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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO IDENTITY FORMATION VIA PARTICIPATION
IN SPORTS AND CONSUMPTION OF MEDIATED SPORTS**

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by

Kevin M. Reagan

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The thesis of Kevin M. Reagan was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Peter J. Kareithi
Associate Professor of Humanities and Communications
Thesis Adviser

Robin Redmon Wright
Assistant Professor of Adult Education

Craig Welsh
Associate Professor of Humanities and Communications
Program Coordinator, Master of Arts in Communications

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to develop a better understanding of the role that participatory sports and consumption of mediated sports play in shaping one's identity. The quantitative and qualitative study questioned identity formation at three levels: playing sports as a child, continuing to play sports as an adult and consuming sports via mass media. Louis Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses and other scholar's research on public pedagogy suggest that there are institutions, such as the media and sports, which serve as sites where we learn who we are as individuals. A total of 135 surveys were collected using online snowball sampling. The results suggest that sports do have a role in shaping identities, as males reported significantly higher levels of agreement than females. Additionally, older populations differently with playing sports as a child than younger populations who were less removed.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Rationale

Whether it is the one third of the country tuning in for the Super Bowl or adults screaming encouragement from the sidelines at a pack of children swarming around a soccer ball, sports are embedded in American culture. Elite athletes are placed on a pedestal, not only during medal ceremonies, but also culturally. At the professional level, superstars are paid millions of dollars for playing games, and the most marketable ones make even more as spokespersons for an endless supply of products and commodities. Even marginal American professional athletes earn annual salaries in the six-figure range – a minimum wage that the common laborer would certainly enjoy. The mass mediated professional sports system in our country is a recent phenomenon, dating back to the turn of the 20th century. Through time, sports evolved from a leisure activity, to organized forms that were intended to reproduce future male leaders, and finally to the highly commodified version that is so pervasive in American culture. Yet, little research exists on how sports function ideologically and pedagogically. This study seeks to explain the ways in which participatory and mediated sports impact the formation of identity and if there are any differences in that formation throughout one's lifetime, and across race and gender lines.

1.2 Background

Sports, both mediated and recreational, are situated firmly in American popular culture. In fact, they are intertwined in nearly all of our ideological practices. Althusser (1986) claimed that there are specialized institutions – or Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) – that function ideologically to reproduce capitalist relations and the cultural tastes

of the dominant class. At the time he published his work on ISAs, Althusser said that school had surpassed church as the dominant cultural ISA because of large amount of time that children (and adults even) spent in the classroom. Since then, sports have risen to prominence as an ISA both through extensive mass media coverage and an increased emphasis on youth sports as a tool to teach lessons. One could argue that sports have equaled religion, and that their diversionary capabilities make them an opiate for the masses. Sports stadiums mimic cathedrals, while fans in the stands (pews) worship their idols. Much like religion, sports share similarities with war that are reified by mass media discourses that describe athletic competition as battle or war, and military maneuvers with sports jargon. When looking at the previous examples, sports are intertwined with three highly American practices – capitalism, religion and war. Sports are not merely games, they are “a microcosm of our very social structures and the ideological foundation of their operation,” (Atkinson, 2009, p. xvi).

The mass media function as an ISA in the same manner as education, religion and sports, reproducing the ideologies of the dominant class. Predominantly, the mass media transmits messages and images that are cognitively resonant with the dominant discourses. Foucault (1970, 2002) said that discourses are the driving force behind re/production of power and hegemony, and thus maintain and resist dominant ideologies and identities. He also said that discourses are always the result of a construction; they do not merely come to exist (2002, p. 28). Racial and masculine discourses of sports were built off stereotypes and binary opposition (physical vs. cerebral and masculinity vs. femininity). Meân (2010) said that “sport is often framed as mere leisure and entertainment, and as a site that reflects rather than constructs culture. This position has

inevitably led to the acceptance or disregard of the gendered and racialized nature of sporting discourses as natural and normative, even by those typically strongly opposed to discriminatory ideologies and practices” (p. 68). Thus, commonly held assumptions of naturally gifted black athletes and white athletes who are predisposed to leadership positions (quarterback in football and point guard in basketball) are treated as fact, despite no physical evidence of proof.

While it is impossible to miss their prevalence in American culture today, sports were not always in such a prominent role. Organized team sports first appeared in America in the mid-19th century, modeled after similar programs in elite, private in schools in England. The understanding was that sports would mold the male children of elites into future leaders of business, government and military – positions that women were excluded from at the time, and remain largely so due to the reproduction of masculine hegemony. During the Industrial Revolution, local sports teams organized to play games against neighboring towns, which eventually evolved into larger leagues; technological advancements to railroads, the telegraph and wire services facilitated even more expansion. However, the symbiotic relationship between sports and television arguably made the largest impact (the expansion of neoliberal capitalism is the other). With at least one television set in 90 percent of American homes by 1960, broadcasters found a golden goose in sports: low production costs and a built-in audience that was already established through media like radio and newspaper (Davies, 2007). In addition to the low production costs, sports have natural breaks in action (timeouts, halftime) that broadcasters and corporate advertisers were eager to fill. In fact, some of the ‘natural’ breaks were implemented by broadcasters to allow for more advertisements. Today,

professional sports are one of the most watched television programming options in America, driving advertising revenues and their demand for broadcasting rights. If mediated sports were not profitable, then they would be pushed to margins of media coverage and eventually lose their footing as a dominant social practice.

Much like the media, the American professional sports system mimics our neoliberal capitalistic society, as players are bought (signed to contracts), traded like commodities and discarded when their playing days are over. According to Overman (1997), “spectator sports were transformed into paid entertainment for the working classes, while recreational sports offered a new market for the leisure consumer. America’s games were crossbred with capitalism; the progeny of this union would portend the future” (p. 293). Wenner (1989) suggested that “sport emerges as an institution especially well suited culturally and ideologically, first to the emerging industrial capitalism of the century, and second – and indeed far more so – to the mature corporate capitalist society of the twentieth century” (p. 50). As American culture became more commodified and corporatized, the fun and spontaneity of free play were replaced with organized competition that promotes capitalist ideologies. Postman (1994) cited adult over-involvement in youth sports as an example of parents co-opting their children’s lives. Youth sports provide an environment in which children learn to negotiate between right and wrong as they interact with peers and adults. In addition, he highlighted the trickle-down effect that neoliberal capitalism has on youth sports, which have abandoned the role of play and exercise and evolved to mimic high-stakes professional athletics.

Neoliberalism's reach is felt not only in sports, but it also becomes an all-encompassing cultural tool for producing identities, values and practices (Giroux, 2010, p. 486). Sports are both ideological and pedagogical from their position of power within mass media and American culture. Althusser's (1986) theory of ISAs explains how institutions re/produce dominant ideologies. The mass media, which covers sports extensively, is a primary ISA, while organized sports function as a cultural ISA that hails us to follow rules and be a team player – two major tenets of functioning in a capitalist society. Identities are formed based off the dominant ideologies, which act as a group of ideas that become common sense to us. Additionally, popular culture has pedagogical capabilities that shape our identities and teach us “who we are (or should be) with regard to race, class, gender, sexuality, and so on and whose cultures and histories are considered ‘normal’ and ‘dominant’ through the ways these cultures and identities are portrayed to us and perpetuated through public pedagogies” (Sandlin, Wright & Clark, 2011, p. 7). Sports, as popular culture and through the media, function as a site of learning where we negotiate what is acceptable in our culture and who we are as persons.

One of the pervasive discourses in sports is that they were created *by men for men* (Crawford, 2004). This notion is not particularly surprising given the genesis of American sports, but it is troubling that gendered discourses are continually reinforced through sexualized images of female athletes and references of lesbianism at those who do not fit the typical beauty ideal. However, the mere presence of organized sports alone did not create the current hegemonic masculine landscape of American professional sports. Mass media and their pedagogical capability promote masculine discourses that celebrate qualities of strength and denigrate feminine qualities as weak. According to

Sage (1990), the patriarchy of sports is attributed to the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the cult of masculinity. He said “the social conditions made being both a woman and an athlete an anomaly in American life until the early 1970s” (p. 45). Media-made sports are hegemonic in their narrow focus of male-dominated sports, while women’s sports are pushed to the margins. Hardin and Greer (2009) stated that “even individuals who do not follow sports coverage cannot escape the presentation of sports on television, in magazines and in newspapers as an activity *for* and *by* men” (my emphasis, p. 223). Patterson, Tomlinson and Young (2011) said that the male-dominated presentation is most evident “when you pick up the newspaper in the morning: you don’t read about who won the billiard tournament or whatever, instead you’re always reading about baseball, football, basketball, and sometimes hockey” (p. 559).

Like masculine discourses, racial discourses play on the basest of stereotypes. The two most common stereotypes in racialized sports discourses are the naturally gifted, strong, black athlete and the cerebral, hard-working white athlete (Van Sterkenburg, Knoppers & De Leeuw, 2010). These stereotypes are a manifestation of the racist constructs that emerged during the slave economy of the 19th century, suggesting that blacks are naturally athletic or born to work and only white athletes are equipped with decision-making skills and should be in charge. With emphasis on hard work, sports offer Horatio Alger-like opportunities for athletes with the best skills and drive. However, up until the civil rights era, black athletes were not afforded the same opportunities. To say that it was a level playing field at that time, would be assuming that black athletes were even allowed on the same field. Azzarito and Harrison (2008) said that the media provides cultural materials that help us make sense of identities via

“symbols panoptimized through the media” (p. 148). They argued that young people, specifically, are prone to accepting these discourses as fact.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite much research on identity formation via mass media consumption, there is little research that attempts to explain what role sports play and why this occurs. Existing research suggests that extensive media exposure affects our views, and thus shapes our identity (Gauntlett, 2008). Coupling this perspective with the multitude of outlets available, mediated sports have great capability to shape our identity. Crawford’s (2004) research on fan communities stated that sports promote male hegemony. However, there is little research on whether participation in sports provides opportunities to challenge the power structures. The majority of research on the history of sports supports the notion of sports as an activity that was created for men, by men (Coakley, 2006; Crawford, 2004; Sage, 1990). Additional research highlights the marginalization of women in sports via representations of female athletes as lesbians (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010), while their male counterparts are celebrated for playing through pain with a warrior mentality (Anderson & Kian, 2012). Much like women’s marginalized history in sports, black athletes faced a similar struggle towards inclusion. However, there still remains much work to challenge dominant discourses that marginalize female and black athletes. This research will close some of the gaps on how sports shape identity by determining whether participation in sports or consumption of mediated sports does have an effect on the process.

