present a justifiable worry, I will argue that this is not so. I will argue that Conly's interpretation of VE is oversimplified and ignorant of certain concepts. With the inclusion of key concepts such as *phronesis* and the 'golden mean' which Conly omits I will suggest that this critique does not present worries for the feminist thinker as Conly claims.

Conly appears to omit the concept of *phronesis* or 'practical wisdom' in her analysis and its ability to prevent us from developing the oxymoronic 'wrong virtues' (her concept of a 'wrong' virtue being one which detracts from our personal flourishing with the aim of helping or pleasing others). Foot explains 'practical wisdom' with the following example: 'the man who is wise does not merely know how to do good things such as looking after his children well, or strengthening someone in trouble, but must also want to do them' (2003, p. 6). In this case, it is arguable that Conly's critique focuses too much on the cultivation of one's virtue and ignores the concept of reason and judgement that we must use when practicing virtue. We avoid developing excessive character traits by 'doing the right thing for the right reason' – if we are trying to be loyal, caring, patient, selfless and so on with the aim of nurturing others and neglecting our own wishes, it is hardly arguable that this is for 'right reason' (Appiah, 2008, p. 56). To avoid falling into excessive behaviour and acting as overly selfless, overly courageous or overly generous we must act with the single aim of doing the right thing for the right reason. Sometimes this is not obvious, but through regular introspection and evaluating whether we are acting to do good or acting with a goal other than moral flourishing, it is achievable.

In addition to this, Conly fails to mention that 'every ethical virtue is a condition intermediate between two other states', a guideline which is enforced in VE to be preventative of excessive acts of virtue (Kraut, 2018). In her example of Maggie Tulliver from *The Mill on the Floss,* who damages her relations unintentionally through loyalty, honesty and sensitivity it would appear that virtues can become a slippery slope of excessiveness. By being too loyal, too honest and too sensitive, our attempts to be good can easily cause a negative outcome such as hurting those around us. However, this critique seems to be falsified by the concept of 'the golden mean', where we aim to strike a balance between deficiency and excess. Whilst courage may be a virtue, cowardice and arrogance are the vices which sit at opposing ends of the spectrum: 'Finding the mean in any given situation is not a mechanical or thoughtless procedure, but requires a full and detailed

acquaintance with the circumstances.' (Kraut, 2018). Whilst it may take some fine-tuning to acquire the mean virtue, it is possible that through practise in hospitable environments that we will find balance. This is also a major advantage of VE, for finding the mean virtue of each agent is much like a mechanical column scale: the mean courage for an agent will differ depending on the social situation of the agent in question. Every agent has a different understanding and a different scope of virtuousness. Therefore, it is arguable that Conly's claim that VE lures us into developing virtues detrimental to feminist flourishing is one that can be countered by seeking a medium between deficiency and excess.

Another critique of VE and its application in overcoming the Femininity Hurdle is that, contrary to claims made by MacIntyre, sport is not a hospitable environment for VE to be practised. The basis for this claim is that 'judgements made in sports contexts are characteristically egocentric' and those who make egocentric judgements are 'likely to make less mature moral judgements in other relevantly similar (but non-sporting) areas of their moral lives'[53] consequently stunting an agent's 'moral development in a broader sense' (Olivier, 2010, p. 1229). Building upon this, it is arguable that sports favours, if not glorifies, those who act egocentrically and ruthlessly in the pursuit of sporting success, putting aside virtuous acts in favour of whatever is necessary to bring about a win[54]. In an interview with the Times of India, South African cricketer AB de Villiers stated:

[53] Bredemeier, B., & Shields, D. L. (1984). Divergence in Moral Reasoning about Sport and Everyday Life, Sociology of Sport Journal, 1(4), 348-357: https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/ssj/1/4/article-p348.xml Accessed: 12/09/2019.

[54] A prominent example of this may be found demonstrated by stage eleven of the 2012 Tour de France where Chris Froome left Bradley Wiggins behind in pursuit of gaining time on the yellow jersey going directly against the team's plan of Wiggins winning the overall race. At this point in time, Froome was the *super-domestique* and Wiggins the team leader, therefore in leaving Wiggins he was actively defying the overall team goal and putting his desires of winning first (or so it is claimed). Barry Glendenning from The Guardian [online] described Froome's attack as 'sensational'. Source: https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/jul/12/tour-de-france-stage-11-live Accessed: 12/09/2019.

> I'm not a nice guy on the field. I want to win games. I'll do whatever it takes for us to win games of cricket…I'll try and [sic] intimidate a player if I have to…whatever it takes to win games of cricket. I've never really respected a guy who's been a 'nice guy' on the field…Off the field, I try to be a good human being and it's got nothing to do with cricket. I know my role in the side and that's to win games for my team. A lot of times I don't have to be a nice guy to do that (2015).

Sports is rife with examples of athletes who 'play dirty' to bring about victory. Often this involves bending the rules and sometimes cheating. If one considers the levels of doping by which professional cycling has been tainted as an example[55], it would seem that there are very few virtuous agents in the sport who act morally and avoid rule breaking via cheating, thus proving sport's inhospitality for the practise of VE. In a realm where victory is often seen as the most important outcome and anything will be done to achieve it moral flourishing is not a focal point, if at all considered. Because of the high stakes of victory it is possible that 'contextually induced stress' could impact athlete judgement in sport, which leads to 'less than adequate moral reasoning' (Olivier, 2010, p. 1229). This is highly problematic for the virtue ethicist as it would appear that sport has the potential to foster moral behaviour yet an equal potential to foster immoral behaviour.

