UNIVERZITA KARLOVA

Fakulta tělesné výchovy a sportu

DISSERTATION THESIS

2024 **Olivia Rose Howe**

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
Fakulta tělesné výchovy a sportu

Oppression versus Empowerment: A Philosophical Analysis of Female Participation in Sport

PhD Thesis

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Prague 2024

I declare that I have prepared the final dissertation independently and that I have listed all information sources and literature used. Neither this thesis nor any substantial part of it has been submitted for another or the same academic degree.

Prague, 2024 Student's signature

Acknowledgements

The experience of writing a PhD thesis is like no other; challenging, all-encompassing, arduous, but also deeply fulfilling, fascinating, and one I will cherish. The process was largely enjoyable due to my supervisor, Jim Parry, and my consultant, Irena Martínková, who dedicated hours of their time giving me advice over coffee and biscuits. I am also indebted to my family - Mum, Dad, Granny and Grandpa - who supported me no matter what. And finally, Pepe, who told me that everything would work out. It did.

ABSTRACT

Title: Oppression versus Empowerment: A Philosophical Analysis of Female Participation in Sport

Objectives: Utilising feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, this thesis aims to define and critically analyse what the concepts of oppression and empowerment mean in relation to women. In determining that women's oppression is systemic, internalised and exploitative, the findings are applied the female sport category. This discussion primarily focuses on whether sport has the propensity to perpetuate the oppression of women through its rules and conventions, categorisations, financially and emotionally exploitative practices, and through novel methods such as health data manipulation. Drawing upon current texts in the field of sports studies, the theme that sport can be a source of empowerment for women is discussed.

Methodology: This thesis employed a desk research approach, gathering, interpreting and critically assessing information from second-hand data, including, but not limited to, philosophical texts, journal articles, newspaper sources and social media. This thesis draws upon ideas from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* to provide a more thorough philosophical analysis of the terms 'oppression' and 'empowerment'. This thesis also draws upon standpoint theory, the origins of which lie in the work of feminist philosophers such as Sandra Harding and Nancy Hartsock. The theory assumes that knowledge is 'always socially situated', and those who are socially located as 'insiders' have an epistemological advantage when producing such knowledge.

Results: It is concluded that sport has the potential to be a vital source of bodily empowerment for women, but also a site where oppression can manifest. In addition to several specific policy recommendations, three broad policy recommendations to help sports governing bodies tackle women's oppression and enable women's empowerment are presented. It is proposed that sports governing bodies ought to take the majority of the responsibility in making such changes. Effective changes can be brought about through a review of rules and codes, responding with protective measures, the eventual reformation of education, and the introduction of non-traditional sports.

Keywords: Oppression, Empowerment, Beauvoir, Ethics, Sport, Philosophy

ABSTRAKT

Název: Útlak versus posílení postavení žen: Filosofická analýza účasti žen ve sportu

Cíle: Cílem této práce je na základě knihy feministické filosofky Simone de Beauvoir *Druhé pohlaví* definovat a kriticky analyzovat, co znamená pojmy „útlak“ a „posílení postavení“ žen. Zjištění, že útlak žen je systémový, internalizovaný a vykořisťovatelský, jsou aplikována do ženské kategorie ve sportu. Tato diskuse se zaměřuje především na zjištění, zda má sport tendenci utvrzovat útlak žen prostřednictvím svých pravidel a konvencí, kategorizace, finančně a emocionálně vykořisťujících praktik a prostřednictvím nových metod, jako je manipulace se zdravotními údaji. Na základě současných textů z oblasti kinantropologie je rovněž diskutováno téma sportu jakožto zdroje pro posílení postavení žen.

Metodologie: Tato práce je čistě teoretickou studií, ve které byly shromažďovány, interpretovány a kriticky hodnoceny informace z filosofických textů, odborných článků, novinových článků a sociálních médií. Tato práce vychází z myšlenek knihy Simone de Beauvoir *Druhé pohlaví*, která poskytuje důkladnější filosofickou analýzu pojmů „útlak“ a „posílení postavení“. Práce rovněž vychází z teorie stanoviska (standpoint theory), jejíž počátky leží v díle feministických filosofek, jako jsou Sandra Hardingová a Nancy Hartsocková. Tato teorie předpokládá, že poznání je „vždy sociálně situované“ a ti, kdo jsou sociálně situovaní jako „insideři“, mají při vytváření poznání epistemologickou výhodu.

Výsledky: Závěr této práce uvádí, že sport má potenciál být pro ženy důležitým zdrojem tělesného posílení, ale také místem, kde se může projevovat útlak. Kromě několika doporučení konkrétních strategií jsou prezentovány tři obecné strategie, které mají pomoci řídícím orgánům sportu řešit útlak žen a umožnit posílení jejich postavení. Je navrženo, aby řídící sportovní orgány převzaly většinu odpovědnosti za provedení takových změn. Účinné změny lze provést prostřednictvím revize kodexů a pravidel, ochrannými opatřeními a případnou reformou vzdělávání a zaváděním netradičních sportů.

Klíčová slova: Útlak, posílení postavení, Beauvoir, etika, sport, filosofie.

This thesis includes the following publications:

1. Howe, O. R. (2022). Hitting the barriers – Women in Formula 1 and W series racing. European Journal of Women's Studies, 29(3), 454-469. https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068221094204. Copyright © [2022] Sage Publications. JIF: 1.4

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2. Olivia R. Howe. (2023). Netball and the interpellation of feminine body comportment, Sport in Society, 26(10), 1647-1664. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2023.2173583 JIF: 1.4

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3. Olivia R. Howe (forthcoming). Ethical Risks of Systematic Menstrual Tracking in Sport, Journal of Bioethical Inquiry. Accepted for Publication. JIF: 2.4

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis utilises the feminist philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir's major literary text, *The Second Sex* ([1949] 2011), and applies it to the study of women's sports. At present, women's sports is a fast-growing movement, particularly in the past decade. Nonetheless, women's sport requires continued critical analysis, and I contend that Beauvoir's reflections can offer unique insights into issues such as sex, gender, movement, and, most pertinent to this thesis, the concepts of oppression and empowerment.

Due to the fact that *The Second Sex* was first published in 1949, women's sport is an infrequent topic of discussion for Beauvoir, with the exception of the following extract:

> And in sports, the goal is not to succeed independently of physical aptitudes: it is the accomplishment of perfection proper to each organism; the lightweight champion is as worthy as the heavyweight; a female ski champion is no less a champion than the male who is more rapid than she: they belong to two different categories. It is precisely athletes who, positively concerned with their own accomplishments, feel the least handicapped in comparison to men. But nonetheless her physical weakness does not allow the woman to learn the lessons of violence: if it were possible to assert herself in her body and be part of the world in some other way, this deficiency would be easily compensated. If she could swim, scale rocks, pilot a plane, battle the elements, take risks and venture out, she would not feel the timidity towards the world I spoke about. It is within the whole context of a situation that leaves her few outlets that these singularities take on their importance, and not immediately but by confirming the inferiority complex that was developed in her by childhood (Beauvoir [de], 2011, pp. 356-357).

In the above, Beauvoir highlights how sports enable women to feel more physically empowered ('It is precisely athletes who…feel the least handicapped in comparison to men'), yet emphasises how women are anchored by a society which treats the female body as inferior from birth. The sports we play are inextricably linked to the societies we belong to – sport impacts society, and society impacts sport. It is this relationship between sport and society that complicates the role of sports in women's lives: does sport contribute to their oppression, reifying their inferior position in Western society, or does sport empower them, giving them the tools to challenge prejudices and enabling

a full, physical exploration of the body? Though it is impossible to say if *every* sport plays a role in woman's oppression and empowerment, this thesis will examine several different sports with the overall aim of providing some insight into this question.

Though this thesis examines the themes of oppression and empowerment, the focus lies more heavily with the former topic. Whilst Part 1 seeks to 'set the scene' and explore how women continue to be positioned as inferior athletes in the world of automotive racing, Part 2 will provide a theoretical analysis of the Beauvoirian characterisation of oppression, examining several interpretations from scholars with the aim of providing a robust definition of oppression. Following on from this, Part 3 will apply the previous findings with the aim of understanding how the rules and conventions of sports have the potential to perpetuate systemic oppression. In doing so, this part will provide case studies from the sports of netball, basketball and korfball. In addition to a rigorous historical analysis, Part 3.5 to Part 3.8 will specifically focus on sex segregation, highlighting how sex segregation could be understood as oppressive to women, yet, in certain circumstances, emancipatory. Having looked at existing forms of oppression in specific women's sports, Part 4 will address developing forms of oppression, considering how the digitalisation of society poses new and emerging problems for women in sport. Responding to the previous sections, Part 5 will try to decode how Beauvoir understands empowerment, and in applying texts extracted from *The Second Sex*, will determine that physical empowerment is a favourable response to oppression providing that sports institutions are largely responsible for ensuring women's empowerment. Finally, Part 6 will provide three broad policy proposals which sports governing bodies ought to adopt with the goal of tackling women's oppression in sport and enabling their empowerment. The overall conclusion of the thesis will be presented in Part 7.

Before the analyses of oppression and empowerment begin, there is a clear need to clarify what is meant by the term 'female' employed in the title of this thesis, especially when the term 'woman' is also present in the forthcoming discussions. The answers are (quite) straightforward: a female is a biological sex categorisation, depending on one's sex organs, chromosomes, and hormones. Jurists, biologists, philosophers and sociologists have yet to agree with one another on the exactness of the qualities. Nonetheless, there is a very general agreement that females are one part of the sex binary, though there are a few outliers which make the edges of this categorisation a little fuzzy (Martínková et al., 2022, p. 143).

A definitional ‘rupture’ occurs when the term ‘woman’ is introduced, meaning that ‘a break occurs between facts of usage and facts of essence such that process of definition itself becomes an issue’ (Schiappa, 2022, p. 10). This rupture can perhaps be dated back to Simone de Beauvoir, who famously asked ‘what is a woman?’ (2011, p. 3). The answer to this question is much less clear. Though Beauvoir gives us a potential answer – that a woman is her situation – it is undeniable that the research which she used to evidence her argument is - in many places - flawed, for she assumes that all women have a common identity, which is both impossible to verify and a generalisation which she fails to acknowledge. Today, the term ‘woman’ is a gender identity, assuming that there are specific feminine qualities and characteristics linked to one’s femaleness.

A great deal of Beauvoir’s musings in *The Second Sex* address how this linkage between female and woman has come to be. However, this thesis won’t contribute to this specific debate so heavily – rather, this is the work of those who specialise in gender studies and a handful of sports ethicists concerned with sex categorisation. What is particularly problematic is that the terms sex and gender are used synonymously in society, and sports often make the mistake of conflating the two (Martínková et al., 2022, pp. 134-135). I will not aim to define what a woman is in this thesis, for I am uncertain that it has a straightforward and definitive answer. Instead, I will try to use the term ‘female’ when I am referring to the biological category used for sports categorisations, and the term ‘woman’ or ‘women’ for those who identify as this gender categorisation. Trying to keep these terms separate at all times is, however, an impossible task from a lexical point of view. Therefore, unless specified, I will often refer to ‘women’s sports’ in this thesis, meaning sports played by females, instead of the alternative understanding of sports that suit traditionally feminine qualities.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis draws upon ideas from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* ([1949] 2011) to provide a more thorough philosophical analysis of the terms 'oppression' and 'empowerment'. *The Second Sex* – referred to as Beauvoir's 'magnum opus on women's oppression' (Hill Collins, 2017, p. 326) – was not originally written as a philosophical text but rather a literary discussion that served as a prelude to Beauvoir's autobiography. As a result, Beauvoir's arguments surrounding women's oppression are not as clear-cut and methodical as a philosophical text and are woven into often long-winded prose. It is also worth noting that Beauvoir did not explicitly use the term 'empowerment' but instead used the term 'liberation', which, for reasons justified in Part 5, should be understood synonymously. Nonetheless, rich philosophical musings that provide insights into women's oppression can be found in multiple chapters. Consequently, this thesis draws on both Volume I (specifically the introductory chapter, *Biological Data*, *The Point of View of Historical Materialism*, *Myths*) and Volume II (specifically *Childhood*, *The Girl*, *The Married Woman*, *The Mother,* and *The Independent Woman*).

A potential limit of this methodology is that these reflections brought about by a reflexive inquiry can only go so far. Whilst topics such as Formula 1 and netball provide interesting insights, they are culturally relative, and thus, the findings that the research offers may be less applicable to other culturally specific sports. For example, the sport of netball was based on particular English values and was shaped by British politics, education, and Commonwealth relations. This thesis was written in the Czech Republic, a country partly unaffected and, for a long time, far removed from the sports cultures of Western Europe and beyond. As a result, the discussion of netball and korfball in Part 3 is limited in its application to other sports with broader international and cultural ties.

Additionally, a common critique of philosophical research methods I will address is that they do not provide empirical results. I argue that this is a non-issue due to the policy recommendations made throughout the thesis. Policy decisions present value-based proposals – they are assertions as to what we ought to do, and therefore, they must be situated within a philosophical framework. The outcomes of empirical research are, at best, an improved understanding of factual matters, and so this 'fact-value gap' can inform but cannot determine policy and practice. Furthermore, although empirical research is not produced in this research, second-hand data produced by

sociologists and psychologists are frequently drawn upon to strengthen the philosophical and ethical arguments made. Thus, the analysis of literature, policy, and philosophical concepts bridges the gap between the factual evidence and what ought to be done about it, and such findings are only producible through a philosophical approach.

This thesis also draws upon standpoint theory, the origins of which lie in the work of feminist philosophers such as Sandra Harding (1987, 1992) and Nancy Hartsock (1997).The theory assumes that knowledge claims are 'always socially situated', and those who are socially located as 'insiders' have an epistemological advantage when producing such knowledge (Harding, 1992, p. 442). Standpoint theory claims that a researcher's characteristics affect substantive and practical aspects of the process of knowledge production. Harding contends that a standpoint epistemology enables scientists to draw upon their own experiences to determine 'blind spots' in research processes, resulting in an enhanced notion of objectivity where all positions are considered and consequently, more thorough results are obtained (1992, pp. 457-459). Transparency of the researcher's social location is important in preventing an 'anonymous voice of authority', and instead allows the reader to understand the researcher as a 'real historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests' (Harding, 1987, p. 9).

Within the research process, the researcher reflected on their 'insider' positionality, which can be drawn from their identity as a former athlete, a participant in sports such as netball, a spectator of various sports, and a woman. The researcher also drew on their 'outsider' positionality, acknowledging their identity as a white, heterosexual, British woman. By engaging with texts reflexively, this thesis aimed to understand better how the experience of womanhood varies due to intersecting oppressions such as race and sexuality, as well as social location and culture.

These reflections on social location not only inspired the questions asked but also allowed the researcher to pursue alternative perspectives to those discussed in current published research. Though this approach appears subject to harmful biases, a level of objectivity can be achieved through discussion and debate with diverse communities of sports ethicists within and beyond the faculty. Ramazanoğlu and Holland write that it is 'necessary to reflect on how you are constituted as a knowing subject' as the research undertaken will incorporate one's own values (2002, p. 143). In acknowledging their positionality, the researcher and the supervisor of this proposed

research identify as different genders (one woman and one man), consequently allowing potentially harmful biases caused by personal gendered experiences to be better balanced.

These two methodological approaches to some extent converge. It can be suggested that Beauvoir herself employs a prescient version of standpoint theory through what Kruks calls a 'situated subjectivity', where the knower making knowledge claims rejects the notion of the autonomous subject and instead acknowledges the weight of the subjective experience (1992, p. 92). Although Beauvoir does at times try to remove[1] herself from the analysis in an attempt to provide a view 'from nowhere' (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), she readily emphasises the importance of personal experience by relying on the testimonies of women throughout chapters five to thirteen (Beauvoir [de], 2011, pp. 283-734). On the contrary, however, Beauvoir's reflexivity is less evident, and her writing oftentimes produces problematic and outdated discussions on 'motherhood, race, and queer sexuality' (Oksala, 2023, p. 144). Taking this into account, the researcher acknowledges that social and philosophical critiques in which the researcher is situated are sometimes fragmented and subject to fallibility (Oksala, 2023, p. 144).

[1] Oksala questions whether *The Second Sex* can be interpreted as standpoint theory in action, and instead posits that Beauvoir employs a phenomenological methodology (2023, pp. 143-144).