1.4 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how sports shape our identity. The quantitative and qualitative study questions the role of sports in shaping identity across three separate areas: playing sports as a child, continuing to play sports as an adult and consumption of sports via mass media. Additionally, it will inquire as to how the dominant ideologies of sports shape our identity. Given sports and mass media's pedagogical capabilities, this study will investigate the following questions: Do sports shape identity, and if so, in what ways? Since sports' history is rooted in white, male hegemony, are there differences in the way that it shapes gender and race identities? Are there differences between the way participatory sports and mediated sports shape one's identity? Does the way that sports shape our identity change over the course of one's lifetime?

The preceding research questions were probed around the following theoretical framework: participatory sports and extensive mass media coverage of sports both serve as ISAs that re/produce capitalist relations and inculcate the tastes of the dominant class. However, the ideologies of the dominant class do not rise to prominence by brute force. Discourses are essential to our formation of knowledge, meaning, and identity. In the case of sports, the existing dominant discourses are rooted in white, male hegemony. Much like their role as an ISA, sports are a site of public pedagogy where meaning is made and learning takes place outside of the traditional classroom.

This study used an analytical survey to question identity formation through participation in sports and consumption of mediated sports. The analytical survey included questions that could measure quantitative results and open-ended questions that

provided qualitative answers. By mixing the two methods, the results of this study included the authority of quantitative numbers and the humanistic aspect of qualitative answers.

CHAPTER 2. THE HISTORY OF SPORTS

2.1 Sports' Rise from Leisure to Ideological Practice

American culture's fascination with competition and sports is not a recent phenomenon. The most famous historic record of organized sports dates back to the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, while relics depicting individual athletic competitions go as far back as 3000 B.C. (Blanchard, 1995). Like today, winners were awarded prizes, placing them on podiums with fluctuating heights to signify their position in the world – first, second or third. In addition to social capital, athletes were able to master their surroundings. Crego (2003) said that “while sport had been an integral part of life (e.g. running, jumping, and throwing as a part of hunting, or skiing and skating as essential modes of transportation), in an increasingly modern, industrial society, sports became identified with and reserved for leisure time” (p. 1). Even today, the discourses of modern sports employ phrases that reference its primitive nature, such as “establishing position,” “guarding the plate,” and “standing ground.”

As Crego (2003) noted, the Industrial Revolution played a large role in sports' evolution from a social practice to a marketable commodity. Playing or watching sports as a spectator provided an escape from the rigors of industrial life. In addition, sports are an ideal training ground for industrial labor. According to Guttmann (2000),

the muscular exertion and the skills associated with sports participation are alleged to contribute to worker's health and manual dexterity; the need to accept the rules of the game socializes factory hands to routinized work; and the entertainment afforded by sports spectacles diverts the exploited workforce from political action (p. 255).

Advances to transportation systems, such as roads and railways, made it possible for teams to play in other cities. Ironically, many early professional athletes earned wages similar to common laborers and needed to supplement their income by working manual labor jobs during the offseason, a lifestyle much different than today's professional athletes who make millions annually. However, the rise of American professional sports cannot be attributed only to physical travel. The ability to transmit messages across greater distances led to the rise of mass media and additional coverage via the telegraph and wire services, newspapers with photographs, radio, television and eventually the Internet.

Prior to sports' technologically deterministic rise through mass media, organized sports were introduced in America in the mid-19th century. They were modeled after similar programs in elite, private in schools in Europe. The understanding was that sports would mold the children of elites in future leaders in business, government and military. In America, organized team sports were intended to instill a "set of values related to work, productivity, obedience to authority and teamwork in the pursuit of competitive success" (Coakley, 2006, p. 4). Since sports were only offered to males, they reified masculine qualities of boys who were largely raised by women while the men were at work. Mangan (2006) wrote that biological differences reinforced the male dominance of sports. "The facts of male freedom from pregnancy, greater explosive power and greater expendability, have resulted in cultures devoting considerable effort to prepare the boy to be a man in an atmosphere of aggressive competition, personal assertion and inculcated self-sacrifice – to the perceived advantage of the group, the team, the nation." The hegemony of American sports expects men to be in positions of leadership like coaching,

team management or ownership, while women are given subordinate roles or left out completely.

2.2 The Symbiotic Relationship of Television and Sports

America's obsession with sports did not begin with the creation of cable or television; it was an extension of an interest with sport that has been a part of the earliest societies. Williams (2003) shared this sentiment with regards to the cultural prominence of sports, "the extraordinary development of the many kinds of professional spectator sports in the twentieth century antedates broadcasting. Radio and television came to satisfy and extend an already developed cultural habit" (p. 65). When television established itself as a mass medium in the late 1950s, and it was clear that sports had a captivated audience, the landscape of American sports was changed forever. By 1960, 90 percent of American families had at least one television set, a higher percentage than homes that were equipped with indoor bathrooms (Davies, 2007). With television as a mass medium, broadcasters found a cash cow in sports: low production costs and a built-in audience that was already established through media like radio and newspaper. Wenner (1989) cited four keys to how sports and television changed at the same time during this period: television penetrates into American homes, cementing itself as a mass medium; technological advancements (color, video tape, slow-motion replay, satellites and portable cameras); the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961, which allowed sports leagues to negotiate their own broadcasting rights; and networks and stations purchase broadcasting rights and sell air time to advertisers.

The symbiotic relations between sports and mass media cannot be ignored. When looking at the change of professional sports from a disjointed group of vagabond

franchises to an organized professional system, it is no coincidence that it was centered on the rise of television. Wenner (1989) said television brought a surge in interest to sports, much like the newspaper and radio previously had canonized athletic achievements.

Media attention fans the flames of interest in sport and increased interest in sport warrants further media attention. This notion of symbiosis also provides a fruitful manner of approaching the history of the sport-mass media relationship in the United States. Virtually every surge in the popularity of sport has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in the coverage provided sport by the media. Furthermore, each surge in the coverage of sport has taken place during a period in which the mass media have sharply increased their penetration into the nooks and crannies of American social life. (p. 49)

The relationship between sports and broadcasting was one of financial symbiosis and fit in well with the Capitalist ideology. Wenner (1989) further suggested that “as an institution, sport was well suited culturally and ideologically, first to the emerging industrial capitalism of the century, and second – and indeed far more so – to the mature corporate capitalist society of the twentieth century” (p. 50). In a capitalist society, the main goal is profit and both television and sports both were able to take advantage. According to Gratton and Solberg (2007), “the types of audiences attracted to sports broadcasts were particularly attractive to advertisers who were therefore willing to pay a premium price for these slots (p. 2).

2.3 Sports Rise from Local to Global

More recently, sports expanded globally through technology and the saturation of mass media coverage. In America, the commodification of sports began with the Industrial Revolution and the growth of individualism in cities. Enhanced transportation systems allowed local teams to organize leagues and travel to other cities for competition. The current schedule of Major League Baseball with teams playing games on consecutive days – typically a 3 or 4-game series, before moving on to the next city – was born out of limitations from travel by train. Today, ultra-high definition images of sporting events can be transmitted from anywhere on the globe via satellite. The articles that needed to be type set, laid out, sent to press and eventually delivered are available online within minutes of happening; on Twitter, breaking stories are published within seconds.

Sports are so pervasive in global culture that it is difficult to imagine a world without the Olympics or World Cup – events that shift struggles from the battlefield to the playing field. In global sporting events, the goal is world domination, much like the endgame of politics. However, compared to colonial occupation – which “subdued or subverted nationalistic impulses by authoritarian, often harsh and militaristic, means that often met resistance” – sports are a “less overt means of instilling belief in a dominant system’s values and principles” (Gems, 2006, p. 148). American sports cable network ESPN – which is also expanding its reach into global markets – is the self-proclaimed ‘worldwide leader in sports,’ much like America is the implied worldwide leader in democracy, freedom, policing the globe, etc. American media refers to our professional sports leagues winners as the ‘world champions,’ despite the teams residing solely in the United States and Canada.

During times of political conflict, sports provide a rallying ground for citizens. Nelson Mandela recognized the power of sports to unite citizens against Apartheid, while Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their gloved fists for human rights while on the medal podium at 1968 Olympics. Unfortunately, the same power can be wielded for evil. Following the attacks on 9/11, professional sports created a diversion, provided a communal space to unify the public, and restored the American way of life; in summation, they prevented the terrorists from winning. As America waged and engaged in an unpopular war, sports served as sites for jingoistic patriotism and manufacturing consent. According to Miller (2001), this phenomenon of mixing “sporting values with militarism and citizenship – an internal Americanization equating national sport with patriotism” has existed since the First World War (p. 106).

Technology like the Internet and satellites shrink the world, as events across the world are transmitted to a global audience. Pelton (2010) studied satellites and their technological capabilities that create an interconnected world. Satellites have changed the way telecommunication systems operate, altered how MNCs do business, and the manner in which culture flows. Rowe and Gilmour (2010) said that media’s capacity to transcend time space is key to sports’ success as a globalizing force. They stated that televised sports are

the kind of “killer application” that would eventually persuade distant spectators to be exposed voluntarily to intensive advertising and then pay to watch as if they were in the stadium itself. But media sport, with its substantial, passionate audiences, could not be contained within strictly delimited local and national

boundaries any more than the political economic structures and processes that fostered it. (p. 1531)

Given their capacity to unify countries and shape national identities, it should come as no surprise that sports have global influence. In conclusion, the history of sports is rooted in male exceptionalism, technologically deterministic improvements to mass media and a steady increase from a local to a global practice.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Sports as an Ideological State Apparatus

The field of cultural studies is heavily indebted Marx's theories, but this study is shaped by future scholars who built upon his work. Marx said that the dominant class controls material production, and thus also controls intellectual production. However, before I move any further, I must elaborate on the term ideology. Storey (2012) said that ideology is a complicated concept with competing meanings, and that it is often "used interchangeably with culture, and especially popular culture" (p. 2). This study uses Althusser's definition of ideology. He defined it as a material practice that is evident in everything we do on a daily basis, expanding on the simplified definition that refers to it as a bundle of ideas. Material practices in action have a way of binding us to a social order that is marked by enormous inequalities of wealth, status and power, which parallels Marx's notion that the dominant class controls material and intellectual production (Storey, 2012). Sports offer a source of leisure that diverts us from existing social conditions, while also serving as an ISA that teaches us how to function in a capitalist society. Hargreaves (1982b) said that sports are crucial to "inculcating an acceptance of the kind of work discipline demanded in the modern production process, and in encouraging a positive orientation to hard work as such. In their organization and functioning the major popular sports are seen as replicating all the fundamental features of modern rationalized industrial production" (p. 41).

Althusser used Marx's State Apparatuses – the government, army, police and courts, which he renamed the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) – as the basis for the ISA. Althusser (1986) said that RSA institutions function almost exclusively through

repression or by violence, while ISAs function almost exclusively by ideology (p. 67).