6.3 – 'Mutualism' as a Virtuous Framework for Sports

It would so far appear that the application of VE as a theoretical solution to the Femininity Hurdle is not a strong response if sport promotes egocentricity and a ruthless win-at-all-costs attitude. It may even be suggested that in sport there is an abandonment of morality, thus implying

[55] This may be testified by ex-professional cyclist Paul Kimmage's autobiography, *Rough Ride (1990)*, which claims widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs in the field. A list of doping cases in professional cycling can be found here: http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/list_of_doping_cases_in_cycling Accessed: 12/09/2019.

that VE has no place in sport whatsoever. I will argue that this is not the case by turning my focus to Shawn Graves' paper 'Love Your Opponent as Yourself: A Christian Ethic for Sport' (2018). A caveat one must add before analysing this response is that although Graves promotes a Christian ethic of 'love thy neighbour as thy self', I will be understanding this application as the secular virtue of 'treating others how you wish to be treated'.

Graves suggests that a framework of mutualism can be used to prevent immorality and non-virtuous acts within sport whilst simultaneously promoting the flourishing of the athletic character (2018). The argument against the win-at-all-costs attitude which Graves presents states that a singular focus upon winning cultivates realism - the view that an agent is not bound by moral requirements in certain contexts (such as sport) when seeking to reach an overall aim or good (such as victory). He also states that a win-at-all-costs attitude leads to a relaxed attitude toward rule exploitation, violation and harm of opposition (2018, p. 55). It is possible that persons involved in sport believe that they ought to act solely out of concern for promoting the interests of the individual athlete, team, organization or franchise. Arguably, if realism in sport is true, then violence, discrimination and other methods of foul play are not immoral if they occur to bring about victory in sport. However, violence, discrimination and foul play are necessarily immoral and realism in sport is, therefore, false. Graves concludes that if realism in sport is false, one may suppose that morality governs behaviour within sports contexts (2018, p. 64).

If one accepts Graves' conclusion, it can be argued that when performing moral behaviour in sport we are seeking a good life 'where one experiences moral development, maturation' and 'transformation' as well as the ability to act freely in accordance of one's will (Graves, 2018, p. 57). Furthermore, athletes who try to practise moral behaviour whilst in sport may be looking to become greater athletes as a whole, finding flourishing regardless of an end-result so many seek (victory). It is possible to view moral flourishing and competition as contradictory terms, for the pursuit of victory will amount to another person's defeat, a seemingly selfish and

immoral consequence for the victor. However this is not necessarily the case, and in defeat we may find our path to flourishing: 'One can experience (among other things) transformation, reorientation, enlightenment, maturation and renewed motivation as a result of such frustration and loss.' (Graves, 2018, p. 62).

Seeking flourishing in both victory and defeat is necessary if we are to begin to overcome the Femininity Hurdle, for we must learn to abandon unchallenged immoral practises that occur in the name of victory. Graves argues that we need a 'coherent model of competition that retains both elements: seeking to defeat one's opponents and seeking to promote the flourishing of one's opponents' (2018, p. 62). This model is originally proposed by Simon, who suggests the following:

> Although it is true that sports have winners and losers, and that winning the game is the lusory goal, it does not follow that competition in athletics is a zero-sum game or that opponents must be regarded as mere obstacles to one's own success. Rather, opponents are necessary to create the challenge in the first place. In this view, athletic competition is at least partially cooperative; each participant consents to create a challenge for the opponent so that each can try to meet the challenge of sport in pursuit of excellence. Athletic competition, then, should be (and sometimes is) what we have called a mutual quest for excellence. (2014, p. 92)

Graves suggests that the above framework of 'mutualism' is a satisfactory response to the winning-at-all-costs attitude, therefore, engagement and participation with sport allows moral flourishing of those involved. Sport is therefore a hospitable environment for VE to be practised providing that we clamp down on ruthless and immoral behaviour that is committed in sport and has the aim of hurting others and benefitting oneself in terms of victory.

6.4 - Virtue Ethics and the Femininity Hurdle: Applications and Implications

Providing that a) realism in sports is false and b) mutualism is a satisfactory model of competition to prevent moral wrongdoings in sport, it would appear that we are ready to knock down the Femininity Hurdle. We have so far established that sport is a hospitable environment for VE to be practised and that homophobia, aestheticization, implicit bias and stereotyping are all immoral acts which occur within sport. We must therefore imagine what sport would be like if the Femininity Hurdle were to be demolished: women would no longer be treated as 'lesser' athletes in comparison to men and would be treated with equal respect; the female body would be understood as fundamentally different, not weaker; women would not be ridiculed for how they presented themselves, their sexual orientations, dispositions or mannerisms; spectators, commentators, the media and co-athletes would not hold biases or make assumptions on the basis of how they seem; women would not be renounced for choosing sport over marriage or childbearing. Being a sportswoman would be seen as a legitimate and strong position within society, equal to that of the sportsman. Sport would be a safe space for men and women to demonstrate gender equality, as well as other virtuous practices such as dedication, courage, honesty and humility. By playing in accordance with rules and acting in accordance with the virtues sought within a sports game we are able to practise these virtues until they become habituated and automatic. We must however examine each pillar of the Femininity Hurdle and how the application of VE can be of use in its deconstruction.