PART 1 – SETTING THE SCENE – WHERE ARE ALL THE WOMEN? THE CASE OF FORMULA 1[2]

Preface: It is worth noting that since this thesis section was written and also published, significant changes in the world of motorsport have been made. In 2021, when the ideas for this section were first formulated, W Series was an up-and-coming, novel championship format which brought about new opportunities for women in automotive racing. However, in late 2022, W Series founder and chief executive Catherine Bond Muir stated that the series was in financial trouble due to 'unforeseen circumstances outside of W Series' control' (Reuters, 2022). W Series did not return in 2023. Nevertheless, a new race format directed by Susie Wolff appeared: F1 Academy. F1 Academy seemed to take over from W Series; however, instead of being a separate enterprise, it is in fact supported by the Formula 1 championship. The aim of F1 Academy is to elevate female drivers into Formula 1, thus acting as a feeder league. Though F1 Academy is not without its problems, it does address multiple barriers which women face in the sport, namely representation and (in)visibility, and assumed inferiority. Though F1 Academy is still in its infancy, the issues which it aims to address appear to be a step in the right direction.

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Part 1 of this thesis is written with the intention of 'setting the scene'. To understand what kinds of discrimination women face in sport, I have drawn on the particular example of Formula 1. Arguably, gender equality in the West is improving and sport is a particular aspect of society that demonstrates such improvement. Nonetheless, there are specific areas and types of sport that continue to discriminate against female athletes. It is possible that no matter the focal point, we will find that women are discriminated against. Formula 1, however, is somewhat of a peculiarity. A common argument used to justify female inferiority in many masculinised sports is that they are less strong, less aggressive, less fast, and less powerful. Formula 1, due to the use of a car, relies much less on bodily strength, speed and power. As a result of this, the sport is categorised as unisex. Despite this categorisation, very few women are involved in the sport.

[2] Part 1 has been published as an article online: Howe, O. R. (2022b). Hitting the barriers – Women in Formula 1 and W series racing. European Journal of Women's Studies, 29(3), pp. 454-469. https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068221094204

At present, there have been fewer than ten female drivers in Formula 1 since its inception. Matthews and Pike write that 'despite claiming to be a gender-equal sport, motorsport appears to share characteristics of many sports in that it is inherently gendered in favour of male involvement and control' (2016, p. 1534). They also point to an article in *The Times*, stating 'One thing is certain: women are for decorating Formula One and not for taking part in it' (Eason, 2003). Since this article, models who promote sponsors known colloquially as 'grid girls' have been removed from Formula 1 (hereafter F1), but only seven women have successfully sat in the driving seat of an F1 racing car despite the sport being classified as unisex (BBC Sport, 2018). It has been hypothesised by multiple sports ethics scholars (English, 1978; Fink et al., 2016; Kane, 1995; Martínková, 2020b; Theberge, 1998) that unisex sports provide positive opportunities in combatting gender inequality in sport on the basis of there being no 'muscle gap' that women must overcome (Kane, 1995, p. 198). Rather, athletes work together regardless of sex and gender, demonstrating that it is not only discourse which creates inequalities, but also the activities that athletes engage in, too.

Susie Wolff drove for team Williams as a test driver between 2012 and 2015. However, she never made it as part of the racing team. In a blog post, Wolff commented on her retirement and being a woman in F1:

> Do I think F1 is ready for a competitive female racing driver that can perform at the highest level? Yes. Do I think it is achievable as a woman? Most definitely. Do I think it will happen soon? Sadly no. We have two issues, not enough young girls starting in karting at a young age and no clear role model. Sometimes you just have to see it to believe it. (Wolff, 2015)

Above, Wolff highlights a cyclical problem which dominates conversation surrounding women's sports: because there are not enough young girls karting and taking it all the way to professional driving in F1, there are no role models, and because there are no role models there is little inspiration for young girls to continue the karting, and so *ad infinitum*. It was recently found in a study on NASCAR racing that specifically the fathers of female drivers are considered the patriarchs and powerful political actors within the sport (Kochanek et al., 2020, p. 5). Kochanek et al. found that women drivers typically gained entry into the sport via their fathers (2020, p. 5). Though some women drivers had access to the sport via female family members, women drivers often

placed greater emphasis on their fathers as enabling their entry, evidencing the influence of gatekeeping in automotive racing.

Cycles can nevertheless be broken, and this may be demonstrated by the up-and-coming, women's only, single-seater car racing championship known as W Series. Before I set out to examine W Series and its ethical implications for women in sport, I will begin a chronological, cultural analysis of women's participation in F1 and how the demand for representation has grown to what it is today. I will build on Pflugfelder's theorisation (2009) of the gendered body in motorsport; however, unlike Pflugfelder, I will argue that the sexed or gendered body is accounted for in both the physical conditions of motorsport and the discourse of the sport. It is arguable that there are significant barriers in F1 racing that prevent women drivers from securing a professional driving position and racing on equal terms with men.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss five barriers – historical and current attitudes, assumed physical/mental inferiority, sexualisation, money, and representation/(in)visibility – which I believe to be preventing women from participating in F1. I will not aim to provide an immediate solution to increasing women's involvement in F1, nor do I believe that this list of barriers is exhaustive, but I am hopeful that the initiation of this discussion in a philosophical context will lead to further analyses. After I have outlined the five barriers, I will discuss the introduction of W Series and critically discuss the advantages and disadvantages that it poses. I will argue that W Series provides women drivers with both equity[3] by providing women with a feeder league to advance into F1, and equality[4] as everyone is given the same car and are not given their positions on a pay-to-race basis. I will conclude that although the series is problematic for those who champion the benefits of unisex sports, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages, and this brings hope to a new era of women's car racing.

1.1 - Attitudes – Historical and Current

The first barrier I will discuss is historical and current attitudes. Automotive racing has long been associated with speed, danger, competitiveness, physicality, technical skills, mechanical know-how and getting dirty. These associations have historically been

[3] I understand equity to be where someone is given the opportunity and tools to succeed.
[4] I understand equality to be where everyone is treated as equals.

considered to be indicative of a masculine domain (Shackleford, 1999, p. 180). Previously, a woman driver was considered a 'political statement', contradicting social norms and hegemonic masculinity (Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 421). Women's exclusion from physical and typically masculine pursuits is not a novel discussion (Lenskyj, 1992b; McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 164-165; Theberge, 1989; Weaving & Roberts, 2012, p. 476). However, there is evidence that women are becoming increasingly more involved in sports that demand that they are dirtied and injured to a similar level as men, one example being women's rugby, which has seen significant growth in participation and now boasts over 2.4 million registered female players worldwide (World Rugby, 2018).

A sport which may present a greater parallel to motorsports is equestrianism, which is also considered unisex particularly due to the neutralising effect of the horse – in essence, the sex or gender of the jockey does not matter, rather it is their riding skills, horse handling abilities and the horse's capabilities. Currently, equestrianism is the only unisex sport in the summer Olympic programme. Horse racing, like F1 to automotive racing, is viewed as the fastest and most furious side of equestrianism. Historically, horse racing has been considered a highly masculine arena by scholars (Bossak-Herbst & Głowacka-Grajper, 2021; Butler, 2013a, 2013b; Butler & Charles, 2012; Hedenborg, 2007), and the recent verdict that female jockey Bryony Frost was bullied by fellow male jockey Robbie Dunne adds to the evidence that some attitudes towards women in horse racing remain unchanged (Armytage, 2021). Though it is evident that gender equality in horse racing requires further efforts in de-masculinising the sport, it has achieved certain milestones ahead of F1 (if these milestones can be at all compared) such as Khadijah Mellah becoming the first British Muslim woman to win a competitive horse race[5] in 2019 (Keogh, 2021) and Rachael Blackmore becoming the first female to win the Grand National in 2021 (Hannigan & Clerkin, 2021). F1 is yet to see women racing in the championship, let alone winning any of its races, and this is partially down to historical attitudes towards women in sport and automotive racing.

Historical attitudes which excluded and prohibited female athletes from sport are not only based on 'medical misinformation' of the female body (Lenskyj, 1992b, p. 145) but are strongly tied to the act of 'gatekeeping', and F1 - like most other sports

[5] Mellah won The Magnolia Cup at Goodwood, a prestigious charity race for amateur women jockeys.

which were made 'by and for' men (Dworkin & Messner, 2002, p. 17) - is historically rooted in such practices. Motorsports in Britain were originally organised by 'elitist' and 'exclusive' gentlemen's clubs 'who worked to limit women's participation' (Matthews & Pike, 2016, p. 1535), and is likely related to the dominance of men in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Nonetheless, F1 has never officially prohibited female drivers from competing, with the first female F1 driver, Maria Teresa de Filippis, competing at the Belgian Grand Prix in 1958. F1 is therefore classified as a unisex sport (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile [online], 2013). There is a distinct lack of research into the intersection of sex, gender, and F1 racing. However, there has been some important work by Kochanek et al. (2020) focussing on gender in NASCAR. Although the foundations of F1 and NASCAR differ greatly[6], they are both hugely popular, male-dominated motorsports where male gatekeeping remains prevalent.

The suggestion that F1 was created for men and by men (Dworkin & Messner, 2002, p. 17) is still relevant today, as there are no women drivers in the 2021 series. This shows that although some attitudes towards women drivers have relaxed, nonsensical beliefs remain and cause problematic attitudes today (a recent example being former F1 driver David Coulthard claiming that women aren't capable of winning F1 due to the 'mothering gene') (Houston, 2017; NESN, 2017). It has been argued that women in F1 and other motorsports are 'often highly hetero-sexualized'[7] and continue to negotiate their dual identities as women and athletes (Matthews & Pike, 2016, p. 1545) – I will expand upon this later in section 1.3. Pflugfelder writes that women's inferiority in motorsport is not manifested in the physical conditions of the sport: rather it is the 'discourse' of the sport (2009, p. 412). Attitudes towards female athletes in general (Burrow 2020; Davis & Edwards, 2021; Howe, 2020), including female race car drivers, continue to reinforce the notion that males are the natural

[6] Interestingly, and in stark contrast with F1, NASCAR is considered a pastime of the working classes (Kusz, 2007; Lee et al., 2010). Therefore, the common denominator to the gatekeeping in F1 may not necessarily be classism as Matthews and Pike imply (2016), but the preservation of traditional constructions surrounding Western gender roles.

[7] This claim may however be contested, as part of the foundation of Matthews and Pike's claim (2016) is that 'grid girls' are still prevalent, but since the publication F1 no longer uses grid girls (BBC Sport, 2018).

athletes who are more deserving of respect and recognition. There have been multiple comments made by high-profile figures in F1 about female drivers. The late British F1 driver Stirling Moss stated that the mental stress 'would be pretty difficult for a lady to deal with…I just don't think they have aptitude to win a Formula One race' (Barretto, 2013). Echoing a similar sentiment, former F1 Group chief executive Bernie Ecclestone commented on driver Wolff that 'If [Susie's] as quick in a car as she looks good out of a car, she'll be a huge asset' (Barretto, 2012), later stating in 2016 'If there was somebody [female] that was capable, they wouldn't be taken seriously anyway, so they would never have a car that is capable of competing' (de Menezes, 2016).

There is also evidence that attitudes are beginning to change. Red Bull team principal, Christian Horner, recently stated that it is 'only a matter of time' until there are female F1 drivers, but currently 'there isn't one that could cut it at the front' (Galloway, 2014). It is apparent that attitudes of those directly involved in the industry are beginning to shift. Yet, they are hampered by persisting historical attitudes and reliance on women to 'do better' (Kochanek et al., 2020, p. 8) so that they can 'cut it at the front' and play with the boys in spite of the discrimination they face. What ties together the attitudes expressed above is assumed physical/mental inferiority and sexualisation.

1.2 - Assumed Physical/Mental Inferiority

The second barrier women in F1 racing may experience is assumed physical or mental inferiority. Research found that women race car drivers were not taken seriously due to prevailing gender stereotypes of women's physical inferiority (Kochanek et al., 2020, p. 5). 'Competitiveness' is regularly attributed as an innate male characteristic (Kavoura et al., 2018, p. 28), and educators and sportspersons alike have previously associated female physical differences to cause intellectual or mental inferiority (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 33). Open-wheel car racing (which includes F1) is both physically and mentally demanding. Firstly, the drivers must have sufficient strength to handle the G-forces experienced when accelerating, braking and cornering. Secondly, drivers need a high level of fitness to cope with temperatures in the car and to retain postural stability for hours. Finally, drivers need to be mentally resilient, quick to react and well-coordinated, aware of spatial location and focused. Raschner et al. claim that 'the physical demand on the drivers is comparable to that placed on other

elite athletes' (2013, pp. 58-59), however their claim does not specify whether the 'other' elite athletes are male or female. Furthermore, Raschner et al.'s study (2013) did not clarify the sex of their sampled athletes[8]. Irrespective of whether Raschner et al. sampled female open-wheel race car drivers, it is reasonable to argue that these physical and mental demands are neither male- nor female-specific qualities.

It is plausible that male drivers may have the upper hand in race cars as they have the potential to be physically stronger. Nonetheless, it is unsatisfactory to claim that it is physical differences alone that prevent female drivers from successful entry into F1, especially when two major components of automotive racing – mental agility and the car – are often not reliant upon one's physical differences, especially in an era where technology has allowed smoother, less physical driving techniques. Additionally, motorsport requires a particular type of strength to handle G-forces, requiring specific training to build the muscles required. Thus, it is possible that strength differences in race car handling between males and females are minimal if both are exposed to karting when young. Like their male counterparts, female race car drivers begin karting at a young age (the main pathway into F1 racing), advancing their driving skills much earlier than most. Automotive racing, if it is taken up at a young age, may have the ability to narrow the 'muscle gap', especially if sport is considered as a continuum which does not necessitate a polarised binary but an overlap, as Kane theorises (1995). Alternatively, this may suggest that if drivers are to enter F1 they have to be stronger and more resistant to G-forces on average. Assuming that sex and gender[9] are two distinct categories (i.e. male and female, man and woman), there is too much focus on the differences between the two rather than the possible similarities and the 'range of performance differences among individual females and males' (Kane, 1995, p. 198).

Addressing the claim that women do not have the mental aptitude to drive F1 cars, it is plausible that women drive differently in comparison to men in F1. Statistically, men have more exposure to driving. Women are less likely to hold a

[8] There is some indication that the sampled athletes were male, for they state that 'All of the Formula One drivers, except one, had at least one top-three result in the Formula One championship prior to testing; two of them had won a Formula One Grand Prix' and at present there are no female F1 race drivers (Raschner et al., 2013, p. 59).

[9] I am concerned with both sex and gender in this section, and although the categorisation is 'unisex' in F1, W Series also uses the terms 'woman' and 'female' interchangeably (W Series, 2021).

driver's licence and generally have a lower annual mileage (Massie et al., 1995, p. 78; Li et al., 1998, p. 383; Santamarina-Rubio et al., 2014, p. 6; Regev et al., 2018, p. 132). This may lead to the conclusion that women are less exposed to driving in comparison to men, and therefore may be stereotyped as more conservative drivers. Although this research may give us some important insights into why women are seen as inferior drivers, I do not think it is relevant data for our discussion of female F1 drivers. Nonetheless, this research provides insights to the barriers which women face as drivers in a wider social setting.

In terms of sex-based differences, research shows that males react quicker in spatial choice reaction time tasks (Adam et al., 1999, p. 333). However, in terms of visual reaction time, there is evidence that the gap between males and females has shortened (Silverman, p. 2006). The decrease in sex-based differences for visual reaction times shows that there is some biological development in females, and females may eventually be quicker to react than males (Silverman, 2006, p. 63). Research shows that the different visual reaction times are not only biological, but due to life experiences (Silverman, 2006, p. 64). Considering that women have faced 'neglect, stigmatization and hostility' when engaged in masculine sports (Kane, 1995, p. 201), it is not an unreasonable assumption that some women drive differently or have less experience because they have been denied opportunities which men may have been granted. It is certainly plausible that when boys and girls become involved in karting, they are equally exposed to experiences requiring quick reaction times, and this would indicate that differences are both biological and experiential. Recently, research conducted by Spartan Motorsport Performance Lab and Human Energy Research Lab at Michigan State University discovered that there were no differences in physiological responses to automobile racing between male and female drivers (Ferguson et al., 2019). Although the sample was on licensed IndyCar drivers and licensed Sports Car Club of America Pro drivers, this research indicates that female drivers in F1 may not have different responses to male drivers, thus debunking the myth that females are biologically disadvantaged in comparison.

