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MEDIA, SPORT, AND SEXUALITY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this chapter, students will be able to . . .

- Recognize sexualized language and imagery in mass media
- Understand the impact sexualized media has on adolescents and children
- Describe representations of gays, lesbians, and transgender people in media
- Identify the various ways sexuality intersects with sport and sport media
- Explain the myriad manifestations of masculinity in sports
- Describe the ways women's sports opportunities have been limited
- Identify issues intersex and transgender athletes face in the sports world

Few events capture the intersection of gender, sexuality, media, and sport more fully than the 2015 public transition of Olympic gold medalist Bruce Jenner into Caitlyn Jenner. The media campaign surrounding the entire process captivated American audiences and generated landmark levels of public awareness on what it means to be transgender. In April 2015, Caitlyn Jenner, drew 17 million viewers when she spoke about her transition to becoming a woman in an ABC national television news interview with Diane Sawyer. It was a two-hour "20/20" interview, in which she intimately recalls the first time she wore a dress as an 8-year-old boy, her first attempt to transition in the 1980s with female hormones, and her fear of hurting her kids with the truth of her hidden gender identity.

Caitlyn Jenner has been a public figure her entire career. In the 1976 Olympics, as Bruce Jenner, she won a gold medal in the decathlon, which carries with it the title of "world's greatest athlete." At this time in Jenner's life, she represented the embodiment of the ideal

American masculine man. She had chiseled muscles, shaggy hair, and sexual appeal. Then in 2007, while still known as Bruce Jenner, she appeared alongside her then wife, Kris Jenner, in the reality television series, *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. The show explored the Kardashian-Jenner family dynamics, became wildly popular, and both families became household names. With this level of media attention and visibility, it is not a surprise that, in 2014, Caitlyn hired publicist Alan Nierob to orchestrate a successful public transition story, creating a historic moment in transgender politics (Bernstein 2015).

In July 2015, just a few short months after her nationally broadcast ABC interview, she revealed her new female identity as Caitlyn Jenner on the cover of *Vanity Fair* (Bissinger 2015; Griggs 2015). She wore a cleavage boosting corset and, seated in a sultry pose, she represented the embodiment of ideal femininity. Within weeks, she was awarded the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at ESPN's ESPYs in Los Angeles. And, in that same month, July 2015, E! Network launched the documentary series, *I am Cait*, which chronicles Caitlyn Jenner's life after gender transition.

In this chapter, we begin our analysis of the ways sexuality intersects with various social institutions; the ways sexuality is policed, constrained, and shaped by institutions; and, in turn, the ways those institutions shape sexuality. Here we explore media, sport, and sexuality; and in the following chapters, we extend our institutional analysis to include the workplace, schools, family, and religion. In recent decades, the media and sports worlds have witnessed dramatic changes in terms of LGBTQ representation, with mass media leading



Upon winning the gold medal in the 1976 Olympics in the decathlon, Bruce Jenner was deemed the "World's Greatest Athlete."
Source: AP Photo.



In 2015, Bruce Jenner became Caitlyn Jenner and instantly became one of the world's most famous transgender people.

Source: AP Photo/Charles Sykes.

the change, and the sporting world being much slower to respond to the increasing cultural acceptance of homosexuality and gender nonconformity. These institutions intersect in the form of *sports media*, a term that recognizes that sport is mediated by the media; beyond bringing sports to the audience, the idea of sports media implies that the media frames sports in particular ways for the audience. This is certainly true with respect to gender and sexuality, as this chapter will show.

We begin this chapter with an exploration of sexuality and media, commencing with a fundamental aspect of media: language. From there we explore imagery in media and how this contributes to the hypersexualization and the sexual objectification of bodies. The impact of sexualized media on children and adolescents and representations of LGBTQ in television and film is further explored. We then shift gears to explore the ways sport, gender, and sexuality are framed by the sports media; the heteronormativity of the sports world; and the ways masculinity and femininity play out in men's and women's sports, stigmatizing LGBTQ athletes. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the role of Title IX in expanding sporting opportunities for women, the gradual opening of the athletic closet, the emergence of the Gay Games, and the challenges surrounding the incorporation of intersex and transgender athletes into a gender-segregated sporting world. Current examples of the intersection of sexuality with the institutions of media and sport include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011), a book exploring the erotic story of the world of bondage-discipline-sadomasochism (BDSM), sold more than 100 million copies in the first three years, and then was released as a movie, which grossed over \$550 million in its first three months (Child 2015).
- In 2014, Amazon released its television Original Series, *Transparent*, about a middle-aged father transitioning into a woman. In 2015, it won Golden Globe's award for best TV series, and it reveals how transgender issues have become more mainstream.

- In May 2015, American television personality and conservative activist Josh Duggar publicly admitted on Facebook to molesting five underage girls, and to infidelity and pornography addiction. The sex scandal led to the cancellation of his family's TLC reality television series, *19 Kids and Counting*, and his resignation from the Family Research Council, a lobbying group that works against LGBTQ rights, divorce, and porn.
- When the United States Women's National Soccer Team won the World Cup in July 2015, team captain Abby Wambach garnered positive media attention when she ran toward the stands and embraced her wife with a hug and a kiss, a public display of same-sex affection that until recently has rarely been celebrated outside of specifically designated "gay" spaces.
- In August 2015, the first openly gay baseball player, rookie David Denson of the Milwaukee Brewers minor league team, was recognized. Other male professional athletes have waited until their professional sports careers were over to come out.

MEDIA AND SEXUALITY

Media is essentially a term for mass means of communication. Media comes in many forms in today's world, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, direct mail, and Internet. Media communication serves a variety of purposes, from local to international news, entertainment, education, advertising, artistic expression, promotional messages, and more. Mass media is woven into our daily lives in a multitude of ways and is a pervasive and powerful tool for reinforcing and shaping social and cultural norms. Sex and sexuality have become primary themes in mass media. Sex scandals involving politicians, celebrities, and public figures are widely covered by news sources. Entertainment media such as television, film, and video are inundated with sexual imagery and storylines revolving around sexual interactions. Even the sexual accounts and inquiries of everyday people can be commonly found in sex advice columns and radio shows.

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms and is an essential skill in the twenty-first century. Media literacy helps us understand the role of media in society and how it informs our views of sex and sexuality. In order to analyze and evaluate how media constructs sexuality, it is important to recognize some key principles: audiences negotiate meaning; media is constructed to represent people, places, and events; media contains ideological and value messages; media has commercial implications; and each medium has a unique aesthetic form (Ontario Ministry of Education 1989). In other words, media does not influence all people in the same way; interpretations vary. Media consumption is a negotiated process; we do not simply digest media messages uncritically. Sometimes we reject the message, sometimes we internalize it.

To have commercial implications means that in many cases, media is advertising a product or is supported by advertisers. Media is a dynamic and complex set of genres with a wide variety of messages and values about sex and sexuality. The first two broad forms of sexualized media communication we will analyze are language and imagery.

Sexualized Language in Media

Social constructionist theory views language as a crucial component to understanding reality (Berger and Luckmann 1991). The words we use to define ourselves, others, and the world around us not only organize social life, but shape it too. For instance, as discussed in Chapter Three, language is gendered. Most languages rely on binary

gendered pronouns to define people as either male or female, feminine or masculine, boy or girl. Just as language is gendered, it can also be sexualized. Sexualized language can include words that describe and evoke the practice of sexual intercourse, words and labels that define sexual norms, and terms to refer to individuals and groups of people outside the heteronormative sexual mainstream. Popular, mainstream media in the United States uses sexualized language to reinforce and shape cultural assumptions and norms surrounding sexual behaviors.

In Western culture, a wide variety of constantly changing terms are used to describe the practice of sexual intercourse. Most terms for “having sex” imply multiple meanings that make sense in the culture and context in which they are spoken. For example, to “make love,” or “to sleep with” implies an intimate relationship between two people. Formal medical terms like “copulation,” “coitus,” or “mating” are more ambiguous, in that they acknowledge the physical act but provide no clue as to the level of intimacy involved. Other words to describe sex include being “passionate,” “intimate,” “physical,” or even “sensual.” Informal terms, or slang words, include “hooking up,” “hitting that,” or “getting it on.” The language media use to frame sexuality reinforces social norms about sex and sexuality. For instance, common sources of information on sexual intercourse are women’s and men’s lifestyle magazines, which routinely feature stories focused on how to have “great sex.” This helps create a common understanding as to what constitutes “great sex,” which as we will see in our discussion of disability and sexuality in Chapter Ten, can actually be limiting.

Research on “great sex” editorial advice in popular women’s and men’s magazines reveals that the content is often presented in ways that promote sexual- and gender-role stereotypes, narrow sexual scripts, and contradictory and conflicting messages about sex (Menard and Kleinplatz 2008). For example, generalizations concerning sexual preferences, desires, and fantasies are gender-stereotyped: men aggressively pursue sex, and women desire sex only in accompaniment with romance. Often readers are advised on how to kiss and caress partners, which positions are the best, and how to perform oral sex—all based on heteronormative sexual scripts (Menard and Kleinplatz 2008). Further, often the language used in sex advice media sources describes sex as risk-free. In other words, sexually transmitted diseases, risk of pregnancy, and sexual violence are often not included in the discussions of “great sex” (see Chapters Nine and Ten).