He emphasized that ISAs

also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. (There is no such thing as a purely Ideological apparatus). Thus, Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to ‘discipline’ not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same is true of the Family ... The same is true of the cultural ISA (censorship, among other things), etc. (p. 68)

While Althusser did not mention sports specifically in the previous quote, they function in the same manner with punishments or fouls that discipline players who go outside the rules. He did reference sports as a cultural ISA that promotes chauvinism (masculine hegemony). Additionally, sports occupy a prominent position in the mass media, which is one of the most influential ISAs.

The cultural prominence of certain ISAs has evolved. At the time Althusser (1986) wrote about ISAs, he said that the educational ISA was responsible for re/producing the dominant ideologies. Through the Middle Ages, the church, or the religious ISA, was the primary means for educational and cultural knowledge. Althusser (1986) said that “in the pre-capitalist historical period ... it is absolutely clear that there was one dominant Ideological State Apparatus, the Church, which concentrated within it not only religious functions, but also educational ones, and a large proportion of the functions of communications and ‘culture’” (p. 71). However, schools, or the educational ISA, have replaced the church as the dominant ISA; this should come as no surprise given the amount of time that children and adults spend in the classroom. Sports, some

could argue, have grown in prominence similar to the educational ISA. While the school likely will remain the primary ISA, the mass media has grown the most since Althusser published his theories. Regardless of the size or prominence of the ISA, they are all working in conjunction to re/produce the ruling ideology. “(T)he school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches ‘know-how,’ but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (Althusser, 1986, p. 60).

Wolff (2005, p. 5) said that “ISAs serve capitalism insofar as they effectively interpellate subjects within meaning systems (including definitions of their own and others’ identities) that make them at least accept and at best celebrate capitalist exploitation.” In addition to his theory on ISAs, Althusser (1986) described the process of interpellation as being hailed as subjects to act a certain way in response to social forces, such as pulling over to the side of road when we see police lights in our rearview mirror. He said that “ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing” (p. 87). Hall (1985) explained how interpellation works in regards to race, describing how he has been hailed as “coloured, West-Indian, Negro and black [...] all of them inscribe me ‘in place’ in a signifying chain which constructs identity through the categories of color ethnicity and race” (p. 108). The signifying chains extend beyond ethnicity to include our understanding of gender identity and our relationship with capitalist ideologies.

In summation, ISAs provide our cultural tastes and shape our understanding of identity. With the media ascribing power to athletes, sports act as an ISA, inculcating us with ideologies that shape our understanding of who we are and how the world functions.

Atkinson (2009) suggested that organized sports are ideological training grounds that focus on lessons like “perseverance under pressure, the value of camaraderie and collective problem solving, the benefit of emotional control, the centrality of fairness and justice in everyday life, the importance of assertion and dominance, and the value of hard work and sacrifice in the pursuit of rational and rule-bound goals” (p. xvi). While participatory sports offer a source of exercise or diversion for those who compete or watch recreationally, their main social practice is to maintain the current dominant ideology of sports: white, masculine hegemony. Gramsci’s (2009) conception of hegemony, which is at use here, is defined as a “condition in process in which a dominant class does not merely rule a society but leads it through the exercise of intellectual and moral leadership” (p. 82). Storey (2012) said that “hegemony is never simply power imposed from above: it is always the result of negotiations between dominant and subordinate groups, a process marked by both ‘resistance’ and ‘incorporation’” (p. 83).

3.2 Discourse and its Role in Shaping Identity

Althusser (1986, p. 93) said that the “ideology of the ruling class (hegemony) does not become the ruling ideology by the grace of God, nor even by virtue of the seizure of State power alone,” but instead they are in a continuous class struggle. In our neoliberal, capitalist society, hegemony and ideological struggles are perpetuated and played out through discourses that are essential to our formation of knowledge, meaning and identity. Storey (2012, p. 130) said that discourses work to enable, constrain and constitute. They have a historical basis; they do not simply come to be through a randomized process. Discourses “must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which

must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized” (Foucault, 2002, p. 28). Discourses must be challenged because stagnation allows dominant discourses to control reproduction of identities. The rich – politicians, business elites and multinational corporations (MNCs) – have power because of capital. Parents, professors, or journalists have less persuasive forms, but power nonetheless, based on knowledge, information, or authority (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 355). Knowledge is linked to power, not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to make it true. (Hall, 1981, p. 49). Knowledge does not operate in a void. If ‘truths’ are widely accepted without proof, then they are regimes of truth, which is why popular discourses are accepted as fact.

According to Foucault (1970, 2002), discourses help to re/produce power and hegemony. Meân (2010) said that “sport is often framed as mere leisure and entertainment, and as a site that reflects rather than constructs culture. This position has inevitably led to the acceptance or disregard of the gendered (and racialized) nature of sporting discourses as natural and normative, even by those typically strongly opposed to discriminatory ideologies and practices” (p. 68). Race and masculinity discourses intersect in many different social practices and media constructs. Wodak and Reisigl (2001) said that discourses spread to different fields, overlap, refer to each other and in some way are sociofunctionally linked with each other (p. 383). Richardson (2007) said that language represents social realities and contributes to the re/production of social reality and social life; it enables identity; it is active; has power; and is political. Hall (1997b) said that “language is not a closed system which can be reduced to its formal elements since it is constantly changing, it is by definition open-ended. Meaning

continues to be produced through language” (p. 35). Wodak and Meyer (2009) said that the

power of dominant groups may be integrated in laws, rules, norms, habits, and even a quite general consensus ... Class domination, sexism, and racism are characteristic examples of such hegemony. Note also that power is not always exercised in obviously abusive acts of dominant group members, but may be enacted in the myriad of taken-for-granted actions of everyday life, as is typically the case in the many forms of everyday sexism or racism. (p. 355)

Hall (1996) claims that identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, while his theory of representation (1997a, 1997b) contends that it connects meaning and language to culture.

At the heart of the meaning process in culture, then are two related ‘systems of representation’. The first enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondence or a chain of equivalences between things. The second depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs (p. 19).

ISAs, like sports and mass media, promote discourses that shape our understanding of race and gender identity.

3.3 The Masculine Discourses of Sports

Gendered and racial discourses are common in sports and the following two sections examine these topics. When sports were established as a social practice in America, the understanding was that they would mold the children of elites into future leaders of business, government and military. However, the mere presence of organized

sports and their beginning as an exclusively male practice did not create the current hegemonic masculine landscape of American professional sports. Mass media's ability to perpetuate ideologies was vital to promoting masculine discourses. One of the primary ways that the media reproduces masculinity in sports is through the use of war metaphors to describe sports and sports metaphor to describe war and politics – fields that are traditionally controlled and dominated by males. Metaphors are used as a tool to help us make sense of things (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 185) and they hail us as subjects to act in a certain manner (Segrave, 2000, p. 57). Politicians routinely use sports metaphors in speeches, making references to 'playing as team' or 'taking a page from the playbook.' Richardson (2007) suggested that phrases like 'attacking the goal' or 'blitzing' that crossbreed sports and military terminology define sports as an extraordinary activity (p. 67). In the case of sports, the metaphorical references are overt; sports and war are interchangeable. Furthermore, our cultural maps say that both sports and war were created by men and for men. Mangan (2006) said that sports and warfare work symbiotically to reproduce masculine ideologies. "The sports field and battlefield are linked as locations for the demonstration of legitimate patriotic aggression. The one location sustains the other, and both sustain the image of the powerful nation. Furthermore, the sports field throughout history has prepared the young for the battlefield." Jansen and Sabo (1994) studied this same field much earlier, studying how sports and war metaphors were used as rhetorical devices during the Persian Gulf War to construct, mediate, and maintain hegemonic forms of masculinity.

Sports' ties to warfare extend to the mass media promoting a "warrior mentality" that inhibits players from admitting to injuries (Anderson & Kian, 2012). The current

generation of athletes was raised with a “shake it off” or “rub some dirt in it and keep playing” approach to injuries – a rite of passage passed down from previous generations (Carroll & Rossner, 2010). Recent research into the long-term effects of continuous blows to the head incurred during sports play has brought awareness to the potential dangers, but competing discourses promote playing through pain even if it might lead to long-term health problems like permanent brain damage. The discourse regarding injuries is furthered by the broadcast and print media lauding players who play through pain (Nixon, 1993). Anderson and Kian (2012) suggested that “sacrificing one’s body for the sake of sport glory is a key tenet. Sports journalists have traditionally used their media platforms to reify this social script, an act which simultaneously promotes their own masculine capital” (p. 153). Nixon’s (1993) content analysis of *Sports Illustrated* from March 1969 to April 1991 indicated that athletes are exposed to a set of mediated beliefs that they ought to accept the risks of pain, and injuries of sport (p. 188). This potentially unhealthy stance is compounded by the individually competitive nature of professional sports, as a season-ending injury for one player can create an opportunity for another capable athlete. The loss of a starting position carries financial implications as well. The difference in salary between bench players and star athletes is stark, adding financial incentive for players to play through injuries.

While male athletes are celebrated for their athletic achievements, female athletes typically are denigrated as sex objects or lesbians if they appear too athletic. Feminist movements created greater equality in sports, but there remains a clear pecking order in the American sports media. The focus is professional football, basketball, baseball and hockey, and nothing else matters. Sports that do not possess the same masculine qualities

are not covered as extensively as the aforementioned sports. The discourse of masculinity is shaped at an early age, whether it is in the schoolyard, playground or gym class. Foucault (1978) wrote that masculinity, homosexuality and other sex-based gender identification systems are constructions that spawned from capitalism and industrialization of the 19th century (p. 69). Foucault (1977) also suggested that discipline is “a type of power, a modality for its exercise,” which creates socially quarantined subjects who participate in self-surveillance (p. 216-17). Adams (2013) examined the use of the term sissy and its usage among school age children. The term sissy “tells a boy that he is approaching the limits of what is considered acceptable; it reminds him that he is under constant surveillance and should, therefore, conduct himself accordingly” (p. 521). Hardin and Whiteside (2010) researched the case of former Penn State University women’s basketball coach Rene Portland, who prohibited open homosexuals from playing on her team. Due to the masculine identities associated with sports, female athletes are often referred to as lesbians, regardless of their sexual orientation. The same can be said about sports like figure skating or gymnastics that are deemed not masculine enough and participation by males can call into question one’s manhood. Much like in the schoolyard, femininity in American professional sports is not tolerated.

