

THESIS

DECOLONIZING TRANSNESS IN SPORT MEDIA:  
THE FRAMES AND DEPICTIONS OF  
TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Submitted By

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Science

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2016

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## ABSTRACT

### DECOLONIZING TRANSNESS IN SPORT MEDIA: THE FRAMES AND DEPICTIONS OF TRANSGENDER ATHLETES IN SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

This discourse analysis examines depictions of trans athletes in Sports Illustrated and sport culture through the lens of queer theory and the interpretive-packages model proposed by Gamson and Modigliani (1989). Four interpretive packages emerged from the print content: (1) Marginalization, (2) Labeling, (3) Fighting and Fairness and (4) Pride and Affirmation. The results illustrate that discourse has generally become more sensitive to trans issues. The author presents these results with cautious optimism. Blindly affirming and romancing the transgender can be equally as superficial as marginalization, and representations of trans athletes secured by one person are problematic. Researchers and sport organizations should dismantle antiquated, coercive sex segregation in traditional sport and decolonize how it contributes to gender-based oppression. The author recommends that media outlets focus on presenting fair, accurate and inclusive representations of transness that combat oppressive positions.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The language used within mediated discourse of sport can distribute power equitably in society while making social and professional establishments more democratic and sustainable. The way the media frame athletes and sport can influence readers' attitudes and beliefs (Nicely, 2007; Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf, & Hardin, 2002). Mainstream publications with their larger readerships can exercise their position of power to eradicate injustice (Hardy, 2014). They can shed light on social struggles and promote equality. Alternative, radical and citizen journalism allow for the examination of relationships between social-movement media and social change (Hardy, 2014). Critical journalism is essential in the global market when it provides a "visible demonstration of reliability, objectivity, independence and diversity" (McNair, 2006, p. 94). Recognizing patterns within media reveal the strength of language and journalism entities. "The patterns of what can and cannot be said, or what is and is not said, form evidence of where power is located and how it is developed. These patterns can be understood as derived from ideologies" (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, p. 266). In this study, I strive to gain insight on how language constructs experiences as well as evaluate how the media address and represent gender in sport journalism. By researching the role of the press with transness and sport, I reflect on the discourse in sports journalism and consider if the media packages (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) within the discourse experienced a shift in coverage since Aug. 16, 1954.

At a University of Chicago transgender-studies symposium on Feb. 17, 2006, a transgender attendee proclaimed: "The more we understand who we are, the more society seems to be getting confused" (University of Chicago, 2006). This person's sentiment accurately reflects how, in the present day, some people contemplate transgender subject matters — including bodies, science, identity, gender expression, discourse representations and athletics —

with apparent mystification. Caitlyn Jenner's coming-out interview that aired on ABC in April 2015 (Sawyer, 2015) is a prominent and timely example. Interviewer Diane Sawyer's frequent gasps of bewilderment after she learned, for instance, genitalia is not indicative of gender identity and that gender identity is not indicative of sexual orientation mirror this sentiment. Miley Cyrus's announcement that she had struggled with traditional gender expectations and proclaimed that, "I kind of wanted to be nothing. I don't relate to what people would say defines a girl or a boy" (Krochmal, 2015) might be difficult for some people, including journalists or even feminists to accept or understand.

Transgender athletes in sport confound regulatory regimes, researchers, journalists, teammates, competitors, fans and Westernized society. Biopolitics allow researchers to consider how regulatory organizations sort bodies to maintain control and governance in Western power structures (Puar, 2007). A transgender athlete is up for biopolitical review and scrutiny by a variety of invested governing bodies and skeptical individuals who question the player's gender legitimacy based on the person's transition process. Biopolitics address the mixture of penalizing methods directed at a body (Stryker, 2014). These systems produce regulations for the entire populace of related bodies based on gender, sex, body function, body appearance or any other defining and marginalizing feature. Biometric regulation requires that a person fit into a male or female dichotomy to participate in professional sports. Some trans athletes and activists have challenged the sex and gender binary. In 1977, trans woman and tennis player Renee Richards filed a lawsuit against the Women's Tennis Association for prohibiting her participation. Michelle Dumaresq (mountain biking), Lana Lawless and Mianne Bagger (golf), Kai Allums (basketball), Keelin Godsey (hammer throw) and Santhi Soundarajan (runner) are other athletes who have tested the standards (Travers, 2014). Although some have experienced amplified

visibility and awareness, transgender athletes experience a matrix of domination (Collins, 2000) and oppression. Using inclusive language in sports journalism can help correct this.

In contemporary society, many researchers view the binary concepts of gender as restrictive (Travers, 2014; Bromley, 2012; Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). Feminist researchers who recognize the social construction of gender and the role of language allow for inclusion and detailed exploration of the transgender experience (Frost & Elichaooff, 2014). Scholars who study transgender theories engage in decolonization. Decolonization is the undoing of colonialism when organizations or governments establish and maintain domination over marginalized groups (Boellstorff, et al., 2014). We could consider binary gender categories to be colonized language because they reiterate Western constructs of sex and gender. Researchers are required to rethink sex and gender categories and account for the facets of the transgender transition. They decolonize and expand the notion of what it means to be male, female, trans or another gender identity. As a journalist, media researcher and critical feminist sports scholar, I strive to produce significant research that addresses trans realities and creates tangible progress.

Journalism can facilitate discussion and critiques on the gender dichotomy in sports as well as transgender athletes. Sports media could employ its unique area of expertise to promote social-justice education, inclusive language and gender equality. In general, sports organizations and the cultures within them need an antisexist overhaul to overcome pervasive sexism (Travers, 2013). To facilitate this process, critical feminist sports scholars need to focus on how sports and journalism contribute to gender inequality by reinforcing orthodox masculinity and perpetuating patriarchal sexism. This male-female division within sporting organizations strengthens the

foundation of gender inequality by maintaining separate spheres as well as the supporting assumptions and myths of unfair advantages based on biological sex.

Gender is a distinguishing factor in many media studies (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Whipple & Courtney, 1985; McIntyre, Hosch, Harris, & Norvell, 1986; Aalberg & Jenssen, 2007; Smith & Granados, 2009). These studies address the reactions and impressions of print (Madden & Weinberger, 1982), broadcast (Courtney & Whipple, 1974; Smith & Granados, 2009) and radio (Duncan & Nelson, 1985) media as seen through gendered lens. Ongoing and evolving discourse documents gender in sports, athletes and athletic performance. Feminist sports media research has analyzed coverage of female athletes in media (Bernstein, 2002), media framing of female athletes and women's sports in sports magazines (Nicely, 2007) and sport media as a gendered genre (Kennedy, 2000). Additional research has investigated textual analysis of women in sport (Carty, 2005), including through internet media such as blogs (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013) and message boards (Kian, Clavio, Vincent, & Shaw, 2011). Studies also have addressed media representations of gender in Olympic coverage (Cole C., 2000; Jones, 2011; Samie & Sehlkoglou, 2015) as well as international coverage of gender in sports (Bernstein & Galily, 2008; Lee, 2009; Smith F., 2012; Adams, Ashton, & Lupton, 2014). Research has also focused on the gender dichotomy in sports (Travers, 2013; Travers, 2014) as well as media construction of female bodies (Markula, 2001; von der Lippe, 2002) and coverage of the controversial practice of the International Olympic Committee's sex/gender testing (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013; Wells & Darnell, 2014). These regulations, which have detrimental and oppressive consequences for many athletes, assess competitive advantage. None of these studies, however, addressed media representations and frames of transgender athletes in sports media, media construction of transgender bodies or how the media's coverage of

biopolitical practices has challenged or perpetuated the myths about competitive advantage. This study contributes to media research by addressing critical feminist concerns about sport and media by combining a content and textual qualitative frame analysis of articles about transgender athletes.

This study's objective is to discover and explain how transgender language production and depictions of trans exemplars have shifted and progressed in sport culture and discourse. This study will contribute to academic literature by considering, defining and examining the language and historical context within the interpretive packages used by sports journalists to explain the experience of transgender athletes. As a researcher striving to uncover how the frames and discussions about transgender athletes in sports media changed over time, I will employ media framing as my methodological approach. Framing purports that journalists could stage stories with various approaches that manifest through producers, topics, readers and societal schemas (Entman, 1993). As researchers could perceive discourse as a collection of interpretive packages that give significance to a subject (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), I divided my population into four media packages. The packages allow me to assess what frames journalists prominently present. Agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and media-dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) provide additional backing for the media's role in affecting how audiences think and how they dynamically exercise the content in their daily lives to create significance. These two theories provide insight into how sports journalism plays a role in the development of norms and assumptions about transgender athletic participation. In the literature review, I examine how the language of sex and gender has evolved over time; how science affects the media's understanding of sport; how sexed and gendered sport

creates challenges for marginalized groups; and how the media should address sex and gender in athletics.

As a journalist, researcher and feminist conducting this critical-cultural, qualitative study, I have an obligation to recognize contemporary challenges in gender identities and a desire to correct them. I root my scholarship in community social justice. I have played roller derby with and against transgender athletes for more than a decade. Transgender activists and writers encourage their allies to consider meticulously the negative perceptions, attitudes and practices that affect the lives of all transgender people. Given the focus on the deconstruction of sport, the trans experience and media, I employ feminist media research, including queer and feminist theories, as well as decolonization as the conceptual and overarching theoretical frameworks. A feminist critique of sport through queer studies provides a means to review exclusionary practices of the sport organizations that divide contestants into an uncontested male-female dichotomy. To queer a position is to challenge the regulating methods of power that denote sexual objects as female or male, homosexual or heterosexual and “natural or perverse” (Eng, Halberstam, & Esteban Muñoz, 2005, p. 1). It is a powerful tool for studying, transcending and transforming borders while defying the rigid perimeters imposed on gender and sex. Queer theory allows researchers to contest the status quo by redefining categories and challenging boundaries. Therefore, queer theory provides a framework to queer the definition of the single most organizing aspect of sports: gender. It allows me to question the legitimacy of the established system and what it means to be an authentic athlete. When we decolonize, we reevaluate and reconfigure epistemological strategies that might result in unforeseen mistreatment, privilege, discrimination and dominance (Boellstorff, et al., 2014). As sex, gender and sexual orientation are fluid and neither mutually exclusive nor dependent on each other, we



see that gender identities are multiple and complex. “Queer theory focuses on individual truths and a self-understanding that demands the separation of sex from gender and sexuality to allow for greater insight into the complexities of each” (Bromley, 2012, p. 99). The theory allows researchers to assert that compartmentalizing individual experience only allows for a partial understanding of a person. Given my study’s feminist theoretical framework combined with the framing methodological approach, I critically examined media frames of transgender athletes as well as challenged pervasive misconceptions and marginalization.

My intention is to help terminate continuing prejudicial responses to gender diversity that result in violence, detrimental gender schemas and non-trans feminist perceptions. These are counterintuitive to the elevation of feminist ideology. They only create new power structures tied to bodies. In solidarity with the community, trans allies should fully reject the traditional gender dichotomy and allow for shifting gender boundaries. Embracing the transgender community’s request for recognition requires spreading current analysis of gender-based oppression to include the experience of all marginalized people. The following literature review begins with an explanation of the distinction between sex and gender followed by a review of how sport marginalizes people based on sex and gender. Then, I discuss the evolution of transgender language followed by how sports media do not fully account for sex and gender in athletics. I also present the theoretical framework and research questions that address transness in sports media. After which, I present my results and analysis.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### I. Hegemonic structures sex and gender sport.

Transgender and intersex participation in sport sparks passionate debates (Sullivan, 2012). Many people contend that sport organizations should prohibit these athletes from competition based on sex-based fairness considerations. The controversy about the definitions of “transgender” and “intersex” is included in the debate (Sullivan, 2012). The sex dichotomy largely determines sport-inclusion eligibility so sport-governing organizations create gender policies to define sex for sport-participation purposes (Sullivan, 2012). Researchers wildly contest gender categories in traditionally gender-segregated spaces (Meadow, 2010), including in conversations about birth privilege and in sports. “Our culture is predicated on the idea of two genders starting with the color of your baby blanket, and sports is a place where that binary is firmly cemented” (McManus, 2015). According to research, modern sport emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe and its colonies as a male-supremacist venture intended to accentuate sex distinctions and socialize males into conventional masculinity. Researchers indicate that societal power structures directed sport at civilizing and fighting against the increasing power of middle- and upper-class white women (Travers, 2014). Modern North American sport still operates in a two-sex system that supports heteronormative, cisgender, patriarchal, class privileges (Collins, 2005). This construction is problematic because it does not account for identities and bodies that are outside those structures. Therefore, research suggests that modern North American sport is oppressive.

Both sex (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012) and gender (Butler, 1988) exist outside the Westernized, oppressive male/female dichotomy. While Western cultures frequently use the terms “sex” and “gender” interchangeably (Nordqvist, 2015), their definitions are discrete. Sex is

a biological status that signifies an individual's physical, physiological, chromosomal, genetic and anatomical composition used to classify bodies based on socio-cultural concepts of physiology (Beauvoir, 1949). Within the medical community, professionals traditionally categorize infants as either male or female based on genitalia. However, a range of multiple sequences of physiological and genetic structures — such as hormones, chromosomes, internal and external reproduction organs and secondary sex characteristics — manifest in bodies (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). A person could be born as one of three sexes: male, female or intersex. All bodies are female during the first month of gestation. At six weeks, embryos with a specific male gene traditionally found on the Y chromosome begin to develop testicles, which activates cells that instigate testosterone production. Especially after it surges during puberty, testosterone is accountable for the increased muscle mass, bone density, height and weight as well as a larger amount of oxygen-carrying red bloods cells (Epstein, 2012). Habitually, XY chromosomes indicate more testosterone than estrogen. In addition, many societal power structures consider penis-and-testes genitalia indicative of the male sex as well as secondary characteristics such as a deep voice and facial hair (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). Alternatively, XX chromosomes, estrogen levels that are higher than testosterone levels and a genitalia combination that includes a vagina, uterus and ovaries conventionally define the female sex; secondary characteristics include breasts and wider hips (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). A person born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia or internal reproductive organs that do not comply with Westernized notions of heteronormativity are intersex (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). In this, we discover that sex relates to bodies.

Gender, however, is more complex. Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for a particular sex

(Butler, 1988). This combination of identity, expression and social elements related to masculinity and femininity influence the ways that people act, interact and feel about themselves (Butler, 1988). Gender establishes variance between women and men that are not biological or natural (West & Zimmerman, 1987). These culturally constructed classifications have an explicit meaning developed in and strengthened by sociocultural powers at a particular historic instance (Butler, 1990). “Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy” (Butler, 1988, p. 531). A person’s appearance might not be indicative of the person’s gender identity (Brown & Rounsley, 1996). Research shows that a person self-assigns a gender, on average, by the age of five (Chung, 2009), although some children have identified their gender as young as 18 months (Sawyer, 2015). Some people might be born a gender that does not match Westernized constructs of gender based on birth genitalia. This instance establishes an initial framework for the context of this study.

While features of biological sex are similar across different cultures, gender characteristics vary (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). This historical context proves that gender traditionally existed outside the Western construct of the male/female sex/gender binary. Queer indigenous studies affirm that the Native American identity recognizes multiple forms of gender identity and sexuality within the communities’ cultural identity (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). This allows them to exist in a society that situates gender practices within traditional values. Therefore, Native societies do not classify gender identities that exist outside the Western construct of the gender binary as dissimilar because of the individual’s location and status (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). The Cherokee nation coined the terms “D4Y” and “DβC” to create distance from a binary identification and define ways of

being that are separate from those constructed by the nation-state (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). This act disrupts colonial constructs.

Understanding the distinction between sex and gender informs researchers and journalists about the differences between body biology and social gender construction that is decidedly unrelated to birth genitalia. Recognizing gender production in social situations, such as in sport environments, allows researchers to assess social construction and the societal power that maintains it (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This study expands on sex/gender research by considering how sports media report on bodies that exist outside Westernized constructs. Recognizing the distinction validates a study desired to question media portrayals of sex and gender separately and congruently.

## **II. Science affects the social understanding of sport.**

Previous media research has addressed coverage of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) controversial practice of sex/gender testing (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013; Wells & Darnell, 2014). Stella Walsh in 1932 and Ewa Kłobukowska in 1964 were the first female athletes held back from the Olympic Games based on these regulations (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012). In 2004, the IOC initiated the Stockholm Consensus to control the participation of transgender — primarily male-to-female — athletes (Sullivan, 2012). Trans contenders who underwent transitional surgery after puberty were conditionally eligible to enter the games after appropriate bureaucrat authorities granted approval of a legally recognized sex. (Sullivan, 2012). The IOC ruled that transgender athletes who chose to compete in the sex category of the gender to which they ascribe must undergo anatomical surgery in addition to two years of testosterone suppression or supplementation therapy (Epstein, 2012). While the IOC addressed these earlier biopolitical injustices by updating its transgender-inclusion policy in 2016 (Zeigler, 2016), the

committee's previous regulations demonstrate the sporting environment at a specific time in history and the institutionalization of the bureaucratically established restrictive biopolitical practices. The practice of sex/gender testing is a biometric technology that normalizes the antiquated two-sex structure (Travers, 2014). As it is with biometrics (Clarkson, 2014), these profiling practices were coded with assumptions about gender that enforce body standards.

Through these regulations, the IOC's insensitive sex/gender tests institutionalize patriarchal power and marginalize women. In 2009, the media widely discussed the serious and significant debate concerning the sex/gender testing of Caster Semenya, an intersex South African track-and-field runner (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013; Wells & Darnell, 2014). One study addressed the politics and ethics of sex testing by analyzing print communication discourse within a track-and-field web-based community (Wells & Darnell, 2014). Researchers discovered that most members recognized the sex-testing policies as problematic, in line with feminist struggles and promoted a narrow view of the biologically normative female body while maintaining a belief that the regulations were a necessity to maintain fairness in sex-segregated sport. Further research compared the United States of America and South African print news media and analyzed coverage of the Semenya controversy (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013). The findings demonstrated that the media coverage, especially in the United States, highlighted that Semenya was subject to sex/gender testing because her physical traits — deep voice, muscular build and improved performance — were deemed uncharacteristic for a heteronormative female. United States media reports framed the controversy regarding medical declarations of bodies: the athlete's actual sex, sex/gender testing debates and the limitations of biometric sex-segregated medical assessments of bodies in sport. The sources in the South African print media, however, focused on human rights, nationalism and strategic essentialism.

The study concluded that postcolonial feminism and critical feminist studies could help create transformative visions of sport (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013). Therefore, this study on transness in Sports Illustrated analyzed from a critical feminist perspective works to document changing depictions of sport that are often the consequence of biopolitical changes in sporting structure and policy.

**Biometrics and biopolitics.** Biometric procedures within sporting institutions institutionalize and authenticate power. Biometric technologies, such as fingerprint-recognition scans and full-body scanners at airports, measure the body with the intent to identify people (Clarkson, 2014). Researchers argue that they also facilitate in social hierarchies and segregation by influencing domination and hegemonic effects (Clarkson, 2014; Foucault, 1978; Puar, 2007). Biometric cultural critics argue that biometrics are coded with assumptions about gender and race as well as support profiling practices that enforce body norms. Clarkson (2014) testified that examining experiences with biometrics “reveals the bodily norms encoded into and enforced by these technologies” (Clarkson, 2014, p. 37). Biometric technologies — under the framework of biopolitics and biopower, which both consider how bodies are sorted to maintain control and governance in Western power structures (Puar, 2007) — are tools designed to promote a homonationalism agenda. Homonationalism is public performance of the national-state policy (Puar, 2007). It is naming and identifying how nations engage in institutional policies and how the public performs those regulations. It reinforces the social order and United States heteronormativity (Puar, 2007). Sport pervasively demonstrates homonationalism. As a tool of homonationalism, biometric technologies police the gender dichotomy in sports. Biopolitics in organized sports dictates that the heteronormative biological capacities of assumed bodily norms and ideals regulate an athletic population optimally managed under the mask of competitive

fairness. A person's body, rather than its performance, must endure assessments and judgments to be considered legitimate in the eyes of athletic associations and sport governing organizations. In this, the athlete must comply with heteronormativity for organizations to consider them authentic. Sport media frames of biopolitical practices that marginalize bodies that do not fit into a homonationalism agenda can be studied to address social order as well as how athletic cultures depict regulatory changes.

**The transgender transition.** In transgender studies and transfeminism, biometric technologies are a pivotal aspect of investigating the biopolitical connection of sexualized, gendered and racial concerns (Clarkson, 2014). Indeed, transgender bodies have habitually become susceptible to structural logistical oppressions including labeled unsuitable in body politics (Stryker, 2014) as well as in sport. Transgender bodies are problematic in sports because they exist outside the Western notions of sex and gender; they challenge biopolitical logic and confound administrative practices and organizational rules (Stryker, 2014). The way we understand how transgender people transition affects the public's perception of regulated sports participation. The transition process starts when a transgender person begins living and expressing as the gender to which they identify. To transition implies a modification in physical appearance, which is vital to the practice of shifting gender in public contexts (Carter, 2014). The transition represents the way transgender people transcend beyond socially defined boundaries and fluidly move from one gender identity into another. These performances might visually manifest in clothes or hairstyle alterations. Language, such as in name changes and pronouns, also might reflect these changes. The person might take legal measures such as amending gender on a birth certificate. These self-presentation transitions might include medical intervention such



as hormone therapy, surgery or other procedures. However, these measures are optional for the transition process.

On its surface, the transgender transition process confounds heteronormativity. The previous constraints of the term “transition” have become customized and flexible, as some transgender individuals have formed sophisticated interpretations of their gender identities and the ways they wish to express them (Mapes, 2015). Rather than assuming a transgender transition has distinct boundaries, we need to consider it as more of a transmigration or movement that flows through an unstipulated number of stages and portrayals (Boellstorff, et al., 2014). Socially and legally, these individuals have the ability to define the parameters of their own transitions (Stanley, 2014).

“When we are not aware of the days getting longer, have the seasons stopped changing? This is the promise of transition, as the term continues to expand from its psychiatric and surgical usage: that we can live in the time of our own becoming and that possible change is not restricted to the narrow sphere of our conscious intention” (Carter, 2014, p. 237).

In this, transgender people can establish sovereignty over their personal evolution. Sovereignty, the ability to self-govern, provides the opportunity to diminish and eliminate gendered labeling (Rifkin, 2011). The person in transition could, then, publicly manifest private feelings and engage in gender self-determination in a tolerant and safe environment (Stanley, 2014). An increase in gender self-determination creates spaces for gendered embodiments and expressions (Stanley, 2014) in all contexts including the cultures established by sport. While regulatory organizations impose biopolitical review of trans athletes’ transition (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012), sport media can use its position of power to frame these procedures as necessary, exclusionary or complex. Studying transness in *Sports Illustrated* allows researchers to assess how well media pervasively feature the truths about the transgender transition rather than the myths or

misconceptions. Understanding transitions helps researchers fully recognize the oppressiveness within the IOC's biopolitical regulations created to govern trans bodies in the Olympic Games.

**Competitive advantage.** Previous media research has analyzed the frames of the IOC's biopolitical practice of sex/gender testing in print news media (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013). My study contributes to academic research by considering USA sport media. While interpreting the media frames within interpretative packages, I consider thematic frames depicting fairness and competitive advantage. Our heteronormative society has recently granted the transgender population increased flexibility of self-determination in social contexts, but it questions predisposition to consider transgender people authentic athletics. Some social understanding of transgender athletes is that they might have competitive advantage based on birth sex. However, research shows that medical experts popularly understand competitive advantage to be a myth (Epstein, 2012). Many researchers have addressed this disparity in published works. Carlson (2005) wrote: "Automatic assumptions about advantage are medically discounted: hormone therapy and removal of male organs result in considerable diminution of speed, muscle bulk, and strength" (p. s40). Griffin & Carroll (2010) agreed and reported that the belief that trans women athletes contending in women's sports have "competitive advantage outside the range of performance and competitive advantage or disadvantage that already exists among female athletes is not supported by evidence" (p. 16). Indeed, testosterone accounts for athletic disparities among bodies. However, the fundamental act of adding or removing testosterone during hormone treatments influences competitive performance as either a reduction in performance for trans women or an increase for trans men (Epstein, 2012). Any athletic advantage a transgender woman might have had caused by her prior testosterone levels dissipate after about one year of estrogen therapy (Griffin & Carroll, 2010). In *The Washington Post*

column published on April 1, 2015, Joanna Harper, a transgender researcher and medical physicist, further confirmed that science could explain why transgender athletes do not have competitive advantage (Harper, 2015). Hormone therapy typically includes a testosterone-blocking drug and an estrogen supplement. After trans women begin hormone therapy and their testosterone levels decrease, they undergo muscle-mass, bone-density and red-blood-cell reduction. A combination of these changes causes endurance, speed and strength loss. Meanwhile, estrogen boosts fat storage especially around the hips. Together, these changes lead to a decrease in essentials of athleticism: speed, strength and endurance (Harper, 2015). In summary, testosterone is the hormone that enhances a male's athletic performance. Suppressing testosterone changes an athlete's overall performance. These medical facts begin to deflate the myth of sex-based competitive advantage within transgender athletes who have begun hormone therapy. Considering how clearly sport media frame competitive advantage, medical accuracy and fairness allows researchers to contemplate the impact these depictions could have on public knowledge and perceptions of trans participation in sport. <sup>i</sup>

“I hope the mounting evidence, coupled with exposure to trans women athletes, will go some way toward changing hearts and minds. The rules established by different leagues are unnecessarily inconsistent, and prejudice persists at all levels of sport — from elite leagues down to high school teams” (Harper, 2015).