6.4.1 – Deconstructing Homophobia

Although the deconstruction of homophobia on a societal scale will take monumental efforts, I believe that it is possible to begin part of its deconstruction within the realm of sports. The prominence of openly gay athletes at elite level is increasing, thus their visibility and representation of

the LGBTQ+ community is too (Outsports.com, 2016, 2018). Studies also suggest that attitudes towards lesbianism are becoming more positive amongst younger people (Newman, 2007). What is arguably most important in sport is that homophobic attitudes and homophobic abuse is clamped down upon: slurs, physical violence, plus the implicit biases LGBTQ+ athletes face are first-hand deterrants preventing people engaging in sport. Because Western society is generally heteronormative, it is highly important that everyone has a safe space where their sexuality does not have to be questioned and they can excel alongside their fellow players.

The deconstruction of homophobia, as we have previously established in this thesis, thus relies on increasing visibility, clamping down on acts and attitudes of homophobia, and promoting a range of body types and aesthetics throughout sports to negate assumptions made about the body. Each of these issues are interlinked with one another so it is hard to tackle one without addressing the other, nor can we separate these issues to tackle them individually. We must abandon rule-following to seek the moral good, as the issue of homophobia (like the rest of the constraints of the Femininity Hurdle) is not only presented through gross displays of overt behaviour – verbal abuse, physical abuse, exclusionary behaviour and so on – it is manifested in the human subconscience at a level which we find harder to control (Wright Jr, et al., 1999; Holroyd, et al., 2017, p. 1; Cooley, et al., 2015). Though prescriptivity can help us calculate what is the right way to behave (i.e., I should not act in a homophobic manner as the end result will lead to immoral ends, or, the act of homophobia in itself is wrong as it is a hate crime) it does not always allow us to do what is *good* or address the deeper levels of homophobia which we may act upon. Prescriptive ethical theory addresses our external motivations, but not the simmering internal motivations which lie beneath: we can still *act* in an anti-homophobic manner towards others, yet homophobic beliefs and attitudes could still be harboured on a deeper level.

If we are to reject ethical theories which promote rule-following, it would appear that VE is a step in the right direction to address both how we

should act and the beliefs which we may or may not harbour subconsciously. To address increased visibility, clamping down on homophobic acts and attitudes and promoting varied and non-conformist body aesthetics, we must devise what virtues may help us overcome this pillar of the Femininity Hurdle. Although there are multiple virtues which one may choose to practise in order to tackle the identified objectives, I suggest that those engaging with and participating in sport focus on the Aristotelian virtues of friendship and justice. First we will explore the virtue of friendship. Reid writes the following description of the prominence of friendship as an Aristotelean virtue in sports:

> Friendship (philia) was perhaps the most characteristic Aristotelian virtue to be cultivated in gymnasia (Nicomachean Ethics 1172a5). Friendship in Aristotle refers not just to partnerships between like individuals, or even to the love within families; it is the glue that binds entire communities together… Aristotle's highest form of friendship is based upon excellence (arête) and it stands to reason that such virtue based friendships could develop in the course of mutual cultivation of excellence through athletic training. (2010, p. 190)

By practicing friendship as a virtue, we are inclined to treat others respectfully, kindly, and as how we would want to be treated, irrespective of sexuality or aesthetic. Perhaps if the virtue of friendship was more commonly practised, hateful behaviour would begin to decline amongst athletes and greater cohesion would form between them, whether they are on the same team or as opponents. Although I admit that it would be hard at first to practise friendship in a competitive sporting arena due to rivalry, if we have the mutualist competition framework in mind it is certainly achievable. If the virtue of friendship were to act as 'glue that binds entire communities together', it is more likely that we would see a united front against homophobia, rather than one that is divided and stifled. The virtue

of friendship would also provide an integral safe space for lesbian identity and companionship within sport, differing to the hostility which is faced outside of sport in cultures less accepting of anything beyond heterosexuality: for women, 'sport [provides] a point of entry into lesbian culture.' (Cahn, 1993, p. 357). Although homophobia in sport is still prevalent, especially towards male homosexuals (Kian and Anderson, 2009), if the virtue of friendship was more readily practised over adversarialism I theorise that not only would homophobic behaviour decrease but anti-homophobic, anti-heteronormative atittudes could be habituated and automatized by those enagaging and participating in sport. Once the homophobic behaviour decreases and the safety of LGBTQ+ members increases, then their visibility will be able to increase as those members will not fear how they are treated, nor the beliefs that people hold against them. We are a long way off from this eventuality, but I believe this is supportive of where we should start.