What is peculiar about these assumptions is that F1 racing is arguably not a male-apposite sport. It is suggested that some sports can be divided into 'male sports' and 'female sports', where male sports are advantaged by strength, explosive power, aggression, face-to-face opposition and speed and female sports favour coordination, grace, expressivity, aesthetics, flexibility, and balance (Gentile et al., 2018, p. 96;

Martínková, 2020b, p. 249). Inevitably F1 requires some physical involvement and a great deal of mental aptitude, but the use of a car potentially reduces any sexed differences by introducing a neutralised piece of sports equipment. It could be further argued that the physical differences which are caused by one's sex could be catered for in F1 cars, eliminating claims of physical inferiority – after all, teams already modify the seat position, steering wheel height and controls, pedals and more depending on regulations (Scarborough, 2021), and it would not be too far a stretch to tailor a car to cater for the female body if it had any discovered effect on her driving. Contrary to the assumptions, it would appear that sex has little impact on F1 drivers' skills, and women's exclusion is due to constructed gender norms which have prevented them from reaping the benefits of the sports 'continuum' and gaining equal competitive opportunities in F1 (Kane, 1995).

1.3 – Sexualisation

Sexualisation is also a major barrier which women must overcome and endure in order to become race car drivers. Up until 2018 'grid girls' were used in F1 (BBC Sport, 2018). Other sports, such as darts and cycling, have also abandoned the use of women for promotional activities, whilst 'ring girls' still feature in boxing and UFC[10] . In a statement to the media, F1's managing director of commercial operations stated that the use of grid girls 'does not resonate with our brand values and clearly is at odds with modern day societal norms' (BBC Sport, 2018). The use of grid girls solidifies women's place in F1 as objects rather than agents, creating a divide between those who 'do' sport (the men) and those who 'observe' sport (women)[11]. I suggest that this divide is a strong example of Beauvoirian 'Otherness', whereby the man posits himself as the 'essential' and the woman as the 'inessential' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 6) – after all, without the drivers, there would be no F1 racing, but without the grid girls the racing continues as normal.

It has been strongly argued that self-sexualisation is essential for women drivers who want to enter the world of motorsports as 'mainstream discourse designates athleticism and femininity as incompatible' (Kochanek et al., 2020, p. 6). It is also

[10] Ultimate Fighting Championship.

[11] Here we may see Mulvey's theorisation of the 'woman as image, man as bearer of the look' becoming particularly relevant (1999, p. 837).

suggested that self-sexualisation is required to attract prospective sponsors (Wanneberg, 2011, p. 276). Consequently, women athletes are caught in a 'balancing act' between presenting themselves as authentically feminine, heterosexually appealing women yet also serious race car drivers (Krane, 2001, p. 122). Kochanek et al. noted how one of their research participants was advised not to have the colour pink on her car so that she would be taken more seriously (2020, p. 5). Problematically, when women present themselves as feminine athletes, they also open themselves up to 'disenfranchisement' as they may be seen first and foremost as sexual objects, leading to their athletic careers being 'trivialised' (Krane, 2001, p. 122).

Danica Patrick is often cited as one of the most successful female race car drivers in recent history (Goulding, 2021; Matthews & Pike, 2016, p. 1545; Norris, 2021; Taranto, 2021). She has also been referred to as a 'the most hypersexualized female athlete of the current era' (Fink, 2012, p. 51). Patrick has expressed contradictory views on her alleged 'sex symbol' status, expressing in 2012 that the label is inaccurate, but in the same interview she admitted that in commercials she enjoys being more feminine allows her to be a 'balanced person' (McKay, 2015). She later stated in a documentary 'I feel awesome about being a sex symbol...The exposure that was generated because of being female and using my attributes – it works' (Janes, 2017). Though her achievements are not to be dismissed, it should be acknowledged that Patrick is considered one of the best female drivers, as well as one of the most hypersexualised, yet has only won one race throughout her 20-year professional career. Despite the sporting firsts she made on behalf of women in motorsport, it may be speculated that her success is partially due to her marketability and appeal to a heteronormative audience. Motorsport (and in this particular situation, NASCAR and IndyCar) arguably tokenizes women race car drivers, thus undermining their credibility as drivers (Kochanek et al., 2020, pp. 6-9). Women in F1 are therefore likely to face a harsh dilemma: either they sexualise themselves to gain the monetary support required and have their careers trivialised, or they risk marginalisation by avoiding heteronormative conformity.

1.4 – Money

F1 racing is a costly sport, with team Toro Rosso recently disclosing their operating costs of $181.1 million (Sylt, 2020). They also disclosed that they received $29.5

million in sponsorship (Sylt, 2020). The financial cost of the sport has always been a factor that determines whether someone can drive, regardless of their gender, especially as F1 allows for pay drivers who are not paid by the car owner/team but by personal sponsorship and funding. Furthermore, F1 teams must also pay a basic entry fee of $569,308, which needs to be submitted when they lodge their application and will pay a larger fee if they are a higher-ranked team (Noble, 2020). It is strongly arguable that women face extra hurdles when trying to meet the financial demands of the sport. The cost of motorsport remains problematic for women today, with up-and-coming racing driver Jamie Chadwick commenting that money 'is the biggest barrier for pretty much all young drivers, and specifically the many girls coming through' (Nicholson, 2020). ESPN reported in 2019 that 'a seat on [this year's] Formula 3 grid costs between 650,000 and 750,000 euros' and Formula 2 'costs between 1.6 million and 1.8 million euros' (Saunders, 2019). In an interview in 1987, racing driver Janet Guthrie vocalised two important points about sponsorship which I shall explore further: firstly, men are getting sponsorship and women are not, and secondly, women race car drivers could be highly marketable (Dodds, 1987).

As evidenced by the Toro Rosso disclosure, sponsorship is essential in motorsport, especially if a driver is not signed by a corporate funded team. Sponsorship not only allows drivers to race, but arguably shapes the public perception of the driver (Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 419). Guthrie highlights that sponsorship in motorsport advertised products which were 'used by both men and women', implying that sponsors target men and women alike. However, what must also be taken into consideration is the changing attitudes since Guthrie's claims in 1987. At the time of the interview it is likely that the target audience was mainly men, however it is evident that the times have changed as it is reported that up to 40% of viewership are women (Baldwin, 2015). Considering the (slowly) changing attitudes in motorsport, it is possible that the lack of women being sponsored is not due to the 'ol' boy network' as Guthrie believed, but because a woman is yet to prove herself as a safe investment for sponsors in F1. Once again, the cyclical problem of women's exclusion from motorsport reappears.

Despite this, it is arguable that women race car drivers may provide safe and profitable marketing opportunities. In 2013 it was reported that Danica Patrick boosted TV viewings of the Daytona 500 by 24% (ESPN.com, 2013). Hesitant sponsors may benefit from looking to sports which have previously been considered 'men's games' and are now flourishing as women enter the domain. A strong example is women's

football. A recent survey reported that 'viewership could increase by 300%-350%' in women's football if the game was made easily accessible on television (Chaudhary, 2021). Recently, in the UK, the Women's Super League completed a £8m-per-season deal with major broadcasters (Wrack, 2021). Though football is nowhere near as costly as F1, it does provide multiple sponsorship opportunities. Whether women's football has benefitted from sponsorship and then flourished or vice versa is unclear, however. What is clear is that investment can lead to further sponsorship if an athlete or team is successful. It may thus be concluded that women are marketable, but evidence of strong performances to secure investment are required.

To demonstrate marketability, it may be suggested that an affirmative action or equity approach is required, however this causes concern surrounding athlete credibility. Matthews and Pike found that their participants believed 'a woman participating in the 'pinnacle' of motor-racing, F1, would help challenge societal assumptions regarding women motor-racing drivers' (2016, p. 1546). If a team were required to have a woman on their team, she could inspire the next generation of women race car drivers and increasing viewership, breaking the never-ending cycle of women's representation and (in)visibility. Nonetheless, this could lead to unfavourable circumstances, such as a woman race car drivers' ability being undermined on the basis that she has won a contract based on merit and is instead a 'token' driver. Ferrari was the most recent team to face this specific accusation, after their announcement of their intentions to support a woman driver in their academy was criticised as a marketing stunt (Cooper, 2020; Mitchell, 2019). Being a 'token' driver also comes with additional pressures according to Kochanek et al., who noted that women drivers struggle with sponsors and 'limited conceptions…of what she could accomplish' as they were marketed as the next Danica Patrick (2020, p. 6). Though action is certainly required to break down the barriers women race car drivers in F1 face, the problem should be addressed in a more gender-blind way to avoid tokenism and for attitudes to combat negative stereotypes.

The rejection of affirmative action may be met with the rebuttal that negative stereotypes may be reinforced if women are not given opportunities within high-performing teams; thus, if they perform poorly in a slower car, it is not attributed to the car itself but the woman driving it. This opens women race car drivers to the possibility of stereotype threat, which occurs when 'an individual is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about him- or herself' or a group they represent (Gentile et al.,

2018, p. 95). If a sport is considered a typically masculine domain, the effect of stereotype threat is more likely to impact women participating in that sport, particularly surrounding their physical abilities (Gentile et al., 2018, pp. 99-100). If women are not given the same opportunities as men in F1, and consequently fail to gain enough sponsorship and/or are not signed by a higher-profile, more lucrative racing team, the belief that women are inferior drivers remains, and will only be broken once a woman race car driver performs well. This could provide a strong explanation as to why women in F1 have had fleeting careers on the racetrack. Nonetheless, women need to earn the respect of their competitors, signalling the need for larger F1 teams to take responsibility for nurturing girls and women from grassroots levels by widening the talent pool via investment whilst also sticking to gender-blind and high standards in driver selection.

1.5 - Representation and (In)visibility

The visibility of women in sport, though improving, is yet to be on par with men (Women in Sport et al., 2018). Participation levels of women are fewer in number compared to men at elite level sports (International Olympic Committee, 2018). There are also very few women (and men[12]) of colour involved in automotive racing, with exceptions including Shauntia 'Tia' Norfleet, the first African-American woman to hold a NASCAR licence and the first black woman licensed by the Automobile Racing Club of America (Automobile Driving Museum, 2021), Rwandan-Belgian W Series driver Naomi Schiff and Arab-American professional stock car racing driver, Toni Breidinger. Low participation numbers could also be linked to cultural norms surrounding women driving. In a drive to boost participation numbers it is suggested that there needs to be more visible 'physically active and successful female role models' (Staurowsky et al., 2020, p. 66). However, this is hard to achieve when the participation levels of girls and women are low. The common phrase which is used today by those lobbying a higher representation of women in sport is that the younger generation need to 'see it' to 'be it' (Meier, 2015; Wolff, 2015; World Para Ice Hockey,

[12] Lewis Hamilton is F1's only black driver in the championship's 70-year history. He is also one of the most successful F1 drivers of all time, equalling Michael Schumacher's seven world titles (ESPN.com, 2021).

2021). In this fifth section, I will discuss how representation at the top level of motorsport is a critical barrier for aspiring race car drivers.

A 50:50 ratio of men to women is often considered the perfect ratio of gender representation in a heteronormative society, resulting in multiple protocols to try and balance representation in institutions such as higher education and business. There is evidence that sporting institutions are also chasing the 50:50 ratio, with the 2021 Summer Olympics priding itself on being the 'first ever gender-balanced Olympic Games in history', due to women making up 49% of participants (International Olympic Committee, 2021f). Nonetheless, aiming for such a balance is often a result of the desired 'role model effect', where it is intended that 'the presence of successful women at the top of a profession will inspire others' in a trickle-down effect and aid the combat of harmful stereotypes (Finlayson, 2018, p. 780). Despite positive intentions, equal numerical representation 'neither constitutes nor indicates equality or justice for women', as it does not give us a metric to understand attitudes towards women – a crucial factor in fighting gender inequality (Finlayson, 2018, p. 781). This viewpoint becomes even more salient when the careers of Guthrie and de Filippis are highlighted, who despite their efforts as role models did not cause a flurry of women to follow in their footsteps on equal terms with men. Striving for equal representation opens women up to the problem of tokenism, which could possibly be more detrimental for women's efforts in motorsport as it can fuel the attitude that women continue to be inferior drivers for their entry into the sport is not merit-based.

What is also problematic when numerical representation is prioritised is that people look to the top of the sport, rather than at each and every layer. The 'role model effect' requires us to examine who is the most influential, which turns us to those who have global platforms. In the case of single-seater driving races, F1 is considered the most prestigious and the most visible. As established above, it is the top of the leagues and institutions where women are the least visible, and so it makes sense to tackle the lack of representation here rather than lower down where women may have higher representation. Nonetheless, this leaves us with an 'unattractively elitist' feminist approach (Finlayson, 2018, p. 779). The lack of women race car drivers is a cause for concern not only in F1, but also in the feeder leagues[13]. Karting cannot be discounted

[13] Though W Series aims to serve as a protected category and a feeder league, it is too early to discuss the accessibility of leagues which feed F1. For women to be 'fed' into F1 it is necessary for there to be a generation of drivers to determine how a feeder league systematises. Once W Series has completed more

either, as this is often where most race car drivers start. Some women drivers in NASCAR acknowledge the need to view the bigger picture: 'It's a funnel...the top of the sport is going to depend on how many we can get down the bottom' (Kochanek et al., 2020, p. 10). Evidently, numerical representation is not the only thing that should be focussed on.

Instead, the attention should turn to qualitative representation. Though it has been found that the representation of women role models can boost those in need of inspiration (Saul, 2013, p. 52), it is clear that there needs to be an emphasis on the quality of the women in positions of influence, rather than the quantity. In this context, I take 'quality' to be understood as strong and empowered athletes – those who can drive just as fast as (or better than) Sebastian Vettel and as skilfully as Sergio Perez. To be taken seriously and overcome the stereotype of the inferior driver, women need to demonstrate on the world stage that they too can take the wheel competitively. However, this is highly dependent on change within the institution of F1. Calling on women race car drivers to take matters into their own hands and challenge the norms can be detrimental, for it implies that women need to 'do better' in a sport which is riddled with barriers beyond their control (Kochanek et al., 2020, p. 10). The eventual goal of qualitative representation is to create positive quantitative representation, where women take up some of the seats on the grid and consequently dispel claims of tokenism, blending in with their male co-drivers in a public exhibition of their driving abilities and ending the 'Danica effect'. In light of this, the focus should be directed towards W Series in the search for achieving qualitative representation and better visibility.

1.6 - W Series: The Answer We Have Been Searching For?

W Series is a new racing format which launched in 2018 exclusively for women. Unlike F1, W Series drivers race in mechanically identical cars, levelling the playing field and preventing 'those with the wealthiest backers' from dominating pole position (W Series, 2021). The aim of W Series is to involve more women in motorsport and break the 'see it' to 'be it' cycle via 'positive intervention', elevating the profiles of women race car drivers and inspiring girls at grassroot level (W Series, 2021). The

seasons and their karting initiatives have gained momentum, women's access to F1 should be analysed in depth.

championship was broadcast live on television in 2019 in '340 million households across more than 100 different countries' (Tomas, 2021). The W Series chief executive disclosed that broadcasting the 2021 championship on 'live free-to-air' television was highly beneficial in boosting the visibility of the athletes and inspiring viewers (Tomas, 2021). The championship also has multiple high-profile supporters and has demonstrated that it is a potential springboard for women to compete in F1[14]. Most importantly, the championship presents an opportunity for women to demonstrate driving skills in a non-tokenistic manner, providing empirical evidence of women's driving abilities, dispelling myths and current attitudes surrounding their inferiority. Furthermore, the championship is not based on a pay-to-race premise, selecting its drivers on their ability, overcoming the serious issues surrounding money which women race drivers face (W Series, 2021).

Despite this, W Series presents us with some ethical problems. The first problem is that the creation of an exclusively women's championship which is run separately to F1 may lead to W Series drivers being perceived as 'Others'. Briefly revisiting the Beauvoirian theory of Subject/Absolute, women experience 'Otherness' when their being is considered a subordinate of man (in this case, F1 may be seen as the original and 'Absolute'). By separating women from men to the extent that they have their own championships, cars and formats, they are granted a status of 'separate but equal' – as Beauvoir writes 'it is exactly that formula that the Jim Crow laws put into practice with regard to black Americans; this so-called egalitarian segregation served only to introduce the most extreme forms of discrimination' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 12). Those critical of W Series may further argue that the championship is less prestigious too: compared to F1 it is likely that there will be less money for the winners, less big-brand sponsorship, less media attention and so on. This may be emphasised by the hope that the championship will springboard women into F1, as this assumes that F1 is a step-up, rather than a level competition with W Series[15].