3.4 The Racial Discourses of Sports

Racial discourses emerged during a time when black athletes were excluded from completion. During this time, the two most common stereotypes in sports discourses were the naturally gifted, strong, black athlete and the cerebral, hard-working white athlete (Van Sterkenburg, et al., 2010). These stereotypes are a manifestation of the

racist constructs that emerged during the slave economy of the 19th century, suggesting that blacks are naturally athletic or born to work, while white athletes are equipped with decision-making skills and should be in charge. The other popular representation was that blacks were not intelligent enough to understand rules or simply too lazy to compete. Kareithi (2001) wrote that “popular representations of racial ‘difference’ during the early days of slavery tended to cluster around two main themes. First was the subordinate status and ‘innate laziness’ of blacks. Second was their innate ‘primitive’ simplicity and lack of culture” (p. 7). Black athletes were excluded from sports based off of the ‘Sambo’ stereotype: “loved to play, not compete; an adult child afflicted with a short attention span, low intelligence, infantile dependency, deeply ingrained laziness and a tropical inclination to lethargy” (Roberts & Olsen, 1989, p. 26).

With emphasis on hard work, sports offer Horatio Alger-like opportunities for athletes with the best skills and drive. However, up until the civil rights era, black athletes were not afforded the same opportunities. On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson debuted with Major League Baseball’s Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first black athlete to play in an American professional sports league. Prior to Robinson, race was used as a tool to segregate athletics and maintain the white, masculine hegemonic structure. However, after black athletes were integrated into American professional sports, the discourse that they were mentally unable to grasp the rules or concept of the game was replaced by the naturally gifted black athlete. These constructs attempt to centralize power with the white athlete by rationalizing shortcomings. The cerebral, hard-working white athlete manifests in its dominance of positions which are responsible for decision making on the field (quarterbacks) and off the field (managers, team

owners). In the sports media complex, racist discourses function at both the inferential and overt levels. The media representations of the naturally gifted black athlete and cerebral, hard-working white athlete are long-standing racial discourses. These same discourses were applied to the earliest black athletes, including professional boxers Jack Johnson and Joe Louis, who were always depicted as winning solely on brute strength and when a white fighter was lucky enough to win it was because they outsmarted their black opponent. The nicknames and promotions of black fighters emphasized the skin color or portrayed them as jungle animals. When black athletes showed an ability to compete on the same level – and in some sports like basketball, dominate – the discourse changed to suggest that they were genetically inclined towards athletics. This discourse of racial differences in athletic ability is reified in our culture through the media, whether it is play-by-play announcers commenting on natural abilities of black athletes (Van Sterkenburg, et al., 2010) or movies like *White Men Can't Jump* (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008).

3.5 Sports as a Public Pedagogy

In our neoliberal, capitalist society both knowledge and money are power; judging by the amount of revenue that sports generate, they have great opportunities for pedagogy. Giroux (2004, p. 498) acknowledged sports as both a site of public pedagogy and “an organizing force of neoliberal ideology.” Much like ISAs, public pedagogies typically promote dominant discourses and ideologies. However, public pedagogies provide much more opportunity for resistance to the dominant ideologies. They are sites outside the traditional classroom where learning takes place, such as an art studio, museum, sports playing field and especially popular culture. Popular culture is form of

public pedagogy that “teaches audiences particular ways of being, through the ways it represents people and issues and the kinds of discourses it creates and disseminates” (Wright & Sandlin, 2009, p. 536). Mediated sports and sports as a social practice extend beyond the traditional classroom, teaching us things as children at play and as adult consumers. Participatory sports teach competing cultural lessons such as fair play and winning at all costs, while advertisements on mediated sports push products that purport to help us achieve our best.

CHAPTER 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter is a review of existing literature about sports' role in shaping identities. The review begins with an examination of sports in the global marketplace, which is both expanding into any and all markets and converging via interconnected networks. Increasingly, the global marketplace is dominated by neoliberalism, multinational corporations (MNCs) and Western cultural tastes. The second section explores sports' effect on national identities, both at home and across the globe. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summation of existing research on individual identity formation via participatory sports and consumption of mediated sports. While this study seeks answers on the latter, it was important to examine the role that sports play in identity formation at different levels. This following literature review examines sports' ability to shape global, national and individual identities

4.1 Sports' Role in Shaping Global Identity

Technological advancements to our telecommunication systems allow Brazilians to watch hockey and Canadians to watch soccer if they desire. The shrinking of our world via satellites has fostered the growth of globalization, neoliberalism and cultural imperialism. The globalization of media jeopardizes traditions that lasted centuries to accommodate the programming schedule of new media (Hallin & Mancini, 2010). Neoliberalistic policies, which celebrate free markets and minimal regulation, encourage the spread of globalization and concentrate power and control of media systems. Imperialism was previously imposed through colonization, but globalization allowed for neoliberal policies to inculcate without a physical presence.

Technology shrinks the world, as sporting events across the globe are transmitted to a global audience. Pelton's (2010) research on satellites stated that technological capabilities created an interconnected world, changed the way telecommunication systems operate, altered how multinational corporations do business, and redirected the manner in which culture flows. Rowe & Gilmour (2010) said that the media's capacity to transcend time and space is key to sports' success as a globalizing force. They stated that televised sports are:

the kind of "killer application" that would eventually persuade distant spectators to be exposed voluntarily to intensive advertising and then pay to watch as if they were in the stadium itself. But media sport, with its substantial, passionate audiences, could not be contained within strictly delimited local and national boundaries any more than the political economic structures and processes that fostered it. (p. 1531)

The creation of cable station, Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN), was a turning point in the globalization of sports. Initially downplayed as novelty when it went on the air in 1979, ESPN was beamed to 150 million households in more than 180 countries in twenty-one different languages by the turn of the century (Gems, 2006, p. 154). "ESPN and network television set the standard for broadcasting, a homogenous packaging of sport for consumers, with an emphasis on editing, particular camera angles and focus, slow motion replays, graphics, music, interviews, and "expert" analysis that interprets sports with an American perspective and bias for a global audience" (Gems, 2006, p. 155).

Cable television via satellite transmission was the initial force in globalization; however technological advances in internet connectivity made this process easier and faster. While developing countries are attempting to close the digital divide (Noam, 2010), established global powers are colonizing digital spaces like the internet and interactive television. The control of these sites, or the media that fill them, is centralized through MNCs. Sports are not an exception to this rule, as there is no shortage of websites devoted to teams, interactive games and other digital spaces for fans. Scherer (2007) said that “given the global visibility and cultural centrality of sport, it is not surprising that electronic sporting spaces have emerged as significant battlegrounds for multinational corporations to locate and interact with premium consumers and sports fans” (p. 476). He specifically looked at Adidas’s use of an interactive website which promoted New Zealand’s All Blacks rugby team, but the same websites can be found for any American professional sports teams. Adidas’s use of cyberspace was not aimed only at expanding its global reach, but also encouraging consumers “to inhabit and personally transform online sporting spectacles as part of their identities” (p. 493).

Sports, in their current state, are not merely a product of neoliberalism; instead they grew up alongside each other. The tenets of neoliberalism include individual freedom, the sanctity of the marketplace, and minimal government involvement in economic matters. Neoliberalism and free-market capitalism opened the door for MNCs to continue concentrating ownership, and hence power, of the means of production and the media that promotes the virtues of commodities. This reach can be seen with children in Third World countries wearing Michael Jordan t-shirts because they want to ‘be like Mike.’ Miller (2001) said that “sociologists of sport can quite legitimately emphasize

sport's role as a cultural adjunct to economic imperialism and acknowledge the power of the First World capitalist media in promoting spectacles" (p. 23).

However, the globalization of sports is not limited to the games, as advertisers and sporting goods companies like Nike attempt to dominate a global marketplace. Sporting goods brands and team logos that adorn clothing are symbolic of the literal branding, or marking via burning, and strong factors in shaping identity (Hardy, Norman & Sceery, 2012). According to Gems (2006), Nike's reason for success stems from their ability to maintain

a rebel image while practicing a capitalist, corporate business plan. Nike sells its logo, symbols, ideas, and values as well as shoes and clothing by portraying an independent, nonconformist image. Yet it follows an established multinational path in its operations that draws on European designs, American financing and Asian labor. (p. 158)

Even more impressive, or despicable, is Nike's ability to maintain this image while providing some of the poorest working conditions and wages for the people who manufacture the product. Nike was able to build its sporting empire in the mid-1980s through a strategic partnership with NBA superstar Michael Jordan. Nike's meteoric rise past competitors Adidas and Reebok created a demand by marketing firms for athletes to promote products. Giardina (2005) referred to this as an "embodiment of the twinned discourses of late modernity: neoliberal democracy and consumer capitalism" (p. 50). In their study of marketing strategies in China, Langdon and Kaplan (2012) found that despite their high price, "the demand for Western culture makes (Nike) worth purchasing. There is a distinct demand for American products, as evidenced by the presence of

American corporations such as McDonalds, KFC and Starbucks in China and the success of Nike also reflects this phenomenon” (p. 11).

The existence of Western cultural influences like Nike or the NBA in China is not a recent occurrence. Hallin and Mancini (2010) associated the notion of Americanization with the rise of neoliberalism. They stated that “the process described by the theory of cultural imperialism is essentially one of outside influence, involving the displacement of one culture by another culture” (p. 156). Said (1993) proposed that imperialism remained a global force after the age of empire through means other than military force. Instead, colonial and imperialist culture is deployed to foreign lands via mass media in Americanized formats. Compared to colonial occupation – which “subdued or subverted nationalistic impulses by authoritarian, often harsh and militaristic, means that often met resistance” – sports are a “less overt means of instilling belief in a dominant system’s values and principles” (Gems, 2006, p. 148). Rowe and Gilmour (2010) suggested that sports overt imperialism is made possible because it is:

so thoroughly marketed and mediatized that it appears as common property, circulating within and between regions with such apparent ease as to suggest that even the most diverse societal formations can somehow be united through some form of shared sporting practice. Yet despite appearances, sport is the predominant product of Western modernity and, most visibly, of media corporations that have secured the rights to disseminate it and the brands with which it can be associated. (p. 1542)

Brands like Nike, and others that are disseminated through MNCs, attempt to spread Western culture. Miller (2001) stated that the Americanization assigns power to “MNCs

such as Disney, McDonald's and Coca-Cola to dominate taste formation across the world, in one-way cultural transfer that exploits sport to vend useless pleasures" (p. 14).

While some theorists argue for one-way, passive mediation, Hallin and Mancini (2010) suggest that the process is a negotiated, two-way process that is affected by both internal and external forces. Donnelly (1996) is critical of Americanization and cultural imperialism as explanations for the global expansion of sports, as it oversimplifies complex changes. If one assumes a passive mediation of sports, it ignores the fact that American national pastimes like professional football and baseball are not widely consumed on a global scale. According to Donnelly (1996), "the transfer of cultural products is not just a one-way process, and the ideological messages contained in American cultural products are not fixed; those exposed to American culture also have some freedom to interpret and reinterpret those products in any way they choose" (p. 243).