I will argue that the second virtue upon which we must focus is justice. I will refer to justice as the understanding of equality and fairness which is practised by adhering to rules and treating one another as equals. On the virtue of justice, Reid writes

> Athletic games would seem to promote the virtue of justice first of all by teaching competitors to treat one another as equals when it is appropriate to do so, as it is, say, on the starting-line of a race (Nicomachean Ethics 1131a23–25). Athletes desiring an inappropriate advantage would be guilty of the vice of overreaching (pleonexia), which Aristotle describes as desiring more than one's due share (Nicomachean Ethics 1130a20–23). Sport also demands that competitors subject themselves to the rules, which correspond to a community's laws. (2010, p. 190)

Once again we see that the practise of justice and being just allows those to practise treating one another as equals, and this is frequently practised in

multiple sports: it is made sure that no rower on the start line has their bows in front of another, no cyclist in the Tour de France has illegal kit, false starts in athletics are penalised and so on. Athletes all agree to adhere to these rules to bring about a level of fairness so that the best person wins. It is something which needs to be adopted more by athletes in their attitudes towards their fellow competitors. Discrimination aimed towards one's opponent is no less serious than a swimmer using a banned swimsuit which their competitors do not have, regardless of whether it is a binding rule. Despite this fact, it perhaps calls for governing bodies to take homophobia more seriously in its prevention in competition by athletes and coaches alike to promote sport as a safe space. This zero-tolerance attitude should be adopted by other involved outlets too, such as the media, to minimize the expanse of homophobia in sport.

Not only can the practice of justice as a virtue be used to tackle homophobic discrimination and to clamp-down on homophobic behaviours, justice can be enforced as a virtue in negating assumptions made about the female body. Despite a great amount of social conditioning forming our perceptions of what the female athletic body should look like (and how we imagine the lesbian body presents itself) we can begin deconstructing myths of femininity, sexuality and the athletic body by introducing the implementation intention 'If I perceive a body that is to me of the lesbian athletic stereotype, I will practise my understanding of justice and remind myself that sexuality does not dictate aesthetic and vice versa'. Like Rees highlights, 'no momentary act of will can eradicate implicit bias' and this stereotyping is what is formative of our assumptions surrounding the female athletic body (2016, p. 197). However, we need a hospitable environment to practise these implementation intentions surrounding justice. By practicing sports and acknowledging the range of bodies which women use as tools for their sport, we will more likely be able to have our assumptions triggered, allowing us to respond with such implementation intentions (Drescher, 2015). The eventual effect would be an elimination of biases and

stereotypes surrounding the female body and a greater understanding of the female body as a tool rather than a sexual stereotype.

6.4.2 – Deconstructing Aestheticization

Leading on from the deconstruction of homophobia in sport via VE is the proposed deconstruction of aestheticization in sport. Aestheticization is a prominent feature of the Femininity Hurdle which hinders female progress in sport, leading to unwanted and harmful stereotypes and fetishization of the female athlete. Therefore, we must look towards how we can minimize aestheticization whilst retaining the female athlete's ability to choose how she presents herself.

Arguably, the deconstruction of aestheticization lies in our deconstruction of homophobia towards lesbians and other members of the LGBTQ+ community. The basis for aestheticization is often due to implicit and explicit attitudes towards homosexuality: in fear of being categorised as gay, which for many years has been a taboo, women have either actively or implicitly chosen to steer clear of 'looking like a gay'. The consequent conditioning of the female body to retain feminine qualities originally concocted by patriarchal societies has led to those who do not and cannot embody traditional femininity to be seen as oddities, undesirable and not real women. Female athletes commonly fall into this unfavourable category, however there is evidence for female athletes who use a 'female athletic aesthetic' as a survival mechanism as previously discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 . Those who passively or actively reject hegemonic heterosexuality are considered as extremists or defective, and previously those who identified as homosexual were considered mentally ill (Drescher, 2015, pp. 565-566). It is for this reason we need greater LGBTQ+ visibility in sport and heightened awareness of female body types in sports.

Women of the LGBTQ+ community may not actively choose their sexual orientation, however they may choose to associate with lesbian culture found within the LGBTQ+ community. It is theorised that 'Sport

provide[s] social and psychic space for some lesbians to validate themselves and to build a collective culture' therefore those who associate as both lesbians and as athletes are 'not only a figure of discourse but a living product of women's sexual struggle and cultural innovation' (Cahn, 1993, p. 344). Women who thus associate with this culture are actively contrasting the perceived ideals which aestheticization so heavily enforces. The successes of lesbian athletes such as Megan Rapinoe, Billie Jean King and Helen Richardson-Walsh directly defy the social conditioning that lesbians have a strict aesthetic and that female athletes must embody traditional femininity. To make this collective culture a safer social and psychological space for women of all appearances, sexualities and body types it is paramount that the tackling of homophobia and an elimination of biases and stereotypes are approached through a VE response, emphasising the virtues of friendship and justice.