Moreover, the separation of women from men in single-seater car racing presents us with issues surrounding the lived female body. According to Pflugfelder, the physical conditions of motorsport do not account for the gendered body – instead,

[14] The 2019 W Series champion, Jamie Chadwick, currently holds a position in the Team Williams F1 driving academy.

[15] This categorisation of sports is discussed in greater detail by Martínková, who explores the advantages and disadvantages of 'closed protected' group categorisations and 'open' categorisations (2020a, pp. 467-468).

the gendered body is created via the discourse of the sport (2009, pp. 411-412). It is hypothesised that women's bodies in motorsport are seen in three different ways:

> *beyond vehicles* (navigating the space filled with other bodies and their respective vehicles), *with vehicles* (coordinating with the technology of the vehicle), and *inside vehicles* (operating in the space of the technology, interacting with the technology, but situated by their gender's discursively constructed characteristics) (Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 412 [emphasis added]).

Due to the car in F1 acting as a neutralising piece of equipment, as well as the rule that women can theoretically compete alongside men 'in the same locations, on the same tracks, and with the same technologies', the female body is arguably not viewed as gendered when she races as a body inside the car, rather her assumed inferiority is shaped through unchanging attitudes and lenses such as the media when she is outside of the car (Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 411). The issue of gender 'falls away when drivers become a driver-car assemblage', and she is identified not as a woman, but as a driver (Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 421). However this leads women in motorsport to experience a conflicting 'crux', where they are understood as genderless when racing, yet instantly feminine when entering or exiting the car (Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 422). This potentially causes them to 'experience their bodies as something outside themselves'(Aalten, 2004, p. 269).

If the unisex element of the sport is removed by creating a 'women's only' championship, thus leaving F1 as a championship where a unisex, merit-based athlete pool is only theoretical and not reality, W Series genders the female body within and beyond the vehicle and reinforces a problematic binary that can lead to 'discrimination, intimidation and prejudice against athletes' (Martínková, 2020b, p. 249). Consequently, the creation of W Series could feed into the sexist discourse of motorsport, allowing the continuation of harmful stereotypes that women are inferior drivers who require a separate competition due to their inability to permanently enter the world of F1.

1.7 - Summary – Formula 1 is Insufficiently Unisex

Though W Series is disadvantaged by its segregating nature, the advantages that it offers to women in motorsport are not to be dismissed. This thesis section has identified five barriers that prevent women from securing a seat and from racing on equal terms

with men in F1, and W Series aims to challenge each barrier in this new racing format by providing both equity and equality. A merit-based, equally financed championship for women, which is broadcast on live, national television, gives women the opportunity to address detrimental stereotypes without concerns surrounding sponsorship and money. It is a platform that boosts representation and will greatly increase the visibility of women in motorsport, breaking the cycle that plagues the sport. Though the championship may fall victim to claims of 'Otherness' and being 'just a women's race', the series has the potential to springboard women into F1 by providing an equitable platform. As long as women can break the glass ceiling and compete alongside men, W Series will have fulfilled its purpose and eventually achieve equality. It would no longer matter if W Series were seen as a less prestigious version of F1, for if it becomes a pathway for drivers to gain a seat on the F1 grid, it will become a 'feeder' league. If W Series achieves a 'feeder' league status, sex and gender would not be important factors, and women would indeed experience genderless 'driver-car' identities so that the benefits of unisex sports could be reaped more effectively. Of course, this is dependent on the institutions of W Series and F1 working harmoniously.

At present, the situation for women in F1 appears to be bleaker than in other sports that are making progress in their quest for gender equality. Despite this, in identifying some major barriers preventing progress, academics and non-academics alike are able to begin to directly address the question of how to reduce the negative stereotypes faced by women. Further progress will require more research on women in motorsport, which has hitherto received little attention. There are currently several women climbing the ranks in other automotive leagues such as, but not limited to, NASCAR, IndyCar, and British Touring Cars Championships, and these women could provide further and more up-to-date evidence from sports science research as to how women may or may not differ in comparison to male drivers in a biological context. Further sociological research into the effects of W Series and female-oriented initiatives such as FIA's *Girls on Track* programme and Susie Wolff's *Dare to Be Different* programme could also be fruitful in determining how to progress with combatting harmful stereotypes in motorsport. I am hopeful that F1 can be an exemplary model of unisex sport in the future, using W Series as a positive influence in its social advancement.

Though insights from sociological, historical and philosophical research on areas of motorsport such as NASCAR and IndyCar have been particularly useful in this analysis, at times they were not wholly applicable to F1 due to contrasting cultural roots and embodied values tied to the specific automotive disciplines. Once research is better focussed, issues surrounding gender in F1 can be more accurately addressed. In setting the scene, this first part of the thesis has shown two things: firstly, in a narrower context, the system of F1 within which women are racing has shown itself to be insufficient in its efforts to be a truly unisex sport. Secondly, in a broader context, serious inequalities still exist for women in sport. What may be drawn from this conclusion is that women in sport are oppressed. What is specifically meant by this term 'oppressed', however, requires further analysis, and this will be done in Part 2.

PART 2 – ON OPPRESSION

In her introductory chapter of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir suggests that, throughout history, women have always been considered the inferior sex (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 8). Either through ignorance of cultures beyond Western Europe or perhaps because such anthropological explorations were yet to be conducted and communicated, it is now known that Beauvoir's claim is factually incorrect. Women have not always been considered the inferior sex; myths surrounding female warriors such as the Amazonians continue to be circulated, and possibly even evidenced by recent archaeological discoveries (Donakson Russian Science Communication Association, 2019; Hawkins, 2020). Anthropologists have written on the existence of matriarchal societies, such as the Khasi of North Eastern India and the Mosuo of Southwestern China (Goettner-Abendroth, 2018), contradicting claims that such societies are no longer present (Bamberger, 1974). Nonetheless, it is clear that these societies are of an extreme minority, and are 'seriously threatened' by mainstream patriarchal cultures (Goettner-Abendroth, 2018, p. 21). Taking this into account, it can be suggested that women in a universal context do not share the same experiences regarding oppression, but that many women are threatened by oppressive structures such as patriarchy.

With the above in mind, when reading Beauvoir's discussion on women as a subordinated group, it must be acknowledged that her understanding of woman is influenced by her personal experience of womanhood, resulting in 'an epistemological standpoint of ignorance' (Gines, 2014, p. 252). Beauvoir's position as a Western European, middle-class, educated white woman is often written in *The Second Sex* as representative of the entire gender. Aside from this, her musings of how and why women have come to be a subordinated group are important, and struck a chord with many geographically diverse readers who wanted to understand their existence and their femininity, ending their search and their solitude (Garcia, 2021, p. 108).

Beauvoir writes that women have been economically, socially and sexually subjugated on the basis of biological difference (2011). In the eyes of major (Western) historical academics such as Aristotle and Aquinas, females were seen as 'defective males' (Gondreau, 2021, p. 181), reducing females to a lesser status. As Beauvoir notes, 'the ruling caste bases its arguments on the state of affairs it created itself' (2011, p. 12). These misunderstandings have led to claims which continue to prevent females from participating in 'masculine' realms. For example, women in Western countries in 'skilled trade' occupations such as electro-technology, automotives, bricklaying,

carpentry, painting/decorating, welding and plumbing are low in number at around 1-3% (Bridges et al., 2020, p. 895). Arguably, this is caused by (and feeds into) multiple barriers, including the female body being perceived as weak and inferior, resulting in women who wish to enter the skilled trade occupation being 'resisted and excluded' (Bridges et al., 2020, p. 906). An important question that must be asked is this: if women were not always subordinated, how has it come to be that many women can be considered oppressed? Are they even oppressed? To find the answer to this question, an understanding of what constitutes oppression must be realised, asking 'whether this state of affairs must be perpetuated' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 13).

In the following section, I will explore how Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* lays out her causes and effects of women's oppression. *The Second Sex* – referred to as Beauvoir's 'magnum opus on women's oppression' (Hill Collins, 2017, p. 326) – was not originally written as a philosophical text but rather a literary discussion which served as a prelude to Beauvoir's autobiography. As a result of this, Beauvoir's arguments surrounding women's oppression is not as clear-cut and methodical as a philosophical text, and is woven into often longwinded prose. In order to extract how Beauvoir understood women's oppression, I propose a framework which categorises the causes and effects of oppression into four distinct themes, these being i) oppression is dichotomous, ii) women's oppression is perpetuated by falsehoods, iii) women's oppression results in economic and social inequalities and iv) women's oppression is internalised. Taking into account interpretations presented by Knowles (2019) and Melo Lopes (forthcoming), I will pay particular attention to the fourth theme on the basis that complicity is 'a commonplace feature of female existence' and their status as oppressed persons (Knowles, 2019, p. 243). Although this section may not be an exhaustive interpretation of Beauvoir's writings, my discussion of Beauvoir aims to present a clearer-cut perspective on how oppression may occur in a population which is not a minority yet continues to lack 'solidarity' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 8).

Over the past 74 years feminism has expanded to include multiple philosophies, and the result of this has shown that Beauvoir's understanding of women's oppression is no longer fully reflective of women's oppression today. In an attempt to update Beauvoir's understanding of women's oppression, academics ought to examine other scholarly inputs regarding how and what it means for women to be oppressed. There are several intersecting oppressions which have been widely addressed by scholars before me and whose work I wish to highlight before moving forward with my

discussion. Some key intersections of oppression in women's sports include, but are not limited to, homophobia (Anderson et al., 2016; Cahn, 1993; Cooky et al., 2010; Fink, 2012; Griffin, 1992, 1998; Krane, 2016; Mann & Krane, 2018; Stewart, 2018), racism (Banet-Weiser, 1999; Clarkson et al., 2022; Cooky et al., 2010; McDonald, 2009; Ratna, 2008; Withycombe, 2011), ableism (Cottingham et al., 2018; Gatt & Trussell, 2022; Lynch & Hill, 2021; Richard et al., 2023) and classism (Cooky et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2015; Gatt & Trussell, 2022; Lemmon, 2019; Little, 2014; McCrone, 1991), and the referenced research only scratches the surface of the vast scope of scholarship related to these topics. With these papers in mind, I will employ Iris Marion Young's paper *Five Faces of Oppression* (2014) in places where I believe Beauvoir's theory is lacking, modernising Beauvoir's discussion of oppression so that it is richer and more reflective of 21st century feminist philosophies.

2.1 - Women's Oppression is Dichotomous

At the very beginning of her work, Beauvoir writes that 'Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being' (2011, pp. 5-6). I understand this to be Beauvoir stating that women's oppression is constructed. The claim that 'man defines woman…in relation to himself' suggests that the male sex are the constructors and have constructed the belief that there is an Absolute, and rather than males and females being seen as different bodies with equal status, females have been designated with a status of incompleteness and inferiority. Beauvoir expresses a curiosity as to why women have accepted this order of events, suggesting that 'the tie that binds her to her oppressors…is a biological given' (2011, p. 9). Though it might seem that she is relying on a binary and essentialist understanding of the body, this input can be thrown into question with her later statement that 'the couple is a fundamental unit with two halves riveted to each other: cleavage of society by sex is not possible' and that woman 'is the Other at the heart of a whole whose components are necessary to each other' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 9). Here she is arguing that the division of the world on the basis of sex, and the following implication that there is a superior and an inferior sex, is incorrect.

Beauvoir later discusses the biological division of the sexes and how it has come to be understood as a division of inferiority rather than difference. Firstly, she claims that women have two essential traits as biological beings; 'her grasp on the

world is narrower than man's; and, she is more closely subjugated to the species' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 64). The grasp on the world which Beauvoir highlights is referring to woman's ability to communicate with the external world. Before civilised society, there was a great need to protect oneself and one's community, and this required strength. She writes: 'woman's physical weakness constituted a flagrant inferiority: if the instrument requires slightly more strength than the woman can muster, it is enough to make her seem radically powerless' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 64). However, Beauvoir highlights that in a post-industrialised society where survival no longer necessitates violence, who is stronger no longer matters for our existence, yet patriarchal societies remain structured as if it does.

Survival and human development consequently necessitated the 'devaluation of femininity' according to Beauvoir, yet for some reason 'collaboration between the two sexes' was rarely viewed as a legitimate approach to structuring society (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 772). The cause of women's subordination then, according to Beauvoir, is a matter of power and greed exercised by the male sex: 'One of the benefits that oppression secures for the oppressor is that the humblest among them feels superior' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 13). Notably, this is not specific to women's oppression – this dynamic has been exercised by many oppressing groups, for example, white races towards non-white races, colonisers towards the indigenous, heterosexuals towards queer persons. Oppressive power has multiple causes, however, it is often (but not always[16]) due to power by number, and so conformity within an oppressive regime is endured because the oppressed are simply outnumbered. Yet, as Beauvoir highlights, women are not a minority group (2011, p. 7). Therefore, there must be other factors which contribute to women's oppression.

In discussing Beauvoir's understanding of women's oppression, it may be concluded that Beauvoir believes that oppression is dichotomous in that there are two parties involved: the oppressed and the oppressor. To Beauvoir, in the case of women's oppression, the oppressor is the male sex. Due to Beauvoir's claim that women are dispersed among men (2011, p. 8), it is arguable that Beauvoir does not see women as a group with a common identity, so women can only be oppressed as individual agents. Advancing on this view, Beauvoir's understanding of oppression can be interpreted to

[16] A key example of a group being oppressed despite being a majority are the people within an authoritarian regime. Beauvoir recognised that this was already heavily theorised by Marx and Engels but did not believe they accounted for women's issues, thus she took matters into her own hands.

be not only dichotomous but also agential, whereby every act of oppression needs an individual agent to be on the receiving end.

It is not totally clear whether Young agrees with Beauvoir on this position, but I am inclined to argue that she does not. Early in her essay, Young claims that 'an oppressed group need not have a correlate oppressing group' because oppression is systemic, meaning that oppression is due to a system of multiple intersecting and overlapping forms of oppression (2014, p. 6). Young explains how oppression is more complex than the sovereign power model, where there is the ruler with the power and the subject who is ruled by them (2014, p. 6). Oppression, according to Young, is better characterised as a complex web which is 'not necessarily the result of the intentions of a tyrant', but is caused by 'the collective consequences' of persons unwilling to disrupt the status quo by blindly following institutional rules (2014, p. 5). Young argues that there are multiple ways in which oppression can occur, such as exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence, all of which interact in different ways and combinations (2014). Unlike Beauvoir, Young considers women of various backgrounds and the forms of oppression that they may or may not experience depending on their situation.

On the contrary, it is arguable that Young admits to oppression being dichotomous in certain circumstances. Although she is explicit in stating how oppressed groups need not have correlating oppressors, she also states that 'for every oppressed group there is a group that *is privileged* in relation to that group' (Young, 2014, p. 6). On the topic of groups being oppressed rather than individuals, Young suggests that a group 'exists only in relation to at least one other group' (2014, p. 7). This arguably makes Young's position more apparent, for she admits that some kinds of oppression are dichotomous, however, she is not ruling out the possibility of oppression being more than a dichotomy. This builds upon Beauvoir's idea of oppression, for it allows oppression to occur as a multiplicity. Some groups will only experience oppression from a single oppressing group, whilst others will experience multiple oppressions depending on their membership – a white, middle-class woman is far less likely to experience oppressions than a black, working-class woman because she does not experience racial or class oppression. The only oppression she is likely to experience is based on her gender. There are other factors to consider, such as a person's sexuality or religion, and Young highlights how oppression is a larger nexus than Beauvoir acknowledges in *The Second Sex*.

2.2 - Women's Oppression is Perpetuated Through Falsehoods

A possible second theme for women's oppression according to Beauvoir is that it is perpetuated by falsehoods; specifically, false information surrounding the female sex. Referring back to her statement that 'The tie that binds her to her oppressors is unlike any other. The division of the sexes is a biological given, not a moment in human history' it can be observed that Beauvoir is pointing towards a potential explanation to why women have come to be an oppressed group (2011, p. 9). It is possible that Beauvoir here suggests that because males and females are a 'fundamental unit' when it comes to procreation (2011, p. 9), their social and economic cooperation is misconstrued as a dependency.