4.2 Sports' Role in Shaping National Identities

Americanization refers to the one-way process in which American ideologies are imposed on foreign cultures, most often through imported popular culture like movies, music and other media such as televised sports (Hallin & Mancini, 2010). The same pro-American ideologies are at work domestically, as sports are used to create national pride and unify during times of political turmoil. American professional sports leagues like NASCAR (Kusz, 2007), Major League Baseball (Butterworth, 2005) and the National Football League (Kusz, 2007) provide massive communal spaces for fans to gather. Sports were used as a tool for manufacturing consent to participate in war after the attacks on 9/11. This sense of nationality and community is not unique to American

professional sports, as shown by the globalization of sports. There are many countries and cultures that draw their identity from sports, such as Canada (hockey), Brazil (soccer) and the West Indies (cricket). In addition, sports are used to shape individual identities in the political sphere.

During times of political conflict, sports provide a rallying ground for citizens. Following the attacks on 9/11, American professional sports created a diversion, provided a communal space to unify the public, restored the American way of life and avoided letting the terrorists win. As America waged and engaged in war, sports served as sites for jingoistic patriotism and manufacturing consent for an unpopular war. According to Miller (2001), this phenomenon of mixing “sporting values with militarism and citizenship – an internal Americanization equating national sports with patriotism” (p. 106) has existed since the First World War.

Sports have a history in political struggle – notably through pioneering black athletes like Robinson, women fighting for equality through Title IX, and Olympic boycotts – so it is not surprising that they were featured prominently in the response to the attacks on 9/11. Butterworth (2005) noted that, given its title of America’s national pastime, baseball had a “unique opportunity – perhaps responsibility to respond to 9/11” (p. 108). Taking heed from President George W. Bush’s requests to continue the American way of life, Major League Baseball resumed play after a six-day hiatus. The pre-game ritual of “The Star-Spangled Banner”, which began as support during World War II, was flanked now by “God Bless America,” in place of the seventh-inning tradition, “Take Me Out To The Ballgame.” Butterworth argued (2005) that sports – baseball specifically – are rooted in rituals and myths that parallel religion.

Although ballpark rituals provided an early opportunity to mourn collectively, they evolved quickly into expressions of American nationalism and hegemony. By invoking rituals rooted in religious symbolism, these ceremonies conveyed an aura of national unity and a perception of a foreign threat that de-legitimized dissenting opinions. In the end, they reinforced President Bush's declaration that only two choices remained after September 11: You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists. (p. 123)

Supporting the "us versus them" rhetoric, the New York Yankees placed security guards and roped off exits, restricting fans from leaving their seats during the playing of the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "God Bless America". This policy was in place until 2008, when The New York Civil Liberties Union sued the Yankees and the NYPD on behalf of Bradford Campeau-Laurion, who was ejected from a game after trying to use the restroom during the playing of *God Bless America*.

Immediately following the attacks on 9/11, sports served as both a source of diversion and unification in a shell-shocked America. As America went on the offensive and declared a war on terrorism, the media narrative and atmosphere in stadiums and arenas changed from jingoistic patriotism to one that celebrated militarism. Given its status as uniquely American and that it was also in season at the time of the attacks, football was prominent in manufacturing consent for war. Kusz (2007) explored the media's reaction to the death of National Football League player Pat Tillman, and how this was used by the Bush administration in support of his neoliberalist agenda. Tillman's case was unique in that he traded in a version of the American dream – star athlete with a million-dollar salary – for a much less glamorous life in the United States

Army. He served several tours of duty before he was killed by friendly fire in Afghanistan, a fact that the military withheld from Tillman's family and the public in the weeks following his death. At a time when Bush prohibited media coverage of returning casualties of war, Tillman was afforded a public funeral that was televised by several media outlets. Kusz (2007) suggested that the media spectacle of Tillman's sacrifice symbolized a wounded America (p. 86). Giardina (2005) questioned the spectacular nature of Tillman's funeral, asking "when are the other hundreds and hundreds of not-so-famous soldiers who have perished just as bravely as did Tillman going to have their stories told, or be eulogized by a United States Senator or, even, by the President who sent them to war in the first place?" (p. 112). By momentarily keeping the media narrative as 'American soldier dies heroically while fighting war on terror' instead of 'American soldier tragically killed by friendly fire,' the government was able to manufacture consent for war. Kusz (2007) said that Tillman's death provided an

opportunity for cultural conservatives and neoliberals to advance such a cultural project of "taking back their country" from liberal-minded folks whose political correctness, cultural relativism, anti-Americanism, diversity initiatives, and affirmative action programs they had been railing against for years. (p. 78)

Sports not only provided a space for jingoistic patriotism to rally the troops and pound the war drums, but it also provided a platform for resistance. Historically, sports have been a site where athletes can take a stand in front of a global audience. One of the most famous and transcendent forms of protest in the sporting world occurred at the 1968 Olympics. As the "Star-Spangled Banner" played, US gold medalist Tommie Smith and bronze medalist John Carlos bowed their heads, looking away from the

American flag and raised a single, black-gloved fist in the air. The gesture, which drew boos from the crowd, was construed as a display of black power, but Smith later revealed that it was salute for the human rights of all men and women. Giardina (2005) explored the case of Manhattanville College women's basketball player Toni Smith and how her public protest of the war in Iraq was portrayed in the media. During the playing of the national anthem prior to games, Smith would turn away from the flag. Portions of the media, particularly right-leaning outlets like Fox News, lambasted Smith, ignoring the fact that her freedom of expression was much less imposing than military occupation of a country that had nothing to do with the attacks on 9/11. Giardina (2005) took offense to the way the media piled on Smith, while celebrating Tillman's contributions. "Instead of jingoistic patriotism being used to vilify someone, as the case had been with respect to Toni Smith, the same blind allegiance to what was situationally palatable was turned on its head, given cultural purchase to deify Tillman while shouting down anyone who may have wondered aloud what the United States was even doing in Iraq" (p. 111).

The majority of this literature review focuses on how American sports and media are negotiated by an American audience. However, there is a large amount of scholarship on the way that sports are linked to national identities. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, national identities were determined and mediated through the church and party press newspapers (Hallin & Mancini, 2010). Today, sports play a significant role in shaping global, national and individual identities. According to Gems (2006), sports allow smaller nations to retain portions of their national cultures that are increasingly being dominated by neoliberal capitalism. Sports "allowed for the expression of national identities as colonial powers attempted to fashion subject populations in their own

images. It promoted national heroes, national pride, and national self-esteem, if not equality within the imperial process” (Gems, 2006, p. 153). Certain sports are linked to specific regions, such as soccer to Brazil, cricket to the West Indies, rugby to Wales/New Zealand and hockey to Canada. Brazil is home to some of the greatest soccer players in the world. Dubal (2010) argued that the globalization of sport has diminished the level of play and the excitement of local fans, as native Brazilian players are commodified and purchased by teams in Europe’s Premier League.

While some scholars worry about the effects of globalization of sport, others see it as a site where meaning can be made. As previously stated, sports have the capability to identify entire countries, as well as individuals. Scherer and McDermott (2012) cited the case of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who was sold to his constituents by promoting his knowledge of hockey. They argued that:

in the new millennium, there has been a notable expansion of these carefully crafted promotional practices that Harper and the CP have deployed for personal image-making and relentless partisan advertising, with the ultimate goal of ideologically shifting the Canadian political center to the far right. (p. 272)

Since Canada draws a lot of its identity from hockey, Harper marketed himself to an entire country by creating a link between the two. The same could be said for American presidents, as they will traditionally throw out the opening pitch at baseball games. Obama’s love of basketball also constructs a rhetoric of Americanness, while also touching on a sense of blackness, as it is a sport typically dominated by African American players.

4.3 Sports' Role in Shaping Individual Identities

Media presentation plays a large role in the globalization of sports and nationalism, but also in the shaping of individual identities. Billings and Hundley (2010) stated that mediated sports reach many, and thus have the potential for tremendous social influence.

The consumers of these messages certainly have free will to resist these overt and covert agendas, yet sport is also known as the world's most pervasive form of escapism, consequently resulting in millions of people who are more likely to consume identity-oriented messages in a peripheral rather than central processing route. (p. 8)

The masculine and racial discourses discussed in Chapter 2 are key to shaping gender, sexuality, race and ethnic identities. Hall (1996) claims that identities are constructed within discourses that shape our understanding and reinforce beliefs on class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race. The majority of existing research on sports' role in individual identity formation focuses on media effects; however, participatory sports are also influential in shaping of identity. Participatory sports are an important site for identity formation and inculcation because of the young age that children are entered and the importance that adults place on the competition aspect.

Postman (1994) cited incidents of adults fighting at children's games as irrational. "Parents are fighting over children's games because play has become an adult preoccupation, it has become professionalized, it is no longer a world separate from the world of adults" (p. 130). Due to the increased violence and the continuous decline in the age in which parents are putting children into sports, the American Academy of

Pediatrics released a report on the effects of sports on young children (Committee, 2001). The report suggested that overzealous parents' involvement can have a negative effect on child development. "When demands of a sport exceed a child's cognitive and physical development, the child may develop feelings of failure and frustration ... Teaching or expecting these skills to develop before children are developmentally ready is more likely to cause frustration than long-term success in the sport" (p. 1459). The study accounted for cognitive and physical development via participation in sports, but it did not examine how the rules and discourses of sports shaped participants' understanding of their identity. Bissell's (2010) research addressed how the consumption of media interacts with the young athletes' perception of self-identity and the effect on self-esteem and appearance (p. 41). She found that participation in sports led to improved perceptions of body image and self-esteem in adolescent females, while increased exposure to media had deleterious effects in the same categories. This study does not focus on young athletes, however, it does question issues of identity and self-esteem, and if being a part of a team provides a sense of belonging.

While many sports fans do not play sports, they view their participation in fan communities as equivalent to physically being a part of the team. Heere and James (2007) used group identity theory to explain how sports fans associate as actual members of a team, instead of mere consumers of a cultural product. "Fans identify with a team because doing so provides them with a sense of belonging, often has a positive effect on self-esteem and mood, and influences the perceptions fans have of their own behavior" (p. 320). Bryant and Cummins (2010) proposed that sports fans follow their favorite teams closely because their performance "directly impacts how they view themselves, for

better or worse” (p. 218). Their study used Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which posits that group membership plays a key role in the development of self-identity, and looked specifically at self-esteem in extreme fans following a loss in a college rivalry game.