A further virtue which we may look to adopt in our quest of deconstructing aestheticization is open-mindedness. Though not a strict Aristotelean virtue, open-mindedness is the quality where one aims to avoid initial prejudices so that the agent in question can develop willingness to understand concepts which they would usually have a bias towards or against. This is a vital virtue if we are to begin overcoming aestheticization, for the social conditioning of patriarchal norms and the concept of the lesser athlete still prevail. Due to the nature of society being somewhat unchanged, moral agents have to become the change by becoming more open-minded. In being the change we should be more nurturing teachers, more inquisitive pupils, and more of a sisterhood. We should not tear other women down for their differences. Rather, we should be supportive and praise the diversity which we would normally be biased towards. A recent report showed that in Australia successful high school female athletes were all victims of 'tall poppy syndrome' whereby successful individuals are targeted by less successful individuals in an attempt to normalize them by bullying (O'Neill et al., 2013). The reports showed that 'All 12 female participants responded that they were bullied at school' and 'One former

swimming athlete mentioned being called the derogatory term “the rig” by most of the students at her school. Yet male participants did not disclose any bullying’ (O'Neill et al., 2013, pp. 215-220). Interestingly, the report suggested that a possible reason for the gender divide on bullying was that female athletes exhibited less self esteem than the male athletes, therefore girls were an easy target ‘irrespective of physique or reputation’ (O'Neill et al., 2013, p. 220). It is certainly arguable that due to the aestheticization which female athletes face once they enter the practice of sport self-esteem is ultimately lowered. No matter how they present themselves physically, the aesthetic which they must strive to embody for acceptance leads women to be harassed, fetishized and ridiculed. As a result, we must begin to practise open-mindedness as individuals and as a collective. By becoming the change we are promoting both a top-down and bottom-up system of nurture: we must not only stand up for others, but stand up for ourselves. In doing so, we will begin to have greater understandings that athletes do not have rigid aesthetics which they must adhere to to validate themselves as a sportsperson. I believe that this calls for further female self-empowerment, for a self-empowered female is more likely to break free of such contructs and in doing so as a virtuous agent help others to break free, too.

6.4.3 – Eliminating Implicit Biases and Stereotyping

Finally I will turn to the elimination of implicit biases caused by stereotypes. In Chapter 5 I hypothesized that implicit biases and stereotypes form the final pillar of the Femininity Hurdle. This pillar significantly contributes to, and strengthens, the previous two pillars of homophobia and aestheticization. As previously discussed in this thesis it was highlighted that there are multiple harmful stereotypes which surround females and female athletes, all of which contribute to the problem of the female as a lesser athlete. Rees offers a recommendation to begin deconstructions of

stereotypes and implicit biases, this being a VE response within hospitable environments. Rees concludes the following:

> Community support for egalitarianism is, therefore, essential for the development and maintenance of egalitarian virtue not because there is nothing which would count as virtue in a prejudiced social environment, but because the human cognitive processing system is designed to automatically adapt our responses to whatever social environment we happen to inhabit. Communities and institutions which themselves embody egalitarian values, and which encourage more individuals to adopt egalitarian goals, are therefore crucial. (2016, p. 210).

Rees refers to the practicing of VE as a social phenomenon, something which requires socialisation, teamwork, interaction and so on. It would appear that her conclusion is pointing to realms such as sport where such social activity is required not only within the athletes' team networks, but also on greater scales such as competition. Sports practice and competitions require a high level of commitment to the concept of athleticism which we analysed in section 2.1 as the refined physical and mental excellence of a being. We may deduce from this concept that to be considered an athlete and adhering to the concept of athleticism requires that the agent cultivates virtues via practise and habituation as individuals beyond the sport and as part of a social collective within sports. It is at this point that we recognise agents as athletes and furthermore virtuous, honourable beings.

Like Rees emphasises, community support is 'essential' for the moral development of agents to become athletes. Thus if we are to begin breaking down stereotypes and implicit biases we need to begin to create a sports culture which is more hospitable, open and equal. By clamping down on homophobia, preventing aestheticization and consequently promoting female empowerment in sport we can begin to prevent the formation of harmful stereotypes and the endorsement of myths which have been

perpetuated in society. Although this can be tackled in more than the few ways I have suggested, I am supportive of methods such as implementation intentions, in favour of which Rees argues, as it is crucial that not only are explicit beliefs tackled but also the implicit biases which we adopt from our social conditioning too. By enforcing specific behavioural plans in sporting codes we will begin to neutralize these implicit biases, potentially ending homophobia, aestheticization and overall female sexist oppression that women face in sport.

6.5 – Sport as a Sphere of Influence

If those who govern, engage and participate in sport begin enforcing specific behavioural plans in sports codes with the aim of ending immoral practices which occur within sports, it is wholly possible that these specific behavioural plans can be enforced beyond sport too. I argue that this is because sport is a sphere of influence. In 1984, sports philosopher Peter J. Arnold suggested that 'In and through the practice of sport a person can become more secure in his conviction that his conception of what constitutes the good life is suitable and his plan for living it is worth carrying out…a person tends to be more confident of [his] value when what abilities [he has] are developed and realised and organised in ways which offer both complexity and refinement.' (1984, p. 280). This sentiment is also supported by Olivier, who states 'if it is correct that virtue, once acquired in a sporting context, can be applied to other spheres of life, then the potential for further net gains of happiness clearly exists' (2010, p. 1231). In the 2019 TIME 100 list of most influential people athletes such as Caster Semenya, Naomi Osaka, Alex Morgan, LeBron James, Tiger Woods and Mohamed Salah were listed alongside Jacinda Arden, Michelle Obama, Mark Zuckerberg and others iconised as pioneers, artists and titans (TIME 100, 2019). In market research conducted by Bush et al. it was found that in a sample of Generation Y teenagers females were more likely to be influenced by adverts featuring athletes (2004, p. 115). This is highly supportive of the

claim that the sphere of sports is highly influential to those engage as spectators or participants. I propose the following argument:

> i) Some agents seek moral virtuous guidance by looking to agents which society considers honourable
>
> ii) Athletes are often considered honourable and virtuous agents
>
> C) Agents can seek moral virtuous guidance from athletes which society considers honourable

Therefore it may be proposed that athletes who exemplify virtuousness are influential, thus demonstrating how one should act in the pursuit of moral (and physical) excellence. The only problem by which one may refute the above argument is that those who are more easily influenced and lack rationality (such as children and teenagers) may try to embody qualities of athletes who are wrongly glorified for their immoral acts that are falsely categorised as necessary athletic egocentricity. However, I believe that this calls for the need to introduce mutualist sports frameworks more readily, as well as clamping down on immoral behaviour in sports. This may also call for the practicing of sports-specific virtues such as heroism or 'heroic eudaimonia' which Franco *et al.* define as 'an evolutionary process of growth, personal and social evolution, and phronetic wisdom and praxis, ultimately leading to expression of personal perfection in moments of complexity and crisis.' (2016, p. 346). Athletes who are considered heroes are not glorified for their egocentricity or immoral behaviour; rather, they are seen as heroes for their ability to rise to a challenge regardless of the odds, climbing their way to the top whilst maintaining humility, and making a difference by doing good on and off the pitch. Examples of modern sports

heroes may include Wilma Rudolph[56] or Megan Rapinoe[57]. By focussing on heroics as a virtue, we can avoid glorification of egocentric and immoral acts athletes may commit.

If sport is as influential as the TIMES 100 list suggests, I believe that the above argument is strong evidence that the Femininity Hurdle needs to be deconstructed. Arguably, persons of all ages and genders can have empirical evidence that women are equal athletes to men. We need to view women in an ethical way. The hurdle which blocks women from the sphere of sports does not only hinder progression of gender equality but it also leads us to compare women to an 'ubiquitous' beauty ideal which blocks us from seeing women in a correct and moral way (Widdows, 2018, p. 57). This must begin by tackling constructions and inequalities within so that sport can positively influence moral development beyond the realm of the physical, rather than tainting our path to flourishing and reinforcing the Femininity Hurdle.

[56] Rudolph overcame polio which had caused infantile paralysis as a child, yet went on to win 3 Olympic golds at the 1960 Olympics in Rome being the first American woman to do so in track and field. Rudolph was considered a hero not only for her achievements but her combatting of racial stereotypes in athletics. She also set up the Wilma Rudolph Foundation to support athletes. Source: https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cardiff/reader.action?docID=2007809 Accessed: 01/06/2020.

[57] Rapinoe is known as a hero for her sporting achievements, her activism and her philanthropy. There are some critics of Rapinoe on the basis that she is 'petulant' and 'egotistical' – however, it has also been suggested that her critics are polarised by Rapinoe due to 'double standards'. Source: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-48969342 Accessed: 01/06/2020.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have followed three themes to examine the manifestation of female sexist oppression in sport and how it may help us in overcoming sexism on a larger social scale. The first theme I examined were the *origins* of female sexist oppression in sport, discussing why and how the myths surrounding the female sex began and how they have perpetuated themselves in a 21st century Western society. In analysing the *problems* of female sexist oppression in sport I employed the term 'Femininity Hurdle' to denote the collection of constraints which females, and especially female athletes, face in the realm of sport. This discussion progressed to look at a prominent problem today, stereotypes and implicit biases, and how these contributed to the seemingly impenetrableness and *persistence* of the Femininity Hurdle. Then, I explored possible solutions to the Femininity Hurdle and how they may also contribute to progress in relation to gender equality on a larger scale beyond sport via the application of eudaemonist Virtue Ethics. Through this analysis of the origins, problems, and the potential responses to female sexist oppression within sport I have been able to provide a theory of how to begin to tackle gender inequality in sports and beyond.

In Chapter 1, I address Beauvoir's overarching analysis of woman's situation. Beauvoir argues that women perceive *themselves* as the inferior sex and the notion that women are 'lesser' than men is internal and external, contributing to the lack of visibility of female athletes which we are still struggling with today. I then explore the myths of ownership, indebtedness, the female body and virginity which reinforce the view of women as 'lesser' instead of different. In the durability of these myths within the patriarchal psyche, I suggest in Chapter 2 that sport should evolve by removing dress codes which enforce heterosexual femininity (commonly found in tennis, netball, volleyball and lacrosse), by rejecting immoral preservationism, and continuing to focus on the visibility of female athletes. Additionally, sport sponsors at higher levels such as Nike, Adidas, Müller and Lucozade, to name

a few, should promote the message of diversity in their clothing for they are partly responsible for the image of elite sportswomen viewed on the global platform today. It is evident that myths still leak into our rational expectations of what it means to be a woman. However, the dismantling of these myths is easily achieved through personal responsibility and possibly corporate responsibility.