Leading on from the above, the relationship between male and female has been misunderstood as an inequal division of labour, resulting in a relationship of a superior and an inferior. When a group is in the position of superiority they are able to profit from the subordination of the inferior. Such profits – higher salaries, greater political and economic influence, more autonomy – are enjoyable for those on the receiving ends of the benefits, and to change this state of affairs is portrayed as uncomfortable and threatening to them (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 13). To continue to profit from a group's subordination requires the assurance that the subordinates remain subordinated, and this can be done through false information. Women are told that they are weaker, more sensitive, and less suitable for particular roles in society, and Beauvoir exhibits the ways in which women's roles are constructed to reflect this in various chapters such as *Childhood, The Girl* and *The Married Woman*. They are also told they are best suited to care-taking roles but not ones of authority (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 455). Women are situated as the inferior in patriarchal societies, and because of this they *become* the inferior, resulting in social and economic inequalities (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 13).

Another form of falsehood which may reinforce women's oppression is false value. In Western society, 'masculine' values such as strength, independence, courage, leadership and assertiveness are often promoted as the ideal characteristics of a person. Problematically, says Beauvoir, 'woman herself aspires to and recognizes the values concretely attained by males' (2011, p. 77). Values such as empathy, patience, care and cooperativeness in Western societies are seen as secondary or even inferior values which are associated with the female sex. To be able to transcend in a masculinised

society is to adhere to and manifest the promoted values, yet if a person is to hold different values, their transcendence is considerably more difficult for 'it is the male who opens up the future toward which she transcends' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 77). Though this limitation on transcendence is based on an essentialist understanding of the sexes, whether there is truth in what Beauvoir is saying must be considered – if women are naturally more empathetic, patient, caring and cooperative, or are in fact taught that this is what they should value[17], their transcendence will be challenging, if not impossible. The structuring of a society is based on the belief that strength, independence, courage, leadership and assertiveness are the primary values, and the oppression of women is due to men writing what I call a false social code (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 91).

In what appears to build upon Beauvoir's theorisation, Young's essay highlights how the gender socialisation of women leads to their exploitation. Through essentialist understandings of gender, women can be exploited in two different ways, these being the 'transfer of the fruits of material [labour] to men and transfer of nurturing and sexual energies to men' (Young, 2014, p. 15). By reinforcing the false belief that women are more nurturing and more empathetic than men, women are commonly pushed into caretaking roles. These caretaking roles are not in themselves problematic – in every society there is a need for nurses, social workers, counsellors and more – the problem is that these roles are commonly lower in salary, leading to those who fulfil these roles being exploited for their emotional labour. To Young, the problem is not only gender essentialism, but the lack of value society gives to caretaking and emotional labour roles, leading to a lot of women's work going 'often unnoticed and unacknowledged, usually to benefit men by releasing them for more important and creative work', and a consequent inability to transcend in society (Young, 2014, p. 16).

2.3 - Women's Oppression Results in Social and Economic Inequality

Leading on from Young's perspective on exploitation, it is clear that Beauvoir believes women's oppression results in social and economic inequalities, stating that men and women are 'linked by a reciprocal economic need' which does not free the woman

[17] What the common characteristics, natures and values of women are is a highly contentious debate which goes beyond the scope of this thesis, and is best left in the hands of empiricists. Recent research in psychology, however, suggests that an empathetic nature can be caused by gender roles and stereotypical beliefs (Löffler & Greitemeyer, 2023).

(Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 9). Man's protection of a woman, Beauvoir writes, allows him to justify her existence and consequently forces her to be complicit in her own subjugation (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 13). According to Beauvoir, women struggle socially and economically without some form of male guardianship, creating a situation of dependence.

Beauvoir paints a particularly futile image for women in the introduction of *The Second Sex*, but it serves as a reminder of how far the feminist movement has come in achieving social and economic security for women since its publication in 1949. A claim made by Beauvoir which remains of interest is that women are yet to have the same legal status as men (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 9). A recent report by the World Bank examined laws surrounding mobility, the workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets and pensions and found that 12 economies in the world - Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden – achieved a score of 100, meaning that they give men and women 'equal legal standing', which I understand to mean that both men and women are protected to the same extent by the law (World Bank, 2022, p. 14). This figure is promising but highlights that many countries such as the UK (97.5), Germany (97.5), Italy (97.5), the Netherlands (97.5) and the Czech Republic (93.8) still do not give men and women equal legal standing.

Furthermore, though a country may give men and women equal legal standing, this is not necessarily the case in reality. A strong example of this is the Equal Pay Act 1970, introduced to British legislation by the Labour government in the UK (1970). The Equal Pay Act of 1970 sought to ensure that an individual could claim equal pay in work which is in likeness, equivalent to, or of equal value to the work undertaken by the opposite sex (Close the Gap, 2016). It was later strengthened by the Equality Act 2010. Despite unequal pay being illegal, large corporations continue to pay women less than men who have similar or equivalent work roles. In 2018, the British Broadcasting Company (hereafter the BBC) was found to have paid senior journalist Carrie Gracie £100,000 less than her male comparator (Gallagher, 2020). Two years later, BBC presenter Samira Ahmed won a £700,000 employment tribunal case against the BBC as the corporation was 'unable to explain why she was paid less than her male counterpart' (Waterson, 2020). Though the Equality and Human Rights Commission launched an investigation, it was concluded in their report that the commission 'did not find unlawful pay discrimination' committed by the BBC (Equality and Human Rights

Commission, 2020). This evidences how an equal legal standing does not guarantee equal implementation, and although it is a step in the right direction, the granting and protection of women's rights does not always result in immediate, meaningful change.

2.4 - Women's Oppression is Internalised

Perhaps a more contentious claim, Beauvoir discusses how oppression is often internalised by the oppressed. She writes: 'the slave, on the other hand, out of dependence, hope, or fear, internalizes his need for the master' (2011, p. 9). Not only this, but Beauvoir claims that the master-slave relationship is one of 'reciprocal economic need', implying that the oppressed and the oppressor have a co-dependent relationship, however the oppressor significantly benefits from the relationship (2011, p. 9). Appropriating Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Beauvoir suggests that women are not only in the position of the slave but also have internalised the subordinate position which men have put them in. At face value, this feels like Beauvoir is blaming women for being oppressed, and is supported by the statement that 'If woman discovers herself as the inessential and never turns into the essential, it is because she does not bring about this transformation herself' (2011, p. 9). Further criticism of Beauvoir has arisen from her use of the term 'slave' as analogous to 'woman', with Hutchings highlighting how Beauvoir diminishes the value of reproductive and caring labour which women undertake (2017, p. 194). Beauvoir's employment of the master-slave dialectic is problematic as it implies that women are of weak character; they are unable to speak up or fight for themselves, and this is why women have come to be an oppressed group.

However, it does partially explain why intersectional feminism only gained momentum in the latter half of the 20th century through the works of Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984), bell hooks (1987), Patricia Hill Collins (1986; 1990; 1996) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Beauvoir's work does not pay so much attention to intersectionality, yet her theorisation of internalisation provides an explanation as to why feminist movements in post-war Western Europe lacked cohesion:

> As bourgeois women, they are in solidarity with bourgeois men and not with women proletarians; as white women, they are in solidarity with white men and not with black women. The proletariat could plan to massacre the whole ruling class; a fanatic Jew or black could dream of seizing the secret of the atomic bomb and turning all of humanity

> entirely Jewish or entirely black: but a woman could not even dream of exterminating males (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 9).

It may be understood that Beauvoir suggests that women have internalised the belief that men are required for their protection and prosperity. Patriarchal societies are structured so that women are economically and socially dependent on men, causing them to prioritise relationships with men over other women. This lack of autonomy is not only internalised according to Beauvoir, but is weaponised to the extent that women turn against one another and are unable to organise a cohesive uprising (2011, p. 8).

Further interpretations of Beauvoir's claim that oppression is internalised by women may be offered by Charlotte Knowles (2019). By interpreting Beauvoir's use of Heideggerian terms such as *Mitsein*, *Dasein* and *das Man*, Knowles argues that Beauvoir's claim that complicity 'is a commonplace feature of female existence' (2019, p. 243) can be better understood. Beauvoir writes that 'men encounter more complicity in their woman companions than the oppressor usually finds in the oppressed; and in bad faith they use it as a pretext to declare that woman *wanted* the destiny they imposed on her' (2011, p. 773). Knowles suggests that Beauvoir is not blaming women for being in a situation of inferiority, but rather that they are acting with 'active complicity' (2019, p. 256).

In refining this account of active complicity, Knowles interprets Beauvoir's work to suggest that women's participation in their oppression is due to 'a kind of self-deception, resulting from a reluctance to destabilize the norms, self-understandings, and social roles in which agents have immersed themselves' (Knowles, 2019, p. 258). An example of self-deception on a minute level may be a woman's shaving routine. Although she knows that the desire to shave her body hair is the result of socially constructed Western beauty standards, the woman convinces herself that she enjoys the feeling of smooth, hairless skin, and that she is choosing to conform to these standards because she likes them, not because it is more socially acceptable than having long body hair. Here, it can be argued that a woman is engaging in a form of self-deception; she knows she is contributing to beauty ideals that feed into conceptions of women as pure and childlike, yet she continues to participate in the practice because she has convinced herself that it is *her choice*, and her actions are individualistic. Problematically, this self-deception relies on an agential understanding of oppression as

opposed to systemic, and so the woman is actively contributing to a wider system of oppression even if she is exercising her ability to choose.

Knowles (2019, p. 256) pays particular attention to Beauvoir's statement that 'Woman's faults are amplified all the more to the extent that she will not try to combat them but, on the contrary, make an ornament of them' (Beauvoir [de] 2011, p. 670). It would appear that Beauvoir believes that some women embrace their position as Other 'as if it were something she had freely chosen', and in this acceptance they aim to capitalise on such a status (Knowles, 2019, p. 252). However, the effect of this acceptance is that women are reluctant to challenge their status of inferiority due to the benefits which they may gain from such subordination, reinforcing the position of Other. Whether this complicity is a behavioural response specific to women is debatable, and an attitude of resignation and indifference can be found in both sexes regarding the acceptance of the status quo and social roles (Knowles, 2019, pp. 253-pp. 254). Nevertheless the fact remains: women are, generally speaking, less free than men. According to Beauvoir, this situation of inferiority is largely due to their complicity.

Furthermore, throughout *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir suggests that women act in 'bad faith'. For example, in her chapter *The Girl* she states:

> she does not accept the destiny nature and society assign to her; and yet she does not actively repudiate it: she is too divided internally to enter into combat with the world; she confines herself to escaping reality or to contesting it symbolically. Each of her desires is matched by an anxiety: she is eager to take possession of her future, but she fears breaking with her past; she would like "to have" a man, she balks at being his prey. And behind each fear hides a desire: rape is abhorrent to her, but *she aspires to passivity. Thus she is doomed to bad faith and all its ruses*; she is predisposed to all sorts of negative obsessions that express the ambivalence of desire and anxiety (2011, p. 376) [emphasis added].

Bad faith can be understood as Sartrean term for 'lying to oneself' which allows persons to believe that their unfree nature restricts them to make certain choices (Sartre, 2021, p. 88). It is also interpreted that bad faith is more than just lying to oneself; but also 'entails deceiving oneself not just about the veracity of statements, but more so about one's existential condition' (Correya, 2021, p. 104). With this definition in mind, the above extract can be interpreted as Beauvoir demonstrating how women do not

understand themselves as free from a young age, and act with resignation when they are required to make choices regarding their destiny. The aspiration to be passive is to understand the self as an object and as an inferior rather than an agent who goes forth and takes control of the situation at hand. To explain self-perceived inferiority as a case of bad faith, Edwards argues, is problematic as it fails to acknowledge how 'social, economic, and political aspects of the situation' also contribute to one's oppressed status (2021, p. 54). In applying the Sartrean understanding of bad faith to women's oppression, there is the potential to fall foul to victim blaming – this being the act of accusing the victim of being at fault for their actions, rather than the system of oppression which has limited the agent's choices.

Unlike Knowles (2019), Melo Lopes (forthcoming) suggests that Beauvoir does, in fact, criticise women for acting complicitly with bad faith and accuses them of being morally at fault. Melo Lopes provides an alternative understanding of Beauvoirian bad faith, suggesting that bad faith in *The Second Sex* does not rely on a radical conception of freedom but choice (forthcoming, p. 15). This choice is not 'between living out one's "feminine destiny" or rejecting it', but rather our choices available to use as situated agents impacted by social prescriptions (forthcoming, pp. 15-16). For Melo Lopes, Beauvoirian bad faith and complicity go hand in hand yet remain distinct (forthcoming, p. 17). Beauvoirian bad faith 'involves stubbornly ignoring the discomfort that these sexist practices provoke', whereas complicity 'means that one contributes to one's own unfreedom and that of other women' (forthcoming, p. 17). Women learn to be complicit; it is socially conditioned, but to act in Beauvoirian bad faith is an attitude that women choose.

An issue which arises from Beauvoir's causes and effects of women's oppression is the problem surrounding Beauvoirian bad faith and the concept of choice. Referring back to Melo Lopes' (forthcoming) interpretation of bad faith in *The Second Sex*, it is implied that woman has a level of choice regarding her destiny, although it may be somewhat constrained. Analysing this further, it is possible that Beauvoir's understanding of women as an oppressed group is problematic. The view that all women have the same level of agency to make choices about their destiny is the result of Beauvoir's existentialist philosophy and the supposition that her situation is representative of all women. Hill Collins pays particular attention to this issue, claiming that Beauvoir's chapter *The Independent Woman* evidences Beauvoir installing herself 'at the centre of analysis', assuming that independent women are white and educated

(2017, p. 332). Hill Collins adds that 'Beauvoir ignores the agency of non-Western and/or working-class women just as thoroughly as her perception of how men treat women' (2017, p. 332).

Though her use of her subjective experience was a potentially novel method of feminist philosophy, Beauvoir's failure to discuss women's oppression in a reflexive way results in the claim that *all* women are complicit and *all* women should take responsibility for this immorality, yet this position ignores women who are situated in positions of powerlessness. The working class, queer black woman is far more likely to experience classist, heterosexist and racist oppressions compared to the middle-class, heterosexual white woman. Beauvoir suggests that *all* women are complicit. However, this is not possible; if all women were complicit, all women must have a choice, which not all women have to the same extent, and sometimes not at all.

Young does not indicate whether she believes complicity contributes to the oppression of a person. However, she does imply that not all persons (including women) have the same level of agency. If social persons are viewed as groupings, Young writes, then many of today's societies should be understood as complex and highly differentiated (Young, 2014, p. 12). All individuals have 'multiple group identifications' that alter their position as privileged or oppressed (Young, 2014, p. 12). Young suggests that 'powerlessness' is a key aspect of oppression which is experienced particularly by those that society considers 'nonprofessional' (Young, 2014, p. 21), however I contend that 'powerlessness' can also partly explain why some women have greater agency than others, and on such a basis are more morally culpable than women who have less.

According to Young, the powerless are those who do not have the ability to make impactful decisions, who take orders instead of giving them, who do not have authority and, in turn, 'do not command respect' (Young, 2014, pp. 21-22). Though Young frames powerlessness in terms of a 'nonprofessional' person, or perhaps an unskilled worker, many women may also be seen to lack power and are thus required to 'prove their respectability' (Young, 2014, p. 23). A way in which many women are trying to prove their respectability in Western societies today is by showing that they can be a 'girlboss' – a term coined 'to describe a way of presenting a professionally successful persona that highlights femininity' (Maguire, 2020). In many instances, the term is used to describe women who show that they can balance the demands of motherhood and professional life. In discussing the topic of the do-it-all, 'girlboss'

mother-professional, journalist Katherine Goldstein details how she returned to work after a short period of maternity leave due to the fear that her colleagues would judge her for not appearing committed enough to her job (Goldstein, 2018). Goldstein's situation is not unique – though the number of women in the labour force has generally grown in the latter half of the 20th century (Baerlocher et al., 2021), so has the pressure on women to be both successful professionals and demonstratively competent mothers. However, jobs which require decision-making, technical expertise or authority are often time-sensitive in nature, pressuring women to return to work shortly after giving birth[18].

The option to return to full time work shortly after childbirth is often reserved for the middle to upper classes for it requires a second party, such as a childminder or a partner with economic stability, to look after the child during working hours. For mothers who wish to return to work but do not have the economic stability, choices surrounding maternity leave are more limited. Sometimes there is the option to return on a part time basis, which still requires another party to assist with childcare. Many states offer some form of maternity pay, however many women may be reluctant to take it out of the fear that they will be left 'out of the loop' in their job role, and, having proven their desire to bear children, may be overlooked by their superiors for promotions. Today, motherhood continues to be difficult decision for many women to take as it comes with the risk of powerlessness. Without financial independence, women who do not have the aid of second party support for their children face threats of exclusion and economic instability, whilst also appearing to be 'bad mothers' if they prioritise their professional vocation, losing respect from their peers. This is also true for female athletes (Darroch & Hillsburg, 2017; McGannon et al., 2015).