The prior paragraph reviewed the inclusive manner of sports in creating team identity. In contrast, sports were rooted in exclusivity as a practice reserved for white males. The integration of women in sports has been marked by a history of exclusion, struggle (Title IX) and willing acceptance (as consumers). Hardin and Whiteside (2010) said that women have made much ground in sports, but “hegemonic masculinity dictates sport as ‘naturally’ and exclusive a male pursuit, making the image of woman in sports a contradiction – rife with too much dissonance” (p. 19). Meân’s (2010) critical discourse analysis of the FIFA website found that the women’s World Cup was marginalized through erasure, and that the few articles featured minimized athletic prowess. She said that

sport is a powerful, familiar, and highly naturalized discourse that has become more prominent with the extensive rise in media coverage over the last 15 to 20 years. The same time period has seen a large increase in the participation of women as both athletes and sports fans, yet there has been little substantive change in the re/presentational practices deployed in sports media with respect to gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality...Instead re/presentational practices have increased the spectacularization and hyper-masculinization of male sport and male bodies (e.g. enhancing speed and aggressiveness) and continued to undermine female athleticism (e.g. sexualization and feminization). (p. 67)

When women's sports are included in the media they focus on a hypersexualized presentation. For example, men playing football are celebrated for their hypermasculinity, while women playing football in their lingerie is a punchline. "The discourse used by media gatekeepers is substantially different between men and women, often serving to diminish women's athletic achievements" (Billings & Hundley, 2010, p. 6)

The marginalization of women and minorities in sports media is problematic; the manner in which they are presented reinforces masculine hegemony and shapes our understanding of identity. Shome and Hegde (2010) defined identity as an "important site where the interconnections of race, class, sexuality and gender are played out in the larger field of geopolitical structures," (p. 100). All of these topics play out prominently in sports via the media's reliance on visual images to do the work of shaping identity (Billings & Hundley, 2010).

Gender identity is reduced to biological differences (such as breasts or an Adam's apple) and reinforced with social constructions (wearing makeup, long hair, and gender-based clothing) as evidenced in visual cues; ethnicity is typically reduced to perceived skin pigment; and sexual orientation is left to a viewer's increasingly flawed conceptions of "gaydar," based on stereotypes of effeminate men or masculine women. (p. 5)

Hardin and Whiteside (2010) researched the case of former Penn State University women's basketball coach Rene Portland, who prohibited homosexuals from playing on her team. Portland's "unspoken," but overtly intimidating, policies were tolerated until a former player filed civil litigation. Due to the masculine identities associated with sports,

female athletes are often referred to lesbians, regardless of their sexual orientation. The same can be said about sports like figure skating or gymnastics that are deemed not masculine enough and participation by males can call into question one's manhood. Kusz's (2007) research touched on the gendered aspect that sports played in supporting Bush's "hyper-masculinist rhetoric and imagery (drawing from the conventional masculinist codes and imagery of the old west and *Top Gun*), which tapped into, as it cultivated, American (White) men's conjuncturely specific desire to man up and once again feel like real men" (p. 78).

Much like the presentation of gender and sexuality, sports perpetuate racial discourses that function at both inferential and overt levels. Hall (1981) used ideology as a blanket term to refer to those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and make sense of some aspect of social existence. Bruce (2004) studied this aspect of overt racism in the history of sports broadcasting where announcers make comments that fall in line with racist discourses that infer black athletes as naturally talented and white athletes as hard-working and intelligent. The racist discourses use binary oppositions to highlight the differences. Smith and Hattery (2006) expanded on the inferential racism by examining the portrayal of black athletes as animalized and sex-crazed. They examined the media glamorization of Wilt Chamberlain's purported sexual conquests and, more recently, the coverage of criminal and civil cases against Kobe Bryant, which drew a fine line between promiscuity and criminality.

While these racist ideologies may be already ingrained in certain members of society, the media does not offer much resistance. Hall (1981) argued that

the media constructs for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the problem of race is understood to be. The media are not only a powerful source of ideas about race. They are also on place where these ideas are articulated, worked and transformed and elaborated. (p. 35)

In modern societies, the different media are especially important sites for the production, reproduction and transformation of ideologies. Ideologies are worked on in many places in society, and not only in the head. de B'beri and Hogarth (2009) said that ideological statements

by reporters or other sport personalities are not the product of individual awareness, but rather are influenced by the inescapable framework of the ideological foundations in which these statements were articulated.

Consequently, statements made with no intention of being overtly, or even subtly, racist can support an ideology of racism as they may unknowingly maintain the racist hegemonic framework of the society in which they were represented. (p. 92)

In a telling study of sports commentators, by Rainville and McCormick (1977) showed that white announcers gave white players more play-related praise than black players. While sports announcers are not openly expressing racist thoughts, there are covert racial biases. "Ironically, white sports commentators themselves often tend to deny that they participate in the construction of the discourse about race and ethnicity. Instead they tend to use 'sincere fictions', that is, they often have internalized an image of themselves as being objective, race-neutral professionals" (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2010, p. 831). Bruce (2004) also explored this area of race representation in the media, but offered a pass to media workers, suggesting they are not active racists, but using the "sets

of practices and discourses by which knowledge is constructed in the media, not the personal inclinations of media workers, that racist ideologies continue to be recreated” (p. 863).

The white, patriarchy of sports is evident in both media and scholarship. McDonald (2010) explored the whiteness in sports media and scholarship. She reported that roughly 90 percent of upper-level media positions – the voices of authority – are filled by white men. Hardin and Greer (2009) suggested that the media shapes our understanding of what is feminine and masculine. The “U.S. sports/media complex has positioned sports as male terrain; its ‘masculinist cultural center’ has been a site for boys and men to learn hegemonic masculinity” (Hardin & Greer, 2009, p. 211). In America, the major sports media focus almost exclusively on male-dominated professional sports and major men’s college sports (football and basketball). “Even individuals who do not follow sports coverage cannot escape the presentation of sports on television, in magazines and in newspapers as an activity for and by men” (Hardin & Greer, 2009, p. 223). In a telling study Hardin, Dodd and Lauffer (2006) reviewed sports journalism textbooks to find that the books that trained our future members of the media promoted hegemonic masculinity. They cite the discrepancy in coverage of women’s sports (5-8%) as compared to their participation level (40%).

This literature review covered the role of sports in shaping global, national and individual identities. At the global level, American professional sports attempt to homogenize games, media presentation and style of play. Additionally, sports are a strong factor in shaping national identities, such as a tool for unifying a nation during

turmoil. The review of national identity was necessary because it also plays a role in the creation of one's individual identity.

CHAPTER 5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Sample

For this study, a convenience sample of 135 respondents were recruited to complete a survey of 34-40 questions. Of the collected responses, 21 were eliminated due to incompleteness. The question styles included yes or no, 5-point Likert-scale and open-ended. The survey was made available via the online survey website, SurveyMonkey.com. The vast majority of respondents were contacted through the social networking website, Facebook.com. This type of sampling is also referred to as snowball sampling, which is “a chain-referral technique that accumulates data through existing social structures. The researcher begins with a small sample from the target subpopulation and then extends the sample by asking those individuals to recommend others for the study” (Bhutta, 2012, p. 59). Additional responses were collected from posting on the website, SurveyPolice.com, which is dedicated to online surveys. The forum section on SurveyPolice.com has a section specifically for student researchers. Of the 135 responses, 109 completed the demographics section. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 60 or older, but slightly more than half fell in 30-39 range (n=56). Over two-thirds of the participants who completed the demographic section were female (n=73).

Analytical surveys “attempt to describe and explain why situations exist” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Typically, these surveys are used by researchers to “examine the interrelationships among variables and to develop explanatory inferences,” while also explaining how personal tastes and lifestyles change over time (p. 185). Survey research has many good qualities like cost-effectiveness, large data pool and lack of geographic constraints. Additionally, Facebook has become a prime source for

analytical research because of its networking capabilities. Bhutta (2012) said “Facebook is currently the SNS best suited for this type of research, thanks to size, features, intensive use, and continuing growth,” (p. 57). Baltar and Brunet (2011) also examined the use of Facebook in survey research. They proposed that “we cannot ignore the importance of virtual relationships on people’s lives. Everyday an amount of activities take place in this “online” reality where individuals express thoughts, intentions and opinions about events that happen in their ‘real’ world” (p. 57).

5.2 Procedures

After obtaining consent from the Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections, the survey was created through the website SurveyMonkey.com. The questionnaire design (Appendix A) was broken into three sections: participation in sports as a child, participation in sports as an adult and consumption of sports via mass media. The first section questioned sports participation as a child under age 18. In addition to the yes or no question, the survey asked respondents to provide a list of the sports and for how many years they played. The second section questioned continued participation in sports, along with what sports and how often the respondents played. The third section inquired media consumption of sports, including what media channels and how often they read or watched. The first two sections about participatory sports included five Likert-scale questions, while the third section on media consumption had ten. Each section concluded with an open-ended question where respondents could explain the manner in which sports affected their lives, which added a qualitative aspect to the quantitative nature of survey research.

5.3 Measures

The sections on identity formation from playing sports focused on three aspects of inculcation: creating a sense of community, instilling rules and an ability to work on a team, and preparing participants for life as an adult. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which states that group membership is key to the development of self identity and Althusser's theory on sports and media functioning as an ISA, guided the creation of the initial Likert-scale questions in this study. Additionally, the topic of team identification shaped the questions. Wann (2006) defined team identification as "the extent to which a fan feels a psychological connection to a team and the team's performance are viewed as self-reliant" (p. 352). Like team participation and group membership, the ideologies and discourses of sports encourage participants to accept their existence in a capitalist society. For Althusser, sports are a cultural ISA from which "ideology is secreted and becomes a 'lived condition' which functions to reproduce unproblematically the social relations of modern capitalist production" (Hargreaves, 1982a, p. 9).

Sports fandom works in the same manner as team participation and group membership. While access or physical capabilities may prevent some from playing sports, there are little to no barriers blocking one from consuming sports via a multitude of mass media channels. According to Althusser (1986), the dominant ISA plays a determinant part in the reproduction of the relations of production. One could argue that the mass media has replaced the school as the dominant ISA, as it is the central way in which we make meaning of things. Hall (1997a) said that meaning is "produced in a variety of different media; especially, these days, in the modern mass media, the means of global communication, by complex technologies, which circulate meanings between

different cultures on a scale and with a speed hitherto unknown in history” (p. 3). In addition to the questions about identity formation, the final section asked participant if they felt that the amount of coverage that sports receive is balanced and reasonable.