Chapter 3 explores femininity and its constructed incompatibility with sport. Beginning with the initial examination of the mutual exclusivity of femininity and sport, I turn my attention to the historical practices of females in sport and its association with the female as inferior in both mind and body. The problem of female physical and mental inequality still presides. Sponsorship for many female athletes remains an issue. It was only until recently (May 2019) that Nike began to protect the female athletes who wanted to have children during their career, stating 'We want to make it clear today that we support women as they decide how to be both great mothers and great athletes. We recognize we can do more and that there is an important opportunity for the sports industry to evolve to support female athletes.' (Nike Inc., 2019). If these changes are only being made in the past few months at an elite level, one may counter that women are forced to fetishize themselves as the price for continuing a successful career. This evokes pressing questions as to whether corporate responsibility or personal responsibility is more important in the deconstruction of fetishization. I am inclined to argue that it is the latter, for Nike's change of policy is largely attributed to the campaigning of Alysia Montaño, Kara Goucher, Phoebe Wright and Allyson Felix (Draper, 2019). It would appear that corporations reinforce the sexualisation of female athletes through monetary constraints. Whether female fetishization is also consciously contributed to by the individuals is perhaps a question for another philosophical or sociological investigation. The moral cost of presenting female athletes as more sexual than competitive, however, seems clearer and calls for greater precautions to prevent women seeking validation through demeaning aestheticization. True physical equality is achieved

when a woman's body's worth is the same as a man's and power, strength, endurance, and the ability to push physical boundaries are celebrated over a woman's capability of eliciting sexual desire. By challenging physical equality we are chasing the overall end-goal of not only making the male sex recognise female physical potential but also empowering females to push their bodies beyond social expectations. Only when both sexes come to the same conclusion that the female body is just as capable as the male body in sports will society be able to move forward on pursuing gender equality.

Also in Chapter 3 I explore Young's theory of feminine embodiment as a distinct phenomenology which suggests that the modulated motility of the female body is due to the women's social conditioning and their consequent understanding of themselves as fragile and incapable. Again, this calls for the need for female physical empowerment to overcome female sexist oppression within sport and beyond sport. The theory provides compelling explanations of why women are unable to move freely and are henceforth considered inferior to the male sex. However, Chisholm shows that some women have managed to escape female bodily comportment due to sport. Chisholm thus provides a strong argument in favour of elite athletes being examples for those who are still trying to break feminine bodily comportment, enforcing the need to promote a top-down approach in sport regarding visibility, exemplification and virtuous practice. When we see female athletes in the media pushing physical boundaries we are presented with empirical evidence that the female sex is only temporarily handicapped or the handicap is illusionary. We must therefore promote the diversity of the body and its potential, diverting attention away from sexual ideals and emphasising physical and virtuous excellence that is caused by engaging with sport. I believe it is the latter which we have lacked in previous ethical theories of feminist sport, hence why this thesis is of great importance in moving forward towards recognising the female as an equal athlete.

In Chapter 4 I discuss the Femininity Hurdle in greater depth by analysing the supporting pillars of aesthetics and homophobia. Although aestheticization of the female body is not limited to the two broad

categorisations which I discuss, I argue that the *feminine athlete aesthetic* and the *lesbian athlete aesthetic* significantly contribute to female objectification. These categorisations are, to knowledge, new and they are helpful in terms of highlighting that some female athletes conform to the *feminine athlete aesthetic* to avoid ridicule and homophobic discrimination and this is highly detrimental. Although aesthetic is not always an active choice it has certainly contributed to a bifurcation of female body aesthetics. In doing this, females may not only contribute to objectification of the female body but also homophobia towards females who present themselves in a certain way and associate with the gay community. This presents a strong reason to look closer at how the Femininity Hurdle can be deconstructed in terms of homophobia as this perpetuation of discrimination hinders feminist movements in sport as a whole. Additionally, this thesis calls for a greater focus on functional beauty – in essence, the appreciation of what the body can accomplish in terms of utility – and in doing so we avoid immoral fetishization and aestheticization via objectification of the female body. A further revelation that this dissertation uncovers is that lesbian visibility is paramount to the feminist movement as well as the varying body types which are presented by women of different backgrounds, ethnicities, sporting disciplines and sexualities. With the input of philosophers such as Cahn and Lenskyj it is theorised that lesbianism in sports challenges us to redefine how we expect females to present themselves as athletes in sport, physically and mentally. Diversity and visibility are thus discovered as key factors needed to overcome female sexist oppression.

Leading on from this I examine the third pillar of the Femininity Hurdle: implicit biases and stereotypes. The true extent of implicit bias, I suggest, goes far beyond the athletes perception of themselves but also spreads to those who engage with sport such as coaches, spectators and commentators. This shows that sexism is not a single faceted issue. Rather, sexism presents itself more as a tangled web and affects everyone in both subtle and non-subtle ways. Considering how great a part of society and

culture sport is, it would not be too far a stretch to claim that sexism in sport affects a vast number of those in Western society - it is a past time, a hobby, entertainment and also considered a mandatory part of childhood education. Chapter 5 shows that the issue of sexism in sport is not a localised issue but one which must be addressed as a universal sphere of influence. Stereotypes which are formed about female athletes are rarely positive ones and are often polarised and outdated. Those which are positive, however, have the potential to begin a change of attitudes surrounding female athletes. It is proposed that there is a strong possibility that women may steer clear of sporting pursuits due to the negative associations that sport is not for women, moreover that it is not desirable to pursue sports as it is associated with butch, gay women and is unfavourable in a heteronormative society. This calls for an ethical theory which eliminates stereotypes and consequent implicit biases in pursuit of overcoming the Femininity Hurdle collectively.