This discussion on maternity leave and powerlessness raises important questions regarding Beauvoir's arguments surrounding bad faith and complicity. Beauvoir strongly advocates for the economic emancipation of women[19], writing that 'work alone can guarantee her concrete freedom' (2011, p. 737), however she also acknowledges that motherhood is 'almost impossible to undertake in complete freedom', and the ability to be both a mother and a professional keep her in a constant

[18] Lerner et al. (2010) detail the pressures on female urologists which made them return to work, highlighting pressures from partners and staff as well as financial pressures. Maxwell et al. (2019) echo similar findings for female academics, suggesting that those who have children are penalised in terms of finance, career continuity and progression.

[19] However, she also notes that 'one must not think that the simple juxtaposition of the right to vote and a job amounts to total liberation; work today is not freedom (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 737).

bind (2011, p. 751). Though Beauvoir is sympathetic to mothers, it is unclear whether she considers those who resign from the professional sphere as women acting with bad faith. On the one hand, she seems to suggest that society is not structured to be supportive of women who want to be both mothers and professionals (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 752). Yet, on the other hand, Beauvoir highlights how many women 'resign themselves' to the constraints of femininity because the work they are offered is exploitative, as well as calling the women who rely on male guardianship 'parasites' (2011, pp. 738-753). Beauvoir's writings expose an incompatible tension between the concepts of choice and complicity, demanding that resolutions must be searched for beyond her work.

In responding to Beauvoir's conceptualisation of oppression, I suggest that Young's work could be used to update the tensions surrounding complicity and choice. Young's inclusion of powerlessness as a face of oppression demands that complicity is recognised as relative, and one's complicity depends on one's position within the existing power structures. As a result, there are varying degrees of complicity. A woman cannot act in bad faith if she does not wield power because she does not have the choice to do so – her decisions are pre-determined by those who do wield power.

This argument works in multiple scenarios. Below I present three thought experiments which demonstrate the various degrees of complicity and demonstrate the manifestation of women's oppression in sport. It is important to note that the second and third examples are hypothetical and fictious, however, they are based on some truths. The first example of the athlete, which in this case is based on Jelena Dokic, is a true story:

> Example 1 – The Athlete
>
> The first example I will refer to is the case of Jelena Dokic, a young tennis prodigy who rose to fame in the early 2000s. Dokic disclosed that she was physically and mentally abused by her father and coach, Damir Dokic, since the age of six (Rossingh, 2018). Dokic acted complicitly by obeying her father's commands but did not have the choice not to do so, for being non-complicit would have likely resulted in violence which, accumulatively or possibly instantly, would lead to her death. She is contributing to her own unfreedom, not because she wills it but because her father holds the power, and this renders her powerless and choiceless. For Dokic, it was not possible to act in bad faith

as her actions were guided by the primitive desire to survive, not the desire to be a moral agent.

Example 2 – The Whistle-blower

Continuing the case of Jelena Dokic, this example introduces the hypothetical scenario of a whistle-blower. In 2017, it was reported that 'Some officials even went as far as lodging police complaints' in an attempt to protect Dokic, but they did not fully investigate (Spits, 2017). Let us imagine what it may have been like for the whistle-blower who reported the abuse to the police. Though she was bold enough to report the abuse, which is a commendable act, there is a possibility that she did not push for a larger investigation to help Jelena, perhaps due to fears that she would be labelled a 'troublemaker'. The whistle-blower knows that in her job role she is easily replaceable, and she is hopeful of future promotion in the sport management industry. Additionally, she is a single mother with young children, which she must support. As a result of her career being at stake, she does not push further for Jelena's father to be investigated.

It is arguable that the whistle-blower is acting complicitly by not speaking up for Jelena, yet her actions are not ones born out of bad faith. The whistle-blower is situated in a society where financial income is necessary for survival, especially as a mother who is the sole provider for her children, and so her choices are more limited. She has a choice to speak up, but the potential consequences of doing so bear too great a risk and affects lives other than her own (i.e., her children), thus she prioritises her role as a worker and a mother over her role as a whistle-blower.

Example 3 – The Executive

The final part of this case is what I will call 'the executive'. In her autobiography, Dokic states that 'people on the tennis scene, especially in Australia, turned a blind eye on the physical and emotional abuse [I] suffered' (Spits, 2017). Having read the statements from multiple whistle-blowers, the Tennis Australia executive has found that there is solid evidence that Jelena Dokic is being severely abused by her father. Further information reveals that Dokic has been abused for the entire time she has been in the care of Tennis Australia, with several people coming forward to express concern during this

time. Having realised that Tennis Australia could have prevented Dokic's abuse years earlier, the executive decides not to speak up, for speaking up after years of dismissing whistle-blowers looks particularly bad for the organisation and will damage their image and reputation on a global scale.

Eventually, the executive is contacted by the police, who are once again investigating the allegations of abuse. Concerned that they will be able to access the whistle-blowing reports, the executive refuses to cooperate. Here, it is strongly arguable that the executive is acting in bad faith and with complicity. She knows that Dokic is being harmed but refuses to intervene with the belief that she is acting in Tennis Australia's best interest. In doing so, she perpetuates a system which enables abusers in sport and fails to protect vulnerable persons. She does not stand up for women and girls whom she has the power to help.

These examples demonstrate how Beauvoir's beliefs that complicity and bad faith contribute to women's oppression must be viewed with an understanding of power structures. By viewing oppression as 'the result of a few people's choices or policies' instead of a system (Young, 2014, p. 5), we consequently ignore how bad faith and complicity manifest themselves in various degrees, being wholly dependent on our ability to make uncoerced choices.

2.5 – Summary – Beauvoir's Characterisation of Oppression as Systemic, Exploitative and Internalised

Moving forward, it can be understood that, on a wider level, the oppression of women can be characterised as systemic, exploitative, and internalised. Along with sexism, the intersecting oppressions of homophobia, racism, ableism and classism demonstrate the complexity of women's oppression and how the interlinking oppressions grant some women privilege whilst denying it to many others. Most women will experience sexist oppression in their lifetime. Notwithstanding this, not all women will experience the crisscrossing variations of oppression which must be considered if a robust image of women's situation is to be provided (which Beauvoir does not always do). However, in combination with Young's insights, our conception of women's oppression is significantly enhanced. In the next section, with this knowledge of how the oppression

of women manifests on the broadest level, I will narrow the scope of this discussion and apply the findings to basket sports.

PART 3 – WOMEN WITH BALLS – 'BASKET' SPORTS AND THE REINFORCEMENT OF GENDER IDEALS

In Part 1 of this thesis, I examined the current situation for women in sports which are unisex and highly masculinised. To gain a fuller understanding of women's oppression in sport and how it may manifest in non-unisex sports, my attention now turns to basketball, netball and korfball. These three 'basket' sports all have the same origin, stemming from James Naismith's artificial game of basketball in 1891 (Treagus, 2005, p. 89). What is particularly interesting about these three basket sports is that, although they all can be traced back to Naismith, they can all be typified differently. Basketball was traditionally, and continues to be, a sex segregated sport, this being the categorisation and separation of athletes based on their biological sex. It was also created by a man for the purpose of men's health and recreational lifestyles. Netball soon followed and continued to be sex segregated, yet it was created by women to improve women's health and recreational lifestyles. The third sport to stem from basketball is korfball, a game of Dutch tradition that is a mixed sex. Korfball was another adaptation of basketball and was created by Nico Broekhuysen, a primary school teacher who wanted a co-educational game which involved both sexes (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011).

Though these sports bear a family resemblance (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 636), they have developed into sites of deep interest due to their ideals. Gender ideals are based on an essentialist ideology that men are better suited to hard labour, intellectual outputs and athletic pursuits, whereas women are better suited to childrearing, the arts, and roles of care. It is theorised that whilst sport may reflect social values and gender ideals, it also has the power to construct them (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, pp. 3-4). I propose that gender ideals are a type of false information which serve to oppress women whilst elevating the social status of men in society. The following discussion will explore how basketball, netball and korfball may reinforce gender ideals through the continuation of their sex categorisations, rules, and practices. This thesis section will also develop McDonagh and Pappano's theorisations of 'coercive sex segregation' and 'gender coded' athletic pursuits to gain knowledge on how they impact women's sports (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, pp. 7-10).

Beginning with a brief history of how basketball created three individual sports in subsection 3.1, subsections 3.2 to 3.5 will analyse netball as a sport which interpellates feminine body comportment, consequently gender-coding the sport as

feminine. It is necessary that this research begins with a strong focus on netball, for the currently available literature on the topic is limited to purely sociological and socio-historical investigations (see Hess, 2022; Maclean et al., 2022; Marfell, 2019; Tagg, 2008a, 2008b, 2016; and Treagus, 2005) instead of philosophical. This subsection will hopefully bridge any gaps in current research by addressing the rules of netball. Subsections 3.6-3.7 will compare basketball, netball and korfball, and their approaches to sex segregation and integration. The aim of this analysis will be to provide further knowledge of how sports, although similar at face value, have the power to reinforce gender ideals and contribute to the wider system of women's oppression. Finally, subsection 3.8 will address how basket sports may move forward regarding sex segregation and integration, producing recommendations on how these sports could implement methods to prevent the perpetuation of harmful gender ideals.

3.1 - A brief history of the 'basket' sports

The creation of basketball and the unification of its rules are often attributed to Anglo-Canadian James Naismith in 1891 (Treagus, 2005, p. 89). The game rapidly spread through the US as a game for college students and was developed 'almost exclusively' by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts (Myerscough, 1995, p. 144). The women's basketball game stemmed from Naismith's creation and evolved over time, creating today's game which is now played by 3.1 million women worldwide (International Basketball Federation (FIBA), 2020b). Basketball was not considered a popular sport or pastime for women when it was created, as its aggressive style of play contrasted Western feminine ideals at the time (Jenkins, 1997; Treagus, 2005, p. 92). Nonetheless, physical educators sought to improve women's physical health. Thus, they adapted Naismith's game for their female pupils so that the vigorousness would not warp their bodies and defy their feminine essence (Treagus, 2005, p. 90). As a result, the sport became sex segregated. As women's basketball was introduced during a period which emphasised modesty and heterosexuality, educators sought to de-masculinise the game 'so that it would be acceptable for women to play', and so two more sports emerged: women's basketball in the US and netball in England (Treagus, 2005, p. 91).

Basketball was adapted by physical educators Senda Berenson (Treagus, 2005, p. 89; van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 636) and Martina Bergman-Österberg

into women's basketball in the US and netball in England (Treagus, 2005, p. 97; van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 635). Berenson was considered 'a leading figure in the regulation of America's women's basketball', later teaching the sport to European colleges in 1897 (van Bottenburg &Vermeulen, 2011, p. 636). Bergman-Österberg, on the other hand, is accredited with the initiation of the first women's-only sport college in England and the subsequent creation of netball after a visit to the US in 1893 (Fletcher, 1984, p. 35; van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 4). Revisions of the game rules were possibly influenced by Ester Porter, an American gymnast who visited Bergman-Österberg's college in 1987, who showed the students how basketball was played in the US (Troost, 2003, p. 55; van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 4).

After this, netball began to break away as an independent 'British paraphrase' of women's basketball (Crum, 2003, p. 59). Whilst women's basketball saw regular rule changes that increased the range of movement, netball saw fewer. Over time, women's basketball became faster, more physical and more aggressive, while netball remained comparatively slower, restrictive and precise. It is uncertain why the two sports became so bifurcated, however one suggestion is that the differences between the sports arose due to differing interpretations of the rules and ideas surrounding feminine ideals (Treagus, 2005). Because the sports were developed in the early 20th century in three different continents – North America, Europe and Australasia – it is likely that cultural differences impacted how the game took shape over time. Marfell writes that Victorian femininity in New Zealand differs from the Victorian feminine ideals found in England (2019, p. 578). This was due to the New Zealander women's role in agriculture that saw them move beyond the confines of the household (Marfell, 2019, p. 578).

The split between netball and basketball is likely due to cultural divides and legislative changes in the US and the UK. The beginning of competitive women's basketball can be dated back to an inter-institutional game between the American university California-Berkely and Miss Head's School in 1892 (Staffo, 1998, p. 187). Matches between men's teams were encouraged, but women's basketball matches were considered reprehensible, with women-only spectatorship permitted to prevent the women players from making 'a spectacle' of themselves (Treagus, 2005, p. 93). Nonetheless, collegiate level women's basketball in the US increased in popularity

between 1890 and 1930, and variations of the game[20] continued to grow as the demand for women's physical pursuits increased (Treagus, 2005, pp. 93-94).

Feminine restraint and eugenicist attitudes to women's health remained the primary purposes for women's sports during this period, possibly explaining how women's basketball was able to continue without much prohibition. This being said, women's sports competitions in the US were faced with opposition throughout the early 20th century due to 'problems' in women's sports, such as 'girls playing basketball by boys' rules' and 'a winning at any cost mentality' (Couturier, 2012, pp. 270-271). It was even recommended at a conference in Cincinnati that basketball tournaments for women should be eliminated, the number of games reduced, and interscholastic, intramural competitions should be promoted (Couturier, 2012, p. 271). Over time, women's basketball developed further, and its prominence was arguably catalysed by the implementation of Title IX, though women had been playing men's basketball rules before this (Treagus, 2005, p. 95).

In 1976 women's basketball was introduced into the Summer Olympics programme, and this led to the creation of The Women's Professional Basketball League (WBL) in 1978 (Staffo, 1998, p. 188). However, the league folded after three seasons due to mismanagement, poor treatment of athletes and a significant loss of funds, and it was not until the US National Basketball Association (NBA) formed the WNBA in 1997 that women's basketball began to gain momentum (Staffo, 1998, pp. 190-192). At present, women's basketball rules are similar to men's basketball, with the only differences being ball sizes and court measurements. Basketball is considered a global game and is played and followed by 450 million globally (FIBA, 2020), yet netball is a major sport only in the UK, Ireland, and former Commonwealth countries, with approximately 20 million players worldwide (Williams, 2020).

Netball, however, has not undergone such a radical development, and its comparative consistency makes it 'a surviving artefact of its era' (Treagus, 2005, p. 89), though it is arguably a faster and more skilful game than Bergman-Österberg intended. The quick uptake of netball was partially due to the growth of women's colleges in Britain resulting from the Endowed Schools Act of 1869, but also because it

[20] One variation of women's basketball that is worth mentioning is the game of 'basquette' by Clara Gregory Baer of Sophie Newcomb College, New Orleans (Treagus, 2005, p. 94). Treagus writes that the game 'was even more restrictive on players' due to the more conservative feminine ideals of the southern states, but still attracted spectators and positively impacted attitudes towards athletic women in the early 20th century in the US (2005, p. 94).

did not require much financial support and was 'relatively benign' – meaning that netball was not a threat to the sphere of men's sports and 'could take up spaces' that were not used by men's teams (Treagus, 2005, pp. 95-100). The game was codified in 1901 by The Ling Association of Gymnastic Teachers, though the game was played in various forms before this (Moon, 2019). Promoting gracefulness and discipline over power, netball was the seemingly perfect sport for British women as it avoided gender-bending muscularity whilst promoting health and moral behaviour. From this perspective, it is plausible that the contrasting developments in women's basketball and netball are due to simultaneous efforts to preserve the sports as *women's* sports, though the approaches were uncoordinated and influenced by differing cultures.

The game of netball is now one of speed and skill. Running, jumping and 'fair contact' are now key to the modern netball game, demonstrating the sport to be physically demanding and proving popular with spectators. Despite the increased physicality of the modern game, netball arguably continues to reproduce representations of gender through a 'heterosexualized space' by maintaining feminine dress codes and restrictions on movement (Marfell, 2019, p. 586). Notably, netball continues to be a recommended sport in the English National Curriculum (Long & Roberts, 2022) 'meaning it is played by the majority of school-age children' across the country (Whitehead et al., 2019, p. 21). Netball has been referred to as a 'good girls' game', implying not only that the game is almost exclusively female, but is also specifically for those who are concerned with preserving their femininity (Tagg, 2016, p. 906).