How much do popular magazines actually shape people’s sexual behavior and practices or how they think about sex? This is difficult to decipher. Studies do suggest both adult and adolescent sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors correlate with magazine consumption (Brown 2002; Kim and Ward 2004; Pierce 1993). For example, associations between magazine use and sexual attitudes were explored among 205 female college students. Those who frequently read teen-focused magazines such as *Seventeen* were more likely to endorse stereotypical views of the male sexual stereotype, specifically, the view that men are driven by sexual urges and are fearful of commitment (Kim and Ward 2004).

Just as media promotes and supports language used to describe the practice of sex, it also plays a role in describing what constitutes sexual abuse, assault, and violence. Extensive research has been undertaken to explore the role of language in news media in shaping our perceptions of reality and facts, perceptions of risk, and even how we interpret our own experiences (Kitzinger 2004; Drache and Velagic 2013). Journalists play a powerful role in deciding what stories to pay attention to and the language used to relay the story. For example, reports of sexual assault tend to focus on offences committed by a stranger, and often the offender is labeled as a “monster” or as “evil.” Such a frame presents sexual assault as out of the ordinary and the offender as a predatory, deviant person. In reality, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reports that 6 in 10 rape or sexual assault victims say that they knew their perpetrator—most often it was a family member, friend, acquaintance, or an intimate partner (U.S. Department of Justice 2012). A study of

sexual victimization of college women found that 9 out of 10 victims knew the person who sexually victimized them (U.S. Department of Justice 2000; see Chapter Twelve).

Moreover, the use of the term “sex” in place of “sexual assault” implies that the offence is primarily about sexual intercourse as opposed to a form of violence, confusing the criminality of the incident. Sexual assault and rape are forms of sexual violence that are subjected on someone else. Language used to describe it should explicitly reveal the nonconsensual nature of the act. To describe a victim as “experiencing” sexual violence shapes readers’ perceptions by implying voluntary participation. In recent years, media kits and guides for journalists to help them avoid such mischaracterizations have been offered by nonprofit organizations such as the Minnesota Coalition against Sexual Assault, Chicago Taskforce on Violence against Girls & Young Women, and Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.

Sexualized Imagery in Media

Social constructionist theory views imagery as powerful representations of society and culture. Like language, images not only represent the culture, they provide meaning and shape society (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Since the birth of photography and film in the last century, images are a fundamental aspect of mass media. In today’s world, we are subjected to thousands of media images on a daily basis. Research reveals that images of men and women’s bodies in media are often sexualized (Attwood 2006; Hatton and Trautner 2011; Zurbriggen, Ramsey, and Jawarski 2011). The American Psychological Association describes four possible components to the sexualization of a person or image: when the person’s value comes only from sexual appeal, to the exclusion of other characteristics; when a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness with narrowly defined ideals of sexiness; when a person or image is sexually objectified; or, when sexuality is inappropriately imposed on a person (American Psychological Association 2007).

HYPERSEXUALIZATION: MAGAZINES AND MUSIC VIDEOS Popular, mainstream mass media often use sexualized images that reinforce narrowly defined ideas of sexiness and heteronormativity. When images excessively represent narrow ideas of sexual appeal above all other qualities, sociologists refer to them as *hypersexualized*. Feminists have long noticed and critiqued the hypersexualization of women’s bodies in media (Gerbner 1978; Tuchman 1978). The hypersexualization the media engages in amounts to the *symbolic annihilation* of women and girls by systematically ignoring, trivializing, or distorting them (Tuchman 1978). hooks (1992) argues African American women are often relegated to sexually wanton representations. An example of a hypersexualized image is a black woman in porn-style clothing, exposing her body and emphasizing the breasts, buttocks, or hips. It reflects a trivialization of her value to emphasize only her sexualized body and it reflects and reinforces sexist and racist ideologies.

Magazines, despite their target audience or content purposes, are full of sexualized and hypersexualized images of men’s and women’s bodies. A recent study examined the covers of *Rolling Stone* magazine from 1967 to 2009 to measure changes in the sexualization of men and women in popular media over time (Hatton and Trautner 2011). The authors developed a “scale of sexualization” with eleven variables to describe how sexual the cover image was with three primary groupings: nonsexual, sexualized, and images that scored so high they were

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“Rape is violence, not ‘sex.’ Reporting on sexual assault means finding not only the language but the context and sensitivity to communicate a trauma that is at once deeply personal and yet a matter of public policy; immediate and yet freighted with centuries of stigma, silence and suppression. Reporting on sexual violence requires special ethical sensitivity, interviewing skills, and knowledge about victims, perpetrators, law and psychology” (Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma 2016).

deemed hypersexual. After analyzing more than 1,000 images, published over the course of 43 years, the authors concluded that representations of both women and men have become more sexualized over time, and women continue to be more frequently sexualized than men.

The majority of male images on the covers of *Rolling Stone* were found to be nonsexual. In the 1960's, 11 percent of men and 44 percent of women were depicted sexually. While in the 2000's, 17 percent of men and 83 percent of women's images were sexualized with 2 percent of men and 61 percent of women's images described as hypersexualized (Hatton and Trautner 2011). This research reveals institutionalized sexism within media representations that promotes the idea that successful female musicians must have sexual appeal, while for males it is less important.

Since emerging in the early 1980s, music videos have become widely viewed and an integral part of the music industry and pop culture. It is estimated young people watch an estimated 30 minutes to 3 hours of music videos per day (Ward 2003). Music videos display sexualized and hypersexualized images of men and women, but women are disproportionately sexualized in this medium (Aubrey and Frisby 2011; Pardun, L'Engle, and Brown 2005; Potter 1998). Music videos, like film, not only show images, but engage in a form of storytelling, which often revolves around sex, sexual relations, and sexualized behaviors.

A content analysis of 40 music videos reveals that not only do men appear twice as often as women, but the videos support gender stereotyping of men as aggressive and dominant, women as sexual and subservient, and heteronormativity, with women as the primary objects of male sexual advances (Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, and Davis 1993). Overall, the content of music videos portrays a fantasy world in which women are displayed as submissive sexual objects available for heterosexual male's sexual gratification, again, revealing institutionalized sexism within the mass media (Jhally 1990, 1995).

SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION: ADVERTISING When women and men's bodies are sexualized and hypersexualized in media images, they become sexual objects. *Sexual objectification* is the equation of an individual's worth based on body appearance and sexual function. Sexual objectification theories specifically focus on the ways in which women are viewed as sexual objects (Bordo 2004; Dworkin 2006; MacKinnon 1989a). Sexual objectification dehumanizes women by viewing them as passive and inactive rather than as complex, subjective beings. Sexual objectification of women's bodies is pervasive in advertising. Advertising is a \$160 billion a year industry, and it is estimated that we are exposed to over 5,000 advertisements every day (Story 2007).

Advertisements, like music videos, not only assert certain ideologies but are designed to sell a product. The feminist concept of the "male gaze" describes how media imagery is designed for the primary looker to be male and the object of the gaze to be female (Mulvey 1999). In advertising, women become objects of sexual desire for men's viewing pleasure, with the objective to sell a product. Thus, the objectification of women's bodies is an extension of the commodification of all goods and services in a capitalist society (Martin 2001). In the case of advertising, women essentially become the commodity being bought and sold. The advertising message is: "buy the commodity, 'get' the woman" (Kilbourne 1999).

Advertising images reinforce distorted and destructive ideals of femininity, including unrealistic expectations of beauty, perfection, and sexuality (Kilbourne 1999). Jean Kilbourne's (1999) research on women's images in advertising reveals they represent mostly young, white, and thin women with unnaturally flawless beauty, and in positions of passivity and dismemberment. Naomi Wolf (2002) claims that media promotes the "beauty myth," a social ideology that promotes unrealistic idealization of feminine beauty. The myth is that beauty is something that can be measured and perfected and that all women should try to attain it; that beauty does not come naturally, but there are cosmetic, diet, and skin care products one must purchase in order to acquire beauty. This myth serves a function as well, in that it has the ability to control women. Wolf argues that chasing the ideals of

beauty becomes an obsession that traps modern women in an endless spiral of hope, self-consciousness, and self-hatred, and distracts them from pursuing full equality.

The impact of sexual objectification and standards of unattainable and flawless beauty is that it informs and shapes women's perceptions of and relationships with their own bodies (Spettigue and Henderson 2004). Many actresses are extremely thin, and most female fashion models weigh 25 percent less than the average American woman (Brody 2000). Almost all images in mass media today are mediated through the use of cosmetics, prosthetics, and digital postproduction manipulation, or photoshop, to make women appear even thinner and flawless. It is no surprise that as a result, women are often dissatisfied with their bodies. Constant exposure to images of thinness can lead to the internalization of the thin ideal and, in turn, to the development of distorted body image; preoccupation with shape and size; eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia; body dysmorphism disorder; depression; and anxiety (Eyal and Te'eni-Harari 2013).

Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa disproportionately affect women and adolescent girls. A large-scale national survey found that 0.9 percent of women and 0.3 percent of men reported having anorexia at some time in their lives, and 1.5 percent of women and 0.5 percent of men reported having bulimia (Hudson et al. 2007). Feminist philosopher Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight* (2004) theorizes that the physical body can become an instrument and medium of power. In this context she argues anorexia functions as a political terrain through which women negotiate their relationship with sexism and gender inequality. She claims media images and modern diet culture distort women's relationships with their bodies and food and that eating disorders represent a way for women to reclaim control and power, albeit an extremely dangerous and unhealthy one (Bordo 2004).

Research on lesbians and women of color demonstrates that for many women, eating problems are related to trauma (Thompson 2012). Author Becky W. Thompson argues that women who are lesbian, poor, or nonwhite experience eating disorders that are not necessarily primarily linked to the media-constructed "culture of thinness." Instead women in these groups with eating problems trace the onset to oppression in the form of sexual abuse, racism, classism, heterosexism, and sexism. Some minority women are pressured to make their bodies different in order to aid their families' assimilation into a higher-class standing. For these women, their relationship with food was a way to regain control over their lives or to anesthetize the pain of their trauma or oppression (Thompson 2012).

Disordered eating impacts not only women, but also men and children. Eating disorders often develop during adolescence and early adult years, but research indicates the preoccupation with weight begins in childhood (Bryant-Waugh and Lask 2013). Barbie is a cultural symbol of ideal female beauty and serves as a role model for young girls. In a study on the impact of Barbie, girls age 5 to 8 displayed higher levels of body dissatisfaction and a greater desire for thinness after looking at books featuring Barbie dolls compared to ones with larger sized dolls (Dittmar, Ive, and Halliwell 2006).

Increasingly prominent media representations of a muscular male body impact men's relationship with their bodies (Wykes and Gunter 2005). Research shows that males are increasingly developing eating disorders due to body dissatisfaction, but that symptoms are often different than they are in females (Cruz 2014). Instead of thinness, the focus is on muscle enhancement through the use of steroids, supplements, or other muscle-enhancing products. Studies indicate that males who use supplements and other products to enhance their physique are more likely to binge eat and binge drink alcohol (Field et al. 2014). Binge-eating disorder is the most prevalent type of eating disorder in the United States at this time with 3.5 percent women and 2 percent men reporting they experience binge-eating disorder at some point in their lives (Hudson et al. 2007).

Body image plays an important role in sexual health and well-being (Gillen, Lefkowitz, and Shearer 2006). Not only does it impact self-consciousness and sexual self-esteem during sexual encounters, but it can impact expectations about your sexual partner's body

(Wiederman 2000). When bodies are sexually objectified, a narrow conception of sexiness is promoted. The impact of this informs and shapes people's expectations of others and can lead to sexual dissatisfaction. Studies indicate that women who are more satisfied with their body image report more sexual activity, orgasm, and initiation of sex, greater comfort undressing in front of their partner, having sex with the lights on, trying new sexual behaviors, and pleasing their partner sexually than those who are dissatisfied with their body image (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, and Peterson 2000). Pornography, a fast-growing and powerful source of sexual representation in media, also shapes and informs expectations of bodies and sexuality (see Chapter Eleven).

INTERSECTIONALITY: RACE, CLASS, AND ETHNIC IMAGERY Media images not only reveal, reinforce, and shape our understandings of gender, but they also inform how we perceive racial, ethnic, and class inequalities. Similar to symbolic annihilation mentioned earlier, race and class theorists argue that media engages in a *structured absence*, when the dominant group has the power to keep certain groups or certain images out of the media (Krabill 2010). For example, healthy black relationships are rarely shown in television and film. Structured absence is not only the lack of representations of people of color, but an omitting of racial sentiments in media content. For example, a lack of regard for the pervasiveness of present-day discrimination or the ways sexual stereotypes impact various race and ethnic groups are invisible in the media.

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) describes the use of stereotypes in media as *controlling images*, meaning these images are a major instrument of power as they work to make racism, sexism, heterosexism, and poverty appear normal and natural. Collins argues that while blacks are incorporated into American culture today, including the media, they are done so in ways that replicate older racial hierarchies. For instance, black sexuality is portrayed as wild and animalistic, which serves the function of helping to perpetuate racial differences and the racial hierarchy. She argues that although the mass media is saturated with sexual imagery, the public dialogue around these portrayals serves to titillate or even repress sexuality rather than to instruct or educate. The media's sexual spectacles often include depictions of black sexuality as deviant and as examples of what not to do. Finally, Collins describes how television talk shows package racist stereotypes of promiscuity among minorities and the poor that suggest cultural, rather than biological, explanations for economic inequality.

Asian females are hypersexualized in media in the form of images of extreme sexual subservience or cunning seductiveness (Hagedorn 1994). The cultural stereotype of Asian women as sexual and exotic objects is historically rooted in the Western colonization of various Asian countries. The long history of U.S. military engagement in the Pacific, including the Philippine Wars, Japan and China during World War II, the Korean conflict, and the Vietnam War, influenced views of Asian women as either sex objects for soldiers to exploit or as the evil, cunning enemy (Chan 1988). Cinema is one of the most influential forms of mass media in modern culture and has a tremendous power to inspire human emotion, attitudes, and behaviors. In films such as *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) or more recently *X2* (2005), racialized and gendered stereotypes continue. Specifically, Asian women are misrepresented as either sexually subservient or devious. *Racial fetishism* involves fetishizing a race or ethnic group by sexually objectifying their bodies based on stereotypes. The individual person has no value, but rather her racial identity is the only erotic factor of worth. Derogatory slang terms to describe white men who fetishize Asian women are "Asiaphiles" who are described as having "yellow fever."

The Walt Disney Corporation is one of the most influential media production companies in North America. Disney films target children and often depict negative gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes. In Disney's film *Pocahontas* (1995), violence and brutality associated with colonization and conquest is sanitized and made to seem invisible. A racist notion of white superiority over native "savages" is supported most obviously in the lyrics of the song "Savages." The film tells the historically inaccurate story of a romantic relationship between

the Native American female character, Pocahontas, and English settler, John Smith. Images of Pocahontas are sexualized with her scantily dressed and modelesque physical features. This depiction of a Native American woman reinforces a long tradition of Native American women being misrepresented as the “Indian Princess” stereotype, or as inferior, lustful, and deeply committed to some white man (Pewewardy 1997).

Children, Sexualization, and the Media

There is growing concern about young people’s exposure to sexual content in media and its potential effects on their sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Extensive research has been conducted to understand young people’s daily media exposure, its specific content and message, and the impact on young people concerning sexuality. Children’s media exposure is higher than ever in the digital era. Not only do most U.S. and Canadian children have easy in-home access to television, films, and video games, but the Internet is easily accessible via computers and mobile electronic devices on a daily basis. “Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds” is a large-scale, nationally representative survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2010 about young people’s media use. This study shows 8- to 18-year-olds devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes per day to using entertainment media. And since young people often use more than one media source at a time, or are “media multitasking,” young people are actually managing to get a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes of media content into those 7.5 hours (Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts 2010).

In recent years, governments and large research organizations investigated the sexualization of children in media, including the UK Home Office’s “The Sexualization of Young People” (Papadopoulos 2010), the American Psychological Association Taskforce Report on the Sexualization of Girls (APA, 2007), and the Australian government-led research project, “The Sexualization of Children in Modern Media” (Commonwealth of Australia 2008). Findings reveal media images adultify images of children while infantilizing images of adult women, which blurs the lines between sexual maturity and immaturity and essentially displays children as sexual objects and adult women as children. Clothing advertisements target young girls with displays of child models dressed in erotically provocative clothing: fishnet stockings, kiddie thongs, and padded bralettes are promoted to girls as young as ten years old (George 2007). The reality television show on child beauty pageants, *Toddlers and Tiaras*, which debuted in 2009, released controversial footage of a three-year-old contestant dressed as the prostitute played by Julia Roberts in the 1990 film *Pretty Woman* (Henson 2011).

How do young people respond to the sexualization of culture? Obviously an individual child’s age and level of cognitive and emotional development are significant; but research reveals that many young people internalize media and advertising images, and the results impact their relationships with their bodies and their sexual behaviors (Levine and Kilbourne 2008). It can also hinder their ability to form healthy sexual relationships with marriage partners later in life (Durham 2008). Next to adolescent’s parents and peers, mass media is the primary source of information regarding sexual norms (Durham 2008). Televised media has a high prevalence of sexual talk and portrayals of sexual behavior. A link between the amount of television watched and the likelihood of a young person to have sexual intercourse at an earlier age is found to be correlative (Collins et al. 2004). Moreover, teens rely on media for sex education (see Chapter Ten).

Sociologists asked 71 pre-teen girls to record media video diaries about their everyday engagement with popular culture

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“Here’s what lots of girls don’t know. Those ‘pretty women’ that we see in magazines are fake. They’re often photoshopped, air-brushed, edited to look thinner, and to appear like they have perfect skin. A girl you see in a magazine probably looks a lot different in real life,” wrote 14-year-old activist Julia Bluhm (2012).