5.4 Reliability

Reliability analyses were conducted to confirm the reliability and to ensure internal consistency. Table 1 shows that Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were acceptable in all three sections. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) stated that Cronbach’s alpha is commonly used reliability coefficient that uses the analysis of variance to assess the internal consistency of a measure (p. 59). Only one Likert-scale question – Q6: I identify as an athlete ($\alpha = .64$) – deviated far from the Cronbach’s alpha (for section, $\alpha = .77$) when the question was removed from the sample. Despite this singular deviation, the scale was consistent and reliable in almost all measures, as emphasized in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability Analyses for Likert-scale questions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Alpha if Deleted
Identification from playing sports as a child			0.87	
Playing sports gave me a sense of community	3.99	0.86		0.85
Sports taught me rules	4.13	0.77		0.84
Sports taught me teamwork	4.25	0.78		0.85
Sports gave me a competitive edge	3.92	0.97		0.85
Sports prepared me for adult life	3.52	1.02		0.86
Identification from playing sports as an adult			0.77	
I identify as an athlete	2.96	1.18		0.64
Playing sports gives me a sense of community	3.69	1.03		0.71

I am very competitive	3.77	1.11	0.79
I play sports to stay in shape	3.39	1.14	0.72
I feel a sense of pride when I/my team wins	4.11	0.83	0.74
Identification from consumption of mediated sports			0.84
I identify as a sports fan	3.80	1.15	0.81
I feel a sense of community as a sports fan	3.76	0.99	0.82
When a team/athlete I like wins, I feel a sense of pride	3.84	0.94	0.82
When a team/athlete I like loses, it affects my mood	2.94	1.11	0.82
Athletes have extraordinary ability	3.93	0.73	0.83
Athletes have ideal bodies	3.39	0.84	0.84
Athletes deserve recognition in the media	3.34	0.80	0.83
The media covers a variety of sports	3.47	1.10	0.83
The media covers sports that I like	3.69	0.94	0.82
The amount of media coverage sports receive is reasonable	3.00	1.03	0.82

CHAPTER 6. RESULTS

6.1 Results

Sports are a prominent part of American popular culture both as an ideological practice and from its prominent position in mass media. Billings and Hundley (2010) recognized that mediated sports have the “the power to reach millions,” and thus have the “potential for tremendous social influence,” specifically in regard to identity (p. 8). Social Identity Theory suggested that playing on a team, along with membership through sports fandom, play a role in shaping self identity as a member of a team through spectatorship or participation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, there is no scientifically proven manner of pin pointing one’s identity and exactly how it was shaped, unlike a car crash test can determine the level of impact that a car makes while traveling at 25-miles per hour. Identities are constantly changing; they are not fixed and change over the course of one’s lifetime. Billings and Hundley (2010) said that “identity is an extensive negotiation that is always changing, always being interpreted and reinterpreted, and always contested by various entities” (p. 5).

RQ1: Do sports shape our identity, and if so, in what ways?

Given the nebulous manner of identity, RQ1 is best answered through the questions about sports creating a sense of community. A variation of this question was included at all three levels of review – playing sports as a child, continued participation and media consumption. Using the mean scores on Table 1, playing sports as a child returned the strongest agreement ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.86$), followed by consumption of mediated sports ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.99$), and finally continued participation in sports ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.03$). Strong agreement for community building at all three levels suggests

that sports do play a role in identity formation. In addition, the open-ended questions provided an opportunity for respondents to say in their own words how sports affected their lives. While some chose not to answer, the majority of open-ended responses said that playing sports as a child taught them rules, collaboration and competition – crucial aspects of functioning in a capitalist society. One of the respondents said:

Playing sports helped me learn to work together with others toward a common goal. It taught me that each person had a specific role in the team and to be successful each person had to do their role and trust others to do the same. It also instilled in me a work ethic – the harder you work, the more you are able to achieve.

RQ2: Since sports' history is rooted in white, male hegemony, are there differences in the way that it shapes gender and race identities?

The masculine discourses of sports are long-standing and entrenched in sports. As a social practice, women were excluded from sports, and only through much struggle did they earn the opportunity to play. Even today, the discourses are perpetuated through the media and on the playground with phrases like “throw like a girl.” Billings and Hundley (2010) accused the media gatekeepers of promoting discourses that are “substantially different between men and women, often serving to diminish women’s athletic achievements” (p. 6). Women’s sports are rendered invisible through erasure and when they are covered the focus is on sexuality. While mediated sports promote masculine hegemony and coverage of men’s sports dominate the media landscape, the response rate of the survey conducted in conjunction with this study yielded a 2-to-1 ratio of women (N = 73) to men (N = 34). A review of the mean scores in Table 2, suggests

that males are more invested in sports and more likely to have their identity shaped by playing sports or consuming mediated sports. The open-ended answers included several replies by women who admitted to watching sports as a means to identify with their spouses. One respondent used it as leverage in selecting future television programs: “I only watch it when my significant other has it on (ESPN/Sports Center). I only watch games I’m interested in (about 5 football games a year). My fiancé watches it constantly, and I have to bargain to watch what I want.”

Table 2

Mean Results by Gender	Male	Female
Identification from playing sports as a child	N = 34	N = 73
Playing sports gave me a sense of community	4.26	3.90
Sports taught me rules	4.41	4.05
Sports taught me teamwork	4.62	4.14
Sports gave me a competitive edge	4.26	3.79
Sports prepared me for adult life	3.94	3.38
Identification from playing sports as an adult		
I identify as an athlete	3.35	2.85
Playing sports gives me a sense of community	4.06	3.58
I am very competitive	4.12	3.62
I play sports to stay in shape	3.85	3.25
I feel a sense of pride when I/my team wins	4.44	3.96
Identification from consumption of mediated sports		
I identify as a sports fan	4.38	3.60
I feel a sense of community as a sports fan	4.15	3.66
When a team/athlete I like wins, I feel a sense of pride	4.29	3.71

When a team/athlete I like loses, it affects my mood	3.56	2.67
Athletes have extraordinary ability	4.29	3.82
Athletes have ideal bodies	3.50	3.32
Athletes deserve recognition in the media	3.38	3.38
The media covers a variety of sports	3.74	3.34
The media covers sports that I like	3.91	3.64
The amount of media coverage sports receive is reasonable	3.18	2.96

While the survey produced measureable data for gender identity, the response rate for non-white participants did not provide sufficient data. Despite the low response rate, sports' effect on race identity is ripe for examination. Boyd (1997) said that "sports and the discourses that surround them have become one of the master narratives of twentieth century culture" (p. ix). The racial discourses seek to undermine accomplishments of black athletes by attributing them to natural athletic talents, while white athletes have to work hard to attain their achievements. Of the 108 respondents who completed the demographic section, 102 identified as White, while only 6 identified as Black, Hispanic or Mixed Ethnicity. The low response rate of non-white participants aligned with McDonald's (2010) research on the whiteness of sports and media scholarship. The results may have been skewed by the method of snowball sampling. If the majority of the network is white/Caucasian, then a snowball sample would likely replicate the same results.

RQ3: Are there differences between the way participatory sports and mediated sports shape one's identity?

The results did not produce significant difference in identity formation through participation in sports and consumption of mediated sports. As stated in *RQ1*, it is impossible to show exactly how identity is formed. However, the difference in mean scores (see Table 3) between respondents who replied yes (N = 81) or no (N = 33) to consuming sports in mass media yielded significantly different results. The scores emphasized the influence that mass media has on shaping one's identities. While the quantitative aspect of the research did not show the effects of participatory sports on identity, the open-ended responses did provide qualitative information about participatory sports' effect on identity:

While I did not really like most of the girls on my soccer team, I really enjoyed the sport and through the experience I learned how to persevere through what was sometimes a negative social experience, the desire to not let my team down and improve for the sake of not embarrassing myself. Looking back, I do believe that this has given me an edge in the professional world because we will always have people on our teams that we don't particularly like but must still work with. I don't know if this can be directly correlated with my playing sports, but I do believe it played a role in shaping my adult self. Additionally, I enjoy being active and as I've gotten older have taken up different sports like golf without necessarily needing to excel, but doing it for the social and physical aspect.

Table 3

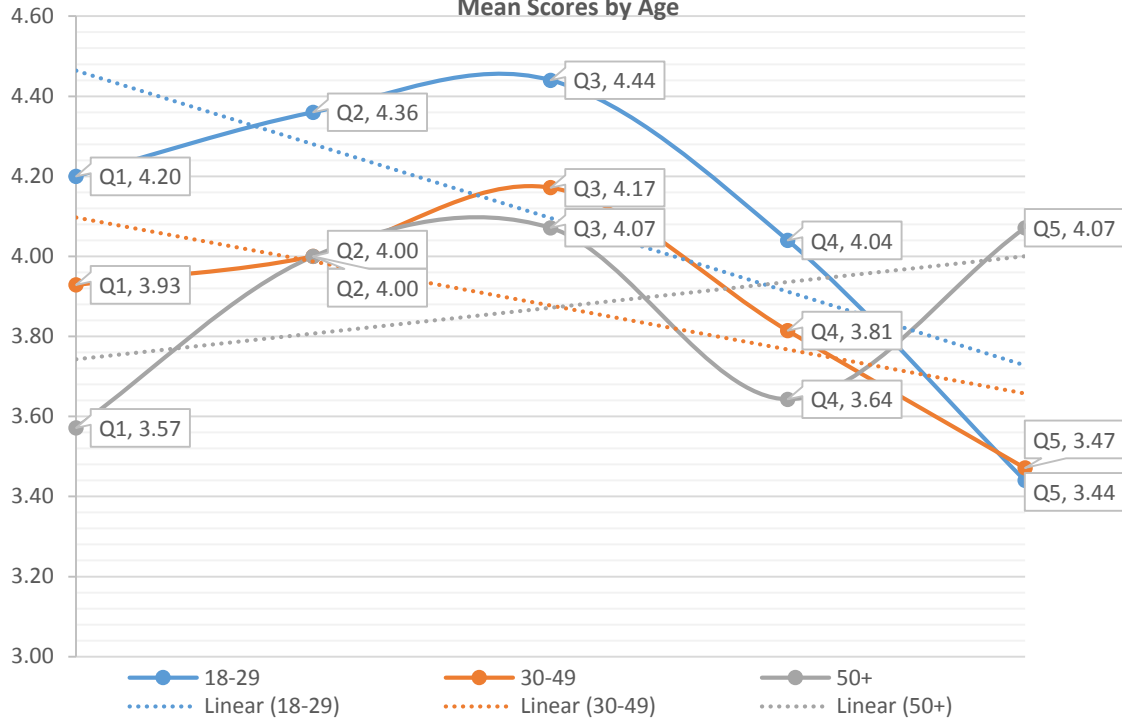
Identification from Consumption of Mediated Sports, Mean Scores	Y = 81	N = 33
I identify as a sports fan	4.31	2.55

I feel a sense of community as a sports fan	4.12	2.88
When a team/athlete I like wins, I feel a sense of pride	4.15	3.09
When a team/athlete I like loses, it affects my mood	3.23	2.21
Athletes have extraordinary ability	4.05	3.64
Athletes have ideal bodies	3.41	3.33
Athletes deserve recognition in the media	3.47	3.03
The media covers a variety of sports	3.62	3.12
The media covers sports that I like	3.91	3.15
The amount of media coverage sports receive is reasonable	3.15	2.64

RQ4: Does the way that sports shape one's identity change over the course of one's lifetime?