Parallel to the development of women's basketball and netball was the growth of the game of korfball, which translates from Dutch as 'basket ball'. Though less popular than basketball and netball, the Dutch game of korfball is unique in that it is, first and foremost, a mixed sex game. Favouring the principles of coeducation and cooperation, korfball is 'similar to basketball and netball in terms of the throwing, catching, and shooting skills required' (Summerfield & White, 1989, p. 145). As it is a game for both the sexes, there are both male and female defence and attack positions, but players can only guard opponents of the same sex (Summerfield & White, 1989, p. 145). Players cannot 'dunk' the ball either, thus reducing (male) height advantages. Consequently, the game does not advantage its male or its female players, though it does arguably remain male-apposite. The game, however, has struggled to gain much recognition beyond the Netherlands and Belgium, with the first world championships

only being established in 1984. It is considered more of a 'provincial sport' than a global one, thus it remains a curiosity for non-Dutch sports fans and sports ethicists alike. Following the analysis of basketball and netball, this thesis section will finish with the analysis of korfball and mixed sex netball to determine whether mixed sex sport is the way forward in championing female empowerment in sport.

3.2 - Netball and the Interpellation of Feminine Body Comportment[21]

Feminine body comportment is a term popularised by Young's essay 'Throwing Like a Girl' (2005) to indicate how women typically inhabit and present their bodies as an 'ineffective, vulnerable encumbrance' when performing purposive movements and tasks (Preston, 1996, p. 167). Additionally, it is understood that feminine body comportment is a socially induced way of moving in the world. Historically, feminine movement has been concluded as a result of essential differences between men and women. However, as Young (and many others after her) have pointed out, feminine body comportment is better understood as a consequence of woman's 'historical, cultural, social, and economic limits of her situation' (Young, 2005, p. 29).

It is likely that the female body will have nuanced movements compared to the male body due to biomechanics, however I will not aim to provide a theorisation of how the body might move had it not been impacted by Western patriarchal ideals of how the body ought to move and be presented. Instead, I will argue that bodies can move in different and inhibited ways because of gender ideals. Bringing this issue to light, I will discuss how the sport of netball can encourage a feminine body comportment through limitations on movement and space. I will also contend that the rules of netball have the potential to contribute to the oppression of women in sport by preventing women from fully exploring the body's potential and encouraging internalised bodily restraint and objectification.

Netball continues to be heavily female focused, causing a major sex and gender imbalance in the sport. This imbalance is a major reason why it remains ineligible for inclusion at the Olympic games (Gwilliam, 2018). However, mixed sex leagues have begun to form as well as male-only teams (Polley & Law, 2019; Matthey, 2021). There is evident hostility towards netball becoming sex and gender inclusive as the game is

[21] The majority of this section (3.2) has been published as an article online:
Olivia R. Howe (2023) Netball and the interpellation of feminine body comportment, Sport in Society, *26*(10), 1647-1664. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2023.2173583.

often considered a ‘a safe space for women to play sport’ (Gwilliam, 2018). Former England netball chief Joanna Adams stated that ‘the second men start to play, women will stop’, illustrating the institutionalised nature of sex segregated netball (Gwilliam, 2018).

It has now been over 40 years since Young published ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ (1980), yet the paper still provides valuable insights towards a feminist philosophy of sport, and is therefore considered a pillar in this area of research. Recent research suggests that her theorisation surrounding feminine body comportment is well-grounded, with studies showing that young boys tend to have a greater perceived competence of their physical abilities compared to young girls (True et al., 2017). Coupled with low motor competence, it is hypothesised that this will create sex differences in physical activity levels and participation (True et al., 2017). Netball appears to be, in part, a living example of Young’s theory of feminine modalities.

Young also believes that women are ‘physically handicapped’ in a sexist society, rejecting Beauvoir’s theorisation that it is both biology and social conditioning that impact female motility (Young, 2005, p. 42; Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 353). It is, in Young’s view, society alone that designates women an ‘unfree status’ (Young, 2005, p. 29). It is worth noting that Young did not address the transcendence of women in the context of elite sport, nor did she discuss how sport may be used as a means of breaking free from feminine comportment. Young’s theorisation is arguably ‘outmoded’ (Chisholm, 2008, p. 33), and is at times a particularly negative understanding of the feminine body. However, her ideas surrounding ‘space’ may indicate that the very structure of netball as a sport actively reinforces gender ideals. In the following sections, I will outline and apply Young’s modalities of feminine body comportment to netball.

3.2.1 - Ambiguous Transcendence

Young appears to adopt a Beauvoirian understanding of transcendence: the movement into the future via projects that introduce us to opportunities of freedom – and immanence: a ‘stagnation within a situation’ (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 37; Scholz, 2008). Young writes that feminine bodily existence is an ‘ambiguous transcendence’, whereby a woman’s existence is ‘overlaid’ with immanence (2005, p. 36). Though she can achieve physical freedom in her movement, socialisation of the feminine body causes her to stagnate, thus her physical self lies somewhere between the two (2005, p.

32). The effect of ambiguous transcendence, then, would see the average woman throw a ball without 'pure fluid action' that a free and transcending body could execute (Young, 2005, p. 36). According to Young, women limit their movement when they throw partially due to this ambiguity, thus women are seen to throw underarm instead of overarm, without force, and without certainty. Women fail to extend their bodies into the space around them as they fear that 'open extension and bold outward-directedness' invites objectification, resulting in a struggle to move in a free and unburdened manner (Young, 2005, p. 45).

Young's conception of ambiguous transcendence is certainly applicable to those who played netball (or women's basketball as it was then known) in the late 19th and early 20th century, for the game was created with contradictory aims: increasing female physical vitality whilst simultaneously preserving femininity. Discussing the historical beginnings of the game, Treagus writes on how Berenson sought to adapt the game of basketball for women:

> Berenson… felt that women were not capable of the physical exertion required by the men's game. The divisions were used to confine players to their section of the court, thereby restricting their movements and lessening the chances of them exhausting themselves by running the court's full length. Other changes, such as eliminating snatching and batting, were designed to stop roughness, indicating Berenson's concerns about unfeminine behaviour: 'Unless a game as exciting as basket ball is carefully guided by such rules as will eliminate roughness, the great desire to win and the excitement of the game will make our women do sadly unwomanly things.' (Treagus, 2005, p. 92).

The early games of netball sought to prevent women from achieving bodily transcendence, though it is possible that this was not Berenson's perspective. As evidenced by the societal belief that women were incapable of physical exertion to the same level as men, physical autonomy for women was, at the time, a forward-thinking approach met with resistance. Since Young's publications, scholars have been able to understand an emphasis on feminine movement as oppressive to women, since it promotes internalised beliefs of physical inferiority and incapability.

The level of physicality required in elite netball today is a major departure from Berenson's game. It is more technically demanding and fast paced, requiring players to

change direction quickly, throw accurately, and intercept passes without hesitation. Though it is not a sport that favours brute strength, a level of forcefulness is required to ensure that the ball is not repossessed by the opposition. Young writes that women tend to shy away from moving towards an object such as a ball; instead 'the woman takes herself to be the object of the motion rather than its originator' (2005, pp. 38-39). However, this is contrasted in elite netball with a chest pass throw. The chest pass throw requires the athlete to push from the chest in an explosive manner, putting one foot forward to stabilise the body and shift power so that the ball travels at speed. Another common throwing method in netball is the overhead throw. Similar to a throw-in in football or rugby, the athlete is required to extend her arms slightly backwards, before launching her body into a forward motion with the aim of passing the ball at such a height that it surpasses those who try to intercept.

Contrastingly, it may be argued that goalscoring in the game of netball currently promotes an ambiguous transcendence of the body. The 2020 rulebook issued by the International Netball Federation (now renamed World Netball) states that all players must obey rule 9.6 of 'footwork' (International Netball Federation, 2020). When receiving the ball, players may land on one foot and then the other. Alternatively, they may land two feet at a time. If a third step is taken, the player is sanctioned, and a free pass is awarded to the opposition. This rule applies when a player attempts a shot at the goal, so that the player must stand still when aiming for the hoop with their arms above their head, flicking their wrist to achieve the required arc. This scoring technique may be dated back to the 1911 English rule book on netball, which states that shooting methods vary, yet the technique where the player uses 'two hands' is the 'prettiest' method (Grieve, 1911, p. 21).

In comparison to netball, basketball has greater fluidity in the goalscoring process. Because the player can run and dribble with the ball, the player is able to take a run-up to the hoop, using all of their body to achieve a 'dunk', which the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) defines as an action where 'the ball is forced downwards into the opponents' basket with one or both hands' (FIBA, 2020, p. 21). When taking a shot, the netballer experiences the body as an ambiguous transcendence, for the legs are rooted in immanence whilst the arms are transcendent. The basketballer, however, experiences the body as transcendent. Dunking incorporates the whole body in a fluid motion – no part of the player is unmoving, and thus they experience full physical freedom. Here, it may be suggested that the rules on footwork in netball reinforce an

ambiguous transcendence of the feminine body, since stillness is an essential and defining part of the game.

3.2.2 - Inhibited Intentionality

Young states that the feminine body experiences an 'inhibited intentionality': the physical struggle between the confident body that acts with certainty, and the unconfident body that acts with uncertainty. As a result, the body is seen to enter a state of conflict between 'I can' and 'I cannot' (Young, 2005, p. 36). Furthermore, Young argues that the feminine body 'underuses its real capacity' when it is trying to execute an action, contributing to the inhibited intentionality the agent may experience (2005, p. 36). Again, netball can arguably be seen as a sport that reinforces inhibited intentionality by limiting the body in terms of space and movement, encouraging what Young calls a 'feminine hesitancy' (2005, p. 37). From a Beauvoirian perspective, this conflict could be understood as a deeper manifestation of internalised oppression, where the woman is reluctant or struggles to challenge her status of (physical) inferiority.

A key example of this may be the Over a Third rule 9.5.2, which states: 'The ball must be caught or touched by a player in each third of the court' (International Netball Federation, 2020). As a consequence of this rule, a player cannot throw the ball the distance of the court. Instead, the ball must be thrown in shorter passes, either within the third or between adjacent thirds. The Over a Third rule has been included since[22] 1961. There are at least two possible reasons why this rule was introduced. The rule may have been introduced so that cooperation between all team members was encouraged, and this may be supported by the 1911 rulebook, which states that netball should promote 'character building' and dissuade selfish and rough play (Grieve, 1911, p. 29). In light of this, throwing a ball the length of the court may run counter to the spirit of the game. Alternatively, it is possible that the rule was introduced to prevent 'unfeminine' qualities, such as physical exertion from running the length of the court

[22] This rule appeared in Section 11 of the 1961 All England Netball Association rule book, which stated 'The ball may not be thrown over a complete third without being touched by a player in that third' (All England Netball Association, 1961, p. 22). It is possible that this rule appeared earlier, however it was not included in the 1953 rulebook, which was the only rule book prior to the 1961 edition accessible to the researcher.

and what may have been viewed as an unnecessary display of physical power by throwing the ball from one end to the other.

Compared to basketball, where a player is permitted to throw the ball the length of the court and take shots beyond the three-point and midcourt lines, this netball rule can be strongly interpreted as a limitation on physical space and the body. Other examples where netball limits space are the rules on obstruction (Section 11) and contact (Section 12). The rules that are of particular interest to this thesis[23] are as follows:

> 11.1 Obstruction of a Player in Possession of the Ball
> An opposing player may attempt to deflect or intercept the ball or defend a player in possession of the ball, provided there is a distance of not less than 0.9 m (3 ft) measured on the ground from the nearest part of the landing food of the player with the ball to the nearest part of the opposing player's nearer foot.
>
> 11.2 Obstruction of a Player not in Possession of the Ball
> (ii) A player who is within 0.9 m (3 ft) of an opponent…may not, whether attacking or defending, use movements that take the arms away from the body so as to limit the possible movement of an opponent, except as required for natural body stance.
>
> 12.1 Contact and Contest
> When attacking, defending or playing the ball, opposing players may come into physical contact with each other. Provided the players do not interfere with each other's play or use their bodies to gain an unfair advantage over their opponent, it is deemed to be 'contest' and play continues. 'Contact' occurs when a player's actions interfere with an opponent's play whether these are accidental or deliberate.
>
> 12.2.1 Moving into Player's Space
> A player causes contact by:
>
> (i) Landing in a place already occupied by an opponent before the movement began.

[23] I have purposely excluded rules 11.1 (i)-(iii), 11.2 (i) 12.2 (i)-(v), 12.2.2 and 12.2.3 from the above extract as they are not relevant to the argument I am making.

(ii) Moving into the path of an opponent who is committed to a particular landing space. (International Netball Federation 2020)

Here it is visible that the rules of netball aim to limit the spaces that the players can access. Though a player may not feel that they are constricted by the body that they inhabit, the space that the body orientates itself in is a 'continuous extension of its own being'; thus, the limitation of where a netballer can move, land and occupy is also a limitation on her physical freedom.

Contrary to the above, it may be argued that offside rules are also a limitation on a player's physical freedom, but this does not constitute a moral wrong. Rather, the limitations on physical space in a sports game have varying reasons for their implementation, such as athlete safety, making the game fairer or making the game more dynamic and/or enjoyable for spectators. Sports, by their very nature, can only exist if there are rules in place. Offside rules are constitutive – meaning that the stipulated goal is achieved 'through prescriptions and proscriptions' that define the ways one can or cannot reach a state of affairs (Loland, 2002, p. 2). A try in rugby, therefore, can only be scored if the ball in play is passed backwards to the receiver. Furthermore, offside rules in the game of rugby serve 'to ensure there is space to attack and defend'(World Rugby, 2021). Arguably, the Over a Third rule can be typified as a rule that ensures dynamic and skilful passing from third to third in the game of netball.

What is critical to this discussion, however, is the reason *why* the Over a Third rule was initially implemented, and why the limitation on space in the game of netball has a deeper narrative than offside rules in other sports. Interpreting Merleau-Ponty, Edgar writes that the pleasure and excitement in football as both player and spectator derives from the contest of space (2015, p. 163). Like football, the netball court 'is an array of places, within which [players] strive be at home in the exercise of their skills' (Edgar, 2015, p. 163). Similarly, it is arguable that the game of netball is an embodied experience as the court acts as an extension of the body (Edgar, 2015, p. 160). In accepting this theorisation of space, it must be questioned whether the historical limitation on women's space can be separated from the modern game of netball. On the one hand, the rules and limitations on space were constructed to create a fair and skilful game. Yet, on the other hand, these limitations were originally implemented to prevent women from achieving a full physical exploration of the body that is associated with masculinity. If and how a game can develop beyond its original oppressive motives

requires further consideration[24]. However, if a sport is to be empowering, change must be supported and further examination of the game's potential evolution is required.

Rail claims that the physical and aggressive contact women experience in the game of basketball 'reveals to the world who she is and how she wishes to be treated', giving meaning to the self (1992, p. 4). This theorisation rests on a phenomenological account of the body which understands the lived body as relating to the material world through emotions that shape our experiences of physical contact and vice versa (Rail, 1992, pp. 4-5). Basketball is considered a contact sport (Andreoli et al., 2018, p. 1; Francis, 2016, p. 84) because contact is a necessary part of the game. Without snatching, tackles and guarding, women's modern basketball would be like Berenson's game, from which modern basketball has developed away. To be successful in a game of basketball there can only be feelings of 'I can' as the body moves towards the ball in the hope of gaining possession. Basketball is best played without feminine hesitancy. Hence, the game encourages that the whole body is utilised through legitimate contact, whilst prohibiting 'flagrant fouls' which are defined in Section IV as 'unnecessary and/or excessive contact committed by a player against an opponent' (WNBA, 2022). As a result there is a balance where women can learn about who they are and what they can physically achieve without excessive and intentional[25] physical harm. Comparatively, netball does not encourage such a full exploration of the physical and emotional self, fostering restrictive, internalised attitudes of restraint towards the female body as a result.

3.2.3 - Discontinuous Unity

Building upon Merleau-Ponty's proposed relation between the body and the external world, Young proposes that a woman's default experience is an uncertainty with the world she experiences, meaning that there is a lack of harmony when trying to execute a physical action successfully. Unlike Young's other modalities, the third modality of 'discontinuous unity' is the least applicable to the modern game of netball. Despite netball aiming to preserve femininity by reducing the physicality of the players, the physical demand of the game has increased drastically since its inception. Even if a

[24] For further discussion surrounding the preservation of sexist rules and practices in sport, see Howe (2022a).
[25] I acknowledge that, due to basketball being a contact sport, there is potential for harm to occur via accidental contact and rough play.

netballer is restricted by the rules, execution and certainty are now athletic requirements of the game.