(Jackson and Vares 2015). They specifically examined girls' responses to hypersexualized performances by female pop celebrities. What they found is that girls negotiate meanings of a sexually saturated pop culture in complicated and contradictory ways, which often reflect the binaries of "good girl" versus "bad girl," "slut" versus "nonslut," associated with expectations of female sexual behavior. Jackson and Vares (2015) encourage feminists who want to engage with girls on the subject not only to encourage political, gender-focused critiques of hypersexualized media, but to take it a step further by engaging in conversations about alternative, noncommodified meanings of sexuality. In this way, the development of a pleasurable, embodied sense of sex and self is possible.

LGBTQ REPRESENTATIONS IN TELEVISION AND FILM

Similar to symbolic annihilation and structured absence mentioned earlier, representations of LGBTQ individuals and groups in television are widely neglected or distorted. In fact, throughout television's first four decades, gays were virtually invisible (Becker 2006). This invisibility promotes heteronormativity, as well as cisgender and heterosexual privilege. Commercial demands shape LGBTQ images in television and film; for instance, advertisers fear offending mainstream audiences, so when LGBTQ people are portrayed, they generally fit mainstream stereotypes.

In the 1970s, gay rights activist groups, such as the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA), began to address the issues of visibility and the portrayal of homosexuality on television (Montgomery 2006). As a result, there has been a steady increase in the representation of gays and lesbians in film and television.

Sociologist Joshua Gamson (1998) warns of the visibility trap that LGBTQ people find themselves in: increasing visibility creates particular dilemmas for marginalized populations. The desire for increased visibility for these populations is understandable; being recognized and affirmed can "lay the groundwork for political change" (Gamson 1998:213). Yet, television and film sensationalize "other" sexual minorities and gender nonconformists and increasing visibility is likely to result in a conservative backlash.

From Invisibility to Stereotypical Images: Lesbians and Gays on Television

Gay television characters first emerged in the 1970s on shows such as *Soap* (1977–1981) and *Dynasty* (1981–89). Introduced in 1998, NBC's comedy *Will and Grace* featured television's first gay male lead character, Will Truman. The show was highly successful in ratings and generated profits for advertisers well into the 2000s. Many other shows began featuring gay characters, such as Stanford Blatch, the gay best friend of Carrie Bradshaw in the Emmy-award-winning HBO series *Sex and the City* (Netzley 2010). Often gay male characters are portrayed as the best friend to a straight woman or in secondary or supporting roles.

Specifically gay-themed programming on U.S. network television really began in the 1990s. *Queer as Folk* was a groundbreaking show introduced by Showtime in 1999; every character was gay and every episode was gay themed (Chambers 2009). Between 1994 and 1997, hit shows like *Roseanne* and *Friends* included gay jokes and references; nineteen network series included recurring gay characters; and perhaps most surprising, over 40 percent of all prime time network series had at least one gay-themed episode (Becker 2006:3). *The L-Word* (2004–2009), a lesbian-themed show, emerged at the same time as media hype around "lesbian chic" in the early 1990s emphasizing the trendiness of lesbianism (Beirne 2008). Importantly, the increasing presence of gay and lesbian characters and issues on

television exposed heterosexual privilege—the taken-for-grantedness of heterosexuality and heterosexual images in the media (Becker 2006). As a whole, despite successes in television, in 2011–2012, LGBTQ characters still represented only 2.9 percent of all scripted characters on U.S.-based broadcast television networks (GLAAD 2012).

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Images in Hollywood Cinema

Cinema shares a similar story. Traditionally, representations of gays, lesbians, and transgender individuals are altogether neglected or marginalized. In a groundbreaking book, *The Celluloid Closet*, Vito Russo (1987) analyzed Hollywood films from the 1890s to 1980s. He argued that lesbians and gays are often completely left out; and when portrayals are included, they are from a homophobic standpoint. Russo described how the voluntary Motion Picture Production code, also known as the Hays Code, applied a set of moral guidelines and censorship to film production. If filmmakers wanted their films shown in mainstream cinemas they had to follow these guidelines. The Hays Code prohibited all mention of homosexuality from the silver screen until the 1950s. When gay and lesbian characters were finally openly made visible in films in the 1960s, they were primarily defined by their sexual orientation and often lacked any complex character development (Russo 1987).

Like television, since the 1990s, film has increased visibility and improved its portrayal of LGBTQ characters. The success and popularity of such films as *Philadelphia* (1993), about a gay man living with HIV/AIDS; *Flawless* (1999), about a homophobic cop who befriends a drag queen; and *In & Out* (1997), a film about a former school teacher who questions his sexuality, among many others, led to the production of more films in the 2000s. In 2005, *Brokeback Mountain*, a film about the secretive, sexual relationship between two cowboys, achieved mainstream commercial success.

Despite such success, LGBTQ characters and storylines are still often avoided. Between 1990 and 2005, research reveals that film award campaign ads continually avoided LGBTQ imagery while promoting heteronormative themes, even in ads for LGBTQ films (Cabosky 2015). For example, in the first three months of the advertising campaign for *Brokeback Mountain*, the ads displayed heterosexual imagery of the main male characters with their wives (Cabosky 2015). It was not until the final months of its marketing campaign, notably after it had earned an Oscar nomination, that images of gay intimacy began to appear in relation to the film in advertisements (Cabosky 2015).

In addition to issues of visibility, when LGBTQ characters are incorporated into film and television, stereotypes and misrepresentations are enforced. One of the most prevalent stereotypes about gay male characters is they possess the gender character traits assigned to women: highly feminine, submissive, and emotional. The archetype of “the sissy” brings amusement to audiences and is not threatening, as it represents weakness (Russo 1987). In this way gay male characters are often appreciated primarily for their comedic value, and are not portrayed as complex human beings. Gay men are also often portrayed as hypersexual, infected with HIV/AIDS, sexually promiscuous, and otherwise immoral (Hart 2000; Herman 2005). Lesbians, on the other hand, are often portrayed and defined by their level of embodied sexual desirability and ideal femininity, shaped by heterosexual norms (Jackson and Gilbertson 2009). In other words, most lesbians in media are thin, attractive, and objects of heterosexual desire. Lesbian sex scenes are shown twice as often as gay male sex scenes. When lesbians are sex objects for the male gaze, it can make lesbian sexual relations appear to be a performance for others (Jackson and Gilbertson 2009).

Transgender Images and Issues in Media

Gender-variant people have long been part of a media spectacle in the form of freak shows. Most cities had laws against cross-dressing well into the 1960s (see Chapters Four and Five). In the first half of the twentieth century, when cross-dressers, intersex, and transgender

people found themselves arrested, freak show producers would bail them out in exchange for them joining their freak shows. The “bearded woman” and other “freaks” were “othered” and became entertainment for the mainstream (Sears 2008). In recent years, transgender individuals have become more visible in the media and are being seen in a more positive light. CNN describes 2015 as “America’s Transgender Moment” (CNN.com 2015). In addition to the attention Caitlyn Jenner’s transition attracted, transgender models such as Andreja Pejic appeared in *Vogue* magazine and Carmen Carrera in *W* Magazine (Gregory 2015).

In television, transgender roles are steadily increasing, such as the role of actress Laverne Cox as a transgender prison inmate in *Orange Is the New Black*, a transgender gym coach on the final season of *Glee*, and an entire show about an aging father who begins life as a woman,

in *Transparent*. Children’s books about acceptance of and the experiences of transgender people are popular, including *I Am Jazz* (2012), a story of a transgender child based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings. Jennings is a *YouTube* star and spokesperson for trans kids; and she is featured in a TLC reality show about her life called *All That Jazz* (2015).

While visibility is a tremendous step toward greater equality, the transgender community is still often viewed in a negative light. Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD) research on transgender characters in scripted television over a decade reveals that 54 percent are negative representations, 35 percent are problematic, and only 12 percent are considered fair and accurate. This research is comprehensive in that it looks at television, including all the major networks and seven cable networks. Stereotypes and misrepresentations are frequent, often portraying transgender characters as victims, villains, and as sex workers. Finally, antitransgender slurs, language, and suggestions were present in 61 percent of scripted dialogue (GLAAD 2012).

“

“I would say that 2014 was a watershed moment for visibility, but the record unemployment rates, homicide rates and discrimination that we experience has not changed. So we need more of what’s happening in the media in terms of visibility to affect policies and how we treat transgender folk,” —Laverne Cox (Berenson 2015).

SEXUALITY AND SPORT

Few institutions expose the intersection of gender and sexuality better than sport. David Coad (2008) introduced the term *sports sex*, to refer to how traditional mythologies about sex and gender are created and perpetuated through sports culture. Sports scholars have long identified sport as a heterosexist and homophobic institution that manifests not only in a rejection of homosexuality but in an embrace of hyperheterosexuality (Anderson 2002; Connell 1995; Griffin 1998; Hekma 1998; Pronger 1990; Sartore and Cunningham 2009). Notions of masculinity are particularly linked to our understandings of heterosexuality, particularly the jock culture that surrounds sport. *Jock culture* refers to an environment that encourages many unhealthy behaviors by athletes, particularly machismo, hypercompetitiveness, violence, bullying, aggression, male supremacy, and female subordination (Coad 2008; Lipsyte 1975). Jock culture “propagates gender myths, insisting on the ‘natural’ differences between men and women and, finally, it relies on the heterosexual myth” (Coad 2008:6). Jock culture is so pervasive that the idea of a gay athlete often comes across as an oxymoron (Anderson 2005).