### **III. Sport creates challenges for marginalized groups.**

Media researchers have addressed the dichotomy and sex segregation in sports (Travers, 2013). They have studied textual portrayals of female athletes and women in sport (Adams, Ashton, & Lupton, 2014; Carty, 2005; Nicely, 2007; Samie & Sehlikoglu, 2015), visual portrayals of athletic women (Kennedy, 2000; Markula, 2001) and how female hyperandrogenism affects intersex athletes (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013; Wells & Darnell, 2014). Marginalized groups, specifically women, have been othered by sport media culture (von

der Lippe, 2002). Both political and psychological, otherness is the unequal and unfair position that attaches inferiority and alienness to groups that are distinct from Westernized, homonationalism-based constructs (Brons, 2015). G.W.F. Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic (Hegel, 1807) greatly shaped the concept of the other, which suggested wide applications and implications. His text facilitated otherness's place "in any critical discourse that wrestles with some idea of the 'other' as that against which you define yourself" (Cole A., 2004, p. 578). While research on the relationship between transgender and intersex athletes exists (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012), research on how media frame in sport journalism affect the public's perception of transgender athletes and if sport media culture has othered trans athletes has been overlooked. In addition, media research has largely ignored how textual portrayals in sports journalism contribute to pervasive sexism that affects the transgender athlete. Transgender topics are gender-based issues, and scholars should add them to gender-based sport media research. Therefore, research on sport journalism should arguably address textual portrayals of trans and intersex athletes as they relate to topics that create particular challenges for these marginalized groups. Media research should consider the salience of such topics, the accuracy of the coverage and the way journalists frame these athletes in discourse.

**Sport in society.** While sport in its most primitive form promotes unyielding dedication, nourishing lifestyles and collaborative fellowship, it also could promote or block social-justice change. Sport is a principle societal institution because it leads to conversations about social reform and socialization, and its international and national reach impacts political and policy development (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). Sport can communicate national interests, such as legitimacy and status enhancement, and nations dedicate immense resources into achieving sporting success on an international playing field, such as in Olympic competitions (Frey &

Eitzen, 1991). Therefore, studying sport allows researchers to examine relationships, behaviors, structures (Frey & Eitzen, 1991) and oppressive binaries and segregations on a national and international level.

Research has shown that people who reside in the United States of America are seemingly comfortable with the myth that athletic superiority is an avenue for mounting societal progress; however, racial and gender-based discrimination is exceedingly prevalent (Frey & Eitzen, 1991; Travers, 2013; Travers, 2014). Women have faced a specific type of oppression because myths have circulated about their ability to participate in competition. These myths include:

- (1) sport is harmful and a threat to a female's reproduction and childbearing abilities,
- (2) sport masculinizes appearance,
- (3) males are emasculated if females outperform them, which threatens the development of masculinity,
- (4) funding female sport clubs wastes resources because their performance levels are lower than males' performance; and
- (5) females do not need sports for personal maturity because competition, achievement and aggressiveness are irrelevant to a female's life experiences (McPherson, Curtis, & Loy, 1989).

Although research has debunked these falsehoods, these beliefs are persistently persuasive; powerful; and trigger stereotypes, stigmas and conflict (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). Despite these problematic consequences, research shows that women athletes have a better outlook on their life, self and body than non-athletes do (Snyder & Kivlin, 1975). Cisgender females have thrived in athletics. As research has refuted myths about cisgender females in sport,

researchers and journalists should consider that presumed truths about all women — both cisgender and transgender — in sports are both inaccurate and exclusionary.

**Gender in sport.** Many sport institutions — from recreational and professional leagues to athletic clubs and gyms — and the cultures within them need a general antisexist overhaul to overcome pervasive sexism and misogyny. As scientific evidence has shown, separating sport by sex is a questionable practice and understanding sport performance on a continuum might be more authentic (Travers, 2013). “The unthinkability of gendered overlap in sport performance is a key component of the binary normative structure of most contemporary Western sport” (Travers, 2013, p. 8). Researchers suggest that this ideology supports injustice for all genders and dominance in sports attributed to cultural, rather than biological, directives (Travers, 2013). “As the culture moves toward a greater, though imperfect, acceptance of gay and lesbian professional athletes, transgender athletes have traditionally faced greater stigma. Witness the reaction to Caitlyn Jenner, which was part celebration and part rejection” (McManus, 2015). This sex-based division strengthens the basis of gender inequality by maintaining separate spheres as well as the assumptions and myths of unfair advantages based on biological sex. Eliminating binary, normative sport structures would create a culture of overlapping ability, fluid understanding of gender identity and greater opportunities for transgender inclusion.

**Transgender and intersex athletes.** In terms of science, transgender bodies challenge biopolitical logic and confound administrative practices and organizational rules (Stryker, 2014). Historically, the fear of competitive advantage (Griffin & Carroll, 2010) has made it difficult for some athletic organizations to accept athletic bodies that exist outside the sex and gender dichotomy. Therefore, critics have scrutinized transgender, as well as intersex, involvement in sports. They contest the participation of intersex athletes who identify as female because of the

players' naturally occurring testosterone levels; thus, they are barred from female Olympic participation (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012). They could be eligible to compete in male competition (Zeigler, 2016). However, sport still forces them into coercive, as opposed to voluntary, categories. Similarly, members of the transgender community face a unique but nonetheless crippling form of discrimination. "The sight of a transvestite [*sic*] onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence" (Butler, 1988, p. 527). Similarly, they encounter distinct challenges in athletic competition (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). Governing entities necessitate biopolitical review of a transgender athlete's transition process (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) recently updated its transgender policy, which removed the need for Olympic-level trans athletes to undergo surgery and removed all restrictions for trans men (Zeigler, 2016). However, this policy still normalizes an antiquated two-sex structure (Travers, 2014). "No current policy debate on transgender participation in mainstream sport questions the sex-segregated structure of sporting spaces" (Travers, 2014, p. 195). The new IOC regulations are also oppressive to transgender women because they must abide by additional restrictions not applied to trans men. To date, a publicly out transgender athlete has never competed in the Olympics (Zeigler, 2016). However, Chris Mosier, a triathlete who qualified for the World Duathlon Championships and the first out transgender athlete to make a United States national team, was not sure if he would be allowed to participate; now, he can (Thomas, 2016).

#### **IV. The language of sex and gender evolve over time.**

Queering, decolonizing and dismantling binary language in sports journalism while employing gender-neutral language, some scholars argue, will help undo pervasive stereotypes. Language is not merely a representation of experience; rather, it has the power to establish and organize knowledge. “Language is a subtle way in which the socially constructed aspects of gender identity can act as oppression” (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010, p. 438). The way people understand and express circumstances and concepts are reliant on the words used in society and discourse.

**The evolution of term “transgender.”** General understandings of the terms “sex” (Beauvoir, 1949) and “gender” (Butler, 1988) have developed. Similarly, the language used to describe the transgender community (Williams C., 2014) as well as how to address them (McManus, 2015) has progressed. Some researchers have used the offensive and archaic (GLAAD, 2014) word “transvestite” to describe a transgender person (Butler, 1988). However, the official definition denotes a person who wears clothing socially associated with the opposite sex (GLAAD, 2014). According to The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, journalists should use “cross-dresser” instead (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015). Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression not performed for the entertainment of others (GLAAD, 2014). The word “transsexual” is an older term for a member of the trans population who had undergone or desired a medical transition (GLAAD, 2014). It is not an umbrella term for transgender people, and people should not use it unless someone requests it. The term is outdated, and The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law indicates that media should use the more inclusive and inoffensive word “transgender” instead (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015).



The expansive use of the word “transgender” embraces the political and scholarly promise of transgender studies (Williams C., 2014). Some credit Virginia Prince (1913–2009) with establishing the term “transgender” when it gained widespread use in the early 1990s. However, researchers assert that public opinion exaggerated her role and the term’s true evolution is multifarious (Williams C., 2014). Prince, who played a marked role in forming trans communities and organizations, was a self-identified heterosexual cross-dresser from Los Angeles, Calif. Eventually, she did live as a woman on a full-time basis. Prince self-assigned as “transgenderal” in 1969 and as “transgenderist” in 1978 (Williams C., 2014). In this, she assigned a name to living as a gender other than the one assigned at birth without undergoing surgery. In 1975, “FI News” defined the term “transgenderist” in the way Prince employed it. Ari Kane, a trans community leader on the East Coast, applied this term similarly in 1976. However, Prince and Kane did not use the word in the all-inclusive, modern sense, and they were not the first people to employ the use of compound terms that incorporated “trans” and “gender.” “More importantly, the earliest documented uses of ‘transgender’ do not distinguish cross-dressing or living full time without surgery from transsexual identities” (Williams C., 2014, p. 232). In reality, the term evolved due to medical necessity.

In 1965, Dr. John Oliven suggested that “transgenderism” should replace “transsexualism.” He argued, “the concept of sexuality could not account for the ‘all consuming belief that [transsexuals] are women who by some incredible error were given the bodies of men’” (Williams C., 2014, p. 233). Then, on April 26, 1970, “TV Guide” used the term “transgendered” to describe the “title character of Gore Vidal’s sex-change farce” (Williams C., 2014, p. 233) in the 1968 satirical novel, “Myra Breckinridge.” Writers described the book as “part of a major cultural assault on the assumed norms of gender and sexuality which swept the

Western world in the late 1960s and early 1970s” (Altman, 2005, p. 132). In 1974, Drs. Robert Hatcher and Joseph Pearson used “transgender” as a term for operative transsexuals, when they wrote: ““transvestite rarely seeks transgender surgery”” (Williams C., 2014, p. 233). Oliven used “transgender” that same year. The following year, in 1975, trans groups began considering “transgenderism” as an inclusive word for transsexuals and transvestites (Williams C., 2014). In 1979 — and then again in 1982 and 1985 — Christine Jorgensen (1926 –1989) publicly rejected the word “transsexual” in favor “transgender.” Some consider her the most famous transgender person because she was one of the first to undergo hormone therapy and surgery (Hadjimatheou, 2012). In 1984, TV-TS Tapestry magazine published an article on the transgender community. In this, “transgender” was a blanket term that included cross-dressers and transsexuals. Eventually, in the mid-1980s, “transgender” referenced all trans people (transsexuals, cross-dressers and other gender outside the male/female binary) within the community, popular culture and medical field (Williams C., 2014).

By the early 1990s, the term “transgender” had undergone a surge in popularity. Researchers should attribute this rise to the evolution and acceleration of a trend in language rather than the recreation of a prevailing word that had an alternate meaning originally. “The coinage, uptake, and diffusion of ‘transgender’ was an organic, grass-roots process that emerged from many sources, in many conversations happening in many different social locations” (Williams C., 2014, p. 233). In recent years, various organizations, such as the GLAAD Media Reference Guide (GLAAD, 2014), have created inclusive language-policies for journalists who address the developing nature of sex and gender-based terms. GLAAD designed these guidelines to decrease nomenclature inconsistencies for the general public and media professionals.

Non-discriminatory guidelines that speak to appropriately discussing and addressing transgender people in media discourse have evolved. Using inclusive language promotes self-determination. As mentioned above: “Language is a subtle way in which the socially constructed aspects of gender identity can act as oppression” (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010, p. 438). Therefore, social-justice and professional organizations (GLAAD, 2014; Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015; Society of Professional Journalists, 2014) have argued that journalists should employ suitable nomenclature when reporting on marginalized groups. Media regulation organizations suggest, at the least, media producers should follow the baseline parameters dictated by the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics and The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law.

(1) The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics indicates that media should minimize harm, show compassion and consider ethical justification (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014).

(2) The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law indicates that journalists should use the word “transgender” rather than the term “transsexual” and “cross-dresser” rather than “transvestite” (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015).

Identifying catchphrases in stories helps document language evolution in sports media. This study’s methodology indicates that catchphrases are overused words in packages of stories. Researchers say that catchphrases in media discourse seize the spirit of a media frame in a language: in words, statements, taglines and slogans (Gamson & Lasch, 1981). Editors are prone to publishing attention-grabbing catchphrases. These words or phrases that have cultural resonances can imply positive or negative connotations (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). I paid

particular attention to catchphrases in Sports Illustrated discourse because I aim to document and analyze the evolution and influence of trans-specific language.

#### **V. Sports media do not fully address sex and gender in athletics.**

Media and sport contribute to our tendencies to frame gender and transgender folks in a specific way. Researchers say that media affect the public's beliefs and attitudes about gender and that media have a responsibility to establish public comprehension about legal and medical transgender issues (Sullivan, 2012). Some mediums have challenged and expanded notions of gender while other representations and frames reinforce gender binaries (Sullivan, 2012). Media have traditionally portrayed discriminatory articles and images that sensationalize trans athletes, which adds to stereotypes and misconceptions (Sullivan, 2012). However, some media professionals have become more tolerant and educated about transness (Sullivan, 2012). Therefore, sport media could help form public opinions of trans athletes. GLAAD (2014) suggests that media discourse can legitimize impertinent and inaccurate rhetoric that distorts the lives of the transgender and intersex population, and these stories diminish journalistic quality (GLAAD, 2014). Therefore, research shows that journalists have an obligation to be sensitive to trans language and issues. Trans Media Watch is a British charity dedicated to improving media coverage of trans and intersex issues (Kermode, 2010). It asserts that journalists and media regulators should have a firm commitment, "to treat incidents of transphobia with the same seriousness as incidents of homophobia and racism" (Kermode, 2010, p. 12). The organization issued a survey to assess the transgender population's use and perception of media in 2010. Trans Media Watch surveyed self-identified, United Kingdom-based transgender people on their feelings about representations of trans people in the media. Trans Media Watch implemented the survey between Nov. 1, 2009 and Feb. 28, 2010. It employed a mixed-methods approach that

focused on quantitative survey data while incorporating a qualitative open-answer approach that allowed respondents to provide detailed accounts of the nature of their experiences. The results indicated that 78 percent of the respondents shared that media portrayed trans people inaccurately or highly inaccurately (Kermode, 2010). Read more survey results and details in the discussion section.

A European agency conducted the above study. However, researchers should study sport media found in the United States of America because Western constructs influence media representations. Understanding globalization is vital to grasping the altered nature of modern sport and culture. Globalization is connecting and compressing the world and the strengthening global awareness (Jarvie, 2006). The increased global media coverage of international sport supports the concept of global sport. However, closely examining television coverage indicates that these discussions are understated styles of cultural nationalism (Jarvie, 2006). Research indicates that broadcast companies from the United States attract viewers to Olympic Game coverage by emphasizing national significances and symbols (Jarvie, 2006). The television networks maintained that viewers preferred nationalist themes that promoted United States principles and international superiority. The power of Western sport and media in international areas are paramount. Other countries have contested that the idea of global sport and its governance reflect Western and United States power (Jarvie, 2006). Therefore, to understand sporting spaces, researchers should examine their position in Western media.

Sports journalists can correct misconceptions through attentively researching and exposing myths used against the population (GLAAD, 2014) through careful analysis of its frames and depictions of transgender athletes. Research has shown that the media frames of athletes and sport can influence reader attitudes and beliefs (Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf, & Hardin,

2002). Communication scholars discovered that excessively overt sexism in sports media discourse is infrequent, but the process of media framing permits biased ideas to skate through filters (Eastman & Billings, 2001). “Hidden racism and sexism” (Eastman & Billings, 2001, p. 187) are found in media frames in mainstream outlets (Ward, 2004), and the frames have power to alter or validate the attitudes of younger audiences socialized through media discourse (Eastman & Billings, 2001). Specifically, academics learned that media frames could mold how children acquire impressions about socially appropriate, gender-based roles (Nathanson, Wilson, McGee, & Sebastian, 2002). “As early as grade one, stereotypes concerning the gender-appropriateness of athletics influence perceptions of and participation in athletic activities” (Harrison & Lynch, 2005, p. 228). A study reported that 36 percent of teens who identified as boys, compared to 9 percent of people who identified as girls, desired society to see them as superstar athletes (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). These effects indicate that not only are children mindful of gender roles at an early age but also that they are also conscious of how they apply to sport and athletes.

Researchers have said that late 20th and early 21st-century media can deeply affect public perception and gender performances (Landau, 2012) and images in media sensationalize trans athletes (Sullivan, 2012). Therefore, academics routinely study trans depictions in popular discourse, including magazines, and a range of visual media (Landau, 2012). Author Leslie Feinberg published international images that depicted the range of gender identities and sex, including photographs of the black American basketball player Dennis Rodman cross-dressing, in her book “Transgender Warriors” (Feinberg, 1996). Researchers discuss black masculinity while considering that both race and gender are social constructs and not biologically based (Crapanzano, 2012). Subsequently, characteristics connected to gender and race as well as

dominant views associated with both are within a system of cultural representations that the social institution of media establish, display, outline and sustain (Crapanzano, 2012). In this study, I analyze visual images within discourse that convey or depict transness to consider these images and their overall implications.

## **VI. Theoretical Framework**

Analyzing sports media discourse through the lens of queer theory allows me to queer and decolonize the gender dichotomy in sports while examining gender construction in sports media. Feminist media researchers believe journalism “industry practices reduce the range of voices, rely on stereotypes, limit access to information, and overall turn everything into a commodity. ... These patterns are derived from ideologies, such that mainstream news effectively tells its readers what to think about and, to some extent, what to think” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, pp. 269-270). The researchers are mirroring agenda-setting, media-dependency and framing theories when they address how the media have power over audience perception. Hardy (2014) spoke on the two dimensions of media power: (1) power over the media in how media producers decide on what topics to report and (2) power of the media in how media outlets shape meanings and induce change. I am concerned with access to power as it relates to voices, identities and interests heard in discourse about transgender exemplars in sports media.

**Queer and feminist theories.** Queer theorists assert that sex, gender and sexuality are fluid rather than standing on fixed frameworks. They assert that compartmentalizing individual experience only sanctions a partial understanding of the person (Bromley, 2012). Queer theory allows researchers to acknowledge that sex, gender and sexual orientation are neither mutually exclusive nor dependent on each other. Therefore, it allows scholars to regard gender identities as multiple and complex. Queer theorists reject the traditional gender male/female dichotomy,

and they acknowledge shifting gender boundaries (Bromley, 2012). They strive to create universal knowledge that (1) gender is socially constructed and (2) the male/female binary is a myth.

Queer theory significantly contributes to feminism because it allows us to separate biological sex from gender and sexuality (Bromley, 2012). While feminist scholars have turned their attention to queer theory and queer methodologies (Naples & Gurr, 2014), they continue to develop new ways of understanding knowledge production, experience, identities and gender marginalization to expand their research to include transgender theory and transfeminism. Transgender theory allows researchers to reiterate the problematizing assumptions about bodies and identities. It establishes a framework for a heteronormative critique that demands an end to a hierarchy that legitimizes socially constructed gender behaviors while devaluing and delegitimizing transgender identities (Elliot, 2010). Similarly, transfeminism, a synthesis of transgender and feminist perspectives, is rooted in the notion that various forms of sexism and oppression intersect with each other (Serano, 2012). Transfeminists contend that viewing men as oppressors and women as the oppressed is overly simplistic (Serano, 2012). Rather, transfeminism suggests that society marginalizes anyone who does not conform to a gender binary — from an intersex athlete and a transgender woman to a homosexual man and a tomboy girl — in different ways.

Queer theory gives me the framework to queer the definition of the single most organizing aspect of sports: gender. Queering a position challenges the regulating methods of power that denote sexual objects as female or male; homosexual or heterosexual; and normal or deviant (Eng, Halberstam, & Esteban Muñoz, 2005). Queering the sports dichotomy presents cause to consider the implications of patriarchal and heteronormative standards as they relate to



gender in athletics. Queering the gender dichotomy in sport helps create spaces in which society begins to see the unacceptable as standard. This epistemology allows me to question the legitimacy of the established system and decolonize what it means to be an authentic athlete. In this, I aim to rupture the illusion of gender normativity. Through this framework of feminist, queer and transgender studies, I use decolonization as a theoretical framework under which to investigate the representations and frames of trans athletes.

“I believe that taking the diversity of trans lives into account is necessary for the development of inclusive feminist and queer theories and practices” (Elliot, 2010, p. 6).

**Decolonization.** Scholars need to decolonize the relationship between bodies and identities as well as the relationship between gender and sport. When researchers decolonize, they reevaluate and reconfigure epistemological strategies that might result in unforeseen mistreatment, privilege, discrimination and dominance (Boellstorff, et al., 2014). Decolonizing allows us to find the theoretical, ethical and political tools to confront knowledge production about transgender and intersex people (Boellstorff, et al., 2014). By decolonizing processes, institutions and beliefs, academics confront “our own society’s contradictory agendas concerning sexuality, gender and power” (Towle & Morgan, 2006, p. 671). Decolonizing allows us to understand the transgender experience beyond sexuality and a two-gender framework.

When we decolonize the relationship between gender and sport, we contemplate alternatives to the antiquated two-sex system that challenge the archaically established norm of sex segregation. First, we reconsider the previous research that suggests (1) genitalia are unrelated to athletic performance, (2) gender identities can be fluid and (3) the sex-segregation in sports socially exclusionary. Researchers have also argued that a sex dichotomy in sports is scientifically problematic. Carlson (2005) asserts: “Any attempt to separate the sexes for sport by use of black and white constructs of maleness/femaleness creates more problems than it solves.

Chromosome screens imposed these cut and dried distinctions, which simply do not exist biologically” (p. s40). Therefore, sport organizations have exploited certain sex-based distinctions to justify forced segregation in a biopolitical attempt to assert power over athletes. However, scholars have proved that these exclusionary divisions are scientifically inaccurate.

**Additional theoretical approaches.** Referencing agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and media-dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) postulates backing for the media’s role in affecting how readers think and how they dynamically exercise the content in their daily lives to create significance. While one study used agenda-setting theory in a content analysis of LGBT discourse in MSNBC and Fox News (Wiktorek, 2015), this study combines transness with non-heterosexuality, and these issues are unrelated. Agenda-setting theory and media-dependency theory provide insight into how sports journalism might play a role in the development of norms and assumptions surrounding transgender athletic participation. Combining agenda-setting theory with a qualitative frame analysis allows scholars to investigate media’s effect on public opinion (Cissel, 2012). “Mass and electronic media remain the most important means by which people across the world form views on reality beyond their individual experience” (Hardy, 2014, p. 212). Agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) describes the media’s ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. Audiences will regard news items covered frequently and prominently as significant. At the first level of agenda-setting theory, communication is a process based on any object or set of objects competing for attention. The object is the topic of discussion. The first level illustrates the influence of issue salience and the media’s role in affecting what readers think (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). At the second level, agenda setting influences what people think about and how they think about them, such as what are the descriptions used to describe the object. It also considers the attributes that journalists and

readers have in mind when they think and talk about each object. In other words, the second level considers how the agenda of attributes affects public opinion and the media's role of telling its audience how to think about the topic (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

As we know from agenda-setting theory, media have the ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. Similarly, the media-dependency theory proposes that the significance of media discourse is determined by how “available meaning-generating experiences are in people's everyday lives” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 9). How does the everyday sport fan come to comprehend the complex issues surrounding the gender dichotomy in athletics? “On many issues, people encounter relevant phenomena directly rather than through mass-media accounts. They try to understand events in light of what touches their lives” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 9). However, many athletes might not have played on teams with transgender athletes. The media-dependency theory proposes that the media's contribution in the practice of formulating material worth deviates depending on the topic (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). Readers might have minimal knowledge to critique discourse meaning on some topics while they could have a great deal of experience on others. Regardless of the readers' dependency on content, the viewers dynamically exercise their previous knowledge in practice to erect significance; they are not passive subjects “on which the media work their magic” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 9).

Research shows that readers mentally infer and manage media discourse through framing and media frames (Reber & Berger, 2005; Scheufele B., 2004). Media framing describes the selection and prominence journalists give to portions of content, which allows some textual characteristics to be emphasized while others are diminished or omitted (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Knight, 1999; Entman, 1993). “Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged,

organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Diminishing the exposure to knowledge in media discourse is problematic because it diverts attention from potentially imperative knowledge while limiting the public’s complete understanding of the topic (Entman, 1993). A frame can offer a range of perceptions, rather than a single idea, which permits debate among those who share a mutual frame (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Media frames have three functions:

- (1) selection, in the demonstration of what or whom;
- (2) emphasis, in the quantity of selected depictions; and
- (3) exclusion, in the removal or avoidance of certain representations of or facts within topics (Billings, 2004).

Four areas of media communication manifest media frames:

- (1) in producers, swayed by personal preexisting schemas and frames, who transmit textual discourse or verbal expressions;
- (2) in the deficit or presence of topics within communication that might contribute to what information a reader does or does not ingrain in memory;
- (3) in the readers whose preexisting schemas and frames will impact what knowledge they process and store; and
- (4) in overarching shared societal schemas that often reflect heteronormative, patriarchal knowledge structures that might be pervasive due to the omission of or exposure to popular media discourse (Entman, 1993).

Therefore, exercising media framing in qualitative research creates opportunities for expansive interpretations, discussion and debate that could ideally lead to progressive social change.

My research questions allow me to examine the media frames of gender identities and expressions that do not conform to heteronormative, Westernized dichotomies and standards. As media discourse delivers fundamental tools to facilitate social understanding (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), I review textual representations that reinforce traditional binary structures and investigate positive social change for the transgender community.

**Research questions.** Given this literature review's deconstruction of sport, the transgender experience and media, we largely do not yet know how transgender language production has shifted and progressed in sport culture and sport discourse. Interpretative packages, as outlined by Gamson and Modigliani (1989), allow us to group together related articles and look at media frames within these collections. Therefore, I add to the academic literature by considering, defining and examining the language, metaphors, exemplars and historical context sports journalists use within the interpretive packages to explain the depictions and ultimately the experiences of transgender athletes. How have the frames, depictions and discussions about transgender athletes in sports media changed over time? What do the frames in these interpretative packages ultimately demonstrate about transgender discourse and society?