The survey included six age brackets, but for the purposes of this review I filtered them to three ranges – 18-29, 30-49 and 50 or older. The younger age groups – 18-20 and 21-29 – had much stronger agreement with statements about the inculcation process of participation in youth sports. This likely can be attributed to the fact that the 18-29 age group are less removed from the lessons they learned in youth sports. However, the younger populations did not identify sports as a factor in preparation for adult life, which contrasted the older population's significant agreement with this question (Table 4). In summation, older populations look fondly at sports as preparatory for adult life, while younger populations related to sports as teaching teamwork, rules and competition.

Table 4
Identity Formation Through Participatory Sports,
Mean Scores by Age



Some other key differences between age groups showed that younger populations are larger consumers of media. In this study, 21 of 25 respondents in the 18-29 group answered yes to consuming sports in media. Thus, they are much more likely to identify as a sports fan. Surprisingly, the older age population (50+) reported similar media consumption habits. The same populations also returned similar results for the questions about the effects of a favorite team winning or losing has on mood. In response to the questions about existing media coverage, older populations seemed more accepting of the male dominated landscape. However, all age groups returned similar results for the question that sports receive a reasonable amount of coverage.

6.2 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the role of sports in identity formation. The majority of the existing research is focused on how sports

shape global and national identities, and little research explored sports as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Additionally, existing research used either quantitative or qualitative methods. By mixing the two methods, the results of this study included the authority of quantitative numbers and the humanistic aspect of qualitative answers. This study examined the role of participatory sports and mediated sports – both ISAs – in shaping identity across three separate areas: playing sports as a child, continuing to play sports as an adult and consumption of sports via mass media.

Through a review of existing literature, it is generally understood that sports are an effective tool in shaping global identities, unifying entire nations in times of turmoil, and perpetuating racial and masculine discourses. Given sports and mass media's pedagogical capabilities, this study investigated *RQ1*: Do sports shape identity, and if so, in what ways? The existing literature suggested that participatory sports and mediated sports do play a role. This study showed that people who play sports and consume them in the media have a strong agreement with identifying as sports fans and feeling a sense of community. The open-ended answers emphasized the identity-building capability of sports, as many responses referenced sports as a means for teaching rules, teamwork and creating their competitive drive. One respondent said:

sports taught me how to work in a team. For example, how to effectively communicate with others, that one person can't always succeed without help from others, accomplishing goals takes hard work, practice makes perfect, camaraderie, ability to bond with people over shared experiences, etc.

Billings and Hundley (2010) argued that sports are ripe for examination because of “the underlying belief that sport shapes society as much as society shapes sport, but

also because many sporting entities routinely resist more progressive thinking about identity issues” (p. 2). The lack of progressive thinking is evident in the racial and masculine discourses of sports, which are perpetuated by the media. This stance led to the inclusion of *RQ2*: Since sports’ history is rooted in white, male hegemony, are there differences in the way that it shapes gender and race identities? Much of the literature examines sports as a hegemonically male endeavor from which women are excluded and when they are included it seeks to marginalize their achievements. Ironically, this study returned a much higher response rate from women, despite the male-dominated nature of sports. This variance in response can likely be attributed to the random nature of snowball sampling, but could also suggest the continued ground that women are gaining in the traditionally masculine world of sports. Unfortunately, the sample included a very small amount of non-White respondents, so it was undetermined whether sports played a significant role in race identity.

Both participatory sports and mediated sports function as ISAs that seek to re/produce the ideologies of the dominant class. While both are ISAs, they use different methods to produce identities; the media uses dominant discourses, while sports inculcate via rules and lessons. This study sought to determine if there was a difference in the manner these two practices shape identity. *RQ3* asked: Are there differences between the way participatory sports and mediated sports shape one’s identity? The results did not suggest that there was a significant difference in identity between playing sports and watching sports.

Identities are constantly changing and always in flux (Billings & Hundley, 2010). There is no known research that examines differences in identity formation with age as a

dependent variable. This led to the final area of research, *RQ4*: Does the way that sports shape one's identity change over the course of one's lifetime? Meân (2010, p. 68) posited that identities are embedded in discourses, and we have an emotional commitment to the discourses from which our identities arise. This statement suggests that age groups have connections to certain discourses about sports (i.e. younger audiences will be more accepting of women in sports). The most significant result from this question was the difference between age group in response to participatory sports as a child.

While this study provided a wealth of information about sports and their role in identity formation, there remains much to uncover. The study had intended to measure if the amount of time spent participating in sports or watching sports created any variations in results. However, the open-ended response for amounts of time resulted in many blank responses and varying time formats. Also, I would change the sampling method in future studies to include a more diverse population. The snowball sample reflected heavily upon my social networks, and did not produce an accurate representation of a population of sports fans and participants.

6.3 Conclusion

Hargreaves (1982b) argued that “with some notable exceptions there has been an extraordinary neglect of sport as a social and cultural phenomenon among the social science and cultural studies communities, who have largely ignored what is arguably one of the central components of popular culture” (p. 30). In 33 years since Hargreaves' statement, there has been much more research about sports and its role in American culture, as evidenced by the length and breadth of this study's literature review, but sports

remain largely understudied in comparison to the amount of attention they receive in media. While Hargreaves's (1982b) first comment rings hollow by today's standards, his explanation for the lack of research on sports stands the test of time.

On one hand, sport is easily taken for granted as by definition either an enjoyable, unserious activity, which it would be unbearably pretentious, even self-defeating to subject to analysis, or, on the other hand, as an activity which is unquestionably good for the individual and society. And it can also be taken for granted in the sense that it can be easily dismissed as a rather mindless activity or enjoyment unworthy of academic attention. From such stances therefore, sport presents no real analytical problems and it is therefore usually accorded a relatively low academic status. (32).

However, Billings and Hundley (2010) stated that sports status as a form of escapism or a mindless activity is precisely why it requires examination.

The consumers of these messages certainly have free will to resist these overt and covert agendas, yet sport is also known as the world's most pervasive form of escapism, consequently resulting in millions of people who are more likely to consume identity-oriented messages in a peripheral rather than central processing route (p. 8)

This study sought to examine the media messages and lessons of sport and what effect they have on shaping identities. The results echoed the existing research that defined sports as a strong factor in shaping identity. Going forward, this study can be replicated with younger age groups, particularly adolescents, who are more susceptible to influence from the dominant discourses of the media (Bissell, 2010). Continued

examination of identity is required because mass media coverage of sports and participatory sports have grown exponentially since Hargreaves' statements and one can assume that they will continue to expand.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Identity Formation via Participation in Sports and Consumption of Mediated Sports

Thank you for participating in my survey. Your feedback is important.

Principal Investigator:

Kevin Reagan, Graduate Student
777 West Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, PA 17057
717-571-7597
kmr350@psu.edu

Advisor:

Dr. Peter Kareithi
777 West Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, PA 17057
717 948 6758
pjk12@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of why sports and athletes are so popular in our culture. Additionally, it will inquire as to how the dominant ideologies of sports shape our identity.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to answer between 34-40 questions on a survey.

3. Duration: It will take about 15-20 minutes to complete the survey.

4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Kevin Reagan at 717-571-7597 or kmr350@psu.edu with questions or concerns about this study.

6. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

By clicking “Next” below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

1. Did you play sports as a child (under age 18)?

Yes

No

2. What sport(s) did you play?

Archery

Baseball

Basketball

Bowling

Boxing

Cycling

Figure Skating

Football

Golf

Gymnastics

Hockey

Horseback Riding

Martial Arts

Soccer

Softball

Tennis

Weightlifting

Wrestling

Other (please specify)

3. How many years did you play sports?

4. Playing sports gave me a sense of community

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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5. Sports taught me rules

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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6. Sports taught me teamwork

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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7. Sports gave me a competitive edge

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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8. Sports prepared me for adult life

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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9. How did playing sports affect your life? *If you do not wish to answer, please press Next*

10. Do you still play sports?

Yes

No

11. What sport(s) do you play?

Archery

Baseball

Basketball

Bowling

Boxing

Cycling

Figure Skating

Football

Golf

Gymnastics

Hockey

Horseback Riding

Martial Arts

Soccer

Softball

Tennis

Weightlifting

Wrestling

Other (please specify)

12. In a typical month, about how many hours do you play sports?

13. I identify as an athlete

Strongly

Disagree

Neither Disagree
nor Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Disagree

14. Playing sports gives me a sense of community

Strongly

Disagree

Neither Disagree
nor Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Disagree

15. I am very competitive

Strongly

Disagree

Neither Disagree
nor Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Disagree

16. I play sports to stay in shape

Strongly

Disagree

Neither Disagree
nor Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Disagree

17. I feel a sense of pride when I/my team wins
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

18. How does playing sports affect your life? If you do not wish to answer, please press Next.

19. Do you follow sports in the media?
 Yes
 No

20. What media do you use?
 Television
 Radio
 Print (Newspaper/Magazine)
 Online (Newspaper/Magazine)
 Blogs
 Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
 Other (please specify)

21. In a typical week, about how many hours do you spend reading or watching sports media?

22. I identify as a sports fan
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

23. I feel a sense of community as a sports fan
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

24. When a team/athlete I like wins, I feel a sense of pride
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

25. When a team/athlete I like loses, it affects my mood
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

26. Athletes have extraordinary ability
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

27. Athletes have ideal bodies
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Disagree nor Agree Agree Strongly Agree

28. Athletes deserve recognition in the media
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
29. The media covers a variety of sports
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
30. The media covers sports that I like
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
31. The amount of media coverage sports receive is reasonable
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

32. How does sports media consumption affect your life? If you do not wish to answer, please press Next.

33. Which category below includes your age?

18-20

21-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60 or older

I'd prefer not to answer

34. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Less than high school degree

High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)

Some college but no degree

Associate degree

Bachelor degree

Graduate degree

I'd prefer not to answer

35. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

Employed, working full-time

Employed, working part-time

Not employed, looking for work

Not employed, NOT looking for work

Retired

Disabled, not able to work

I'd prefer not to answer

36. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

Married

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

In a domestic partnership or civil union

Single, but cohabiting with a significant other

Single, never married

I'd prefer not to answer

37. What is your gender?

Female

Male

I'd prefer not to answer

Other (please specify)

38. What is your approximate average household income?

\$0-\$24,999

\$25,000-\$49,999

\$50,000-\$74,999

\$75,000-\$99,999

\$100,000-\$124,999

\$125,000-\$149,999

\$150,000-\$174,999

\$175,000-\$199,999

\$200,000 and up

I'd prefer not to answer

39. In what ZIP code is your home located? (enter 5-digit ZIP code; for example, 00544 or 94305) Enter 00000 if you'd prefer not to answer.

40. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian / Pacific Islander

Black or African American

Hispanic American

White / Caucasian

I'd prefer not to answer

Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

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