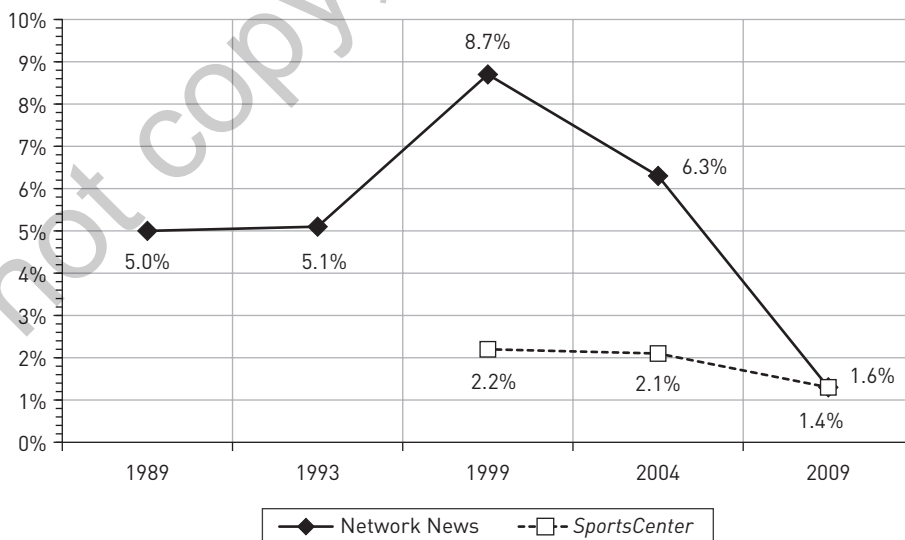
Sport Media

Media scholar Sut Jhally (1984) uses the term *sports/media complex* to describe the commercial and ideological interdependence of the institutions of sport, mass media, and advertising. Sports are mediated events; “what viewers see, then, is not the actual event, but a mediated event, in other words, a media event” (Eitzen and Sage 2003:251). Thus, sportscasters help create

listeners' and viewers' sport experiences through camera angles, narratives, and especially what information and images are revealed and which are concealed about specific athletes or the game itself. Broadcast teams choose what to highlight based on what is considered to be good television and what is perceived as keeping people tuned in. Male sporting events dominate television broadcasting, which reinforce our ideas about gender, sport, and masculinity. How male athletes and their bodies are portrayed in sport media reinforces Western cultural understandings of masculinity. Research by Nick Trujillo (1995) finds that NFL broadcasts regularly reproduce three images of the male body—as an instrument, a weapon, and an object of gaze.

Sports media, then, helps marginalize women's sports. While women's rates of sport participation have skyrocketed since the passage of Title IX, they are still only a fraction of sports media coverage (Messner, Duncan, and Willms 2007). In collecting data over a 15-year period, Messner, Duncan, and Willms (2007) found that in 1989, only 5 percent of television network time was devoted to women's sports. Ten years later, it increased to a mere 8.7 percent. By 2004, the proportion of news coverage devoted to women's sports had *fallen* to 6.3 percent, and by 2009 it had fallen to 1.6 percent (see Figure 6.1). Because of the assumption that audiences prefer male bodies and, thus, they will not be able to sell advertising during a women's sporting event, women's professional sports teams were unable to secure a major national TV network contract until 1996 when a new women's basketball league finally got one. As Messner and colleagues state, "In the past three decades we have witnessed an historic sea change in sport's gender dynamics. But one would never know this, if one simply got one's sports information from the network affiliates' evening and late-night news shows, or from the sports highlights shows on ESPN and Fox. The mass media's continued marginalization of women's sports serves to maintain the myth that sports are exclusively by, about, and for men" (Messner, Duncan, and Willms 2007:158).

FIGURE 6.1 ■ News and *SportsCenter* Airtime Devoted to Women's Sports, 1989–2009



Despite the dramatic increase in women and girls' athletic participation, there has not been a corresponding increase in media attention to women's sports. In fact, media coverage of women's sports has declined since its peak in 1999.

Source: "Gender in Televised Sports: News and Highlight Shows, 1989–2009." 2010. Michael Messner and Cheryl Cooky. <http://dornsifeccms.usc.edu/assets/sites/80/docs/tvsports.pdf>.

In addition to the marginalization of women's sports, sports media sends problematic messages to male athletes. Some researchers argue the sports media provides a *televised sports manhood formula* that presents "boys with narrow and stereotypical messages about race, gender, and violence" (Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2007:141). Television coverage of men's sporting events, programming such as *SportsCenter*, and the commercials that accompany these sports programs all provide seamless messaging to men and boys about what it means to be a man. This involves messages concerning the appropriateness of aggression, violence, playing to win, avoiding being perceived as "soft," and the idea that beautiful women are their prize for success on the athletic field.

Masculinity and Sport

The linkage between masculinity and sports has a long history. Competitive team sports gained significant popularity in the United States simultaneously as the nation was faced with a crisis of masculinity in the early twentieth century (Anderson 2009; Anderson, McCormack, and Ripley 2013). During this era, the United States was industrializing, urbanizing, and modernizing. People's lives were changing dramatically. Instead of men engaging in the physical demands of farm labor, most men were employed in factories. There was also an active women's movement that challenged traditional gender roles (Filene 1975; Messner 1992). Sigmund Freud, a significant thinker of the era, noted that an outcome of the increased urbanization was an increase in same-sex sexual activity. This resulted in a *moral panic*, an extreme societal response to a perceived erosion of morals due to social changes (Cohen 1972). Freud argued that this occurred because with men working outside the home, boys lacked male role models. Sport was proposed as a solution to this dilemma. Thus, competitive organized sports were designed as a masculinizing agent in boy's lives (Anderson, McCormack, and Ripley 2013). Masculinity can never be taken for granted; it is something men must continually prove, and the sports world is a perfect venue for this.

As we describe in Chapter Three, masculinity and femininity are opposing concepts. Masculinity requires rejecting all things feminine; and since competitive sports originated as a masculinizing agent, it is unsurprising women were marginalized from competitive sports for so long. Homophobia and misogyny are used to construct masculinity (Anderson 2005). This explains why the sporting world maintained its commitment to homophobia well into the turn of the millennium, whereas societal attitudes toward gays and lesbians in the rest of society began to shift in the 1990s (Anderson, McCormack, and Ripley 2013). As Griffin argues, "Sport is more than games. As an institution, sport serves important social functions in supporting conventional social values. In particular, sport is a training ground where boys learn what it means to be men" (1998:16).

Homophobia in the sports world manifests in a number of ways. First, through the use of homophobic language to motivate men to excel, such as being called a faggot, pussy, wuss, gay, or fag by teammates or coaches, or when such terms are used to deride opposing teams. Scholars emphasize the role of language in establishing dominance and masculinity among male athletes (Adams, Anderson, and McCormack 2010). Research finds homophobic language is present in all types of men's sports, although it seems to be declining, mirroring the declining cultural homophobia (Anderson 2002; McCormack 2014).

Another manifestation of homophobia in sports is the invisibility of gay athletes. Because of the interconnectedness between sport and masculinity and the extreme homophobia in sport, gay men have yet to make tremendous strides in the sports world. The dearth of gay male athletes is particularly evident in the four major professional sports in the United States: football, baseball, hockey, and basketball. There are 3,496 athletes on

"Sport can be seen as one of the last bastions of traditional masculinity, where men can prove themselves as 'real' or 'inferior' men and differentiate themselves from women" (Symons 2007:140).

professional rosters of the four major North American leagues; and only one openly gay man was among them until he retired in 2014, Jason Collins of the NBA (Ogawa 2014). Of course there are gay male athletes, as the story of Michael Sam in the opening vignette of Chapter One shows, but most of them have chosen to remain closeted due to homophobia and the value placed on masculinity among athletes. We will discuss the recent and measured emergence of the gay athlete below.

SPORTS, MASCULINITY, AND SEXUAL

ASSAULT We will explore sexual violence in greater detail in Chapter Twelve, but here we discuss *sports rape*, or rapes committed by athletes—a sexual assault as an extension of the dysfunction of jock culture (Coad 2008). There is nothing legally distinct about sports rape, of course. It is still rape, a felony. But sports rape is unique in the extent of institutional cover-up often engaged in by universities, athletes, media, and sometimes even the victims themselves.

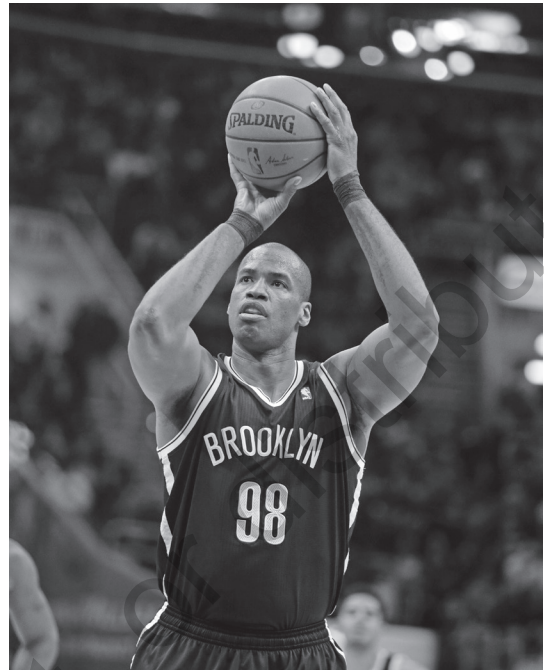
While media coverage of rape charges against celebrity athletes such as Darren Sharper, Jameis Winston, Kobe Bryant, and Mike Tyson proliferate, research finds that sports rape is not limited to a handful of celebrity athletes (Benedict 1997, 2004; Benedict and Yaeger 1998). In fact, it is found across cultures, with disturbing frequency. Athletes must continuously prove their manhood, masculinity, and heterosexuality. Heterosexual conquests, both consensual and nonconsensual, help athletes establish and maintain their masculinity in jock culture. Importantly, when charges are filed against an athlete for rape or sexual assault, most of the players are never convicted of a crime (Benedict 2004; Coad 2008).