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Ongoing and evolving discourse documents sports, athletes and athletic performance. The framework of this study challenges me to interpret discourse on transgender athletes in sports media. I selected Sports Illustrated as a representative publication because researchers regard it as the most influential sporting publication in print journalism (Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf, & Hardin, 2002). Sports Illustrated reaches an audience of 17,463,000 through its magazine that prints 48 editions a year (Sports Illustrated, 2015). In this study, I strove to gather the entire population of transgender-specific discourse from the Sports Illustrated launch date on Aug. 16, 1954 (Ritchie, 2010) until Dec. 31, 2015.

I modeled this methodology after William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani's *Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach* (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). As discourse is arguably a collection of media packages that give significance to a subject (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), I divided the trans-specific discourse into interpretive packages. I organized the content within my packages into framing devices and reasoning devices. The articles within each package perform similar work and explain the production of cultural issues (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that, although media discourse does not necessarily change public opinion (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), the packages and the elements within them help assess what frames and depictions media producers prominently present. After critically examining the depictions, exemplars, themes and language within the discourse, I identified the structures and characteristics within the content. Then, I described their meaning through a qualitative discourse analysis.

## **I. Framing as a methodological approach**

Framing stresses that power structures provide media organizations agency to shape a story in such a way that it could exist on a continuum from negative to positive; in this, adverse depictions have more power on the perceptions of the audience than favorable depictions (Billings, 2004; Eastman & Billings, 2001). It identifies that journalists can stage stories within various approaches. These slants influence the public's grasp and operation of the content (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997). However, media organizations might not purposely print slanted media frames to persuade the public or misrepresent subjects. Rather, paper space constricts print publications so many journalists strive to report as succinctly and still as commendably as possible (Nelson, Clawson, & Ox, 1997).

Media frames, coupled with escalated salience, could alter public opinion by relocating ideas and material from a publication's discourse into a person's cognizance and increasing the likelihood a person will store the frame in memory (Nicely, 2007; Scheufele D. A., 2000; Entman, 1993). Through repeated exposure, readers have the opportunity to engrain framed messages in semantic memory (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). According to Squire, Knowlton, & Musen (1993), semantic memory means "general knowledge about the world" (p. 459). Therefore, media frames can contribute to the semantic memories the public has about the transgender population. Researchers treat media discourse and public opinion as two parallel systems of construction (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Media organizations capitalize on recognizable frames to aid readers in the sense-making process of the posed content (Bronstein, 2005). Employing this technique affords journalists the luxury to avoid fully clarifying new, unacquainted or incorrectly pervasive beliefs about marginalized groups (Nicely, 2007). If these messages include inaccurate, misrepresented or excluded information about gender or

transgender subjects, the readers might apply this perceived general knowledge found in sports discourse to their general attitude about these groups in professional, social and public contexts (Nicely, 2007; Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). This application can be problematic when sports media is in a position of power to transmit erroneous depictions of the framed subject (Nicely, 2007; Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). Thus, the manner in which media present the subject might manipulate how readers utilize the frames and interact with various genders in non-athletic settings (Nicely, 2007; Eastman & Billings, 2001). Therefore, this presentation could affect how readers operate frames and mingle with diverse genders in athletic venues.

## **II. Qualitative frame analysis**

A qualitative frame analysis is the most appropriate method because I interpreted written content from a critical-cultural perspective (Walker & Myrick, 2006). Qualitative researchers examine and interpret occurrences or portrayals after collecting empirical material such as texts that illustrate customary or challenging events or significances (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Social qualitative research tackles societal evolution. This form of exploration allows for flexible guidelines and procedures that could shift during data collection and analysis because the scholar might amend research questions during the research process to reflect a heightened comprehension of the concepts, theories and how they could relate to the discourse (Creswell, 1998). Researchers based the investigation process of qualitative research on methodological practices of investigation that study a social or human dilemma (Creswell, 1998). As my literature review illuminates, I was required to discern and grasp many interdisciplinary models and definitions for a comprehensive and sophisticated detailed analysis. In qualitative studies, a panoramic measure of a topic and its components will not supply the answers to research questions (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, I chose qualitative methods because the study's audience



is receptive to this approach (Creswell, 1998). I designed this media study under a feminist, social-justice framework. The intended audiences are journalism, sport and social-justice scholars and related academic journals as well as sport regulatory boards and athletes.

Feminist researchers are particularly receptive to qualitative analysis because it requires that they remain reflexive throughout the research, analysis and verification process (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014). Reflexivity is a practice by which scholars and journalists recognize, examine and understand how their social background, location and assumptions influence research (Hesse-Biber, 2014). This established framework reminds researchers to account for personal biases and examine their influence on data. I worked to remain reflexive while researching and analyzing the meaning shaped by journalists and interpreted by readers (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Conducting this study also established a structured platform to engage in feminist objectivity. Feminist objectivity recognizes situated knowledge (Bhavnani, 1993). In this, the researcher must acknowledge three key elements: (1) her positioning (location), (2) her partiality (bias) and (3) her accountability (Bhavnani, 1993). My position as a citizen of the United States of America situates me within a Westernized culture. Reflexively considering my social background as a cisgender woman athlete gives me a particular perspective on Westernized sport constructs that contributes to my location-based education as well as my partiality. As a scholar, I am accountable to academia to develop functional research. As an athlete, I am accountable to sporting spaces to endorse inclusive practices. As a journalist, I am accountable to the public to promote ethical treatment. The Society of Professional Journalists upholds strict standards in its Code of Ethics that states, “ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). While my positions

have the ability to influence my partiality, my accountability to feminist objectivity and reflexivity reminds me to consider my situated knowledge throughout research and analysis.

Feminist and qualitative approaches further remind researchers that these practices allow for multiple realities within discourse. While they must consider positioning, partiality and accountability in analysis, researchers can make thoughtful and respectful connections while actively learning. Feminist media research indicates that scholars “must recognize that multiple realities exist and that no single analysis will explain a text’s deeper meanings” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, p. 287). Qualitative approaches “emphasize the researcher’s role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participants’ view rather than as an ‘expert’ who passes judgment on participants” (Creswell, 1998, p. 18). Understanding these research practices allows me to recognize that different researchers might recognize an alternate reality in the same discourse. “A discourse functions as a system of meanings created by a combination of texts and the social practices that inform them” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, p. 265). Discourse analysis allows researchers to inspect language, examine how the media frames construct realities and observe its cultural influences on subjective experiences.

The study of print media “is particularly common and fruitful because mainstream print media purport to be objective and, thus the operation of power within print news is both unacknowledged and subconscious” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, p. 270). These factors influence the production and purpose as well as the reader perceptions of the text. By studying a system of meaning shaped by printed words and social practices, researchers can “examine and question images and meanings that might otherwise go unexamined, and thus better to understand how power operates through ideas and representations” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014,

p. 265). A researcher should also be conscious of three substantial stages while conducting a textual analysis.

(1) The researcher identifies textual and literary components within the discourse (Stern, 1996). Feminist media research stresses the necessity to define workable themes that are conceptually narrow enough to facilitate closer readings of texts (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014).

(2) The researcher outlines a draft of meaning based on the components by developing parameters to create component packages (Stern, 1996).

(3) The researcher deconstructs the text and thus constructs deeper meaning based on the themes and packages, which can uncover cultural assumptions associated with the component packages (Stern, 1996).

Following these three extensive stages established a structural framework for studying text within sport media discourse and social practices within Westernized sport structures to shape a system of meaning.

Qualitative, critical media research establishes a structure under which journalists and scholars can dedicate space and time to cover the media's role in society as well as examine how its work intersects with public life and reflects citizens' needs (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). A simple analysis of the text would not be sufficient to understand the significance, meaning and influence of the material. I selected a qualitative method because the complex variables I explored within the printed pages of sport media discourse and within the social practices of Westernized sport structures connects multiple clusters of interdisciplinary theories, concepts, policies and practices.

### III. Media packages

I modeled my media packages after William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani's *Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach* (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Additional researchers (Steele, Taylor, & Luchessi, 2012) have used this method to inspect communication frames. The media-packages model creates a structured, systematized and established framework through which to examine multiple facets of media frames as well as how journalists construct and communicate views and news through discourse. I examined the entire population of transgender-specific discourse from *Sports Illustrated* between its launch date on Aug. 16, 1954 (Ritchie, 2010) and Dec. 31, 2015. To find the articles, I first searched the word "transgender" through the Sports Illustrated Vault. The Vault at [si.com/vault](http://si.com/vault) is an online search platform released to the public during the fall of 2016. Then, I searched the terms "transsexual," "sex-change operation," "sex-change surgery," "sex-reassignment" and "sexual reassignment." Of these, I excluded articles about sex/gender testing that did not relate to transgender athletes specifically, which frequently featured intersex exemplars. I also searched the preferred names of specific transgender-athlete exemplars including Renee Richards, Fallon Fox and Caitlyn Jenner. Searching for their preferred name, rather than their given names, ensured the articles I procured addressed trans-specific topics. I excluded articles that referenced Renee Richards but did not contain the defining term "transsexual" or any reference to her gender identity because the stories did not speak to transness. Rather, they were primarily tennis-match recaps.

Not all articles on transness were easily available to me through the Vault. When I began my research, *Sports Illustrated* had a glitch in the online system.<sup>ii</sup> Therefore, to diminish the chance that *Sports Illustrated* left me without an entire population, I cross-referenced my

collection and the key phrases through Academic Search Premier. In it, I found additional articles on transness that did not specifically employ any of the searched words. Because of the subject matter in the stories, I include them in my population. My final population contains 51 articles.

Once I procured the articles, I divided the population into four media packages that exhibit distinct media frames, depictions, controversies or themes at their centers. Media packages have signature core constructions that allude to media frames (Gamson & Lasch, 1981). The researchers divided the signature elements into framing and reasoning devices. According to Gamson & Modiglia (1989), a value-added process develops media-discourse packages. A package must construct meaning from signature elements over time and combine new events into an interpretive structure to remain viable.

The three reasoning devices are roots, as in analyzing the cause of an event or package; appeals to principles, which insinuates a set of moral claims; and consequences, as in analyzing the effect of an event or package (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). According to Gamson and Lasch (1981), the framing devices are metaphors, depictions, catchphrases, exemplars and visual images.

(1) *Metaphors* have two components: the primary subject the metaphor illustrates and the linked subject that the metaphor arouses. Transgender athletes are the primary subjects in all media packages. The two types of metaphors are (1) dynamic metaphors that focus on multiple objects in the associated subject and (2) single-value metaphors that focus on a single quality of the associated subject. Associating transgender people with homosexual pride is an actual, although inaccurate, metaphor found in this study.

- (2) *Depictions* are principal subjects that journalists portray in a certain way through single-value metaphors, exemplars or a series of modifiers. Othering the transgender is an unfortunate depiction.
- (3) *Catchphrases* seize the spirit of a frame in a word, statement, tagline or slogan. They are an attempt to construct abridged declarations about the principle subject. Sport commentators use these catchphrases such as “Play ball!” and “Grand slam!” to describe gameplay.
- (4) *Exemplars* are humans that act as representatives of a larger group. Michael Jordan is an example of an exemplar athlete.
- (5) *Visual images* are pictures of exemplars and other related artistic elements within the publication. These visible representations could be of, for example, Renee Richards or the blue, pink and white transgender flag.

According to Gamson and Lasch (1981), the reasoning devices are roots, appeals to principle and consequences.

- (1) *Roots* are the dynamics that motivate a series of events. In my population, I examine roots as the social, professional, educational or similar dynamics that motivated media producers to depict transness as they did. An increased visibility of transgender athletes might motivate a conversation on their inclusion in a competition.
- (2) *Appeals to principle* references how packages depend on distinctive moral entities and sustain particular overall principles. In sports research, Kane (1996) analyzed media coverage from a feminist perspective to uncover pervasive ideologies within the discourse. In this, she appealed to the principles of feminism and equality in sports.

(3) *Consequences* refer to the consequences of the package. “A given package has a characteristic analysis of the consequences that will flow from different policies” (Gamson & Lasch, 1981, p. 5). Whether the short or long-term results are the focus depends on the package. The consequences of Caitlyn Jenner’s transition caused some people to question the legitimacy of winning an Olympic medal and request IOC to revoke it (Ennis, 2015). Recent coverage of the Olympics’ updated transgender-inclusion policy (Zeigler, 2016) is a result of this shift in procedure.

#### **IV. Analyzing media packages**

Interpretive packages reflect the article’s frame, topic, subject, theme, depiction or other defining characteristic. Researchers should not confuse assembled frames with stances for or against a subject. Frames can grant room for dispute, but not all disagreements are frame disagreements. Rather, a shared frame can reflect opinion differences while still sharing a frame (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Similarly, not all frame packages have straightforward stances. Some are, rather than pro or con, ambivalent or contain a storyline and scenario (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). I placed each article into one package based on the way the journalists frame transness and trans participation in sport. The Gamson & Modigliani (1989) model does express that articles in a population are not bound to one frame, and they might fit into multiple media packages. However, most stories in my population fit into clearly defined media packages. I developed these packages by reading through my population multiple times and taking detailed notes before I began sorting articles. Initially, I documented the use and evolution of trans-specific language including offensive terms, proper definitions and pronoun usage. Then, I studied the frames of exemplars. These initial evaluations resulted in two of the four interpretive packages. Afterward, I considered tone, purpose, topics, principles and roots to identify the

distinctions between the additional packages. If sub-themes within articles transcended package topics, I addressed them in my results.

Once I established packages, I defined and inductively analyzed the content and media frames within the packages and individual articles (Creswell, 1998). I (1) hyper-critically dissected the content including headlines, body content, paragraphs, clauses, phrases and words as well as visual elements and photography when applicable; (2) analyzed the segments; (3) reported and wrote on findings; and (4) reconsidered the original observations to verify the interpretations and assessments. As the media-package construct suggests, I experimented with multiple forms of analysis to simultaneously deconstruct the text, configure it in new forms and decolonize the meaning.

**Three classes of factors.** According to Gamson & Modigliani (1989), interpretive packages reveal the production of issue cultures. This model suggests that considering three classes of factors — cultural resonances, sponsor activities and media practices — can serve as a framework to interpret packages. Understanding these considerations establishes a mental framework for effective media research.

***Cultural resonances.*** (Culture) Some packages have an innate advantage because they imitate cultural topics in their ideas, language and potent symbols. Resonances make a package more appealing because the frames are recognizable and natural. “Those who respond to the larger cultural theme will find it easier to respond to a package with the same sonorities” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 5). When considering the United States’ values: “‘Efficient’ is a word of high praise in a society that has long emphasized adaptability, technological innovation, economic expansion, up-to-dateness, practicality, expediency, ‘getting things done’” (Williams R. M., 1960, p. 428). Consider the word “efficient” as it relates to body function, athletes and



athletic prowess. Athletes, embodied in the frames of Babe Ruth and Lindsey Vonn, are central cultural heroes who have challenged the restrictions of the natural body to accomplish great feats. “Mastery over nature is the way to progress: good old American ingenuity and know-how” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 6). Similarly, some academics consider the implications of using the word “not,” as in “not eligible to participate” and “not a real woman” (Martinez, 2015). Overused words in stories that have cultural resonances can imply positive or negative connotations. While studying the positive and negative frames language creates, I thought of the themes dialectically and considered that all themes contain counter-themes. “The theme is conventional and normative; the counter-theme is adversarial and contentious. But both are rooted in American culture, and both can be important in assessing the outcome of any specific symbolic contest” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 6). For example, the counter-theme to overcoming nature is to become in harmony with it. “Harmony with nature rather than mastery over it is stressed. ... the more we try to control nature through our technology, the more we disrupt its natural order and threaten the quality of our lives” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 6). In the context of this study, I contend that coming to terms with a gender identity is establishing harmony with nature.

***Sponsored activities.*** (Money) Power structures drive all dominating forces. Sponsored activities are any power structures driven by money. Political economy is the study of the balance between public intervention and capitalist power (Hardy, 2014). The political economy of media views news organizations as commercial enterprises and identifies the extent of each business’s corporate reach (Hardy, 2014). The political economy of media is concerned with the commodification of audiences. Commodification, “a totalizing cultural force,” transforms “things into objects for sale” (The Hedgehog Review, 2003, p. 6). Business creates, operates and

markets these “things” — in the case of this study: audiences — for the purpose of profit. While some writers suggest that “there may be some things that money shouldn’t be able to buy” (The Hedgehog Review, 2003, p. 6), others insist that the audience’s experience connects with the power dynamics and economics within media organizations (Hardy, 2014). When a news organization strives to commodify an audience, it might publish sponsored packages constructed by sponsoring agents (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). While trained journalists condense and rewrite material, sponsoring agents can leverage the way some editors are prone to publishing attention-grabbing catchphrases. The agents construct content that transfers seamlessly to the media while evoking the desired media frame. Social movement organizations could affect the framing process (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In sports studies, sponsoring agents could be, for example, sports agents. These professionals, who represent athletes on their search for team placement and lucrative contracts, are attempting to frame an athlete in a specific light to gain sponsorships. While not all sports agents promote themselves as marketing or public relations professionals, some might provide this service (Sosnick Cobbe & Karon, Inc., 2015). Sponsored activities includes any representations of transness that increase revenue streams based on an exemplar’s celebrity status, popular trans debates or other related items as well as transgender athletes with agents or promoters.

***Media practices.*** (Media) Journalists are active participants in the practice of creating packages, and they create packages that facilitate discussions. Their operational customs and procedures contribute to the value of the process substantially (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). “In their commentary on an issue, they frequently attempt to articulate and crystallize a set of responses that they hope or assume will be shared” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 9). While researchers argue that the total impact journalists have on media packages is up for debate, they

also contend that journalists frequently give official packages favorable judgments. In other cases, some people might challenge the social assumptions journalists convey within packages (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Public opinion does indirectly affect this process as well when the media producers believe, sometimes inaccurately, that the audience is thinking in a particular way. In this, “journalists straddle the boundary between producers and consumers of meaning” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 9). They witness, simultaneously with other readers, and respond to related accounts the media have contextualized, published and framed.

Woven into the analysis process, I employed verification strategies to distinguish when to continue, stop or adapt my research to ensure the accuracy, rigor, reliability and validity of the data analysis. Qualitative processes flow back and forth between “design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002, p. 17). Therefore, modeled after Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers (2002), I considered the following principles of qualitative inquiry:

- (1) *collecting and analyzing data concurrently* to establish a joint interface between what we know about transgender athletes in sports media and what we need to learn;
- (2) *thinking theoretically* to build a solid foundation by incorporate micro and macro viewpoints; and
- (3) *developing a theoretical framework* that fluidly shifts between the micro interpretation of the discourse and the macro understanding of the cultural significance of the collective content.

These strategies and the overall research methodology explained in this chapter justify procedures and analysis techniques applied to answer my research questions. In the next chapter,

I discuss interpretative packages and emergent themes within the discourse population. I use framing devices — metaphors, depictions, catchphrases, exemplars and visual images — and reasoning devices — roots, appeals to principles and consequences — to establish an organizational structure for each package and the study's results.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Four interpretive packages emerged from the 51 articles (see Appendix A for a full list of articles). The Marginalization package contains 24 articles that range from the year 1963 until 2011. This interpretive package marginalizes transgender people by categorizing them as entertainers or as subjects of mockery. The Labeling package has eight articles that range from 1976 to 1998. This package works to segregate the transgender population from a Westernized society. Twelve articles that range from 1976 to 2013 comprise the Fighting and Fairness package. This package questions the effectiveness of the sport system's organizational structures that prohibit or allow trans inclusion. It addresses eradicating these concerns and injustices or establishing further exclusionary regulation. The most significant stories are in this package because it indicates directional shifts. The Pride and Affirmation package includes seven articles that range from 1983 to 2015. This package validates all gender identities and sexualities but it does not create a distinction between transness and sexual orientation. It alludes to the steps needed to improve trans sporting lives but does not give a solid, conclusive stance on how to allow for trans inclusion in athletic spaces. The following sections outline the framing and reasoning devices within the four packages. Find charts summarizing the results below.

**Table 1: General Information**

<b>Package</b>	<b>Number of Articles (51 total)</b>	<b>Percentage of sample (approximate)</b>	<b>Year Range</b>
<b>Marginalization</b>	24	47 percent	1963 – 2011
<b>Labeling</b>	8	15.6 percent	1976 – 1998
<b>Fighting and Fairness</b>	12	23.5 percent	1976 – 2013
<b>Pride and Affirmation</b>	7	13.7 percent	1983 – 2015

**Table 2: Framing Devices**  
(primary subject = transgender athletes)

<b>Package</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Depiction</b>	<b>Catchphrase</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>	<b>Visual Image</b>
<b>Marginalization</b>	Entertainment or Mockery	Marginalized	Transvestite	Dennis Rodman	Cover Image: Dennis Rodman
<b>Labeling</b>	Segregation	Othered	Transsexual	Renee Richards	None
<b>Fighting and Fairness</b>	Fighters	Included or Excluded	Fight and Fair	Renee Richards	Fallon Fox
<b>Pride and Affirmation</b>	Sexual Orientation	Inappropriately Associated	Transgender	Caitlyn Jenner	Caitlyn Jenner

**Table 3: Reasoning Devices**

<b>Package</b>	<b>Roots</b>	<b>Appeals to Principle</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
<b>Marginalization</b>	Audience Engagement	Lack of Principle	Marginalization
<b>Labeling</b>	Heteronormative Knowledge Structures	Ignored Principle	Segregated Othering
<b>Fighting and Fairness</b>	Challenge or Reinforce Power Structures	Challenging Inequality and Promoting Fairness	Policy Revision
<b>Pride and Affirmation</b>	Upgrade Inclusive Queer Representations	Acceptance and Affirmation	Residual Inclusion

### **I. Marginalization**

**Summary.** Twenty-four, approximately 47 percent, of the articles fit into the Marginalization package. This interpretive package marginalizes transgender people by categorizing them 1) as entertainers or 2) as subjects of mockery. When categorized as entertainers, journalists depict trans subjects and cross-dressers as performers and comedians. Trans people or those associated with the trans community are subjects of mockery when people ridicule them for their actions, appearance and conduct. Of the 24 articles in the package that span from 1963 to 2011, half belong to the entertainment subgroup and the other 12 belong to the mockery subgroup, although some contain multiple frames that overlap into the companion

subgroup. The core frame reiterates a power structure between cisgender and transgender people that allows society to segregate and dehumanize the latter. The authors and featured voices, intentionally or not, cement media frames that misrepresent subjects. Sports Illustrated printed the articles in this package between 1963 and 2011, which shows that Sports Illustrated has published marginalized representations of the trans community for a majority of its existence.

### **Framing devices.**

*Metaphor.* Metaphors contain two elements: the primary subject — in this case, transgender athletes — and the linked subject that arouses the metaphor. The linked subject in this package compares the transgender population with clowns or performers in the entertainment category or with erratic, unstable, shameful or odd behavior in the mockery category. The work within the package either dehumanizes and degrades the transgender community or establishes its members and those depicting diverse gender expressions as entertainers. While metaphors are dynamic because they focus on multiple depictions of a subject, all the depictions are problematic and oppressive.

The metaphor of the clown/performer delegitimizes the trans person's definitive gender identity. As previously explained, transgender people face a unique and crippling form of discrimination. "The sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence" (Butler, 1988, p. 527). In the entertainment package, for example, Curry Kirkpatrick's story titled "Judged in the World's Court" (published July 22, 1974) covered the world amateur basketball championships. In it, Kirkpatrick states: "But the loudest ovation of the week was reserved for a transvestite who strolled the length of the floor in a black outfit with a white straw hat and an enormous 00 monogrammed on his-her chest." In this, the writer uses the catchphrase

“transvestite” in the comparison of the trans person to an entertainer. This association is problematic because people do not perform actualized forms of gender expression for the entertainment of others. In addition, using the “his-her” pronoun combination perpetuates the problematic sex/gender dichotomy.

The articles that turn the trans community into a chopping block for mockery are even more problematic because they are fundamentally dehumanizing. Transgender people are framed as an abomination and cause for concern because they exist outside the Westernized constructs of the gender binary. “The A’s New Stew Can Do” (published Oct. 5, 1987 10-05) by Ron Fimrite and “A Hero Lives Here” (published on Nov. 6, 1989) by Peter Gammons address the humiliation of Dave Stewart. Hiring a “transvestite” prostitute led to his arrest. By defining the sex worker as a “transvestite,” the writers insinuate that this act is more disgraceful and shameful than hiring a cisgender prostitute. As explained in the literature review, “transvestite” is an archaic and offensive term (GLAAD, 2014). Further, to define a transgender prostitute as distinct from a cisgender prostitute fundamentally others the trans population by situating its members outside Westernized constructs.

**Depiction.** The depictions of transness marginalize the experience of trans individuals by branding them as entertainers or mocking them. These representations of transgender people and cross-dressers as entertainers arguably disregard their real and valid identities. Many depictions of diverse gender expressions present people using cross-dressing as a tool to entertain a crowd. In “Finding a Place in the Sun” (published Oct. 17, 1988), Sports Illustrated featured Duke quarterback Anthony Dilweg. Reporter Jill Lieber wrote:

“Dilweg had been the regular punter since 1985, but he was best known around the Duke campus as the football player with the wacky sense of humor. He plagued his teammates by spraying shaving cream in their jockstraps. In a public speaking class he delivered an emotional halftime oration while dressed as a transvestite basketball coach, complete



with panty hose, black pumps and red lipstick. ‘The teacher said that anybody who had the guts to do such a thing deserved a good grade,’ says Dilweg.”

Not only does the author use the word “transvestite” in conjunction with a person who was intentionally trying to gain attention but associates it with a person who is described as “wacky” and who has the “guts” to dress in drag. This comparison insinuates that cross-dressing is crazy and doing so requires a certain level of silly confidence.