Chapter 6 explores how we can overcome the Femininity Hurdle via an ethical theory. I propose that a eudaemonist Virtue Ethics (VE) is the best way forward on the basis that it promotes doing what is good over what is right (for the right reasons) as well as neutralizing implicit biases via implementation intentions. Unlike many other theories which I have analysed over the course of this essay, I have provided a response which links the three components of feminist philosophy, sports philosophy and VE. The secondary focus upon VE until recently may be why the three have not been linked before. As far as I am aware, there are no current theorisations that VE can be applied to a feminist philosophy of sports. I believe that this application is most effective as it tackles not only female sexist oppression as a whole, but importantly targets the physical inequality women are subject to which anchors misogynist perceptions. By presenting society with empirical evidence that women can be athletes of equal merit we are removing the very foundations of sexist opinions regarding the female body and mind. This also calls for, I believe, greater research into the implicit biases within sports and whether certain sports manifest implicit

biases differently to others. I imagine the research would be fruitful, for sports cultures vary within depending on external social influence and sport origins.

What has also been an unexpected turn of events in this dissertation was the uncovering of how prominently homophobia contributed to the Femininity Hurdle. Gender studies and queer theory have often circulated the topic of sport in relation to masculinity, power, violence and so on. However, with the exception of inputs from Cahn and Lenskyj, this dissertation shows revelations as to how impactful homophobic discrimination is on the feminist movement within sport. Visibility of those who associate as members of the LGBTQ+ community in sport has been vastly overlooked and continued investigation of how it relates to sports feminism is of great importance. In an era where female athletes appear on our television screens more than ever before, we are exposed to the discrimination which female athletes face at an increasingly intimate level. One of the most disputed current debates in sports and gender studies is that of Caster Semenya, and, though I will not comment on her eligibility to race as a woman, I will highlight that she has been subject to constant and alarming discrimination on the basis of her race, sexuality and aesthetic. Though modern Western society considers itself to be in more prosperous times of equality there is still evident rigidity on how we perceive the female body and a seemingly indestructible foundation of heteronormativity. Though sport is supposed to abandon cultural presuppositions, politics, and hierarchies it finds itself in the midst of scandals surrounding homophobia and gender politics. Perhaps this is inevitable, for influence on social practices such as sport is possibly transactional with the societies which surround and engage with it.

The most important implications of the philosophical investigation I have conducted is that women are still far from gaining gender equality. Although statistics show that we are on an upward climb towards greater female representation in many realms of society, it is evident that attitudes towards the merit of female athletes is lagging comparatively speaking. A

safe space for women to be totally, unquestionably equal is required. Whilst society at large will take many years to address this need to change, sport is ontologically peculiar for it 'stands in the space between representation and reality' (Edgar, 2013, p. 170). The rules that are governed by sporting bodies, the games which are played, the competitors themselves are under great scrutiny to change sexist attitudes. This dissertation provides additional pressure in hope that sport can embody gender parity within the coming years so long as the Femininity Hurdle is deconstructed.

A possible discussion which may arise in response to this thesis is that despite sport (and consequently society) benefitting from the implementation of VE, to some VE may not contribute to the game whatsoever. For the purpose of entertainment, we take some sort of interest or even enjoyment when we see sportspersons bend the rules, act egotistically and win at all costs irrespective of doing what is right. Some may even further argue that without morally questionable acts sport would simply be dull, failing to capture the eye of the spectators and the passion of the competitors. How should this be responded to? The possible answers are simple: firstly, we must introspect and understand why we enjoy watching immoral occurrences in sport. Other than the dramatic story line it may present, we may find that by indulging in the glorification of egoism and winner-takes-all heroics we are supporting injustice, a vice which we should try to avoid. Secondly, we should consider whether acting virtuously in sport makes the sport better as a social practice. This thesis has argued heavily that society benefits greatly from a VE approach to overcoming sexism. However, it is also possible that the game itself can benefit from a VE approach. I suggest this on the basis that in order to enjoy a social practice we look for certain traits; self-improvement, improved physical and mental wellbeing. We want to be treated equally and fairly. Regardless of whether we are competing, spectating, supporting, if we enjoy the game we enjoy it both as a lower, physical pleasure of corporeal improvement and as a higher, intellectual pleasure as we become more mentally astute. Perhaps if VE were implemented more readily it would be interesting to research

whether the mental well-beings of competitors improved in virtue-centric environments compared to those in rule-centric environments. To summarise my viewpoint, I am strongly inclined to argue VE not only betters sport and wider society, but the game itself.

Beauvoir wrote 'To be a complete individual, equal to man, woman has to have access to the male world as man does to the female one' (2011, p. 714). Though many of us live in a modern, Western society the fact remains that sport is a man's world, dominated by male athletes with greater media presence, greater salaries and a status as superior athletes. Yet, most importantly, though the triumphs of feminists before, women have *access* to sport thus they hold the key to achieving gender equality in such a realm. The expansion of effort in overcoming female sexist oppression on a greater scale is hinged upon our seeking of virtue, its habituation and automatization. Women are equally responsible as men in this plight for gender equality in and beyond sports. As individuals and as a collective we may be able to change the course of female sexist oppression with philosophical acquisition and betterment, and sport can be the place to start.

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