In *Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town*, Jon Krakauer (2015) exposes five rapes or attempted rapes that occurred at the University of Montana in Missoula, MT, between the years 2010 and 2012. Several members of the UM football team were among those accused of sexual assault. What he finds are disturbing patterns of disrespect and disinterest by the local police and prosecutors, and assumptions that the women are making false accusations. The women who pressed charges or spoke publicly were attacked in the press and on local football fan websites.

Sexuality, Femininity, and Sport

The fact that sport is a masculinizing agent in the lives of boys and men should not lead us to conclude that it does not hold a significant influence on the sporting experience for women. First, because sport has long been linked to men and masculinity, women athletes are perceived as trespassers on male terrain (Bryson 1990; Griffin 1998). If women can be athletic, competitive, and muscular, then how is masculinity distinct from femininity?

Second, the linkage of sport with masculinity has limited women's opportunities to compete in sports. The ancient Greek Olympics allowed only male competitors, and women were not allowed to even watch the competition. It was not until 1920 that the United States sent a women's team to compete in the Olympics (Griffin 1998). In the early 1900s, women



In 2014, Jason Collins was the only openly gay male professional athlete competing in one of the four major sports (basketball, football, baseball, and soccer).

Source: AP Photo/Tony Dejak.

became interested in sports such as golf, tennis, and bicycling. The 1920s were an era of expanded opportunities for sports participation for women due to the growth of women's colleges. Critics argued strenuous activities could damage women's reproductive organs and participation in sport would lead to "mannishness" in women; essentially, they feared female athletes would acquire masculine characteristics. Of primary concern was the fear that women would develop what were assumed to be male sexual characteristics and interests; specifically, it was feared that women's sexual inhibitions would decrease. By the 1930s, however, the concern shifted. Instead of fearing women's sport participation would lead to excessive heterosexuality, it was feared that it would lead to a failed heterosexuality; in other words, the new fear was that the female athlete might prefer women. In the post-World War II era, this fear transitioned into the stereotype of the "mannish lesbian athlete" (Cahn 2007).

The linkage of female athleticism with lesbianism becomes a powerful stigma, the "bogeywoman" of sport (Cahn 2007). Homophobia discourages many girls and women from playing certain sports and causes parents to steer daughters away from sports or programs that they believe attract lesbians (Eitzen and Sage 2003). Some women's collegiate athletic programs even practice a form of *negative recruiting* in which coaches encourage high school players to sign with their program because it is free of lesbians. This practice was most explicit in the women's basketball program at Penn State under coach Rene Portland (Mosbacher and Yacker 2009). Portland's well-known "training rules" were: no drinking, no drugs, and no lesbians. While such discrimination against lesbian athletes was well-known on campus, Portland maintained the practice throughout her 27-year career as a college basketball coach until she retired in the late 1990s. Negative recruiting does not happen in men's sports due to the heteronormativity of sport culture. Male athletes are assumed to be heterosexual, whereas the association of sports with masculinity means female athletes are assumed to be sexually deviant.

Linking female athleticism with lesbianism influences how women athletes present themselves on and off the field. Women's professional sport organizations overtly emphasize the heterosexual femininity of their players as a way to avoid the lesbian stigma, which they assume will decrease fan interest and attendance. Some women's teams have taken this so far as to enact a closeted atmosphere similar to the military's former "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy (Eitzen and Sage 2003). Advocates of women's sport respond to the lesbian stigma "by insisting that sport participation increased women's heterosexual appeal. They worked hard to project an image of happy and enthusiastic heterosexuality among women athletes" (Griffin 1998:35). Both lesbian and heterosexual athletes work to manage their identity within the context of sport by presenting themselves as ultra-feminine in the same ways that male athletes embrace hypermasculinity (Melton 2013). For instance, female athletes often wear full makeup and feminine hairstyles during athletic competition.

This feminization of female athletes was clearly seen during World War II, when professional men's baseball leagues were suspended so the men could serve in the military. Philip Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs, formed a women's professional baseball league in its place. The league enforced a "femininity principle" as a way to ensure that the players were normal, white, heterosexual girls, which was believed to appeal to their desired fan base. Players were chosen as much for their looks as for their athletic abilities; and they were required to adhere to hair, makeup, and dress codes, including competing in a skirted uniform rather than pants (Cahn 1994; Griffin 1998).

The lesbian stigma also justifies the lack of media coverage of female sports. Research clearly shows the disproportionate amount of media attention devoted to male sporting events compared to women's athletics. Televised male sports send particular messages to viewers about gender and sport, including "sports is a man's world" and "women are sexy props or prizes for men's successful sport competition" (Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2007). Such images reinforce the lesbian stigma by emphasizing the heteronormativity of sport (Melton 2013). Additionally, sportscasters continually emphasize the marital and motherhood status of heterosexual female athletes, while remaining silent about the relationship status of nonheterosexual athletes. This is why the international television coverage of Women's

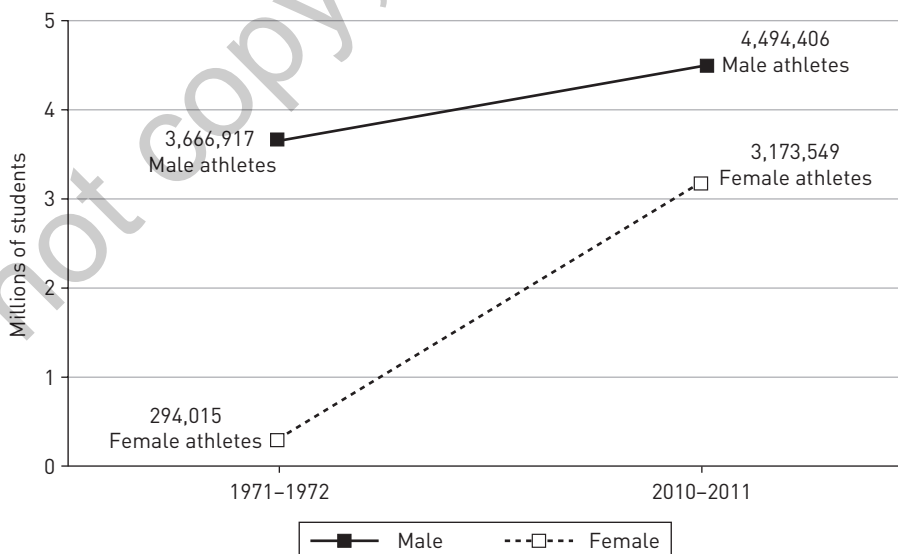
National Soccer Team player Abby Wambach running to her female partner and kissing her in celebration of the U.S. World Cup victory in July 2015 was a radical shift away from the extreme heteronormativity of past media coverage of women's sports.

Perhaps most problematically, lesbian athletes and coaches play and work in constant fear of being outed, experiencing what scholars refer to as *minority stress*, the stress associated with being a member of a stigmatized group and being devalued in your society and in your field (Meyer 2003). Scholars note female athletes' physical and psychological well-being is inhibited due to minority stress (Sartore and Cunningham 2010). Other research finds women's psychological health declines when they are in unsupportive athletic environments, leading to low self-esteem, low confidence, high stress levels, and even substance abuse (Krane 1997). While homophobic environments take their greatest toll on lesbian athletes and coaches, heterosexual female athletes are also negatively affected. "Homophobia affects all women: it creates fears, pressures women to conform to traditional gender roles, and silences and makes invisible the lesbians who manage, coach, and play sports" (Eitzen and Sage 2003:246).

Despite the destructiveness of homophobia in women's sports and the lesbian stigma attached to women athletes, it is a mistake to paint the picture as entirely bleak. Sport can also be an accepting environment for lesbians. Many lesbians find a supportive community among women athletes and, as Pat Griffin states, "many lesbians in and out of sport describe the network of friends and ex-lovers whom they feel safe with and affirmed by as *families of choice*. . . . They also create an opportunity for lesbians in sport to meet and fall in love" (1998:190).