Further representations of the trans population designed to mock their existence continue to marginalize trans identities. In “Courting Disaster” (published May 8, 1978), J.D. Reed wrote:

“... many men in rural tennis wear Peds, those half-socks for women with the fuzzy ball on the heel to keep the sock from slipping into the shoe. This is not some odd, transsexual dress code of the North Woods, but comes from the fact that, for some years, rural tennis was considered less than manly.”

Not only is the way a “transsexual” dresses described as “odd” but also it is considered to be “less than manly,” which conforms to Westernized constructs of male behavior and appearance. As agenda-setting theory suggests, media can influence how readers think about the subjects of discourse (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, media infiltrating discourse with negative depictions and opinions of transgender people might influence how readers treat transgender people. These actions could result in violence against and mistreatment toward the trans people.

**Catchphrase.** Catchphrases seize the spirit of a frame in a statement, tagline or slogan (Gamson & Lasch, 1981). Catchphrases allow me to document and analyze the evolution of trans-specific language. Overused words in stories that have cultural resonances can imply positive or negative connotations (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). “Transvestite” is the most salient catchphrase within the package because it appears in more than half of the articles. Not only do content producers and featured voices frame the trans community negatively or not seriously but also they diverge from the actual definition of “transvestite.” The intended meaning

varies from story to story. It is used to describe drag queens, transgender people, cross-dressers, nonsensical people looking to gain attention or make people laugh, emotionally unstable people, sex workers, entertainers, sports fanatics in costume and any non-discriminant, gender-diverse expressions. Authors and featured voices use it in instances of ridicule, oppression or amusement. Sports Illustrated does not give its readers a clear and concrete definition of what it means to be a trans person or a cross-dresser. This discrepancy places people with gender identities and expressions that exist outside Western constructs into marginalized roles. Further, “transvestite” is a transphobic word. Media regulation organizations clearly indicate that journalists should not write it in discourse (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015; GLAAD, 2014).

Other articles featured questionable terms. In “Having A Gay Old Time In Columbus, Ohio, members of the Rainbow Golf League are proud representatives of the game’s silent minority,” author Eamon Lynch quoted homosexual golfer Jim Riedel. Riedel said: ““We had members of the transgendered community in the league, so that spawned all sorts of jokes about a new purple tee between the men’s and the ladies’.”” On the surface, readers might perceive this as harmless banter between peers. However, framing the trans plight as a joke trivializes their real struggle and others the trans population by suggesting that their inclusion is beyond the understanding of the Westernized sex dichotomy even as it relates to sexual-orientation affirmation. Moreover, the term “transgendered” is socially and scientifically inaccurate. While previous research employed the term (Namaste, 2000), the past tense “-ed” should be removed from trans discourse to override common misconceptions. As a cisgender woman is not “woman-ed” nor is a cisgender man “man-ed,” a transgender person is not “transgendered.” In Time magazine, author and trans activist Julie Serano said that including the “-ed” “makes it sound like ‘something has been done to us,’ as if they weren’t the same person all along” (Steinmetz,

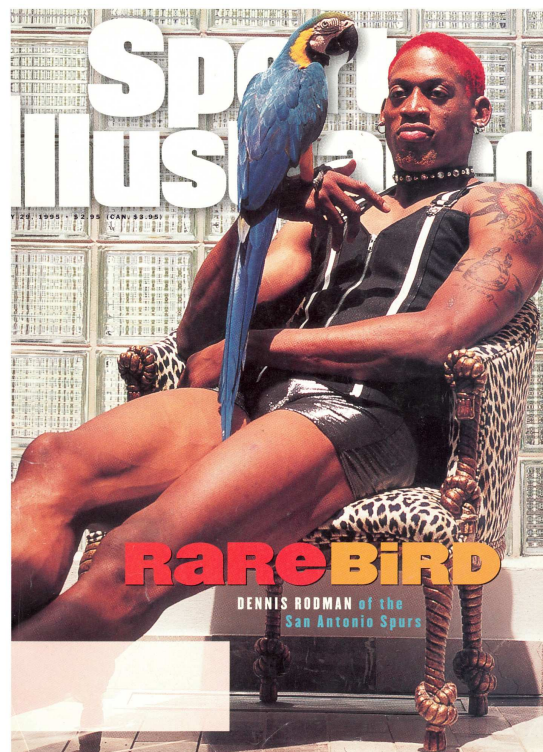
Why it's best to avoid the word 'transgendered', 2014). Research shows that gender is constructed within the brain (Russo, 2016) so a person is born transgender and does not become one.

**Exemplar.** Although he is not transgender, former basketball player and eccentric celebrity Dennis Rodman who regularly renders non-conforming gender expressions stands as the primary exemplar for this Marginalization media package. He is the only exemplar in my population that Sports Illustrated featured visually on the cover of the magazine. The work he does as an exemplar encompasses both the entertainment and mockery components. He demonstrates how the frames in the package trivialize injustices faced by the transgender population. In the story "Rare Bird" (published May 29, 1995), the author, Michael Silver, quoted Rodman's friend Amy Frederick who described one of Rodman's moods as "transvestite." The story reads: "An hour later, when Rodman emerges wearing a shiny tank top, metallic hot pants and a rhinestone dog collar, his guests ooh, aah and gawk in amusement. 'Dennis is in one of his transvestite moods,' says Rodman's friend Amy Frederick, rolling her eyes." In this, the source employs the word "transvestite" as an insult. The depiction of Rodman equating the trans identity with a mood delegitimizes and dehumanizes the trans population.

Marginalization is more widespread when Sports Illustrated printed this Rodman article because a package that supported affirmation and pride did not largely exist. Journalists did not have a concrete package to process pride and affirmation, as only one article in the Pride and Affirmation published before 2010. According to framing theory, frames are the lenses used to understand how journalists give prominence to content (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Knight, 1999; Entman, 1993). Framing teaches us that media and authors have the power to validate or discredit exemplars. As a media producer, Sports Illustrated makes the lenses under which

readers perceive Rodman. Readers, secondly, must rely on whatever frames are available to them. As media-dependency theory proposes, the availability of meaning-generating experiences in people's lives determines the significance of media discourse (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). If readers do not have the framework to understand affirming depictions of diverse gender expressions, they will rely on the frames that are already available to them.

*Visual image.*



**Figure 1: Dennis Rodman Cover**

Despite the relatively large number of articles in this package, visual images that depict non-Westernized representations of gender expression and identity are vastly limited. Visual images are significant because they give insight into how media producers created a package. They convey the visions of editors, writers and photographers as well as reflect what they want the story to represent. Visual images illustrate how these professionals interpret the content. Media producers manifest media frames when they transmit verbal expressions swayed by

personal preexisting schemas and frames (Entman, 1993). The final image in print represents an accumulation of many opinions. The photographers conceptualize and shoot these images from their forethought. Editors and designers select portions of the camera roll. Adding visual elements to a story indicates that the article is salient because it either fashions an occasion for visually appealing images or the topic provokes significant or timely discussion. When this occurs, the content is sufficiently noteworthy enough to prompt media producers to devote time, money and energy on photo shoots and added art-specific tasks. Choosing a cover photo heightens these deliberations. In the eyes of a journalist, a stellar cover image is essential to a publication. The preliminary face on the magazine frames the entire publication. It flaunts the salience of the featured story or public figure. The cover is the first detail potential readers see. Media producers design it to grab and maintain attention. It must sell the magazine from a newsstand. As an editor who reviewed, approved and rejected an average of 10 covers a month for 10 years, I am instinctively aware of a magazine cover's probable magnitude. Although the internet altered this former truth, newsstand sales were previously the second-highest revenue-generating stream, after print advertising, for magazines. Engendering magazine covers were uniquely crucial at that time.

Although he is not transgender, Rodman is the subject of this package's visual image. Tattooed Rodman wearing a front-zipper corset and form-fitting metallic shorts holding a parrot appeared on the cover of Sports Illustrated when "Rare Bird" (See Figure 1) published in May of 1995. This visual depiction in this package is the most meaningful. The juxtaposition of a highly masculine and tattooed athlete with overtly feminine clothing and body position reflects what our society highly esteems — masculinity — placed under what Westernized society respects less — femininity. At first glance, readers see that Rodman is cross-dressing because his outfit is

typically associated the feminine gender expressions. A deeper analysis reveals how highly feminized this picture is. The skimpy clothing nevertheless manages to cover Rodman's chest and nipples while engaging a concave shape between his pectorals. Sports Illustrated brandishes these and numerous supplementary elements indicative of social constructs that express obedient and passive femaleness exceedingly prevalent in images of women in magazines on this cover.

Disputably, his garb mildly emits meanings suggestive of conforming cisgender femininity in comparison to significance strained after an in-depth breakdown his physical posture. A seated Rodman faintly arches his back, and the image exposes the skin on his crossed legs more than any other patch on his body. His left arm modestly drapes over the midline of his torso. Rodman's pose communicates unassuming submission. His quiet demeanor reflects a subservient disposition. This photograph is in stark contrast to the archetypal demonstrations of masculinity in sport magazines. Conventionally, sports media steer portrayals of maleness to excessive renderings of hyper-masculinity in magazine photo shoots (Groth, 2012). Their characteristic statuesque posture is elevated, vigorous and open. Protruding, oiled biceps and bare, muscular chests successfully steer attention away from lower-body attributes that are decidedly objectified, as is the case with Rodman's cover, in countless staged feminine exemplifications of the human body. Triumphant, leering stances command attention and impose aggressive intensity. Peering and penetrating eyes directed squarely into the reader's space guide intimidating and habitually frightening facial expressions. The fear-educing face common in photographs of athletic black men is not present in the arguably restrained expression Rodman wears on this cover. His debatably unpretentious and perhaps mildly harsh expression could mirror internal indifference about the opinions of a critically judgmental audience. Bear in mind that only two articles relatively supportive of gender identities and expressions that exist outside

Westernized social constructs printed before this cover surfaced in May of 1995. One story emerged into the Fighting and Fairness package (“She’d Rather Switch — And Fight” published in September of 1976) and another into the Pride and Affirmation package (“Renee Richards’ ‘Second Serve’ Is A Book About Two Remarkable People” published in March of 1983). No articles in those packages circulated in 1995. The public might have forced Rodman to adopt an “I don’t care” air and apathetic attitude to live his authentic life because he witnessed limited support for his physical manifestations of gender expression and broad marginalization directed at cross-dressers and statements of transness. Regardless of individual interpretations of his intended tone, Rodman’s closed mouth visually silences him in the custom that methodized magazine images muzzle women. His gaze moves to the right and vaguely below the glossy page to avoid eye contact with the reader. Extracted meaning judged on the combination of facial and body positioning conveys systematized subservience.

Clearly, Rodman’s presentation is in direct contrast with regular depictions of black men. However, it is not unlike regular presentations of blackness. Through animal symbolism, his image mirrors depictions of black women regularly presented as wild beasts in magazines (Pious & Neptune, 1997). Researchers found evidence that animal-print clothing in magazine advertising signifies a sexualized and predatory nature, which is apparent in the model’s provocative body position (Pious & Neptune, 1997). These demeaning metaphors compare women of color to animals or animal-like in magazine photo shoots. Photographers dress them in stereotypically feminine animal print or surrounded by images of wildlife. This conduct is an act of dehumanization. Society dehumanizes women to keep them bound to outdated gender roles (Brennan, 1995). Patriarchal structures of dehumanization perpetuate violence against black women. They present women of color as creatures or sexual beasts that should be controlled,

domesticated, dominated and battered. Dehumanization insinuates that they blindly obey primitive instincts such as childrearing and physical desires (Brennan, 1995). Societal structures also dehumanize black men by comparing them to animals when the media frame them as dangerous beings (Crapanzano, 2012) that regulators should lock up in cages or jails, tame or euthanize.

In this visual image, Rodman is sitting, which gives the impression of an unimposing and docile person, in an ornamental animal-print chair. A dog collar, both symbolic of the female practice of jewelry and the animalistic natures, accessorizes his neckline. The blue-and-yellow parrot perched on his right hand further presents him to be a man of the wilderness. The bird is a literal visual depiction that specifically relates to the headline “Rare Bird.” Comparing people to animals is dehumanizing. It reflects a lower degree of worthlessness and less-ness.

The overall story this image tells is a profoundly comprehensive depiction that addresses gender expression, racial discrimination and dehumanization. This picture evokes both entertainment and mockery. In terms of entertainment, the cover creates a visually amusing image of a known public figure, famous black athlete and flamboyant character known for doing this for entertainment value. The cover is interesting, colorful, different and attention grabbing. Importantly, media producers decided to feature this image on the cover. The editors probably spent a long time deciding what image to use. Sports Illustrated arguably designed the cover to entertain audiences and grab attention to sell covers. Mostly this cover is for entertainment. Rodman was obviously aware the photographer was capturing images of him. He did decide to sit for this picture, which shows he is open to displaying various forms of gender expression. I appreciate, respect and love this. Although the cover conforms to problematic portrayals regularly seen in the magazine of Western magazines, Rodman is bravely non-conforming to



traditional binary stands of gender expression, and I applaud him for that. However and unfortunately, cross-dressing shown in this way does evoke mockery because this image of a man with tattoos, in a time when society considered tattoos to be more radical, in this surprising and not socially appropriate outfit is meant to be ridiculous.

When the editors picked this image, they decidedly made him appear subservient. The visual images of Rodman within the pages of the article in the magazine tell a similar story. This story ran on pages 34-39 and then jumped to page 40 and then to page 43. The eight-page story features six pages of text and a two-page photo spread at its inception. The dominant visual images in the story show him lying on a couch. They span the width of the spread when the pages are next to each other. On the two outlier pages, Sports Illustrated shrunk Rodman's couch reclining image to the width of a single page. Consider the reclining images of Rodman of the pages with spreads. In the lead spread that takes up the whole page, Rodman angles his closed eyes and face to the front. In the following two images that span the bottom length of the page under the text, Rodman closes his eyes while tilting his face upward. The last two images on the orphan pages are the only two that show Rodman's open eyes and forward-facing gaze looking at the reader. The sexualized and feminine reclining-on-the-couch depictions juxtapose with smaller pictures of him playing basketball. These images are more indicative of how sports magazines traditionally depict black men. These images are much smaller. They are more typically masculine.

Given the previous interpretation of Rodman's adjusted legacy, had the media framed him differently, readers might have responded to the cover with affirmation. However, depicting a person cross-dressing under a headline that contains the word "rare" is unsettling. It

perpetuates the false assumption that cross-dressing is uncommon. It also implies that the act of cross-dressing is peculiar and odd behavior.

**Reasoning devices.**

**Roots.** According to Gamson & Lasch (1981), roots are the dynamics that motivate a series of events. In my analysis, I examine roots as the social, professional, educational or similar dynamics that motivated media producers to depict transness as they did in the package. In the Marginalization package, the need to engage audiences and arouse an article's appeal motivated the reporters' depictions of trans as entertainment and mockery. Five stories written by one particular journalist — regular Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly — appeared in this package. Ranging in purpose from entertainment to mockery, Reilly arguably used transness to gather and amuse his audience in his regular column, Life of Reilly.

Two of the five mocked Renee Richards. “40 for the (Dark) Ages” (published Oct. 3, 1994) mocked Renee Richards by calling her, and dozens of other athletes, “party poopers.” In “Reincarnation By Extrapolation” (published Dec. 7, 1998), Reilly capitalizes on general confusion about her transition, makes her appear abnormal and others her. Each of these articles ridicules dozens of athletes for various reasons within the one page of the column. Reilly's additional three other articles were framed as entertainment. In “Raging Over The Bulls” (published June 15, 1998), Reilly suggests that men would have a “sex-change operation” to have Michael Jordan's children. In “Queer Eye for the Sports Guy” (published Nov. 11, 2003), the columnist compared trans people to rodeo clowns when he talked about an event at the gay rodeo called “‘wild dragging’ (contestants try to place a begowned transvestite atop a bucking bronco).” These above stories allude to the probable assumption that Reilly has a lack of education about the transgender population. Diminishing the exposure to knowledge in media

discourse is problematic because it diverts attention from potentially imperative knowledge while limiting the public's complete understanding of the topic (Entman, 1993). He also reveals a general disregard for the community and a lack of desire to take it seriously. As media framing and Entman (1993) suggest, personal preexisting schemas and frames sway media producers. Salient media frames have the power to change public opinion by moving material from a text into a person's cognizance, which increases the possibility it will be stored into memory. Readers could engrain these framed messages, through repetition and repeated exposure, into semantic memory (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). An author appearing in a package five times in a 24-article group is a noteworthy reassurance. Therefore, Reilly's roots contribute to the way he frames his trans context. This representation could contribute to changing public opinion if he exposes readers to the frames often.

The final story of the five, "Extreme Makeover" (published July 2, 2007), diverts from the frames of the other two. Reilly wrote about his colleague and friend: a trans woman born as Mike Penner, sports columnist for the Los Angeles Times, who changed her legal name to Christine Daniels. While Reilly arguably wrote the story to entertain his audience Reilly wrote it about his trans colleague and friend, which makes the article unique. Placing this article in the Marginalization package is not a judgment call on his relationship with his friend. Initially, I considered alternative placement, such as in the Pride and Affirmation package, because it addresses the author's friendship with a transgender journalist and contains some affirming comments. Reilly arguably wrote this story because he recognized that the transition of his friend was a provocative and absorbing story that would entertain his readers who would consider the plight of the transgender sports journalist as a captivating story. The story emerged into Marginalization because, under the framework of this study, depicting transness as entertainment

is marginalization. Readers might believe these instances are rare, inconsequential and eccentric. Unfortunately, the story does not have a happy ending. An article in the Fairness and Fighting package titled “The Transgender Athlete,” which is the most comprehensive story about the state of trans sport participation and exemplars that published in June of 2012, reported that Daniels killed herself in October 2008, which was less than two years after Reilly published “Extreme Makeover.” This is the last story Reilly published in Sports Illustrated that mentioned a trans person. Perhaps he stopped because of his friend’s suicide. Future research could address this through author interviews.

*Appeals to Principle.* Appeals to principle references how packages depend on distinctive moral entities and sustain particular overall principles (Gamson & Lasch, 1981). The package would not produce a feeling of remorse when audiences read or engage with frames that ridicule the transgender population because readers lack the proper understanding and frames necessary to grasp the trans experience and catchphrase meanings. As agenda-setting theory suggests, media can influence the salience of topics on the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, audiences will regard items covered frequently and prominently issue as significant. Similarly, audiences will deem excluded frames and information as insignificant. Therefore, by wavering in its definition of a “transvestite,” readers regard its actual meaning as irrelevant. A lack of understanding, a lack of care or a desire to tap into readers’ preexisting frames about what a transvestite might have caused the authors’ inaccurate use of the term. Regardless of the intention, doing so allows readers to believe that the actual definition is not necessary to understanding the content in the story. Readers might realize the media depict the trans population as humorous, clown-like, scandalous and unnatural. However, some journalists might not feel guilty when framing trans people, people associated with transness or stereotypical trans

actions in these ways because they do not have a clear definition of the word “transgender.” As media-dependency theory suggests, the availability of meaning-generating experiences in the readers’ lives determines the significance of media discourse. If readers have limited exposure to trans issues in their personal lives, they rely on how the media frames transgender people.

**Consequences.** The methodology states that consequences provide analysis of the short and long-term outcomes that arise from different policies (Gamson & Lasch, 1981). In my results, I also interpret consequences as the general intended or inadvertent results the package has. Sometimes it relates to athletic-inclusion policy while other times it relates to social policy. This package does little to influence athletic-inclusion policies. If anything, it gives a reason to not include trans because they are animal-like, cheaters, only for entertainment value and unnatural. The consequences of this interpretive package could be that the sports media readers have become comfortable with gender identity expressed as a form of entertainment or mockery. This marginalizes trans people because media frames influence readers.

## **II. Labeling**

**Summary.** The Labeling package contains eight articles and approximately 15.6 percent of the articles in the population. It works to segregate the transgender population from Westernized society. The package unfortunately woefully disregards and ignores the transgender population. Rather than promoting an inclusive community, Sports Illustrated compartmentalized, segregated and labeled the trans population as other.

### **Framing devices.**

**Metaphor.** The metaphor here is segregation. Segregation is a useful metaphor because it evokes the idea of separate-but-equal and other hidden injustices in the minds of readers. Other packages depict trans exemplars as marginalized, contemplated or revered. In this package,

writers segregate and other transgender exemplars by placing transgender exemplars into separate categories. As defined in my methodology, single-value metaphors focus on a single quality of the associated subject. (Gamson & Lasch, 1981). In the Labeling package, the writers delineate trans athletes by one trait: gender identity. When their gender becomes a defining characteristic, the transgender population is fundamentally othered and eliminated. Labeling does the work for segregation, which is this package's metaphor. Segregation indicates difference when othering occurs. The intentional segregation created when sports media solely define a person as a member of the transgender community rather than defined as an athlete creates arbitrary divisions within sporting spaces.

***Depiction.*** The articles in this package other trans people, and the package depicts how sport media culture has othered trans athletes. They do this by unnecessarily defining a person by gender identity. The articles “Extra! Chrissie Loses First Set!” (published April 4, 1977), “Zing Go the Strings of Our Hearts” (published July 25, 1977) and “Call Him Coach” (published June 16, 1997) all segregate Richards by defining her as the “transsexual Renee Richards.” Otherness is problematic because it attaches an unequal and unfair position of inferiority to marginalized groups. Further, it does not allow for intersectional identities. As interpreted from the Master-Slave Dialectic, otherness in discourse defines the idea of the other against how readers define themselves and suggests vaster implications (Hegel, 1807). Researchers connect otherness to knowledge and power (Foucault, 1978). Therefore, othering a marginalized group points out their perceived weaknesses to strengthen the hegemonic majority. Examples of othering, such as colonialism, serves to maintain power structures hierarchical authority. Therefore, othering the trans athlete works to preserve the dominance of cisgender athletes in sporting spaces.

**Catchphrase.** “Transsexual” is the most salient catchphrase and label in this package. As framing theory suggests, media framing communicates the selection and prominence journalists give to portions of emphasized, diminished or omitted textual characteristics (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Knight, 1999; Entman, 1993). Labeling an athlete as a “transsexual” or as someone who had a “sex-change operation” organizes the audience’s knowledge of a person. However, it compartmentalizes individuals with the intention to maintain heteronormative dominance. The authors might argue that mentioning a person’s trans status is salient because it helps readers activate preexisting schemas. Further, media producers might also contend that, as paper space constricts print publication, they employ precise descriptors to convey a message as succinctly as possible (Nelson, Clawson, & Ox, 1997). Reporters might not purposely inaugurate frames that other transness. However, marking an exemplar by a marginalized gender identity when it is not relevant to the story’s topic tokenizes the person. It divides people and establishes an adverse “us” verses “them” binary.

As explained in the literature review, “transsexual” is an outdated term for a member of the trans population (GLAAD, 2014). Trans activist Christine Jorgensen publicly rejected the word “transsexual” in favor “transgender” in 1979, 1982 and 1985 (Hadjimatheou, 2012). The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law indicates that journalists should use the more inclusive and inoffensive word “transgender” instead (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015). When we consider the evolution of trans language, we see archaic terms used in discourse long after media regulators and social-justice activists declared them inadequate.

**Exemplar.** Tennis player Renee Richards, who appears in seven of the eight stories, is the Labeling package’s exemplar. Richards might be the most prominent exemplar because Sports Illustrated printed more sport recaps and game play-by-plays in the pages of its magazine in the

1970s and 1980s before the internet became the most common way people obtain news. The central themes of the articles that feature Richards do not speak to gender issues, competitive advantage, fairness or pride. Most of the articles are sport-specific or focus on the sporting business. However, her gender identity is included as a qualifier that others her in the context of the business of sport and gameplay. In the tennis-specific story “Rocket with a racket” (published May 29, 1978), reporter Melissa Ludtke introduces Richards as a “transsexual.” She goes on to quote basketball and tennis player John Lucas who said: ““We have a Tasmanian [Helen Gurlay Cawley], an Australian [Wendy Turnbull], a Rhodesian [Pattison], another former basketball-tennis player [Riessen], a black and Renee Richards.”” Lucas — who played mixed doubles with Richards and described their pairing as an ““odd couple”” in the article “Call Him Coach” (published June 16, 1997) by L. Jon Wertheim — unjustly others his colleague. Lucas, a black athlete who disputably understands unjust representations of marginalized groups, intentionally segregates Richards. Labeling her as trans while excluding other racial and cultural characteristics does not allow for intersectional gender identities. The featured quote does segregate other athletes into location and racial categories that are unnecessary to understand the content of the story. However, the article wrongly parallels her gender identity with ethnic identities, which creates even more structural distance between the supplementary athletes and her.

***Visual Image.*** This package does not contain a visual image because the magazine did not present clear images of transness in these articles. Failing to print these visuals proceeds to exclude and other the trans population. As agenda-setting theory explains, audiences regard excluded frames and information as insignificant (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, excluding images of trans athletes visually erases them from the story.



### **Reasoning devices.**

**Roots.** The dynamics that motivated writers to label Richards are the predominantly collective societal schemas that reflect heteronormative, patriarchal knowledge structures. By sports media operating its positional power to convey overly simplified depictions of a framed subject, it forces its readers to rely on the supplied information to interpret meaning based on preexisting frames and schemas. However, this portrayal severely simplifies the complexities of the human existence while segregating, overlooking and neglecting other defining characteristics. It ignores cultural attributes, professional positions and personality traits that might be more relevant to the content.

**Appeals to Principle.** In accordance with accepted standards of conduct and the definition of morality, this package might indicate that people overlooked the plight of the transgender athlete. By journalists othering them in print and not framing the content in a way that boosts understanding, readers can largely ignore their struggles.