TITLE IX Opportunities for women in sports expanded dramatically with the passage of Title IX in 1972. The legislation was intended to provide women with equal educational opportunities as men. In the language of the legislation, "no person in the United States

FIGURE 6.2 ■ Male and Female Participation in High School Sports, 1972–2011

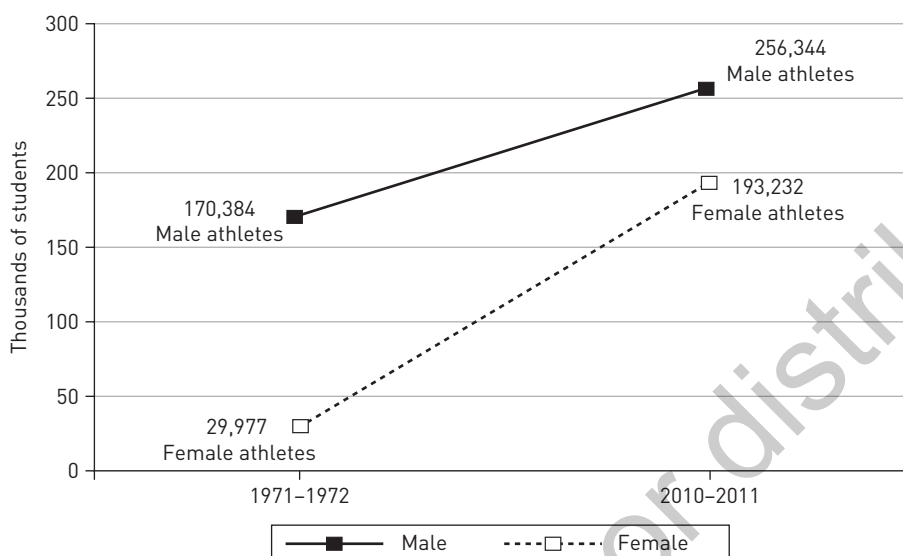


This graph shows the dramatic increase in female participation in high school sports since the passage of Title IX legislation.

Source: "Title IX and Athletics." National Federation of State High School Associations. <http://www.ncwge.org/TitleIX40/Athletics.pdf>.

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FIGURE 6.3 ■ Male and Female Participation in College Sports, 1972–2011

This graph indicates the dramatic increase in female athletic participation in college sports since the passage of Title IX.

Source: "Title IX and Athletics." NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Report, 1972–2011. <http://www.ncwge.org/TitleIX40/Athletics.pdf>.

shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist 2007). Unintentionally, this legislation opened up incredible sporting opportunities for women at all levels, yet "despite the law's promise, athletic departments remain one area of resistance to equity for men and women in higher education" (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist 2007:1).

The effect of Title IX on women's sport participation is undeniable. In 1971, 294,000 girls played on a high school sports team, compared with 3.7 million boys. By 2011, 3.1 million girls played high school sports compared with 4.5 million boys (see Figure 6.2). Women's participation in collegiate sports and the Olympics has also increased dramatically since the passage of Title IX (Messner 2007; see Figure 6.3). The 2016 Olympics hold the distinction of having the most female Olympians ever, with women making up 45 percent of the participants (Baciglupi 2016). Despite such progress, there is nowhere near gender parity in sports. Boys sports programs are better funded, offer players the opportunity to play for better coaches and better-paid coaches; girls have substandard athletic facilities; male athletes have more scholarship dollars; and the vast majority of colleges and universities are not in compliance with Title IX.

COMING OUT OF THE ATHLETIC CLOSET

This chapter portrays the athletic world as one hostile to LGBTQ athletes and coaches, primarily due to the conflation of sport with masculinity, which results in invisibility for gay male athletes and stigma for female athletes who are presumed to be lesbian. In the early 1980s, no lesbian athlete was publicly out. Women's professional sports organizations such as the Women's Tennis Association and the Ladies Professional Golf Association sought to keep lesbian athletes in the closet for fear of losing fans and commercial endorsements

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(Griffin 2014). Despite the declining degree of homophobia in the mainstream culture, and the increasing visibility of LGBTQ people and issues in the media, the athletic closet continues to remain shut; LGBTQ professional athletes remain closeted or come out only after their athletic careers end. Eric Anderson (2005) became the first openly gay male coach when he came out in 1993 as a running coach at a conservative high school in California. He shares the dramatic change in how he was perceived: “Overnight I had gone from being known as the hilarious teacher and revered coach to the faggot teacher and the faggot coach. My athletes went from being the pride of the school . . . to the shame of the school, affected by a guilt-by-association process relating to my stigma” (2005:2). As of 2014, there was only one openly gay NCAA coach, Sherri Murrell of Portland State University (Griffin 2014).

Gay athletes exist at every level of the sport, from high school to college and professional athletics, of course. Rather than being repelled by the homophobia of sport, some research finds that gay men are drawn to sport because it is a perfect cover for their homosexuality (Pronger 1990). For this reason, many gay male athletes are uninterested in coming out. While female professional athletes in the 1980s were often “outed” against their will, by the early 2000s, professional athletes were coming out as lesbian on their own: from tennis player Amelie Mauresmo in 1999, to WNBA players Sheryl Swoopes in 2005 and Brittney Griner in 2013, homophobia against lesbian athletes appears to be decreasing to some extent (Bullingham, Magrath, and Anderson 2014). In 1999, Massachusetts high school football player Corey Johnson’s coming out was covered in the *New York Times*. Ultimately, his coming out experience was one of acceptance. Most athletes who come out describe feeling an immense sense of liberation (Anderson 2005).

Gay Games

Gay athletes have sometimes formed their own self-segregated sporting opportunities, such as the Gay Games. There is a Gay and Lesbian Athletic Foundation, and increasing numbers of gay sports organizations have established gay sports spaces rather than focusing on assimilating LGBTQ people into mainstream, heterocentric sports organizations. In response to the marginalization of LGBTQ athletes, and with the goal of creating more inclusive sporting opportunities for LGBTQ athletes, former Olympic decathlete Tom Waddell founded the Gay Games in 1982. Through the Gay Games, Waddell hoped to unite the gay and lesbian communities, which were quite divided at the time, to challenge myths about gay men as feminine, and to normalize gay and lesbian people through sport competition (Symon 2007). The Gay Games mark a shift in gay liberation away from an emphasis on LGBTQ oppression toward focusing positively and publicly on expressing pride in one’s gay identity (Pronger 1990; Symons 2007). This international athletic competition and cultural event occurs every four years, and it sometimes draws more participants than the regular Olympic Games (Griffin 1998). The first competition was in 1982 in San Francisco. Another international competition emerged in 2006, the World OutGames, which are held every four years. This event is currently a competitor to the Gay Games, and there are talks of the two merging by 2022.

CREATING SPACE FOR INTERSEX AND TRANSGENDER ATHLETES

Since most competitive athletic programs in this country are gender-segregated and based on an assumed gender binary, many athletes, including those who are intersex, transsexual, and transgender, have to fight for the right to participate in organized sports. In the face of such demands, some sporting organizations struggle to adopt appropriate policies. One of the first widely known disputes occurred in 1977 when Renee Richards, who had been



Salvatore Lamia, an Algonquin Shinnecock American Indian, won medals in the triple jump and the long jump at the Gay Games in 2006.

Source: AP Photo/M. Spencer Green.

born male but transitioned to female, challenged the U.S. Tennis Association's requirement that athletes must possess two X chromosomes to compete in the women's U.S. Open. The assumption behind her exclusion was that as someone who was born male, she must have some kind of competitive advantage over the other women. In other words, the policy was based not just on a gender binary but on a gender hierarchy; it was assumed that males were athletically and physically superior to females.

Following this logic, male athletes do not face sex verification testing in international competition the way women have. It is assumed an athlete born female would not have any competitive advantage over athletes who had been male their entire lives. The assumption of female athletic inferiority prompts sex verification at the highest levels of competition. In 1968, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) shifted from a visual inspection of female genitalia to chromosome testing to determine athletes' eligibility. Simply seeking to make sure competitors have a second X chromosome is not going to solve the problem; while women typically have two X chromosomes, there are a number of chromosomal variations that can and do occur (see Chapter Three). Importantly, mandatory sex verification was initially implemented for political reasons. During the Cold War, Western nations feared Communist nations would engage in "gender fraud to dominate women's sport in the service of nationalist objectives" (Buzuvis 2013:59).

By 1996, the IOC no longer required sex verification of female athletes. However, it is still done on a case-by-case basis when there is cause for suspicion. Rather than relying on a chromosome test, an athlete declared suspicious faces a panel of medical and psychological experts conducting more holistic tests. South African athlete Caster Semenya faced such a panel in 2009 (see Box 6.1). They concluded that while she did have elevated levels of testosterone, it did not disqualify her from women's sport. Since 2011, the IOC has allowed female athletes to compete as long as their testosterone levels are below the normal range for a male or if they have androgen insensitivity syndrome (which essentially means their bodies cannot use the testosterone they make). In Semenya's case, there is an assumption



South African athlete Caster Semenya faced suspicion and humiliating challenges to her eligibility to compete as a woman at many international athletic competitions.
Source: AP Photo/Anja Niedringhaus.

she has no competitive advantage over other female athletes (Buzuvis 2013). While this policy is an improvement over previous era's sex verification testing, it also faces critique. For instance, why should sport emphasize the level of natural occurring hormones someone has as the only competitive advantage worthy of disqualifying an athlete? Women who are naturally taller have a competitive advantage in many sports, yet that does not disqualify them from competition (Buzuvis 2013).

When it comes to transgender athletes, the IOC has been at the forefront of policies to determine participation, implementing a policy in 2004 that allows transsexual/transgender athletes to participate with their transitional sex. There are three criteria that a transsexual/transgender athlete must meet, however:

- (1) Surgical and anatomical changes must have been completed, including external genitalia and gonadectomy;
- (2) Legal recognition of their assigned sex has been conferred by the appropriate official authorities; and
- (3) Hormonal therapy appropriate for the assigned sex has been administered in a verifiable manner and for a sufficient length of time to minimize gender-related advantages in sport competitions [later defined as a minimum of two years from the time of surgery]. (Buzuvis 2013).

Numerous other sporting organizations followed the IOC in adopting this policy for transsexual/transgender athletes, including one high school sporting organization, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Association (Buzuvis 2013). However, many are urging against adoption of the IOC policy. Specifically, critics argue that the requirement that the person have sex reassignment surgery to participate in youth sports is unrealistic since surgery is not recommended for people under eighteen years of age.

As of 2007, the Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) decided to allow high school and middle school athletes to compete on a team that is consistent with the athletes' gender identity, irrespective of their officially assigned gender. They do not require any medical evidence to support the student's claim. Advocates praise this policy for its inclusiveness. The NCAA allows transgender athletes to play according to their identified sex rather than their birth sex (Buzuvis 2013). As many states and municipalities begin to include gender identity and expression in their antidiscrimination clauses, colleges and universities are starting to be proactive to avoid discriminating against transgender athletes.

Trans Inclusion in the Gay Games

While the International Gay Games are designed to be an inclusive sporting event, they somewhat ironically struggled with the inclusion of transgender athletes. The Gay Games IV in 1994 were the first games to have a specific transgender policy (Symons and Hemphill 2006). The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) sought to develop an inclusive policy that included persons who were living fully as members of the sex they had transitioned to. Their policy did not require athletes to have completed sex reassignment surgery, which can be financially unattainable for many and medically prohibited if the individual has other medical conditions such as HIV, herpes, or Hepatitis C. Despite attempts at inclusiveness, many transgender people felt the policy was discriminatory because it relied on the authority of experts stating the person was transgender. For many, this was problematic

BOX 6.1

GLOBAL/TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY: *SOUTH AFRICAN SPRINTER CASTER SEMENYA AND SEX TESTING IN INTERNATIONAL SPORTS*

Caster Semenya is a South African athlete whose eligibility to compete in international competitions was threatened when people questioned her sex, specifically whether or not she was a female. When she won the 800 meter race in 2009 at the World Championships in Berlin, competitors immediately began questioning her sex. She was banned from international competition for a year; a decision that was reversed in 2010. Even before she experienced official gender verification testing, she used to have to go to the bathroom to show a member of the competing team that she was female before a race (Levy 2009). She went through sex testing to prove she was female, and the results were leaked. She did not have a uterus or ovaries, despite the fact that she was brought up as a girl and has female external genitalia. She was born with undescended testes, which

results in her having three times the amount of testosterone as the average female; this was felt to put her at an advantage over other females.

The International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) chooses to use testosterone levels to distinguish between males and females, but that is arbitrary. Due to this, Semenya has been forced to undergo treatment, the exact nature of which remains undisclosed, but likely involves hormone therapy and monitoring (Greenfield 2012). Since this controversy erupted, Semenya consciously altered her appearance so she looks more feminine. Some are critical of this, calling it a "policing of femininity." For women who are exceptional athletes, the first question to emerge is whether or not they are even a real woman.

because it made their gender identity pathological (Symons and Hemphill 2006). Despite this opposition, “the gay games of 1994 appears to have been the first international sports event to include transgender participants within its policy and procedures, including those who were in transition or who could not complete their sex change for financial and/or medical reasons” (Symons and Hemphill 2006:118).

By 2002, the Gay Games VI were held in Sydney, Australia. The FGJ had established the most inclusive gender policy by defining gender in terms of social identity and not requiring medical authorization of one’s gender. The policy also went “beyond Western conceptions of sex/gender/sexuality, as traditional indigenous transgender identities were included. . . . Indigenous Australian Sistergirls, Indonesian Waria, Thai Kathoey, South Asian Hijra and Samoan Faafafine” (Symons and Hemphill 2006:123).

CONCLUSION

This chapter examines how two powerful institutions, media and sport, interact to shape and inform sexuality and are, in turn, shaped by sexuality. Language and imagery are fundamental aspects of communication. Both are sexualized in mass media in a variety of ways, often leading to discrimination against women, sexual minorities, and gender nonconforming people. The tendency to hypersexualize and objectify bodies in the media can influence an individual’s sexual relationships with others, contribute to a negative body image, and in extreme cases, lead to disordered eating. The impact of sexualized media on children and adolescents reveals media can and does have the power to shape their beliefs and understandings about sex and sexuality. Representations of LGBTQ individuals and groups in television and cinema have been traditionally neglected and negatively stereotyped. With progress in recent years, equality in representation is still needed.

Few institutions expose the intersection of gender and sexuality better than sport, and the sport media plays an important role in reinforcing heteronormativity. The intersection of masculinity in sport marginalizes female athletes and gay athletes. While women have made significant progress in sports since the passage of Title IX, the sports media has not kept up with these cultural changes. Gay athletes have faced the option of assimilating into mainstream, homophobic sports institutions or segregating into gay sports spaces. Finally, sports remains one of the most rigidly gender-segregated institutions in society. This presents transgender and intersex athletes with some serious dilemmas. International athletic competitions have attempted to address these issues through different forms of sex verification tests since the 1960s. Today, many high school and college athletic programs are establishing policies that allow for the inclusion of transgender and transsexual athletes in sports.

Key Terms and Concepts

Controlling images 118	Moral panic 124	Sports rape 125
Hypersexualized 115	Negative recruiting 126	Sports sex 122
Jock culture 122	Racial fetishism 118	Structured absence 118
Media 113	Sexual objectification 116	Symbolic annihilation 115
Media literacy 113	Sports media 112	Televised sports manhood
Minority stress 127	Sports/media complex 122	formula 124

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Describe how language is sexualized in media. How is imagery sexualized in media? What potentially dangerous impacts can these have on women and girls? What impacts do these have on men and boys?
2. Describe representations of LGBTQ individuals in media. How are stereotypes perpetuated? What messages do stereotypes send? What impact might they have?
3. Explain the intersection of masculinity and sport and the affect this has on gay and female athletes. What role does sports media play in reinforcing masculinity in sport?
4. Explain the two paths LGBTQ athletes have taken to enter the sports world: assimilating into mainstream sports organizations or forming separate, gay sports spaces. What are the pros and cons associated with each approach? What affect does each approach have on the wider society? How is this similar to LGBTQ political activism described in Chapter Five?

Activities

1. Describe a transgender character you have seen portrayed in television or film. How are they depicted? What social norms or values are reflected?
2. Watch a major men's sporting event on television and write down evidence of masculinity being reinforced (paying attention to the broadcaster's comments, camera angles, etc.). Imagine if, instead, this sporting event involved female athletes (if you are watching men's basketball, reimagine it as women's basketball, for instance). Take the evidence you compiled and see how it applies (or fails to apply) to a sporting event involving the opposite sex. What does this tell you about sports media and the frame through which we see sports?

Essential Readings

- Anderson, Eric. 2005. *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Griffin, Pat. 1998. *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Messner, Michael A. 2007. *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Russo, Vito. 1987. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Wolf, Naomi. 2002. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women*. New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Wykes, Maggie and Barrie Gunter. 2005. *Media and Body Image: If Looks Could Kill*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Recommended Films

Celluloid Closet (1995). Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, Directors. A documentary narrated by Lily Tomlin that reviews various Hollywood screen depictions of homosexuals and the attitudes behind them throughout the history of North American film.

Killing us Softly Series: Advertising's Images of Women (2010). Jean Kilbourne, Writer/Director. This highly influential and award-winning series by Jean Kilbourne examines over 160 print and television ads and reveals sexist and misogynistic images and messages and a restrictive code of femininity that disempowers girls and women.

Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity (1999). Sut Jhally, Executive Producer/Director. Narrated by antiviolence educator Jackson Katz, this film explores how U.S. media and pop-cultural imagery shapes the social construction of masculine identities, particularly a violent masculine ideal.

Training Rules (2009). Dee Mosbacher and Fawn Yacker, Directors. This documentary investigates the Penn State women's basketball program under Coach Rene Portland and specifically her "training rules" which involved "no lesbians." Through interviews with former players, the harm caused by this homophobic athletic environment is exposed.

Suggested Multimedia

Center for Media Literacy (CML) is an educational organization dedicated to promoting and supporting media literacy education as a framework for accessing, analyzing, evaluating, creating, and participating with media content. <http://www.medialiteracy.com/new-you>

Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD) is an organization that works with print, broadcast, and online news sources to highlight stories from the LGBT community. GLAAD works with writers and producers to bring LGBT characters and plotlines to entertainment media. www.glaad.org

Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association is a group whose goal is to nurture and grow LGBTQ sports worldwide, to make associations with mainstream sport and human rights organizations, and to organize the World OutGames every four years. Originating in 2006, this event is a competitor to the Gay Games, and there are talks of the two merging by 2022. <http://www.glisa.org/outgames/aboutglisa/>