**Consequences.** Readers frame athletes differently when the player exist outside socially approved Westernized constructs of gender. When journalists define athletes solely by a gender identity, they are systematically othering an entire population while ignoring all other personality characteristics and interests. As textual portrayals in sports journalism contribute to pervasive sexism that affects the transgender athlete, journalists should engage in reflexivity and reexamine the characteristics they select to define. Through decolonization, they should consider the relationship between athletic bodies and gender identities as well as the relationship between gender and sport. A person's gender identity is not relevant to stories that recap sport tournaments. They should avoid defining a person as such when unnecessary to eliminate unforeseen mistreatment, privilege, discrimination and dominance. Eventually, Sports Illustrated

dropped the “transsexual” distinction on stories unrelated to transness — most of which were tennis match recaps — and simply referred to Richards by her name alone.

### **III. Fighting and Fairness**

**Summary.** Some stories are decidedly pro or con trans inclusion. The other interpretative packages express clear-cut negative or positive frames of transgender athletes. This package features depictions on both sides of the argument, which is uncommon in the other three packages. It questions the effectiveness of the sport system’s organizational structure. It calls for revisions and new policies that either prohibit transgender participation in sports or allow for inclusion. This interpretative package is firm on the assumption that society needs to be cautious and critical of sporting organizational structures and transgender players. It acknowledges a current system is in place that provides structure for sport teams. However, the sport system established by the governing bodies is problematic because it polices transgender bodies. This package addresses eradicating these concerns and injustices or establishing further regulation to ban their involvement. The most significant and impactful stories in the population are in this package. These articles indicate directional shifts. It speaks to messages regarding transgender identities, transgender bodies and sport inclusion. It makes a clear case as to the timeliness regarding policy changes and exemplars and why media cultures discuss such issues when they do.

The Fighting and Fairness package contain 12 articles and approximately 23.5 percent of the articles in the entire population. They focus on policies that restrict trans participation, such as Great Britain’s Ladies Golf Union closing a “gender loophole” by requiring all contestants in the Women’s British Open to be “females at birth” in a brief titled “Just Like a Woman” (published June 17, 1996). At the opposite end of the dispute, in the where-are-they-now “The

Originals” (published July 31, 2000), L. Jon Wertheim wrote a profile about Richards. In the story, Richards stated she did not want sport-governing bodies to exclude her from professional tennis so she “got into fighting legal battles to be allowed to play.” The core position of this package is that the governing bodies of sport organizations need to amend, revisit and update current trans-specific participation regulations to account for fairness for the transgender athlete as well as cisgender players in, primarily female, sport teams.

Any letters to the editor were included in this Fighting and Fairness package because they feature fervent pro and con trans-inclusion opinions. The letters were in response to Reilly’s “Extreme Makeover” (published July 30, 2007) and the second pair reacted to Torre and Epstein’s “The Transgender Athlete” (published June 18, 2012). In both instances, Sports Illustrated featured the letter contesting trans inclusion first. Sports Illustrated published the con letter opposing “The Transgender Athlete” first in a larger font in a more prominent position than the letter in support of trans tolerance. This letter did not specifically say it promoted trans inclusion in sports. Rather, the writer indicated he was pleased this marginalized group received acknowledgment. This letter featured phrases such as “it doesn’t seem fair” and that these athletes “still have physical advantage.” In both instances, the editors selected the con letters to be the most salient, which gives the impression that most people do not support the transgender population.

### **Framing devices.**

**Metaphor.** The overarching metaphor is that transgender athletes are fighters in their respective sports as well as for the ability to be eligible to compete. Those fighting against the trans inclusion are also fighters. Each article in this Fighting and Fairness package features one or more signature trans athlete exemplars, which is significant because this acknowledgement, at

the most basic level, recognizes their plight and existence and, more significantly, gives them a voice and validation in some cases.

**Depiction.** The featured sources, athletes and organizations depicted in this package are either contending for transgender inclusion or believe that trans athletes have a steadfast and unwavering competitive advantage. Renee Richards is an example of a fighter for inclusion in “She’d Rather Switch — And Fight” (published Sept. 6, 1976) and “The Originals” (published July 31, 2000) as well as mountain biker Michelle Dumaresq in “The Gender Flap” (published Sept. 23, 2002). Those documented as opposing inclusion are, for example, members of the Great Britain’s Ladies Golf Union in “Just Like a Woman” (published June 17, 1996). The implications of featuring contesting views are that readers, who can access previously established schemas about transgender people and sport, might have their opinion validated or systematically challenged. Readers who, however, have limited knowledge about trans participation in sports might be confused overall about the dispute if they read stories that address both sides. Alternatively, if they lack education on this topic and only read one story that addresses trans participation, especially if the story is medically inaccurate, the readers might develop a quick and unfounded opinion about competitive advantage.

**Catchphrase.** Two significant catchphrases appear in this package: “fight” and “fairness.” All articles do the same work and question the justice of trans participation or exclusion in sport. However, Sports Illustrated framed some content around the concept of fighting for inclusion (four articles) and others around establishing fairness for all players (eight articles).

**Fight.** The first article in this subtheme, “She’d Rather Switch — And Fight” (published Sept. 6, 1976) by Ray Kennedy, was a four-page profile of “transsexual Dr. Renee Richards”

who, as the deck head read, “didn’t win the Tennis Week Open, but she won some friends and influenced some people.” Indicating that she had a “fight” in the headline and “won” in the subhead, coupled with the circumstance that this is the first article in the package and the only one that published before the mid-1900s, marks it as a landmark article. Noteworthy, the author used the pronoun “she” in the headline. Additional weighty phrases on the first page of this article include: “transsexual,” which is how Sports Illustrated regularly classified Richards, and “sex chromosome test.” This article depicts an openly trans community that is growing, and it conveys general confusion mixed with acceptance.

The second implementation of “fight” in a headline is in “He’d Rather Switch Than Fight” (published on March 15, 1999). Sports Illustrated published this single-paragraph brief in its recurring Scorecard section. The kicker “Kickbox Sex Swap,” which preceded the headline, articulated the story of Thailand boxer Parinya Kiatbusaba (also referenced as a Nong (Va-Voom) Toom in subsequent stories<sup>iii</sup>) taking a stand about her desire to have a “sex-change surgery” while her sister was quoted discouraging “him” and said that her sibling would never be the same again. As found in “She’d Rather Switch — And Fight,” the article equally conveys contradicting opinions about trans issues. In this instance, trans athletic participant takes a backseat to the desire for a medical transition. Noteworthy, the headline does not use the pronoun associated with Kiatbusaba’s gender identity. Perhaps she never indicated her preference because she left unsafe or did not care. Perhaps the magazine ignored her wish to use the feminine pronouns or perhaps it was a cultural oversight due to lack of education.

In his The Life of Reilly column, Rick Reilly wrote the third story with “fight” in the headline, “He’d Rather Fight *And* Switch” (published June 28, 1999), which was in response to “He’d Rather Switch Than Fight.” The Scorecard brief galvanized Reilly to construct his

counter-column. He addresses the injustices Kiatbusaba experiences as a professional transgender athlete, including how she was initially not allowed to wear a bra during bouts. She was forced to weigh in naked, and the Thai kickboxing community rallied against her. Although Reilly does hit on these injustices, he also relies on formulating elaborate and sexist descriptions of Kiatbusaba's appearance and behavior. Arguably, as Kiatbusaba is a model and actress, she might have encouraged the anecdotes. As the story reads:

“At the postfight press conference, Toom, clutching a stuffed puppy, told how every time he got hit in the breasts, he lost his breath.” However, the line directly following it reads: “Plus, his opponent made fun of them and said they felt ‘mushy’ to the punch. That’s so disrespectful. They’re only half the size of George Foreman’s!”

Once again, as distinguished in previous stories in this Fighting for Fairness media package, the author conveys contradicting messages. In this, he flows between sentences that support Kiatbusaba and sentences that ridicule her. This paradox complicates the dialogue and confounds readers. They might wonder why someone is writing an article framed around transgender injustice is making fun of his subject and her predicament. He also refers to Kiatbusaba as a “transvestite.” This instance is the only one in which Sports Illustrated published this offensive word in this package. As previously indicated, five of Reilly's stories were included in the Marginalization interpretive package. Perhaps Reilly gravitated toward using that word because he included it in the previous content that appeared in the Marginalization package. Media producers manifest media frames by using personal preexisting schemas and frames. (Entman, 1993). Therefore, Reilly's personal association with the word “transvestite” leaks into the text of his stories.<sup>iv</sup> Based on framing theory, increased access to this public frame could alter public opinion.

Both “He’d Rather Fight *And* Switch” and “He’d Rather Switch Than Fight” feature the catchphrase “fight” in the headline and refer to Kiatbusaba with masculine pronouns. Readers

who saw both articles could unequivocally make this connection because the visual image of the word “and” in italics in the follow story expressed the intended differentiation between the Scorecard brief’s “than” and the column’s “and.” This slight change makes it clear that the second article is a proponent for inclusion. Kiatbusaba’s real desire is not included in the second story because, unlike the first brief, the writer did not give print space to quotes from the athlete. Further, both headlines are reminiscent of “She’d Rather Switch — And Fight” that circulated more than two decades earlier. Perhaps this relation was a creative accident or perhaps the authors intentionally borrowed the Richards headline.

The final story that introduces the “fight” catchphrase into its headline is David Epstein’s “Come Out Fighting” (published March 18, 2013), which discusses mixed martial artist Fallon Fox’s participation eligibility. Using “fighting” in the headline insinuate a real struggle that parallels her sport. As with several other articles in this media package, the story begins with accounts of contention. Specifically, this article comments on how challenging being a transgender athlete in martial arts can be, but the content eventually transitions into respect that humanizes Fox and her experience. Not in stark contrast to the other “fight” articles, however, this story also tackles contesting positions through the text, from quoting someone that is a proponent of a “tranny” division to the editor of Outsports.com who was quoted to have said Fox’s inclusion would ““open the doors to every other sport.”” The disputing opinions continue to appear in the text throughout this package.

*Fair.* The articles delineated by the “fair” catchphrase do similar work as the “fight” ones: navigate competitive advantage. Many fairness arguments come in the form of those voices who are anti-trans inclusion expressing outrage at those who would try to participate and those voices who are pro-trans inclusion advocating for those excluded. In “The Gender Flap”

(published Sept. 23, 2002), author Austin Murphy’s undoubtedly confronts the issue of fairness for mountain biker Michelle Dumaresq. He indicated Dumaresq fought against countless barriers while striving for equality in her sport. As with the other article, the story opens by describing how the author felt about writing this column: that compassion was not his initial response and he was simply excited to have found an easy-to-write-about topic. However, and fortunately, he begins to frame the article differently in the following paragraph and describes a deeper respect for Dumaresq. Within the first three paragraphs, Austin quoted Dumaresq to have said: “Your gender identity comes from your brain, and it’s pretty overpowering.” Because this appeared so early in the content, the media producers arguably regarded it as salient. This is first time Sports Illustrated mentions gender construction and the brain as it relates to transness early on in a story.

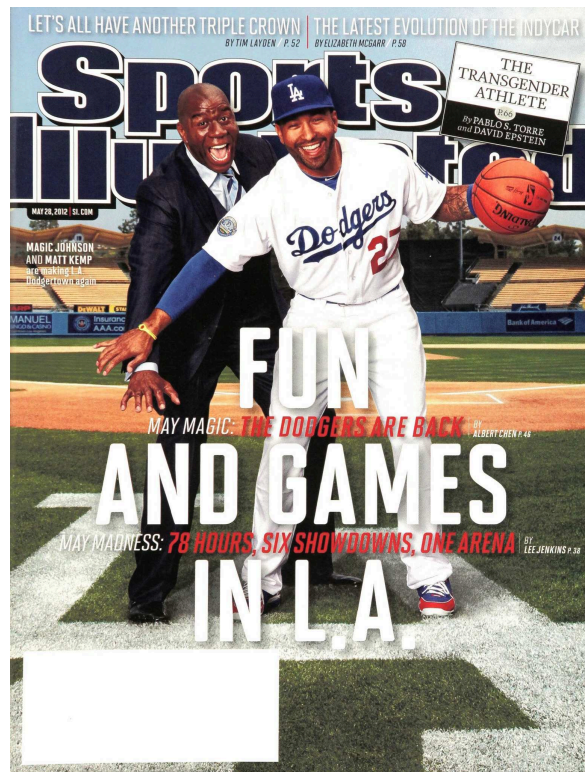


Figure 2: Trans Cover



The longest, most in-depth and arguably most significant article about trans eligibility in sports fit within the Fair catchphrase sub-package. Sports Illustrated featured “The Transgender Athlete” (published May 28, 2012) by Pablo S. Torre and David Epstein<sup>v</sup> on the front page of the magazine. This publication features the only time the word “transgender” — or any manifestation of the word “trans” — appears on the cover of a magazine in my population. The signature exemplars in the article articulate stories of fairness concerns and lucidity about what it means to have or not have competitive advantage. Although it still presents some alternative views, the feature article frames the controversy from the athletes’ perspective more than the other pieces in this package. It also refrains from any level of mockery or marginalization. Exemplars in this story are present throughout news coverage in stories challenging bias and inadequacy in the current sports system. This article’s depictions of the following athletes — as well as the gendered body — is that their genitalia does not impact athletic performance, but testosterone levels do. The list of featured trans sports figures is extensive: (1) Keelin Godsey, hammer throw and the United States of America’s first trans Olympic contender; (2) Michelle Dumaresq, professional mountain biker from Vancouver; (3) Renee Richards, tennis; (4) Lana Lawless, a one-handicap golfer; (4) Donna Rose, first trans and post-op female to participate in the women’s division of the U.S. Open national champs; (6) Jonny Saelua, center back on American Samoa’s men’s soccer team, who identifies as female became the first openly trans athlete to play in a World Cup game; (7) Kye Allums, basketball’s first openly trans NCAA Division I athlete; (8) Christine Daniels, Los Angeles Times sports writer; (9) Joanna Harper, runner and doctor; and (10) Lindsey Walker, trans female known as Drew when she played basketball in college. The authors also mentioned Caster Semenya, an intersex South African track-and-field runner.

This article chronicles previous injustices and writes respectfully about the trans population. This transition highlights cultural change that is vastly dissimilar than the previous depictions of mockery and entertainment<sup>vi</sup>. As media set the agenda for public opinion, researchers can interpret this article to exhibit a shift in public discourse towards a universal understanding of transness and the transgender athlete. While it addressed personal struggles, it also accounted for rules and regulations. The story featured many images of trans athletes, although none on the cover, and it humanized their experiences.

**Exemplar.** Richards is the primary exemplar because she sets the foundation for the widespread discussion about the fairness of trans inclusion in sport. The “She’d Rather Switch — And Fight” article is exclusively about Richards and her battle for inclusion. The author gives equal salience to positive frames and supportive depictions, sources and quotes that support Richards as well as critical frames and obstructive depictions, sources and quotes that do not support her. Examples are throughout the story:

- (1) ridicule (calling Richards’ story a “put-on” or a joke in the first line of the article affirms that a male becoming a female was a silly concept in the 1970s)
- (2) trans as an entertainer (in the line “there was no escaping the extraordinary spectacle of Renee Richards);
- (3) confusion (quoting someone who said her actions were “mind-boggling”)
- (4) sexism (comparing professional tennis players to “defenseless girls”)
- (5) depicting her as a self-serving exemplar (“The revelation that Richards’ Hollywood lawyer, Greg Bautzer, is indeed peddling a book by Richards does not enhance her crusader’s image.”)

(6) unsupportive (“Not everyone is so enthralled. When the Richards controversy surfaced, the U.S. Tennis Association countered by requiring that all women entrants in the U.S. Open take a sex chromosome test.”)

These are intermixed with examples of:

(1) validation (one source states that legal and medical research supports Richards as well as could impact all sports and “dissuades any inclination to dismiss Richards as a self-promoting exhibitionist”);

(2) explanation and truths (Richards asserting she is “anatomically, functionally, socially, emotionally and legally I am a female.”)

(3) support (“Dr. Roberto Granato, the urologist who performed the ‘sex-reassignment operation’ on Richards a year ago, rushed onto the court, embraced his former patient and exclaimed, ‘Oh, Renee, this is going to help so many people!’”)

(4) evidence of trans-athlete inclusion in athletes (Richards calling sex chromosome tests “inconclusive at best” in an effort to respect scientific practices rather than stereotypes)

(5) social justice influence aspirations (“Richards proclaims that she is embarked on a crusade for human rights, a quest ‘to prove that transsexuals as well as other persons who are fighting social stigmas can hold their heads up high.’”)

Readers find these examples of contrasting principles within the first five paragraphs of this multi-page story. These expressions contribute to how the author frames the article. As previously mentioned, media frames alter public opinion by instilling ideas within public discourse into the audience’s cognizance. The salience of it increases the likelihood that the reader will stow the notion into memory (Nicely, 2007; Scheufele D. A., 2000; Entman, 1993) and into semantic memory after repetition (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). According to Squire,

Knowlton, & Musen (1993), semantic memory is general knowledge (p. 459). Media frames can lead to semantic memories. By including strong words and mental images of both positions within the first page of the story, the author — the media producer swayed by personal preexisting frames and schemas — is indicating through selection of content and emphasis of information the complexity of the transgender-in-sports debate. Readers will bring their own established frames and schemas to the story. Ideally, readers would formulate fact-based opinions. Moreover, Richards is not self-promoting regardless if she was pursuing a book deal or not; she was working toward equality in all sports.

Richards' increased visibility in sporting spaces motivated this article and ultimately the debate about transgender inclusion in sports. She prompted discussion that gave media producers and consumers the space and language to address their questions, concerns and opinions about transgender athletes in competition with and against cisgender athletes. The article — which is the consequence of misinformation, lack of information or confusion about the competitive-advantage dispute — also give media cause to clear up some misconceptions about transgender transitions. The author buried this information into the second page of the story and into a quote that is equally contrasting and contradictory as the entire first page of the story. It reads:

“Though the female hormone, estrogen, that she takes has further reduced her strength, quickness and endurance, no one can accurately assess how much and to what extent her game has been diminished.” This quote is both validating and confusing. A reader who was uneducated about transgender transitions could theoretically interpret that the athlete has a heightened medical advantage over cisgender female even if the athlete has experienced diminished performance. To this point, and in relation to the entire Fighting for Fairness package, no story addressed the medical truths about competitive advantage or transitions in the first paragraph or the headline.

Little to no empirical data authenticates the assumption that trans athletes who undergo medical transitions have a competitive advantage (Sullivan, 2012). This omission begs me to consider why Sports Illustrated had not published a story that blatantly states in the headline that, after hormone therapy, trans athletes do not have a medical advantage. A story framed in this way would clear up inconsistencies and stereotypes. As agenda-setting theory suggests, media can influence the salience of topics on the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Audiences regard prominently covered issues as significant and deem minimized frames as insignificant. By submerging this evidence about testosterone later in stories, readers will deem it less important than the content printed before it. However, prominently displaying this material might put the magazine at a disadvantage on an international level in terms of acceptance at worldwide athletic competitions, such as the Olympics.

### Visual Image.

**MMA**

## Come Out Fighting

Transgender mixed martial artist Fallon Fox has forced her sport to grapple with issues of eligibility

**I**n what might reasonably be described as the most testosterone-drenched of sports, it was never going to be easy for the first MMA competitor who came out as transgender. On March 4, two days after winning her second pro fight with a one-round KO of featherweight Ericka Newsome in Coral Gables, Fla., Fallon Fox did just that. The revelation was followed promptly by questions about whether she would be allowed to continue competing against women.

Fox, a 37-year-old Navy veteran, was born male but—as she told SI.com’s Loretta Hunt, who broke the story—she began to feel as if she were inhabiting a body of the wrong sex as early as age five. (For transgender males and females the physiological characteristics that distinguish them do not conform to how they feel about themselves.) Ten years ago Fox informed her parents that she identified as a woman. Fox says they referred her to a therapist who tried to persuade Fox that she was a gay man, rather than a transgender woman. The therapy was a waste, Fox says, and she began medical treatment to transition to female. She says she underwent testosterone-suppression therapy to bring her hormone levels in line with those of an adult woman—and to negate male-typical advantages

**LONG HARD BATTLE**  
Fox, who struggled since childhood with her sexual identity before having gender-reassignment surgery seven years ago, is 2-0 as a pro.

such as greater muscle mass and red blood cell levels—and seven years ago she had gender-reassignment surgery.

Having transitioned hormonally and surgically years ago, Fox would be eligible to compete as a female under NCAA and Olympic rules. (In 2010, Kye Alums, a guard on the George Washington women’s basketball team who identifies as a male, became the first Division I athlete to come out as transgender.) Guidelines issued last year by the Association of Boxing Com-

missions require proof of at least two years of hormone therapy before a trans woman can compete against women.

Fox began training as an MMA fighter in 2008. As soon as she came out, her next fight, scheduled for April 20, was postponed. Officials for the Florida State Boxing Commission (which oversees MMA in the state), who were unaware that Fox was born male, are reviewing her license, presumably to verify that she transitioned appropriately and has undergone sufficient testosterone suppression.

Fox’s management and the promoter of her most recent bout are in her corner. “As long as she’s licensed, she’s always welcome in our promotion,” Jorge De La Noval, founder and CEO of Championship Fighting Alliance, told SI.com. Nonetheless, the expected vitriol—like the suggestion that Fox should compete in a special “tranny division”—spilled forth on message boards.

The brutal nature of MMA could make Fox’s case a lodestar for sports considering the eligibility of transgender athletes. “People keep bringing up the fact that [trans women] were born in a male body and how that gives them a distinct advantage,” says Cyd Zeigler, cofounder of Outsports.com. “In no sport would that advantage show up more clearly than in MMA. If Fallon is allowed to fight, I think that will open the doors to every other sport.”

Even if Fox retains her license, though, “will other women accept the fighter?” Zeigler asks. “I think there’s a big story there.” —David Epstein



PHOTO COURTESY OF GLOVEBOX TRAINING CENTER/FOX/GETTY IMAGES/REX USA

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Figure 3: Fallon Fox

The visual image is of Fallon Fox, trans woman mixed martial artist. Her powerful, ready stance presents her strength and muscles in a body position that is more indicative of masculine portrayals (Groth, 2012), rather than feminine ones, in sports magazines. This image transparently engages with the fight aspect of this package because it shows her in a fighting stance above a photo kicker that reads “Long Hard Battle” and below the headline “Come Out Fighting.” While this image does invoke a sense of pride in the power of competition and inclusion, it also lends itself to the competitive advantage debate. Readers could look at this image and consider if this overly muscular trans woman would yield an unfair advantage. If Sports Illustrated had published a more feminized image of Fox, the magazine would have relied on feminine stereotypes to frame Fox in a less domineering way. However, in the way the magazine presents her, she confounds the impression of female normativity and homonationalism.

As I explained in the literature review, homonationalism reinforces the social order and heteronormativity within the United States of America (Puar, 2007). Within its framework, homonationalism creates division between popular society’s definition of what it means to be a good queer and a bad queer (Puar, 2007). Society affirms and shows pride for a trans person who looks and acts within the comfortable and limited constructs of a heteronormative woman or a man. Feminine gender expressions settle fears, so homonationalism deems it socially satisfactory. The good queers mimic a heteronormative state. They aspire to build a socially acceptable version of family and being. They desire children and a capitalist lifestyle considered safe in the eyes of Western society and government. The bad queers, according to Puar (2007), are the individuals who make intolerant people uncomfortable. They might have AIDS, HIV or other diseases. They might be flamboyant or act in such a way that generates unrest in

oppressive, heteronormative contexts. Their appearances in either their external manifestations of gender expression or their physical body might not conform to Westernized sex-appropriate looks or beauty standards. Given this description of homonationalism, Sports Illustrated frames Fox as a bad queer because she does not conform to Westernized standards of the feminine gender. This representation starkly contrasts the visual images of Caitlyn Jenner who, as will be explained in the Pride and Affirmation package, Sports Illustrated frames as a good queer. Presenting Fox in a way that confounds heteronormativity, however, is ultimately more impactful than extenuating her femininity because it begins to dismantle gender-based feminine stereotypes.

### **Reasoning devices.**

**Roots.** This package's roots are in the desire to challenge or reinforce systems of power and privilege in sporting cultures. More specifically, the core frame addresses issues that pertain to transgender participation in sports such as competitive advantage, policies and public conceptions. Specifically, competitive advantage is a significantly salient theme in the discussion on transgender inclusion. Therefore, competitive advantage is a prominent topic in this section. Journalists should arguably reevaluate how they embody this in their discourse to ensure that they depicted competitive edge in the clearest and most medically accurate way. When this occurs, transgender athletes would ideally be welcomed onto the field or track while other cisgender players would feel comfortable, physically safe and trusting in the fairness of the competition.

Besides the matters of fairness and competitive advantage, the violence against the transgender population was a dynamic root that stimulated this package. "The Transgender Athlete" story cited a "staggering degree of victimization" against trans youth and adults alike.

As previously mentioned, sport gives journalists and researchers relatable frameworks under which to discuss topics related to social justice and socialization. Therefore, in addition to allowing us to queer the binary structure of sports, it also allows us to decolonize the manner in which we raise our youth so that they will be tolerant and inclusive. The hopeful consequence is to instill education into the readers and promote acceptance to eradicate trans violence. The spur of sexual-orientation tolerance could also have sparked a moral appeal that resulted in a heightened conversation about trans inclusion. I address this concept in more detail in the following media package.

***Appeals to Principle.*** This third package challenges morality, inequality and fairness on both sides of the argument. It taps into the moral values of its readers to consider the social and sport implications of transgender participation. It focuses on the aspects of the sports system that need revision so athletes can comfortably share sporting spaces. Overall, the intended outcome is to reform a system and create rules that permit inclusion safely, which, as the package indicates, is not possible without amendments to regulations and procedure.

***Consequence.*** The intended consequence of this Fighting for Fairness package is policy revision and charges of fairness. One article that also appeared in a Scorecard blurb section, titled “Amended” (published Nov. 11 2003), reported that “transsexuals” who have undergone a “sex-change operation” would “be allowed to compete in the Olympics after a waiting period to let testosterone and muscle mass reach normal levels for their new gender.” Although the policy change was necessary, problematic assumptions litter this sentence. First, transgender people do not change into a “new gender,” as the brain constructs gender identity. Rather, they would simply be transitioning their bodies into the sex that matches their gender identity. Further, as we now know, genitalia are indicative of neither gender nor athletic functionality. Therefore,



undergoing a sex-change operation is unnecessary for athletic eligibility because it has no impact on performance. As mentioned in the literature review, the International Olympic Committee updated its transgender-eligibly policy in 2016; the new regulations removed the need for Olympic-level trans athletes to undergo surgery and removed all restrictions for trans men (Zeigler, 2016). This policy still normalizes the antiquated two-sex structure. Moreover, transgender women are subject to additional restrictions that do not apply to transgender men. Thus, this perpetuates the sexism and marginalization of women, as a whole, in sports. Additionally contestable in modern trans debate, and arguably a consequence of public media discourse on trans athletes and policy changes for trans inclusion, is the highly contested debate about transgender bathroom policies. In sport, as mentioned in “The Transgender Athlete,” trans athletes have become a topic of contestation for coaches, cis athletes and parents who had concerns about transgender people sharing locker rooms with cis youth.

#### **IV. Pride and Affirmation**

**Summary.** This package, which comprised 13.7 percent of the population, contains seven articles that all do similar work: affirm queer identities. Relatively speaking, this fourth package is more current in its prominence in the public discourse. It departs from the other three by adopting a clear stance on acceptance of LGBTQ people as a whole. However, the package still discusses issues prevalent in all categories such as competitive advantage. This package differs from the others because it validates all gender identities and sexualities. It emphasizes that sporting organizations should address these considerations. The package’s core frame addresses how to affirm all gender identities and sexual orientations, which allows the athletes to participate in sports. The core frame is that the sports system is fundamentally discriminatory. As cited in the literature review, men created the construct of Westernized sport with the intention to

suppress a marginalized group: women (Travers, 2014). Proponents of this package feel that when appropriate policies are in place, trans people should be able to participate in sports without backlash or contention. It alludes to the steps needed to improve their sporting lives. It addresses previous practices that might have been immoral or unethical. However, the articles do not give a solid, conclusive stance about how to fix the perception of competitive advantage. Rather, the package works to educate the public and charges them to be more aware of the experiences of LGBTQ athletes.

### **Framing devices**

*Metaphor.* The metaphor in this package is exceedingly literal. It directly and inappropriately bundles transness — a gender identity — with sexual orientation — a matter of attraction and relationships. Within the seven articles, four are explicitly about transgender athletes. The remaining three place gender inappropriately into the same category as sexual orientation. Transgender is an issue of gender and not of sexual orientation. This package's metaphor is that transgender people have a similar experience as those who do not identify as heterosexual. These stories only mention the word “transgender” after lesbian, gay and bisexual in the LGBT acronym. However, the trans population's concerns about inclusion and equality closely relate to gender-based matters, such as those discussed by feminists, rather than sexual-orientation charges. Researchers further differentiate transgender studies from lesbian, bisexual and gay scholarship because trans research medical understandings (Landau, 2012). Even so, Sports Illustrated defines transgender people within the confines of the popular acronym.

In these articles, the primary exemplars are gay and primarily male athletes, which makes the trans population invisible in social contexts and inappropriately categorized. Studying language through the lens of queer, feminist and transgender theories allows me to examine the

thematic relationship between words and their actual — opposed to assumed — meaning. Queer and transgender theories allow the transgender community to disengage from the entrapment within the sexuality-based LGBT acronym. In the academy and journalism, when queer scholarship used this acronym as an overarching definition, it makes transgender people invisible, erased or integrated into an inappropriate category that does not properly recognize the distinction between sex and gender. The term “LGBT” is further exclusionary because it disregards the gender identities and sexual preferences that exist beyond the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Within my personal discourse, I endorse the use of “LGBTQ” or simply “queer” because these provide more expansive language structures. Sports Illustrated, however, exclusively operates “LGBT” in the discourse in this population.

While sorting transgender people into the sexual-orientation category visually erases transness, it does make the word “transgender,” which is the catchphrase of this package, more visible in certain contexts. The implications of adding the transgender into discussions about sexual orientation might be to blame for the relatively quick, comparatively to the general approval of other marginalized groups, acceptance of their community. When journalists couple the transgender in with stories framed around personal pride and acceptance, they weave transgender pride into the dialogue even if, habitually, the media producers and readers might misunderstand what the term officially means.

Linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism support this concept. Also known as The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, linguistic relativity postulates that our world is only as extensive as our language permits (Hickmann, 2000). It promotes the view that language shapes cognition in that the concepts and ways of thinking depend on language. We use the theory to support the idea that people who speak different languages see the world differently. Similarly, individuals who

speak the same language process the world similarly. Related to linguistic relativity is linguistic determinism, which is the position that language necessitates how we think (Hickmann, 2000). It suggests that thinking outside the boundaries of language is unfeasible. For example, if a language does not have a word for love, then love does not exist. Further, it endorses that language might codetermine or fully determine nonlinguistic behavior such as memory, perception, categorization and thinking. As media frames manifest in readers whose preexisting schemas and frames impact how knowledge is processed and stored, linguistic determinism arguably endorses that language used in discourse could have particularly strong effects on readers who share similar language structures. Similar to linguistic relativity, linguistic determinism concludes that thinking differs among linguistic communities (Hickmann, 2000). These concepts reflect the endurance of language. They point to how this study investigates generated meanings and alludes to why language overwhelmingly matters.

Therefore, combining the transgender in the LGBT acronym is not wholly detrimental because, even though readers might not have understood what it truly means to be born a transgender person, they were acquainted with the word. The familiarity that leads to rapid inclusion reveals that language has the power to make people feel more comfortable with marginalized more quickly than they traditionally would. It also demonstrates why language matters and why it is impactful. The routine exposure to the LGBT acronym in media discourse could explain why transgender people have experienced relatively rapid inclusion. Lumping the transgender into the LGBT acronym and including the word “transgender” on a story about sexual-orientation pride has confirming consequences. Placing the “T” in an affirming frame imparts a positive spin on transness.

**Depiction.** The four articles in the packages that are explicitly about transgender athletes as well as the three that endorse acceptance for openly gay athletes depict principal subjects advocating for inclusion, pride and progress. The authors of these articles are promoting education by appealing to moral principles of the readers. As Michael McCann wrote in the Scorecard story Loaded Question (published March 25, 2013) about the NFL asking drafts prospects about their sexual orientation: “NFL teams would be wise to drop bigoted questions.” These articles support the lesson that society should not take on the role of identifying or accepting someone based on sexual preference and gender.

Moreover, sexual orientation does not affect athletic performance in the slightest because sexual preference does not imply medically and hormonally altered bodies. Therefore, sporting establishments manifested the oppressive practice of excluding them or forcing them to hide their sexual preference to establish power structures to make the other players more comfortable. The trans bathroom debate is similar because using a bathroom next to someone who had different genitalia than you is not dangerous. This example demonstrates othering to reestablish power structures.

While I have been advocating for this inclusive framework for the duration of this study, I recognize that the position within this package is equally as superficial as the marginalization package because, as a whole, it excludes the more profound frames that dissect the intricacies of the still prevalent trans dis-inclusion.

**Catchphrase.** I discussed the catchphrase of this package, “transgender,” heavily in the metaphor portion of this package as it relates to linguistic relativity, linguistic determinism and the LGBT acronym. Six of the seven articles use “transgender.” Considering the evolution of trans-related language as outlined in the literature review (Williams C., 2014) as well as

guidelines within The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015) and GLAAD Media Reference Guide (GLAAD, 2014), I would hope to see that journalists would embrace the inclusive “transgender.” The only article that does not is a review of Richards’ book. In the article “Renee Richards’ ‘Second Serve’ Is A Book About Two Remarkable People” (published March 28, 1983), author Jeremiah Tax refers to Richards as a “transsexual.” The more pervasively used term in previous package, “transvestite” was not present. This example is a clear indication that the frames, depictions and discussions about transgender athletes in sports media have changed over time. In this interpretative package, the change ultimately demonstrates that discourse and society have become more sensitive to transgender issues.

***Exemplar.*** Although marginalized groups in athletics have advocated for more equality in the sport system, recent exemplars have brought this discussion to the forefront of public awareness. The recent coming out of Jenner, for example, roused a firestorm across all media platforms. Therefore, Jenner is the Pride and Affirmation package’s primary exemplar. As written in the article “In Changing The Game” (published Dec. 28, 2015) by Amy Ellis Nutt: “‘Caitlyn coming out as a woman is such a big moment,’ says Christina Kahrl, a national baseball writer and editor for ESPN.com who is an out transgender woman. ‘That forces people collectively to understand transness.’” She continued to say that: “‘Sports gives us this opportunity to talk about something we’d never talk about ordinarily.’” As previously cited, the principle societal institution of sport can nourish social justice change because it can communicate national interests such as legitimacy and status enhancement (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). This position alludes to the outcomes that result from inclusive policy changes. Moreover, it further illustrates that sport is a reflection of society.

Mainstream media outlets embraced Jenner as an avenue to address trans topics (Sawyer, 2015). However, members of the trans community and allies protested against her (Ring, 2015) and even accused her of being transphobic (Song, 2015) after Time magazine deemed Jenner a runner-up for Person of the Year in 2015 (Steinmetz, 2015). Reporter Katy Steinmetz asked Jenner about her goal of “normalizing” the transgender. Jenner responded: “The only way you can normalize it is to expose it.” She also said: “The more as I proceed and go forward, it is important for me to try to project a good image for this community.” After Steinmetz had asked her to give a description of a good image, Jenner said:

“One thing that has always been important for me, and it may seem very self-absorbed or whatever, is first of all your presentation of who you are. I think it’s much easier for a trans woman or a trans man who authentically kind of looks and plays the role. So what I call my presentation. I try to take that seriously. I think it puts people at ease. If you’re out there and, to be honest with you, if you look like a man in a dress, it makes people uncomfortable. So the first thing I can do is try to present myself well. I want to dress well. I want to look good. When I go out, as Kim says, you’ve got to rock it because the paparazzi will be there.” (Steinmetz, 2015).

Controversially, Jenner admitted that she thought a man cross-dressing should try to fit into Western constructs of beauty because the alternative — resembling a man in a dress — causes other people to feel uneasy. According to Puar (2007), the individuals who make intolerant people uncomfortable are bad queers. This representation is the version of queerness and transness that Jenner indicated that she strives to avoid. She insinuates that the transgender community’s job is to ensure other people are comfortable by appearing as one gender or another. Not only does this further perpetuate the problematic sex/gender binary but also Jenner is prompting the restrictive construct of the good queer that states a trans woman should embody femininity for society to accept her. Jenner is perpetuating problematic structures. She is not a proponent of changing social systems.

Following “the paparazzi will be there” clause, Jenner continued to say: “The second thing I want to do in living my life authentically is be intelligent on the subject. Hopefully as time goes on I’ll learn more and more and more and get better at that” (Steinmetz, 2015). Although she is arguably a member of the trans community even if she rejects the position, Jenner is undereducated about its difficulties. She did issue an apology (Song, 2015) for her transphobic comment about the uncomfortable appearance of men in dresses. Much of this opinion might project from years of hiding a true gender identity. If parents allow children to experiment with gender expressions from a young age, the children will grow up with affirming opinions about all gender identity and expressions. When this occurs, we will observe decidedly diminished transphobic comments.

By placing Jenner in a position of influence, we might be romanticizing the transgender. Jenner is neither the best transgender warrior nor a willing exemplar for trans inclusion. Cultural or historical locations establish trans exemplars (Towle & Morgan, 2006). According to Towle & Morgan (2006) who addressed the Native’s concept of the phrase “third gender,” transgender warriors uphold the naturalness of the historical transgender observed in Native communities. The third gender identity legitimizes transgender in a historical context (Towle & Morgan, 2006). Historical Indigenous communities did not other them and considered them central fixtures of culture. Warriors in the primordial sense are natural and ancient figures of power. Understanding that they are natural and historical situates them in a place that is not deviant. However, media producers can romanticize some exemplars and especially those reluctantly placed in the position of warriors (Towle & Morgan, 2006). When society romanticized a transgender exemplar, it turns the person into potentially a reluctant or undeserving warrior who is not fully aware of the international trans difficulties, obstacles for other transgender



individuals or interested is being a public advocate for the community. “Our ability to comprehend the complexity of others’ lives is jeopardized when the power to represent them is placed in the hands of those who stand to gain from misrepresenting them” (Towle & Morgan, 2006, p. 681). This misplacement can result in re-colonization. “Rather than reify or romanticize presumed gender variability in non-Western societies, we would prefer to see greater attention given to the historical and social context in which gendered and sexualized bodies and relationships are produced, reproduced, and transformed” (Towle & Morgan, 2006, p. 682). Trans activists need to look beyond the mythical gender warriors that support their ideas and instead let people freely express and embody themselves as they desire.

**Visual Image.**



**Figure 4: Caitlyn Jenner**

A hyper-feminine image of Jenner in a stylish white dress standing at the microphone during a speech at the ESPY awards serves as the visual image of this package. It explicitly

depicts Jenner prompting the limiting archetype that trans women should exemplify utmost womanliness in social situations. In the picture, she embodies socially acceptable femininity. She seals her lips and folds her hands in her lap. She sports a pristinely decorated face above a chic, sexy and fashion-forward gown. Jenner's appearance is not surprising considering her controversial Time magazine quote. Moreover, as discussed in the exemplar section, Western society is exceedingly comfortable with typical expressions of femininity. The media producers selected to print a specific moment that further perpetuates adverse stereotypes. They could have published a commanding image of her perhaps talking into the microphone. However, the selection of this picture matters because the magazine silences a closed-mouth Jenner in the way other magazine depictions silence women. Jenner's humble body position reinforces societally constructed feminine heteronormativity.

When the body contributes to the establishment of social or professional regulatory practices, it becomes a target of repressive biopolitics and a blend of disciplinary customs directed at all bodies (Puar, 2007). Bureaucratic entities control the population of bodies for state-like ends (Stryker, 2014). Biopolitical laws and regulations bear weight on how society looks at people's bodies as well as how governing laws, rules, societal norms and organizations define and categorize bodies. They are deeply rooted in the domain of sexuality in how, for example, popular society deems a relationship socially legitimate by the couple's ability to reproduce. People must marry and build a family in a way that does little social harm to pre-established domestic systems for Western society to consider them good queers.

Media discourse framed in this package allows depictions of queerness as long as they do not dissipate from public comfort and obey the binary gender expressions that Jenner promotes.

Sport corporations, clubs and teams examine, define and sort bodies into male/female categories

to maintain governance in the strikingly established and rarely contested sex/gender-based binary system. This image of Jenner does not fight the oppressive dichotomy-based system. Rather, it works to enforce stereotypes and reestablish societal comfort.

Sports Illustrated did feature Jenner on the cover of its July 4–11, 2016 edition to promote the summer Olympics as well as to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympics at which Jenner set a decathlon world record (Layden, 2016). It published this cover long after I began my research and beyond my population's timeframe that ended in December 2015. However, it is significant to mention because Jenner is the first transgender person featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated both before and after transitioning. The cover's headline "Caitlyn Jenner as you know her now. Bruce Jenner as you knew him then." is problematic because it perpetuates the notion that Jenner's gender switched from man to woman during her lifetime rather her being born into a male body with a feminine gender constructed in her brain. Original speculation said she would be unclothed and wearing her Olympic medals on the cover (Wagoner, 2016). However, Jenner stands in a gold-sequin long-legged romper jumpsuit. All aspects of her physical appearance — body position with her hand on her hip, closed lips and fashionable clothing — and her status as a privileged white celebrity from the United States of America reflect traditional portrayals of women in mainstream magazines (Edwards, 2012). Placing a smaller image of her first Sports Illustrated cover to the left of Jenner — which features a triumphant Jenner winning her event — emphasizes the socially constructed distinction between men and women. Although society marginalizes her because of her trans status, Jenner's position as a famous white person who fits into constructs established by homonationalism highly privileges her. Therefore, heteronormative social structures are content seeing this portrayal on the cover of a sport magazine. While this cover

image conceptualizes progress, it does so at a cost. It romanticizes a privileged, rich, white trans female who personifies social constructs of femininity in order to make a heteronormative society feel more comfortable with trans identities. We should promote a society structured so it seamlessly adapts to all gender expressions and identities without concern or marginalization. Instead, Sports Illustrated intends to present a singular heteronormative image that represents a marginalized and diverse community. Future research could deconstruct and compare the two Jenner covers in more detail as well as expand the timeframe of this study to include articles printed after December 2015.



Figure 5: Caitlyn Jenner Cover

### Reasoning devices.

**Roots.** The motivating root of this package is the timely need to upgrade the social and professional dynamic of trans representation in sporting cultures. It seeks to validate all sexual orientations but only gender identities that conform to the sex/gender binary. It promotes the

belief that athletes should be able to participate in sports as the gender to which they ascribe and without having to hide or justify sexual preference. The package does not rely on the universal assumption that trans people exist only for entertainment appeal and mockery. Although it slightly indicates that fairness is still a consideration in sports, the package excludes frames that address how all athletes must abide by predetermined fairness guidelines that force people into involuntary sex-segregate categories.

*Appeals to Principle.* This package fully depends on distinctive moral entities that promote acceptance and affirmation, which are two reactions that all people arguably yearn to elicit in multiple aspects of life. The package sustains particular overall principles of inclusion and pride. Again, these concepts are arguably universal goals that dictate the Westernized version of social success. They are relatable ideologies for many people raised in the United States of America. This package appeals to the principles of those who are proponents of general societal tolerance as well as tolerance in sporting cultures.

Sports Illustrated further promotes this package's open-mindedness by publishing a story titled "Playing with Pride" (published Dec. 15, 2014) penned by the country's first openly transgender high school coach, Stephen Alexander. A trans man who played on a women's basketball team in college, Alexander constructed the article to create spaces for both sexual orientation and trans inclusion by leading with his personal coming out and transition story as well as his experiences in the women's locker room and now coaching sport teams for boys. He also used the "LGBTQ" acronym, rather than the non-all-inclusive "LGBT," to describe the queer community. The word "pride" in the headline solidified its placement in the Pride and Affirmation package.

Despite his trans identity, Alexander does comparatively little to validate the trans athlete experience. He limited remarks on trans athletes to an off-hand glimpse of support directed at mixed martial artist Fallon Fox in lieu of talking up and highlighting the courage of male homosexual athletes. Basketball's Jason Collins; football's Michael Sam, Mitch Eby and Chip Saraf; and baseball's Robbie Rogers and Matt Kaplon all epitomize socially appropriate depictions of masculine power and presence. Their resolution to live authentically and come out while hoping to begin or preserve careers in the hyper-masculine and restrictive space that is professional Western sport is brave and admirable. However, their position of privilege as physically able men merely reinforces the social order and heteronormativity established through homonationalism. Alexander concluded his article: "To all athletes and coaches who came out this year, representing a wide range of sports, ages, circumstances and backgrounds: You helped the world realize that a person's sexual orientation need not be suppressed but should instead be celebrated. We are redefining what it means to participate in sports as our true selves. We are setting the example of what it means to be a true team. My hope for 2015 is that athletes keep taking the fields and coming out because — while it is a personal journey — they can lift others out of darkness. Everyone can play." The trans man inappropriately and perhaps unintentionally lumps the transgender into the phrase "sexual orientation" or he ignores his own community entirely. He does not address that the struggles faced by the trans population are instinctively more complicated than those faced by cisgender athletes who do not identify as heterosexual. Perhaps he recognized that the audience did not have the tools to process trans inclusion fully or maybe his intention was to write a positive, uplifting and noncontroversial story in an attempt to facilitate trans tolerance.

*Consequences.* Media organizations might not purposely institute slanted frames in discourse to persuade the public or misrepresent subjects. However, they do it anyway. Journalists employing persuasive media frames have social consequences. These results are not exclusively and thoroughly detrimental. Before other journalists widely discussed the experience of the transgender population, Jeremiah Tax wrote the first fully affirmative and trans-specific story in this package — “Renee Richards’ ‘Second Serve’ Is A Book About Two Remarkable People” — in March of 1983. As its headline indicates, this article is a book review. Richards wrote the text with John Ames. The book reflects on Richards’ transgender transition and outlines her battle to change sport policy. Both the book and article are consequences of Richards striving to set the record straight about her life and winning a legal battle for inclusion.

Unlike the articles in the Fighting and Fairness package, this story takes a clear trans-inclusion stance from the start. As we have learned from agenda-setting theory, media can influence information salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The story’s lead immediately questions pervasive and inaccurate perceptions about trans sport participation. Tax began the article:

“For many months in 1976 and ‘77 the country’s sports pages and television screens and conversations in medical, psychiatric and purely social circles were awash with the names Dr. Richard Raskind and Dr. Renee Richards. Raskind, an eminent eye specialist and, to a much lesser extent, tournament tennis player, had undergone transsexual treatment and surgery and become Richards, and was seeking certification as a female tournament player. What should be done about this? Many of the answers to that question in print, on TV and even in medical circles at the time were ill-informed or emotionally intemperate or merely smart-alecky nonsense. Now Richards (with writer John Ames) offers her account of the events leading up to her transsexual experience, the treatment itself and its aftermath.”

The author must have regarded this information as highly salient to place it in the first two paragraphs of the story. Prominently calling out sources that circulate common misconceptions during their accounts of the trans experience is a step in the right direction to increase education

about trans athletes, fairness and inclusion. Although he does not offer clear answers to the “What should be done about this?” question, Tax does indicate that the media and medical groups had provided uneducated, unreasonable, contemptuous and “merely smart-aleck nonsense” about the implication of trans inclusion in sports. I found similarly pervasive inaccuracies and banishment in the depictions and frames of transgender people in the Marginalization package.

Although it does address Richards’ legal battle, the article materialized in the Pride and Affirmation package rather than in Fighting and Fairness. Exceeding affirmative frames and strong language that contradicted both the widespread medical and social beliefs of the time were frequent at the article’s inception. This story was also distinctive from the rest of the package primarily because it was the only Pride and Affirmation article published before 2010 during a time when the Marginalization package was exceedingly prevalent. This article introduced a package that contained affirmative frames to Sports Illustrated readers. While a full package of stories that support affirmation and pride did not largely exist until more than 25 years later, this story began to develop confirming frameworks under which to comprehend affirming depictions transgender athletes. Sponsored activities, one of the three classes of factors outlined in the methodology, could have arguably influenced this article, given that it is a time-based outlier in the package. According to Gamson & Modigliani (1989), social movement organizations have the ability to sway the framing process. In this study, the book “Second Serve” and its business entities could have been sponsoring agents. We do not know why Tax decided to review this book. The publisher could have sent a copy to Sports Illustrated to promote sales. As a journalist who worked as a freelancer, reporter and editor for the Chicago Sun-Times company for 15 years who also produced holiday gift guides, I am more than keenly aware that companies regularly



send books and products to newspapers in the hope media outlets feature them. Alternatively, Tax could have had a general interest in Richards' story and sought out the text himself. Writing book reviews requires additional reflection because a critic must read the book first. Therefore, Tax at least skimmed, if not studied in its entirety, the book. Arguably, the frames in the book could have influenced the frames Tax conveyed in the story. As many factors could have influenced the content of this story and contributed to its decidedly pro-trans-inclusion stance, it emerged as a Pride and Affirmation story because it lacks objective opposition that we find in *Fighting and Fairness*.

The “two remarkable people” mentioned in the headline are 1) Richards pre-transition when she was called Dr. Richard Raskind and 2) Richards after she began her transition. The book's thesis purports that two people — Dick and Renee — inside one body were battling for ascendancy. Arguably, some trans activists might contend that perpetuating the erroneous belief that two people exist within one body is problematic because readers might compare the trans person with someone with dissociative identity disorder or schizophrenia, which perpetuate the exceedingly untrue notion that transness is a mental illness. The article did indicate disjointed medical judgments on the cause of transness when the article published. Tax wrote:

“Most psychoanalysts don't accept the book's description of Richard's problem or the solution he submitted to. They think that sexual confusion stems largely from fantasizing, however induced, and should be treated as early as possible in childhood by traditional or innovative methods other than surgery. One highly respected institution specializing in the subject — the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic — suspended its own surgical procedures some years ago, did follow-up studies on its patients and hasn't resumed transsexual operations.”

Had this been the only reference to medical transitions in the story, I would have recognized it as marginalization. However, the author framed the story in a way that echoes an air of respect for the athlete. The *Fighting and Fairness* exemplar won her dispute.

## **V. Subtheme: Cheating**

The Gamson & Modigliani (1989) model suggests that articles in a population might fit into multiple media packages. They are not bound to one frame. However, in nearly every case, stories fit into one of the four clearly defined media packages. The running subtheme of cheating, however, is an outlier. I situated articles depicting transgender athletes as cheaters in sport arenas in the Marginalization package rather than in Fighting and Fairness even though researchers might argue they overlap. However, the Fighting and Fairness articles address, for example, medical-based issues related to competitive advantage and inclusion. They consider the safety of other athletes and maintaining fairness in sporting spaces. They do not consider an athlete's character. The Marginalization package's parameters indicate that the magazine depicts trans people as subjects of mockery or entertainers. However, classifying a trans athlete who is going through a transition as a cheater is a deeper and severe form of marginalization. Not only does it question the authentication person's gender identity and status as an athlete but also it places judgment on the person's character. Cheating is a notoriously disrespected and disputed in athletics. In Steve Rushin's "Our Cheatin' Hearts" story (published July 14, 2003), his first sentence reads: "Few men are more reviled in America than those who cheat at sports." This perspective is particularly frequent in professional sporting spaces where team owners and managers hand off the most significant paychecks to the strongest performers.

Making opinion-based assessments on athletic performance is commonplace in sports media. While professional expectations of hard news state that journalists should avoid opinion-based assumptions, they give columnists flexibility to share personal and controversial outlooks. Regardless of its source, reviews of value judgments in all media could have long-term detrimental consequences. While critics, academics, journalists and sporting cultures can

question the scientifically based biopolitics associated with competitive advantage, they have the power to damage an athlete's career permanently by judging a person's actions. As we use framing theory to stress, the way journalists slant stories influences the public's grasp and operation of the content (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997). As media-dependency theory explains the significance of meaning-generating experiences available in an audience's life (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), the readers must depend on their preexisting knowledge about competitive advantage. The story does not elaborate on the scientific reasons why transgender athletes are not cheaters. Therefore, it has the power to validate media frames in readers whose preexisting, incorrect schemas and frames impact processed and stored knowledge (Entman, 1993). Beyond readers, the affected public could include coaches or team owners. The story's approach could affect potential endorsement deals.

As mentioned in the methodology, several articles in my population that discussed trans-specific exemplars did not employ any of the searched words. These were included in my study because they provide related insight into the frames of trans athletes. "Our Cheatin' Hearts," which is in the Marginalization package, is one such article. In reference to Richards, Rushin wrote: "The most extreme equipment modification in sports history? Dr. Richard Raskind's becoming women's professional tennis player Renee Richards (and suing for the right to play in the U.S. Open)." The author frames tennis player Richards as a cheater because she had undergone a medical transition. Deeming Richards a cheater is suspect framing. To call a transgender person undergoing a medical transition a cheater is beyond oppressive. It is immoral and biased. It does not follow the Code of Ethics established by the Society of Professional Journalists that indicates journalists should not do harm. The code says that journalists should "balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the

news is not a license for arrogance” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). Inappropriately calling a transgender person a cheater does considerable harm to the athlete who is already facing sex-based oppression and segregation. Any journalist who does so is exercising self-imposed superiority. As quoted in the article “2¢ with Pádraig Harrington” (published Nov. 15, 2004), which is in the Fighting and Fairness package, Mianne Bagger said: “No one has sex-change surgery just to get a tour card.” As cheating is an arguable outlier, this subtheme and its critique remained separate from the results.

In the following chapter, I discuss the implications of the work done in each package and limitations as well as make suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Gamson & Modiglia (1989) said to consider three factors — cultural resonances, sponsor activities and media practices — when interpreting packages. Sponsored activities, as they relate to promotional and financial implications, were only relevant in the “Renee Richards’ ‘Second Serve’ Is A Book About Two Remarkable People” that published in March of 1983. The consequence section in the Pride and Affirmation package outlines this argument. Sponsored activities might also be relevant when we consider that Sports Illustrated commodifies its audience by printing newsworthy and timely stories to boost advertising and sales.

Cultural resonances are relevant because sport is a recognizable framework under which to study society. As previously described, packages with cultural resonances have advantages because they emulate cultural topics in their ideas, language and symbols. Resonances are appealing in packages because the frames are recognizable and natural. While trans marginalization might be a new concept for many researchers, gender marginalization is a relatable framework that could help scholars understand trans matters. Overused words that have cultural resonances can imply positive or negative connotations. The undertones of the uses of the word “transvestite,” especially in the Marginalization package, suggest adverse meanings that improperly display the community. The word “pride,” however superficial as the Pride and Affirmation implications contend, suggests favorable connotations that frame a story. Cultural resonances are also concerned with themes and counter-themes. As previously mentioned, the counter-theme to overcoming nature is to become in harmony with it. Coming to terms with the prevalence of fluid gender identities is establishing harmony with nature.

Most relevant are media practices. Media practices result in media frames. As mentioned in the methodology, journalists create packages to facilitate discussion (Gamson & Modigliani,

1989). Journalists overlap the boundary between creators and users of meaning. How they frame stories can reflect public opinion about transness. The media theories used in this study tell us that journalists transmit personal frames through their discourse, which affects how the audience interprets and uses these frames. The audience places frames that are increasingly salience into semantic memory. This engagement could change public opinion as well as how they behave or relate to a marginalized community.

Journalists within this package situate themselves in a position of power. This media practice and theme overarches the entire population. On several occasions, especially when introducing a trans exemplar, the journalists explain their process for writing an article. Many times, these reasons are to entertain an audience with a novel account of a trans athlete fighting for inclusion. Eventually, many authors change gears within the articles and begin to humanize the athletes rather than considering their life story as tokenized, odd or amusing. Thus, these packages exist for cisgender people to understand trans people. They achieve the work for the cis person to attempt to understand the trans experience or simply read a good story. Besides allowing print space for the one article written by a trans coach, Sports Illustrated provides no other space for direct trans voices. Even if journalists try to relate to the trans experience, they situate themselves as central and work to make transness a relatable concept in cis lives rather than allowing it to exist in its own space. Researchers should consider this position when addressing the implications of each package. The media practices that frame each package have distinct implications on the work the package does and how it impacts public perceptions of transness and transgender participation in sport.

### **I. Marginalization implications**

Mocking the trans population in media discourse or assuming trans people engage in various forms of gender expressions for entertainment value creates an audience that is uneducated about transness and the marginalization of trans people. As suggested in my methodology, researchers treat media discourse and public opinion as two parallel systems of construction (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). As framing theory suggests, media producers have power to validate or discredit people and media frames create the lenses journalists use to give content prominence (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Knight, 1999; Entman, 1993). Media organizations capitalize on recognizable frames to help its audience make sense of the content (Bronstein, 2005). This technique lets journalists avoid fully clarifying new, unacquainted or incorrectly pervasive beliefs about marginalized groups (Nicely, 2007). If these messages include inaccurate, misrepresented or excluded information as they do in the Marginalization package, readers might apply this perceived general knowledge to their general attitude about the transgender population. This thought process is problematic when sports media, which is in a position of power, transmits erroneous depictions of transness as well as contributes to the delayed incorporation of inclusionary policies. How journalists frame a trans subject can manipulate how readers interact with trans people in non-athletic settings. We can say the same for any gender representations that confound heteronormative states.

Media-dependency theory, which researchers use to explain how meaning-generating experiences determine the significance of media discourse (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), supports the claim that readers who do not have the framework to understand affirming depictions of diverse gender expressions will rely on available frames. If journalists had framed cross-dressing basketball player Dennis Rodman in a confirming way in “Rare Bird,” readers would have understood him differently. Subsequently, I would have situated this feature story in

the Affirmation and Pride package, and his legacy would have shifted from being remembered as a “rare bird” to an exemplar supporting diverse gender expression. In 1995, Rodman was a clear proponent for self-determination, which is a more socially acceptable construct in modern day. In the story, Silver quoted Rodman to have said: ““Why don’t more people in his position behave so freely? They hide behind their money, fame and success.”” He further quoted him as saying: ““Then all of a sudden they have no opinion, or they’re afraid to voice it because they’re afraid someone will take away what they’ve got.”” Rodman concluded with: ““You can be famous and still voice your opinion, as long as you don’t hurt anybody. You can do anything you want.”” In this, he promoted general inclusion before Western society considered it appropriate. Therefore, based on what media framing tells us and now that the Pride and Affirmation package exists, Sports Illustrated could have conceivably framed Rodman as a positive cultural icon if he had been a timely and popular social figure in 2015 rather than in 1995. Journalists must queer and decolonize the marginalized images of the trans population to diminish negative depictions and false stereotypes.

## **II. Labeling implications**

Through the construction of framing theory, researchers use media framing to explain the prominence journalists give to diminished or omitted content (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Knight, 1999; Entman, 1993). Labeling athletes as “transsexual” organizes the audience’s knowledge of individuals but it also compartmentalizes them to maintain heteronormative dominance by othering the players. Journalists should not present transgender athletes as the other in sports media because segregation is problematic. We would not define someone as disabled without relating this status to the focus of the story. Gender is no different. Journalists arguably added the defining characteristic of gender to give context to the readers and add color to the story.



However, it is unrelated to the content. According to Associated Press style (Minthorn, Jacobsen, & Froke, 2015), journalists should only mention this defining information if it is relevant to the content. In the articles within the Labeling package, it is not. Therefore, these journalists are not abiding by the established principles of journalism. You will notice that this package's analysis is significantly shorter than the other packages because it works to other and segregate transness from the central conversation. Using agenda-setting theory, researchers explain that audiences regard minimized or excluded material as insignificant (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, segregating depictions of trans athletes excludes them from the central topic of the story. The other packages, especially Fighting and Fairness, require more in-depth examinations because the central themes and frames are exceedingly more complicated.

### **III. Fighting and Fairness implications**

The Fighting and Fairness package documents the evolution of trans-related language. The articles span from 1976 to 2013. In 1976, Sports Illustrated used the word "transsexual" and feminine pronouns to describe tennis player Renee Richards. The magazine did employ "transvestite" and masculine pronouns to describe Thailand boxer Parinya Kiatbusaba in 1999. However, in 2013, it used the term "transgender" and the appropriate feminine pronouns to reference mixed martial artist Fallon Fox. We use linguistic relativity to explain how language shapes the understanding because it influences concepts and the way people think about people (Hickmann, 2000). Linguistic relativity allows us to investigate how language generates meaning and alludes to why language matters. As explained in the literature review, media set the agenda and media framing shapes public opinion. Overall, media are changing its depictions of trans people and the language it uses to describe them. Language has evolved into positive frames. This development shows progress.

Sport gives journalists and researchers a relatable framework under which to discuss gender because both sports and gender have binary constructions. Competition is the crutch of sport in Westernized culture. As addressed in the literature review, sport can promote or block social justice changes as well as can affect socialization (Frey & Eitzen, 1991) and the patriarchy designed Western sport to establish power structures between males and females (Travers, 2014). A homonormative gender binary structure comfortably, naively and problematically traps Westernized societies. Adding the transgender body and identity heightens sport debates, and complicates implications. Conversations and sports media discourse on topics of fairness and safety experience resurgence in popularity and intensity when a transgender identity in sports becomes more prominent in Western culture. We see this implication throughout this package in Renee Richard's legal battle, the controversy around Thailand boxer Parinya Kiatbusaba, mountain biker Michelle Dumaresq, mixed martial artist Fallon Fox and Olympian hopeful Keelin Godsey who was a trans man participating in the female hammer throw. Perhaps the magazine needs to separate medical competitive advantage from social competitive advantage. As mentioned in the literature review, athletic socialization begins at birth, which I further explore later in the discussion. Therefore, trans women may arguably have a socialization advantage. We should separate this debate from the one on medical competitive advantage. The socialized competitive advantage in trans athletes is discernibly challenging to measure, and sport should not consider it in a trans athletes' participation eligibility. Rather, academics should consider it when studying social justice in terms of parenting reform and avoiding assigning a gender or traits to a child at birth.

The Fighting and Fairness package is decidedly complicated. As a researcher, I must consider why this one was particularly difficult to analyze. The answer exists within the lens we

are using to understand the story this package strives to tell, which is a complicated relationship between fairness and inclusion. Packages that are the most complex and exist in a gray area of understanding are both the most difficult to interpret and the most valuable to comprehend. Thus, the most complicated packages are the most useful for research. The majority of what Sports Illustrated printed about transgender athletes is too simple. These representations in discourse assume that readers do not understand complicated issues. Rather, researchers and journalists need to talk about trans inclusion in sports by continuously recognizing the complex issue. They should avoid exclusively mocking or affirming the athletes. In this, we achieve a better understanding of the issues. What we have learned from this analysis is that we must complicate the narrative because the complicated narratives matter the most. We find the best work in the meaty, tough and hard-to-process places. We can take these understandings with the intent to do better in the future.

#### **IV. Pride and Affirmation implications**

While the frames within this Pride and Affirmation package seem aspirational — meaning: eliminating problematic portrayals of the transgender population in media is ideal — this view should not stop researchers and journalists from considering the more substantial, meatier issues as can be seen in the Fairness and Fighting package. Journalists should not stop analyzing and asking the hard questions because these articles address topics that are the cornerstones of progress. Although this package is decidedly positive, romancing the trans experience and trans exemplars can be equally as superficial as the depictions of transgender athletes in the Marginalization package because the representation of the trans athletes fixed on one person is problematic. Beyond mainstream media undeservingly romanticizing her, the exemplar Jenner — who is the subject of two of the four trans-specific articles — does not

represent intersectionality. Journalists may select exemplars that represent diversity who are improper examples (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Rather, Jenner is a stand in and represents the issues at large. This shows that our hegemonic, heteronormative society is comfortable with transgender people when they fit into the male-female sex-gender dichotomy. What is lacking is the pride and affirmation for people who do not fit into these constraining and tightly knit dynamics. Consider people of various races, socioeconomic statuses and skills. Even with the general increase in trans acceptance, our society accepts people as long as people can fit them into neatly gendered boxes.

Biopolitical regulatory frameworks use the queer as an alibi for complicity with nation, race, class and gender norms. It also grants queerness to be an alibi for unjust treatment of marginalized people in the ascendancy of whiteness (Puar, 2007). The ascendancy of whiteness defines the how the state, social institutions and governing organizations offer various forms of national acceptance to multicultural heteronormative subjects while still engaging in exclusionary, xenophobic, homophobic and transphobic practices. We can interpret the ascendancy of whiteness to be assimilation to whiteness. The United States of America claims a multicultural melting pot of domestic bodies. Ascendancy of whiteness argues that the melting pot is not the accumulation of all cultures (Puar, 2007). The state uses its authority to conceal, stamp out and vanquish them. Cultures, colorful in their individuality, turn white when deposited into the United States pot.

Imagine assorted cultures reflect unique, diverse and radiant colors of light. As Sir Isaac Newton discovered in the mid-1600s when he tested how white light bends as it passed through the prism, white is the presence of all color in the visible spectrum of light. If white is the accumulation of all color, it can also be understood to erase color or consume it. Consider what

United States of America's melting pot does to cultures: It whitewashes them. Similar to how white light confines the whole spectrum of colors, Western social constructs confine cultures in their unfortunate ascendancy of whiteness. This positioning erases their individuality. In sporting cultures and society as a whole, we are moving into a more progressive and accepting social environment. However, trans athletes and especially those who do not fit into homonationalism's cisgender and sex-binary distinctions about what it takes to be a good queer, including intersex athletes, are whitewashed, othered, erased or ignored in the Pride and Affirmation package. This division is notably evident when journalists lump transgender people and their unique biopolitical concerns about inclusion into the confines "LGBT" acronym. The ascendancy of whiteness only allows specific forms of queers — the ones that follow the path that appeases to homonationalism — to participate in society (Puar, 2007). A homonationalism agenda reinforces heteronormativity and social order. In the package, depictions of queer exemplars such as Jenner serve as a singular heteronormative representation of a diverse community. Ascendancy of whiteness allows sport organizations and media outlets to levy boundaries on those who do not support the heteronormative.

## **V. Limitations and future research**

While this study reveals how a sports magazine frames transgender athletes and adds to media, sport and gender academic literature, it is limited in reach. I only studied articles that appeared in print Sports Illustrated publications. I did not include stories published through other mediums, such as online discourse and video, in my population. Further, this study only examined one sport magazine. Excluding these mediums and publications is limiting because it reduces the number of examined voices that frame media content. The way in which media producers depict trans athletes in video, for example, could be different than how they frame

them in print discourse. Video reaches a potentially different and arguably wider audience than print publications because broadcasters feature some on television and journalists create some to be easily shared and viewed online. Watching online videos specifically often does not require viewer subscriptions. Therefore, this medium can transmit its frames to supplementary audiences that might not read print magazines. As media theories suggest, the messages in these videos could influence public opinion. We can say the same for online discourse, which is easier to access and more universally available than stories that appear in a print magazine. Online media were not prevalent during the early years of Sports Illustrated. However, adding it to future research would provide a better understanding of how modern media frame trans athletes. Further, online text gives us the option to examine public opinion directly through comments, posts, likes and shares. Studying these accounts would provide clear results on prevailing public opinion, which allows us to make a connection between it and media representations. Further, journalists who do not work for Sports Illustrated might frame trans athletes in a distinct way that varies from or perhaps reinforces this study's results. Adding multiple magazines or other mediums into a future methodology could create a more comprehensive study that gives researchers the possibility of unveiling a more holistic representation of how a larger sample of journalists frames trans athletes in sports media. I intend to elaborate on these topics in my future research. I discuss further limitations and research suggestions below.

**On the trans journalist's professional experience.** This study does not address how media outlets treat their trans employees nor how audiences react to content produced by trans journalists. Although media have traditionally sensationalized trans athletes, media personnel have become more educated on transness (Sullivan, 2012). Sports Illustrated did begin to test its audience's reaction to a trans writer when it published a one-page article titled "Playing with

Pride” (in the Pride and Affirmation package) composed by Stephen Alexander, the country’s first openly transgender high school coach, in December of 2014.

Between 2006 and 2007, broadcast and cable networks doubled their reporting of trans matters partly as a result of Los Angeles Times sports journalist Mike Penner’s transition to Christine Daniels (Sullivan, 2012). As I report in the results, Sports Illustrated previously published a Rick Reilly column about Daniels’ coming-out process and transition in July of 2007. Gravelly — as mentioned in “The Transgender Athlete” (in the Fighting and Fairness package) that ran in May of 2012 — Daniels committed suicide. Although none of the articles indicated direct mistreatment, the way Reilly’s “Extreme Makeover” (in the Marginalization package) framed Daniels suggests that the trans woman faced a community with an underlying lack of understanding about her gender identity and idiosyncratic to what many people considered peculiar. Media organizations contributed to marginalization if Daniels faced gender-based oppression in her workplace. Therefore, future research should address the experiences of transgender journalists in business spaces as well how audiences respond to their content. Future research could address whether audiences trust, mistrust or are uninfluenced by learning that a trans professional was fundamental in producing — writing, editing, recording, shooting, reporting or otherwise developing in any roll — media content. Research could address the audience’s perception of transgender journalists in future studies. In addition, Academics could interview Reilly as part of a case study to address the progression of articles to discuss his experience then and now.

**On intersex athletes.** Research has addressed how media cover female hyperandrogenism (Cooky, Dycus, & Dworkin, 2013; Wells & Darnell, 2014). Future research should address the textual portrayals, frames and depictions of intersex athletes specifically in

sport journalism and Sports Illustrated. Media research should consider the salience, framing and accuracy of the coverage. My study did not include representations of intersex athletes because I wanted to establish a clear distinction between gender-related marginalization, as we find in trans depictions, versus sex-related marginalization, as we find in intersex depictions. Intersex marginalization is decidedly complex in ways that are both similar to and vary from trans marginalization. In the literature review, I mentioned that a person could be one of three sexes: intersex, female and male. However, some researchers have endorsed a five-sex structure (Fausto-Sterling, 1993). Studying intersex athletes opens up research to entirely new levels of critical analyses that examine the extreme colonization of the established a two-sex system in sport media and sport.

Intersex females with high androgen levels have, what the 2012 IOC Regulations on Female Hyperandrogenism named, “female hyperandrogenism” and elevated androgen production (International Olympic Committee, 2012). Olympic-level athletes who want to compete as women must verify their eligibility before they can participate. Present in all humans at varying levels, androgens are hormones such as testosterone and androstenedione that influence male traits and reproductively. They also enhance a human’s strength, power and speed. Parker Molloy from Vice magazine wrote:

“While this is undeniably an improvement over the extraordinarily invasive process of testing athletes’ chromosomes, the 2012 IOC standards remain controversial as many view them as trying to set a standard of normality among athletes, which is at odds with the very concept of high-level athletic competition, where abnormality is prized” (Molloy, 2014).

Female hyperandrogenism in sport creates particular challenges for groups marginalized based on sex and gender because it sanctions a two-sex system, endorses involuntary sex segregation and reinforces traditional gender binary. Sex/gender testing also has ethical implications because



it caused a rift between intersex and transgender athletes — especially intersex women and transgender women (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012). Rather than united against heteronormative injustice and stigma-based discrimination, they found themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum “on the losing sides of each other’s respective arguments for justice and fairer treatment” (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012, p. 20). On one hand, Wahlert and Fiester (2012) reiterated that transgender athletes do not have a competitive advantage because hormone therapy changes the power structure within a person’s body. On the other, intersex advocate, anthropologist and bioethicist Katrina Karkazis and her colleagues created a well-argued case in support of female athletes with intersex conditions (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012). They tackled the strict heteronormative standards that surround intersex athletes that were pervasive in the assessments of all female athletes. Then, they convincingly argued that their testosterone levels do not result in an unfair advantage because most elite women athletes with complete androgen insensitivity syndrome (CAIS) had high androgen levels without testosterone receptors. Under a feminist lens, Karkazis and her team argued that the natural occurrence of androgens were genetic variations of elite competitors and that intersex athletes were not attempting to alter their bodies, which was an argument that privileges biology as the path to legitimacy (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012). Although this argument addressed those who take steroid and testosterone injections, it unfortunately questioned the legitimacy of altered bodies. Some interpreted it to include transgender bodies seen as unnatural occurrences because medical professionals injected the trans body with foreign material and altered them dramatically. The cost for trans athletes “plays into the long-standing friction in queer-affirming scholarship that exists between persons with intersex conditions and transpersons” (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012, p. 20). The IOC inclusionary policy updated in 2016 caused transgender athletes to celebrate (Zeigler, 2016). However,

intersex people experience additional marginalization. In 2014, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), track and field's governing body, disqualified Indian sprinter Dutee Chand because it said she had too much testosterone in her blood (Thomas, 2016). In 2015, the Court of Arbitration for Sport reinstated Chand's eligibility because it ruled that IAAF did not demonstrate that cisgender women with high testosterone had a competitive advantage. Even so, when it released the new transgender policy, the IOC urged the IAAF to reinstate the rules considering hyperandrogenism and said that those who are not eligible to participate in female competition might be eligible to participate in male competition (Thomas, 2016). This suggestion is problematic because it forces cisgender women to align themselves within gender and sex categories of which they do not identify.

In summary, in most instances, the concerns, needs and sensitivities of trans and intersex female athletes are strikingly similar. Both groups endure judgment; the right to self-determination gender; and legal, biological, cultural and competitive standards of gender identity. However, sports organizations have created a conflict. The implications of this struggle are that prejudices related to gender normativity in competitive sports persist. "Until we can begin to consider the ethical dilemmas of gender testing for intersex and transgender athletes in the same conversation, we will never be able to fully examine the range of ethical liabilities for all women athletes" (Wahlert & Fiester, 2012, p. 20). The resurgence of the ethical issue of gender testing in women's sports is indicative of all the unasked questions that address how the needs of women with intersex conditions, trans women and all females are woefully and fundamentally intertwined.

**On competitive advantage instated at birth.** Science has proven that testosterone removal impairs any sex-based advantage in sport. However, the competitive advantage based on

socialization instated at birth needs to be researched further. Additional studies would allow scholars and parents to see how socializing a child to be an athlete has an impact is a competitive advantage. This advantage is more prevalent and impactful in competition than believing the false perception that trans athletes who have followed inclusionary guidelines are at an advantage. Therefore, future research must address how birth socialization leads to competitive advantage.

Popular culture views male children as athletically advantaged based solely on birth genitalia as soon as they exit the womb. Therefore, society traditionally socializes them to be strong, aggressive and competitive. It traditionally socializes female children, however, to be submissive, delicate and yielding throughout their development. Any person born into modern society is subject to such an oppressive experience. Transgender children are subject to additional oppressions that parents might not consider during conception, birth and infancy. Seemingly innocent events, such as gender-reveal parties that employ the inappropriate use of the word "gender" could be detrimental to a child's development because society frames the child's life in a particular way even before birth.

We consider society institutionalizes athletic socialization and sexism at birth. Immediately after a child is born, a doctor assigns gender according to its genitalia before verbally declaring the child a boy or girl. Doctors declare male children decidedly privileged (Dove-Viebahn, 2012) in heteronormative societies. In the case of transgender children, some people contend that, even if a person is born a trans woman, her upbringing is one of privilege because she was born with male genitalia and therefore treated as if she were a boy (Dove-Viebahn, 2012). However, in the decolonization process, I recognize this dispute overlooks the difficulty that adults might encounter when they come to terms with their gender identity.

**On other inclusionary policies.** Future research could address the presence and effectiveness of trans inclusionary policies as well as how media frame sport-specific, gender-based inclusion. Studies could critically dissect the policies or lack thereof in professional sporting organizations such as the NFL and consider how media cover these issues. As transgender advocacy received a surge of attention in 2015, many recreational and professional sporting organizations have proactively reconsidered and updated transgender and intersex inclusionary policies. In 2010, the *On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Student Athletes* report cited visible overlap between female and male adolescent athletic performance. The report advocated that trans athletes in high school should be eligible to compete on the team of their choice without the need to undergo a surgical transition (Griffin & Carroll, 2010). In 2011, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) — which had previously deferred to a government document that outlined gender classification — decided against requiring surgeries for transgender athletes. The NCAA published a 38-page handbook that concluded that genitalia did not affect athletic performance. The organization indicated that trans women were only required to take one year of testosterone suppression before they could compete in the women's division (Epstein, 2012). Travers (2014) reported that college athletes who have been consistently taking hormone blockers since adolescence are immediately eligible to participate in university-level sports while those who transitioned after puberty were required to undergo a year of hormone therapy before participation. Although seemingly progressive, these transgender-participation guidelines do not “significantly affect the ideology of two sexes that undergirds modern sport, nor does it challenge assumptions about male athletic superiority” (Travers, 2014, p. 195). While a trans woman (a male-to-female athlete) must obey a hormone-treatment schedule that counteracts testosterone's performance-augmenting influences to join

women's sport teams, a trans man (a female-to-male athlete) is not required to undergo hormone treatments to play on men's sport teams. Only after he elects to begin optional testosterone hormone therapy as part of his transition process is he no longer allowed to participate in women's sports (Travers, 2014). In this example of homonationalism, queer athletic formations contribute to normalizing the two-sex structure and privileging trans men. This also demonstrates male privilege that has transcended cisgender borders and transferred into transgender politics. Wherein institutions subject trans women to biopolitical review, they grant trans men the benefit of self-determination. Therefore, sport based privilege on gender identity rather than bodies.

**On how media affects the trans population.** This study is limited because it does not provide quantitative measurements beyond population size, frequency and date ranges. I designed it to establish widely generalizable media packages that allow for stricter, more in-depth future analysis. I obtained qualitative measurements and found semi-historical packages that researchers can relate to larger-scale studies on trans identity in the media. This study's results add to academic literature because they launch a framework under which to establish a quantitative coding scheme researchers could not have easily recognized before I named these interpretative packages. I did the necessary work of unveiling these packages so researchers can use them in the future. Forthcoming research would require a new methodology to track quantitative, empirical data on the representations of trans athletes in sports media as well as on the intersection of transgender and media studies. McCombs & Shaw (1972) conducted the first empirical test that used agenda-setting theory when they carried out a study during the 1968 presidential election. Another example of quantitative research, which is also trans-specific, is the previously mentioned Trans Media Watch survey. Trans Media Watch asked self-identified, United Kingdom-based transgender people on their feelings about representations of trans people

in the media. Future research should survey how transgender people who live in the United States of America feel about representations of trans people in the local media. While they might be arguably experiencing accelerated social acceptance, transgender people are still problematically framed and depicted in media, as my research shows. These depictions play out to an international audience as well.

Future research could address similar topics as the Trans Media Watch survey did. For example, negative coverage about trans people in the media caused some survey subjects to feel angry (67 percent), unhappy (50.5 percent), excluded (34.5 percent), frightened (20 percent) and felt bad about society (60 percent). Only 2 percent were not bothered. “The main reason given for these strong feelings was the perceived damage done by the media to the reputation of trans people among the general public” (Kermode, 2010, p. 7). Several respondents said viewing negative responses to trans issues in the media made them feel frightened, intimidated and unsafe.<sup>vii</sup> The survey also assessed the transgender population’s use and perception of media in 2010 found that positive media representations seemed to help some subjects manage uncertainties and discuss being transgender. Similarly, some felt that practically any coverage of transgender issues was positive because it increased trans visibility. Challenging prejudice is easier when the public can discuss the topic more openly. One respondent was quoted to have said, “I think that the media have a great power to foster discussion and understanding” (Kermode, 2010, p. 7). Therefore, future research could address if trans people living in the United States of America in the modern day have similar or distinct experiences than those living in England before 2010.

**On how victimization affects trans athletes and journalists.** The purpose of this study is to examine the frames of transgender athletes in sports media. However, I briefly addressed

how victimization in media discourse copiously affects transgender athletes and transgender journalists. Future ethnographic or interview-based research could document their experiences with victimization and suicide in a personal way. Nearly half of transgender youth have seriously thought about suicide (Fristoe & (ismymiddlename), 2015). Sadly, many — including transgender athletes — have acted on these thoughts. Between August 2014 and April 2015, at least 12 transgender individuals under the age of 25 had committed suicide for reasons of abuse, bullying, forced conversion therapy and depression (Dennison, 2015). Sam Taub was a 15-year-old junior roller derby player (alias: Casper) and a transgender man from the Darlings of Destruction Junior Derby League in Roseville, Mich. (Dennison, 2015). He took his life on April 9, 2015.<sup>viii</sup> Research indicates that African-American transgender women have the highest suicide rate in the United States of America (Kannon, 2015). Almost half of the African-Americans who responded to the study had attempted suicide, in comparison to 41 percent of all transgender respondents.

Perpetual victimization weighs heavy in the minds of transgender teens and young adults because they are consistently targets of hate crimes, and most violent crimes against transgender people go unreported due to social pressures, stigmas and threats of further violence (Human Rights Campaign & Trans People of Color Coalition, 2015). Therefore, when we recolonize the impression of birth privilege, we need to account for the transgender experience. If researchers do not, they continue to normalize gender binaries and two-sex structures while ignoring the ways in which expectations based on birth sex can act as oppressive. This interpretation demonstrates that we have to create safe spaces within sporting communities. Building these environments begins by educating the public through sports media discourse.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this study, I research the proper and non-oppressive ways for journalists to discuss transgender people that would work toward eliminating the gender binary and gender-based power structures as well as decrease the marginalization of transgender individuals. Consider my research questions that address how the frames of transgender athletes in sport media have changed over time and what the interpretative packages ultimately demonstrate about transgender discourse and society. The results illustrate that discourse has generally become more sensitive to trans issues. However, I present these results with cautious optimism. Blindingly affirming and romancing the transgender can be as equally as superficial as marginalization. Representations of trans athletes secured by one person are problematic. Researchers and sport organizations need to dismantle antiquated, coercive sex segregation in traditional sport and decolonize how it contributes to gender-based oppression. Breaking these patterns will allow for more transgender inclusion in feminism and proper representation in the media. Reform in sports media, and media overall, to engage in feminist reflexivity and consider feminist ethics when reporting on all stories that address social-justice issues (abled bodies, race, mental disabilities, class struggles, etc.) creates more accurate and inclusionary representations of the population that go beyond the Westernized, false constructs of reality. Based on my research, I recommend that media outlets focus on presenting fair, accurate and inclusive representations of transness that combat oppressive positions.

While multiple realities exist in discourse, mainstream media's representation of dominate gender ideologies within the texts could provide insight into cultural norms and mainstream concepts; patterns of power and solidarity; and recognition of ideas that have been systematically excluded. Throughout this study, I observed, documented and interpreted



discourse that relate to athletes in the transgender community through a queer transfeminist lens. This research allows for the decolonization of the transgender experience and seeks to identify solutions that would help create a more trans-inclusive environment in media and sports. Research on the intersections of feminism, transfeminism, trans athletes and transgender representation in the media conceives, establishes and designs a construct that has the ability to address how the media present stereotypical gender representations that could influence and strengthen destructive values in society. In solidarity with queer theory, transgender allies should fully reject the traditional gender dichotomy. Allowing for shifting gender boundaries creates a safer environment for all genders and helps diminish the transgender suicide and murder rate. Researchers would like to “see greater attention given to the historical and social context in which gendered and sexualized bodies and relationships are produced, reproduced, and transformed” (Towle & Morgan, 2006, p. 682). Therefore, the term “transgender” changes from a status to description of a life as we go through the decolonizing process.

Researchers need to fervently consider the experiences of all athletes: transgender, intersex and women specifically in terms of the framework of this study. The exceedingly problematic current system does not apply regulations equally to all players nor does it allowed for universal inclusion. When I began my research for this study, I considered the implications of a sporting structure delineated by testosterone levels, rather than sex, gender or genitalia. However, this is obviously problematic because every athlete would be required to undergo testosterone testing. This biometric practice would allow different and oppressive power structures to develop.

In the current system: Not only are trans women subjected to more biometric medical intervention than trans men so they are allowed to participate on their ascribed gender’s teams

but also women in general are excluded from most professional sporting spaces based on performance assumptions. Any sex/gender-based barriers in professional sports spaces should be obliterated so all women — trans, cis or otherwise — are afforded the same opportunity to prove athletic performance in the same playing field as men — trans, cis or otherwise — athletes. The overarching ambition is not to demolish the current sport system or construct a new one. Rather, the goal is to decolonize and reform current practices so sport spaces are not exclusionary. It should work to prohibit and erase systematic inequality and oppression. The new system should establish fervently enforced and sturdy inclusive policies for all bodies including all trans identities and intersex athletes. Therefore, a professional sport structure 100-percent dependent on ability is arguably the ideal solution. Because of its current structure and rules, the sport of tennis could lend itself to social justice initiatives and become the first sport that is not segregated by sex. Of course, future research and tests within sports structures can guide critiques of this solution and call for refinement.

I hope my research will lead to better practices in journalism. Journalists have an obligation to find balance, avoid unbiased reporting and use inclusive language to help facilitate this process. Language is the tool that enables power structures to operate, and it serves to create and reinforce binaries such as the gender binary in sports. Word choice matters because it affects how people think about and treat others as well as how people think about and treat themselves. Language choice informs individual media frames and concrete ways people exist in society. As such, critical-cultural studies should encourage journalists to employ gender-inclusive language and avoid certain expressions. Understanding the history of language and inclusive language will help sport reporters create inclusive and accurate content.

Social-justice organizations have argued that, ideally, journalists should abide by higher standards such as those outlined in the GLAAD Media Reference Guide (see the supplementary file for the GLAAD Media Reference Guide) (GLAAD, 2014). GLAAD designed the guide to help media professionals ethically cover the multidimensional lives of the queer community as its visibility grows (GLAAD, 2014). The guide states that journalists should consistently apply a transgender person's selected name into media material as well as use the correct terms to describe gender identity. It also details words and phrases that people should avoid. GLAAD (2014) reiterates that journalists should use the individual's actual pronouns when referencing a member of the transgender community and asking people what pronouns they use is an ideal and ethical practice (GLAAD, 2014). Certain transgender people have flexible pronoun specifications while others might be strict. Some trans women prefer feminine pronouns ("she" or "her"), and some trans men prefer masculine pronouns ("he" or "him"). Alternatively, they might request plural pronouns such as "they" and "them." In Jane McManus's ESPNW article titled "Transgender Athletes Find Community, Support In Roller Derby," skater Josie Simonis of the Rose City Rollers in Portland, Ore. — formerly of the Windy City Rollers in Chicago, Ill. — indicated that they use the gender-neutral pronouns "they" and "them" (McManus, 2015). In summary, the comprehensive 66-page GLAAD Media Reference Guide provides detailed explanations that promote journalistic consistency and help media professionals build captivating and factual stories that allow readers to formulate their own conclusions about queer issues without the influence of detrimental media frames. Media outlets should require their employees to read the guidebook and follow its strategies and procedures.

When reporting on a story, journalists should consider feminist ideologies and epistemologies to improve their reporting. Feminist media researchers contend that themes

within the text connect to pervasive cultural ideas outside of the literature. Feminist research on mass media examines multiple themes and their interrelationships. “Feminist media research is interested in examining and deconstructing the ideas about gender expressed in mainstream mediated texts, as well as in the process of change exhibited in these texts as cultural ideas about gender also shift” (McIntosh & Cuklanz, 2014, p. 267). As previously mentioned, researchers have shown that sport initiates conversations about social reform, socialization, relationships, behaviors, power structures, oppressive binaries and segregations because it reflects society and effects political development (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). As sport mirrors society, sports media arguably does the same. A feminist ethic would provide appropriate directives for sports journalists. If they engage in the same reflexivity taught to feminists, they would be more keenly aware of their own privileges and prejudices, and thus, they would become more ethical, accurate and conscientious professionals. In sports reporting, the journalists should reflect on their predispositions about bodies, biopolitics and which bodies professional sport organization deem appropriate. They should consider how and why they think this as well as find concrete evidence to substantiate their beliefs. If they cannot find it, they might change their worldview and thus their word choice and thus the frames they create that develop from the language that they choose.

The Marginalization package was highly prevalent in the earlier years of the magazine and the last article published more than five years ago. The Pride and Affirmation package is the most prevalent in recent years. Therefore, this study shows United States of America culture is currently experiencing an upshift in its knowledge and acceptance of transgender identities. Cracked.com published an article on unexpected lessons that were the result of Caitlyn Jenner’s coming-out interview (Harrison K., 2015). As previously mentioned, Jenner said that she used

male pronouns (Sawyer, 2015) until she changed her name to “Caitlyn.” As Harrison wrote this story before Jenner announced her name change, she calls Jenner “Bruce” and uses male pronouns. The writer, Kristi Harrison, claimed that one lesson was that American society is at the end of a cultural shift. She wrote: “Bruce Jenner grew up in a world where there was nothing more hilarious and/or horrifying than seeing a man in a dress. If you see a man wearing a dress, you better run because he’s about to kill you” (Harrison K., 2015). Then, Harrison detailed several television and movie depictions of men, drag queens or transgender women in dresses that spanned decades. She referenced the movie “Ace Ventura: Pet Detective.” In it, when Ace (played by Jim Carrey) discovered that he kissed a trans woman, he aggressively bathed, threw up, took a toilet plunger to his mouth, burned his clothes and cried as if the act of kissing a trans woman was intrinsically repulsive. Kissing her when he thought she had female genitalia did not equally affect him by far. This movie, thus, primes the audience to pull from the harmful gender schema that transgender people are disgusting and deranged.

Harrison continued to write:

“Then the transgender ignorance really starts. See if you can make it through this scene without cringing” after which she shows a video in which “the transgender character is publicly stripped, and the whole room vomits when the bulge in her underwear is found, all for laughs... And the thing is, I did laugh during those scenes. Now they feel grotesque, like when a white person wears blackface or a woman does man work. How did the transgender community turn public sentiment and awareness around so quickly?” (Harrison K., 2015).

While future research could answer this rhetorical question, one solution — based on the results procured from this study — is clear. We as scholars must keep asking the hard questions in an effort to achieve tangible research-based results. We will never find the answers if we are not brave enough to ask the hard questions. Continuously exercising qualitative feminist media research that investigates the frames in sport media creates opportunities for expansive

interpretations, discussion and debate that could lead to actualized social change. Likewise, we must encourage journalists to divert from superficial media frames that are either oppressively marginalizing or blindingly affirming. Tackling hard questions has the power to develop productive discourse that leads to functional discussion and ultimately instigates productive social change.

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## APPENDIX A

### List of Sports Illustrated Articles in the Population

(from Aug. 16, 1954 until Dec. 31, 2015)

#### Package 1: Marginalization

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Author</b>
1963 07-01	Mr. Blitz And The Total Vacation Game	By Gilbert Rogin
1974 07-22	Judged In The World's Court	By Curry Kirkpatrick
1977 09-19	Fantastico, Guillermo!	By Curry Kirkpatrick
1978 05-08	Courting Disaster	By J.D. Reed
1979 10-17	Some Wild And Crazy Guys	By Bruce Newman
1987 08-03	Agents Of Turmoil	By Craig Neff
1987 10-05	The A's New Stew Can Do	By Ron Fimrite
1988 10-17	Finding A Place In The Sun	By Jill Lieber
1989 11-06	A Hero Lives Here	By Peter Gammons
1990 02-19	College Report	By William F. Reed
1991 06-24	Where's The Fire?	By Richard Hoffer
1994 05-30	Scorecard: Career Move	
1994 10-03	40 For The (Dark) Ages	By Rick Reilly
	Rare Bird: Rodman Unchained The Spurs'	
1995 05-29	No-Holds-Barred Forward Gives New Meaning To The Running Game	By Michael Silver
1998 06-15	Raging Over The Bulls	By Rick Reilly
1998 12-07	Reincarnation By Extrapolation	By Rick Reilly
	World Beater With A Center's Frame And	
2002 05-27	A Small Forward's Skills, Aussie Lauren Jackson Is The Shape Of The Future	By Kelli Anderson
	What's Up With Calc? Fighting A Slump	
2002 09-23	And Coping With A Divorce, Mark Calcavecchia Is The Belfry's Big Question	By Chris Hodenfield
	Mark	
	Having A Gay Old Time In Columbus, Ohio, Members Of The Rainbow Golf	
2003 06-16	League Are Proud Representatives Of The Game's Silent Minority	By Eamon Lynch
2003 07-14	Our Cheatin' Hearts	By Steve Rushin
2003 11-10	Queer Eye For The Sports Guy	By Rick Reilly
2003 12-15	Scorecard: Sports Beat	
2007 07-02	Extreme Makeover	By Rick Reilly
2011 02-07	The Man Of The Hour	By Peter King

## Package 2: Labeling

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Author</b>
1976 09-02	A Duel Of Pace And Power	By Curry Kirkpatrick
1977 01-24	On The Other Hand...	By Jerry Kirshenbaum
1977 04-04	Extra! Chrissie Loses First Set!	By Joe Jares
1977 07-25	Zing Go The Strings Of Our Hearts	By Joe Jares
1978 05-29	Rocket With A Racket	By Melissa Ludtke
1993 10-13	The Owners	By John Steinbreder
1997 06-16	Call Him Coach John Lucas Has Segued From The Nba To Pro Tennis To Help Lori Mneil Rebuild Her Game	By L. Jon Wertheim
1998 11-02	Scorecard: Blonde Ambition	

## Package 3: Fighting And Fairness

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Author</b>
1976 09-06	She'd Rather Switch—And Fight	By Ray Kennedy
1996 06-17	Just Like A Woman	By Tim Rosaforte
1999 03-15	Scorecard: He'd Rather Switch Than Fight	
1999 06-28	He'd Rather Fight And Switch	By Rick Reilly
2000 07-31	The Originals They Were The Athletes Who Brough Something Unique To Their Sports, Be It Of Substance Or Style. They Were Memorable Then; They're Unforgettable Still	By Mark Beech; Josh Elliott; Franz Lidz; Jamal Greene; L. Jon Wertheim
2002 09-23	Gender Flap	By Austin Murphy
2003 11-24	Scorecard: Amended	
2004 11-15	2¢ With Padraig Harrington	By Padraig Harrington
2007 07-30	Letters: Blind Switch	Letters To The Editor
2012 05-28	The Transgender Athlete	By Pablo S. Torre And David Epstein
2012 06-18	The Mail: Transgender Issues	Letters To The Editor
2013 03-18	Come Out Fighting	By David Epstein



## Package 4: Pride And Affirmation

Date	Name	Author
1983 03-28	Renee Richards' 'Second Serve' Is A Book About Two Remarkable People	By Jeremiah Tax
2010 05-03	Gareth Thomas ... The Only Openly Gay Male Athlete	By Gary Smith
2013 03-25	Scorecard: Loaded Question	
2013 05-06	So Here We Are, At Last	By S.L. Price
2014 12-15	Playing With Pride	By Stephen Alexander
2015 02-23	A New Reality	By Alan Shipnuck
2015 12-28	Changing The Game	By Amy Ellis Nutt

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<sup>i</sup> Harper also is a competitive runner. She employed her position as an athlete to test competitive advantage in a personal way (Epstein, 2012). Harper, a trans woman who competed as a male distance runner for many years, began hormone therapy in August 2004. She documented how suppressing testosterone and taking estrogen affected her running. Taking into account sex-classified and age-performance standards, she was almost precisely as good as a runner competing as a female as she was before hormone therapy — except she quickly lost speed and strength within three weeks. (Epstein, 2012). Harper wondered if her experience as a distance runner was typical (Harper, Race times for transgender athletes, 2015). To appease her curiosity, Harper collected almost 200 race times from eight trans-women distance runners, including herself, during a seven-year span. Her results indicated that her subjects could not run as quickly after they began hormone therapy. However, they had nearly identical age-graded scores as females and males, which indicated that they were equally but not more so competitive in the new sex category (Harper, Race times for transgender athletes, 2015). The researcher clarified that her study only reflected competitive advantage in distance running. She did not address sex-based competitive post-hormone therapy in other sports (Harper, Race times for transgender athletes, 2015). Sprinters, for example, benefit from extra muscle mass because they need to intensify speed in short distances whereas muscle mass — which decreases with testosterone reduction — in distance running is a drawback. In addition, starting hormone therapy after puberty does not affect a person's height (Harper, Do transgender athletes have an edge? I sure don't., 2015), which can be an asset or drawback in sports such as basketball or gymnastics. However, although this might seem to reflect competitive advantage on the surface, science proves otherwise. "Taller-than-average height and some potential biomechanical advantages might remain, but doctors indicated that transathletes who carry a male skeletal structure on a female-type musculature are more prone to injury" (Carlson, 2005, p. s40). Therefore, removing testosterone increases the likelihood that trans women will be hurt during competition. This disadvantage has the potential to shorten athletes' seasons and leave permanent structural damage within their bodies. When progressive and chronic, these injuries could ultimately end their careers.

<sup>ii</sup> While the website indicated seven pages of articles, I was only able to access five pages. I called the magazine and requested the search engine fix. The person who answered my call said the magazine would repair the problem. I returned to the website weekly during the research process, but it still presented limited search data.

<sup>iii</sup> This is the name journalists gave her in the stories. Additional research revealed that she has several names. Parinya Charoenphol, nicknamed Toom, is also known by the stage name Parinya Kiatbusaba and the colloquial name Nong Toom.

<sup>iv</sup> Five of Reilly's stories emerged into the Marginalization interpretive package. One of these stories was the "Extreme Makeover" column, which was about Reilly's now-deceased transgender colleague. Although Reilly had previously been featured in that category, he is seen here defending what he calls an injustice. Much of his language within the story in this package, however, is reminiscent of his previous discourse. Considering the implications, I wondered if Reilly had changed his humorous and problematic position on transgender people or if he was appealing to the principles of his readers and projecting the most socially acceptable frames. Perhaps he was unaware of the potential implications of transgender marginalization or perhaps he was simply uneducated. He had published this story before he wrote "Extreme Makeover" about his friend so her death cannot be attributed to his, although slightly misguided, fight for transgender justice. Perhaps he was merely looking for a good story to feature in his

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column that allowed him to write colorful descriptions. Overall, the consequence of this story is entertainment with a side of education, as Reilly's cheeky and brazen comments about trans folks that, although have softened since his previous work, still exist.

<sup>v</sup> David Epstein also wrote "Come Out Fighting."

<sup>vi</sup> In at least one instance, the writers employ an improper pronoun. When discussing the suicide of trans sports writer Christine Daniels, they use the masculine pronouns. Perhaps, because Daniels had died and couldn't declare that feminine pronouns were appropriate, the writers resorted to using the masculine. Alternatively, perhaps Daniels used the masculine pronouns at the time of death.

<sup>vii</sup> "Generally, I have found TV programmes about or including transpeople to be much more sensitive to us than newspapers," said one respondent" (Kermode, 2010, p. 8). The study noted that the difference between newspaper and television might be due to "different style of items generally produced in each context" (Kermode, 2010, p. 8).

Part of the sample felt that negative media coverage made transphobia more acceptable. They said they felt hopeless and frustrated because they could not challenge negative coverage. A small group of respondents suggested that negative coverage might actually have a positive effect because it could potentially make the public more sympathetic to trans issues. Approximately 20 percent of the trans respondents said they were verbally abused, and 8 percent were physically abused on at least one occasion because of something they believe was associated with media representations of the trans community. Fourteen respondents also attributed the media to family problems and breakdown while others said they had to clarify inaccurate information that friends and family heard on the media. One said his family had a hard time understanding that he was a transsexual, and not a transvestite. "Another said that she felt the media focus on 'sex change' is problematic because it led to her friends thinking she wanted to become somebody else when all she wants is to confirm her existing identity" (Kermode, 2010, p. 10). Several people stated that all gender stereotypes in the media — negative or positive — were problematic because people with complex identities were excluded. "Many respondents reported that negative media representations of transgender people cause them ongoing problems with their self esteem, leading to self-hatred and potentially self-harm" (Kermode, 2010, p. 10).

In relation to print media content, 19 percent of survey respondents replied that they observed stories about transgender people in the media less than once a month. Five percent indicated daily, 14 percent answered two to three times a week, 18 percent checked once a week, 20.5 percent said two to three times a month and 24 percent replied once a month. More than half, 55 percent, said that they would like to see representations of trans people in the media more often. Only 10.5 percent would like to see them less often. More than three-fourths of respondents, 78 percent, felt that the media portrayals they saw were either inaccurate or highly inaccurate (only 3 percent considered them accurate). A substantial majority, 95 percent, felt the media were unconcerned with what transgender people thought about their perceptions and uses of media" (Kermode, 2010). The Trans Media Watch study discovered that, based on general population demographics, regions that had more organized transgender communities resulted in higher survey response rates. The researchers concluded that this might have been because the survey was "disproportionately well advertised in that region" (Kermode, 2010).

<sup>viii</sup> In response to this tragedy, the roller derby community imposed a campaign called #doitfor57. Several teams that had games scheduled the weekend after added turquoise to their bout-day outfit as a tribute, to rally for the benefit of inclusion and to shed light on the bullying epidemic. A roller derby blog called *Derby Frontier* discussed the implications that result from misgendering, which seems to be a central issue of transgender harassment.

"One of the unfortunate issues following the murder or suicide of a person who is trans is that they are often misgendered by media, police, friends, and family. In almost all of the above cases, the individuals who died were originally reported on under their birth names, not their real names, and were misgendered as their sex assigned at birth. That is to say that young trans men were being remembered as girls, and young trans women were being remembered as boys. Misgendering is often one of the most hurtful things that a trans person can experience in their life and the act of misgendering is often a core part of the bullying and abuse they experience prior to their deaths. To misgender somebody is to invalidate their identity, to undermine their self-concept, and to disregard their existence as a human being worthy of respect. While it may be difficult, please ensure that you are making every effort to not misgender a person who is trans in life or in death as doing so just leads to perpetuation of the harmful behavior" (Dennison, 2015).

Society might remedy the tragic and heartbreaking implications that derive from misgendering by embracing solidarity with queer theory, which advocates for comprehensive inclusion and supports the concept of shifting gender boundaries while dismissing any sex, sexual orientation or gender-related dichotomies or assumptions.