Arguably, this is partly due to rules that prevent athletes from running or dribbling and a greater emphasis on 'passing' – netballers must be aware of who they can pass to, where they should pass to, and what type of pass would be best in the situation. A well-executed and timely pass by a netballer is key to scoring, for mistakes will result in an interception by the opposition and the concession of penalties. Because of the rule (9.4.1. iii) which requires the ball to be released within three seconds, the game has the potential to be (and is) exceptionally quick at an elite level. Further changes in 2016 to international rules regarding injury time-outs, penalty-taking and footwork have also seen the game become 'faster' and 'more furious' (Delahunty, 2015). Though it is possible that discontinuous unity may be present in the bodies of amateur netball athletes, elite netballers must exhibit unity with the ball and with their teammates during the game. Here it is arguable that Young's modality of discontinuous unity does not apply to the modern game of netball at the international level, and therefore cannot be accurately applied to elite level sports.

3.3 - Chisholm's Modalities and their Application to Netball

In stark contrast to Young's proposed feminine modalities, Chisholm argues that Young's description of the typical female motility is 'radically outmoded' (2008, p. 33). Whilst Young proposes that discontinuous unity is a default experience for women, Chisholm suggests that this theorisation is not a correct interpretation of Beauvoirian situationism. Instead, Chisholm writes, Young provides an essentialist perspective by suggesting that gender is the source of bodily incapability (Chisholm, 2008, p. 34). Yet, Beauvoir endorses socially constructed gender as the situation that women find themselves in, writing that the woman's perceived physical inferiority is contextual; '"weakness" is weakness only in light of the aims man sets for himself, the instruments at his disposal and the laws he imposes' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 47).

In her departure from Young's theorisation of the modalities of feminine motility, Chisholm suggests that 'positive' modalities are required as a substitution for Young's 'negative and dated' theorisations of space and the body (2008, pp. 11-21). Opposed to ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity, Chisholm proposes the following five positive modalities of women's embodied

experience in sport: reach, crux, flow, freedom and synesthesia (2008, pp. 23-30). These modalities, Chisholm writes, can be practised in free climbing and 'are the route to an evolving engagement with the larger world' (2008, p. 36).

Problematically, Chisholm's contribution to feminist phenomenology is limited in its wider application to sports because of the sport typologies on which she relies. Free climbing – the focal point of her theorisation - is a 'nature sport': these being sports in which 'a particular natural feature, or combination of natural features, plays at least one of the primary roles that human competitors or partners play in traditional sports.' (Krein, 2018, p. 5). Nature sports differ from 'traditional sports', which focus on the interaction and competition between athletes – either as teams (such as netball) or as individuals, whereas nature sports reject competition and focus rather on the execution of skill in a natural environment (Krein, 2018, pp. 5-6). Chisholm's modalities are only partially applicable to traditional sports such as netball. Consequently, her analysis of feminine motility unintentionally excludes sportswomen who participate in other types of sports. Nonetheless, her theorisation provides interesting insights surrounding women in sport and how their experiences contribute to their transcendence. Because of this, I shall focus exclusively on the modalities of 'crux' and 'flow' in this assessment of Chisholm's response to Young and the potential application of the modalities to netball.

3.3.1 – Crux

'Crux' can be defined as 'a vital or decisive stage', and in climbing terms it is 'the most difficult and decisive part of a climb or pitch' (Collins English Dictionary [Online], 2022). Chisholm explains that the crux for a woman in climbing is the moment where she must make a choice in a situation of uncertainty with the hope that it will pay off – and, when similar circumstances reproduce themselves, she is able to tackle the issue 'with prospective and retrospective vision' (2008, p. 24). It is possible that netball players also experience crux because of the game's 'fast paced' nature 'where players have to make split-second decisions' (Williams, 2020, p. 106). Research has also shown that netballers heavily rely on their decision-making abilities, with offensive agility manoeuvres sometimes calculated 'one or two moves ahead of play' (Fox et al., 2014, p. 549). By performing training drills dedicated to manoeuvres, netballers are able to habituate these decision-making processes and, when faced with the need to

escape from an opponent's defensive block, they can look at the task at hand prospectively and retrospectively. For Chisholm, our socialised understanding of our bodies and gendered prejudices influence a woman's decision-making when she is faced with a crux (2008, p. 12). As a result, women may experience crux situations which demand them to escape the learned association of female frailty, requiring them to push their physical limits beyond what is expected of them by themselves and by others.

However, it is arguable that Chisholm's proposal of crux is significantly more applicable to dangerous, nature-based sports in comparison to traditional sports. Generally speaking, dangerous nature sports require a natural element which result in a level of risk in their undertaking: free climbing requires rock faces with a risk of falling, surfing requires specific wind and water conditions with a risk of drowning, and so on. Athletes in 'danger sports' do not actively seek danger (though they may enjoy that side of it), but aim to score points, overcome opponents, and or achieve a target whilst there are 'possibilities for serious harm' (Martínková & Parry, 2017, p. 81). Additionally, those who take on dangerous nature sports must be 'attuned to information in the environment' where the conditions are constantly changing and beyond their control (Immonen et al., 2018, p. 3). This makes risky situations, and in turn crux situations, more likely to present themselves in dangerous nature sports. In comparison, netball players do not experience such high level risks or crux situations for the artificiality of the game provides 'fixed' constraints (Immonen, et al. 2018, p. 3). Netballers are presented with difficult decisions in the game, but not ones of life and death.

We can, however, view this issue in a positive light. It is possible that the application of crux depends on our interpretation, and perhaps allows us to address a major flaw in Young's theorisation. Women's sports involvement has increased exponentially since Young's publication, and so her theory cannot account for the many hundreds of thousands of sportswomen who have broken the mould of feminine body comportment. It would be inaccurate to claim that it is only women in dangerous nature sports who have successfully accomplished uninhibited motility, for women who are involved in traditional sports also achieve full physical transcendence. A key example would be women who play rugby, in which women are required to punt the ball in a drop kick, using the full body for maximum power. It is perhaps the experience of crux in sport that allows women to understand the body in its primal state through

instinctual, reflexive decision making. This would point to different levels of cruces, wherein 'traditional' sports allow the practice of low-level crux decisions, and dangerous nature sports allow high-level crux decisions. It is plausible to claim that netballers would be more likely to experience feminine body comportment and those who engage in dangerous nature sports less likely, though neither is a certainty. This requires further research into the comparative motility of those who participate in traditional sports and those who participate in dangerous nature sports.

3.3.2 – Flow

The feminine modality of 'flow' is perhaps the most applicable of Chisholm's modalities to the sport of netball. For women, flow is a 'consequence of moves which generate momentum' and 'entails choreographing the push/pull forces of full-body torsion with agility, speed, and rhythm' (Chisholm, 2008, p. 25). According to Chisholm, women can excel in flow as they are less likely to use the brute force of their body in sport, because they are on average smaller and less muscular compared to men (2008, p. 25). For this reason, flow seems to go hand-in-hand with netball, due to its origins being adapted to the smaller bodies of women, even if the belief of 'female frailty'[26] guided such decisions.

As opposed to discontinuous unity, flow requires that the body practices movements so that it 'evolves' in its mastery of intuition and habituation of technique (Chisholm, 2008, p. 26). Because netball, like basketball, is an 'artificial' sport and is characterised by rules on limiting movement, the manoeuvres that are available to netballers are limited. Passing is usually executed in one of four forms: a chest pass, bounce pass, overhead pass or a shoulder pass. When receiving the ball the landing foot must stay grounded until the ball is released again. Fox et al. (2014, p. 549) identified five different types of offensive manoeuvres in international netball competitions, with the side-step manoeuvres being significantly more utilised than the others, possibly due to time restrictions placed on players in possession and the need to change direction quickly. The practice of these movements in training and in competition allows netballers to move in a way that is instinctive, defending and attacking on the court with intuition and speed, thus directly contrasting Young's theorisation of feminine bodily comportment and supporting Chisholm's proposed modality of flow.

[26] This term was coined by Nancy Theberge (1989).

To counter the above, it may be argued that netball does not exhibit the modality of flow as well as other sports. Treagus highlights that because of the stop/start nature there is 'very little natural flowing movement as there is in most other games' (2005, p. 102). It is plausible that movement in other sports generate greater momentum than netball due to repetitive and rhythmic movements. Sports that have the most flow according to Chisholm's definition would be rowing, kayaking, swimming and cycling, to name a few. Netball, though at times fast and agile, is prone to movement which fluctuates in pace due to sudden stops and changes in direction. This can be evidenced by the high number of lower limb injuries in the sport, which may be caused by landings, slipping, tripping and falling. However further data and standardisation of injury reporting in netball is required for an accurate understanding of injury circumstances (Downs et al., 2021, p. 24)[27].

Accepting that netball does not exhibit the modality of 'flow' because of its stop/start nature, then it is possible that basketball does not exhibit flow, either. According to Andreoli et al. 'knee and ankle injuries are the most prevalent' in basketball, regardless of sex (2018, p. 8). However, Ito et al. reported that anterior cruciate ligament injuries were more prevalent in females (2014, p. 4), with Hughes and Dally suggesting that this is due to greater quadricep muscle activity and lower hamstring activity in females compared to males when changing direction (2015, p. 166). However, this does not necessarily lead us to the conclusion that flow is absent in netball and/or basketball. Although there are stop/start movements in basketball, there is also the action of dribbling. Dribbling is a key movement in distinguishing between netball from basketball, for dribbling allows the player to run down the court whilst bouncing the ball. Flow is achieved not only through passing, but also via running, which allows the building of momentum in the game. Flow is possibly achieved in netball when the ball is being passed at speed, but it is more likely to be achieved in basketball, since there is more opportunity to perform and experience the modality through the greater freedom of movement.

[27] Downs et al. also note that some research suggests netball has a higher injury rate compared to basketball, though this is disputed (2021, p. 21).

3.4 - Wider Implications

Accepting the argument here advanced – that the emphasis on feminine movements internalises restraint and objectification of the body – what position should be held with regards to the feminisation of sports? There are multiple examples of sports which have been adapted for the purpose of providing playing opportunities for women, albeit in a watered-down format. With basketball there is netball, with baseball there is softball, with ice hockey there is ringette. Similar to the reasons behind the origination of netball, ringette was created as a less-physical form of ice hockey under the misconception that women are physically incapable of more physically demanding and violent sports, thus infantilising women through paternalistic attitudes (Weaving & Roberts, 2012, p. 473). Cohen echoes this sentiment, writing that the prejudices surrounding female weakness in baseball results in women being relegated to 'marginalised sports' such as softball (2009, p. 9), whilst Travers calls for the expansion of baseball so as to target a 'girl-friendly/women-and trans-inclusive future' (2012, p. 79). It is also hypothesised that men are fearful that 'the character of sport would change' if women were allowed to enter male-dominated sports (Kidd, 2013, p. 558).

There are two potential responses to the problem of feminisation of sports. The first is the most radical, and that is to get rid of these sports altogether, so that Western society no longer has feminised sports. However, this is merely hypothetical, and is only included to quell such extremism. If Western society was to eliminate sports which were created on the basis of female frailty, the opportunity for those who wish to play in such sports would be removed; it would be fighting paternalism with more paternalism, significantly limiting the choices of those who may resist the effects of feminisation and enjoy the sports for what it is. This result would be particularly undesirable.

The second approach to prevent marginalisation through feminisation in sport is to broaden sports so that there are opportunities for women to play on equal terms with men via the integration of the sexes in sports. However, as Channon et al. (2016) highlight, there are arguments on both sides of the debate, which I will briefly outline. With a growing amount of literature on sex integration and segregation in sport by sociologists (Bowes & Kitching, 2021; Channon et al., 2016; McDonagh & Pappano, 2008) and philosophers (English, 1978; Martínková, 2020a, 2020b), it is evident that the concept of sex integrated sports forces us to rethink 'assumptions of male

superiority' and consider 'a very different vision of sex difference and gender relations' which has been reinforced by sports that divide into males/females or men's/women's (Channon et al., 2016, p. 1112).

It is argued that sex integrated sports are more inclusive, particularly for those who identify as non-binary and those who identify as gay men (Channon et al., 2016, p. 1113). Unisex sports naturally promote non-essentialist views of sex and gender, deconstructing the binary on which sport often relies upon and deconstructing stereotypes that men are always bigger, faster and stronger than women. Mixed sex integration may however reinforce this binary, for mixed sex sports still have the ability to promote essentialist differences between male and female bodies by placing females in 'protected' positions (Martínková, 2020a, p. 255). Nonetheless, it may be contended that mixed sex categories enrich sports by enabling cooperation between males and females, as well as financial and accessibility benefits (Martínková, 2020a, p. 254). I will revisit the issue of mixed sex sports in greater depth in section 3.7.

Sex integration in sport is subject to pitfalls. Recalling the comments made by the former England netball chief, Joanna Adams, there are reasons why netball has generally resisted sex integration and even the increase of men's netball teams in men's leagues. The historical marginalisation of women's sports continues to shape attitudes today, even if they are becoming less pronounced. As a result, sports continue to 'rationalize the ascendency of men into positions of authority', leading to a fear of men encroaching on women-only spaces (Channon et al., 2016, p. 1114). Even where sports are not male-apposite, men typically dominate due to social, cultural and economic factors. Additionally, some women value women-only sport settings (Channon et al., 2016, p. 1115). A strong case for women-only or women-focused sports settings may be the sport of roller derby. Research has found opinions on sex integration to vary in the world of roller derby, with many women favouring sex segregation, yet an increasing number of women acknowledging the positives of sex integration (Channon et al., 2016, p. 1115; Pavlidis & Connor, 2016, pp. 1358-1359). Reasons for the preservation of women's spaces vary – they may be religious, cultural, or may provide opportunities for them to escape the male gaze (Channon et al., 2016, p. 1115). It may also be out of concern for safety, though this is often dismissed as paternalistic (Weaving & Roberts, 2012) and, once again, essentialist. I will revisit the concept of safe space later in subsection 3.6.5.

Sex integration in netball is a divisive issue. Scholars have written extensively on sex segregation in sport, advocating the position that women should have the opportunity to 'move up' into men's sports leagues, thus making it an open category, whilst also preserving women's-only sports leagues (English, 1978, p. 272; Martínková, 2020b, p. 462; McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 224). Problematically, this theorisation only works for sports in which men have been historically dominant. Netball provides an interesting challenge to this thought, for there is nowhere for the women to 'move up' – they are currently, and have always been, the dominant group. A middle ground position, then, would be to continue to support women's-only sports such as netball to update the rules to prevent the potentially harmful effects of feminisation. A particular example would be dress codes. Though ringette and softball mirror the men's uniforms, the international level netball uniform tends to be a slim fit mini dress, though skirts, skorts, and body suits are permitted, as are leggings or trousers if they are for religious reasons (World Netball, 2018a).

Though there is some flexibility in uniform, the dress remains a staple for international netballers who do not require religious coverups, and this is important as 'clothing is fundamental in the (re)production of masculinity and femininity' (Marfell, 2019, p. 587). Marfell's study of grassroot New Zealander netballers also found that players saw the dress as a way of 'establishing and reinforcing their feminine identities in what can be an increasingly physical game', and thus important to them (2019, p. 587). However, this view is evidently not the status quo, as Australian Netball has backed the diversification of uniforms in New South Wales where options now include 'a range of singlets, T-shirts, long-sleeve tops, shorts and compression wear' as well as dresses (Hytner, 2021). The result of such a simple change would see an increase in inclusivity by reducing enforced femininity, as well as giving athletes the right to make decisions about their bodies – a right which is crucial if sports organisations and governing bodies are to be fully socially inclusive (Tjønndal, 2019).

This view does not prohibit the increase of men's teams, nor does it suggest that women and men should train separately. Research has shown that the inclusion of men's teams led to men showing more respect towards women's netball teams, as well as reducing hostility to openly gay players in the men's teams (Tagg, 2008b, p. 423). Furthermore, it may be hypothesised that updating rules on contact could be beneficial to netball so as to encourage its players to explore the body's capacities more fully and

avoid restrictive feminine body comportment. I suggest that this could be achieved through more liberal rules surrounding contact and methods of defending.

3.5 – Intermediate Summary

The above discussion has so far shown that, although netball may provide a pathway for female transcendence through positive modalities such as crux and flow, the sport also has the potential to interpellate femininity through negative modalities such as ambiguous transcendence and inhibited intentionality. The rules of netball which encourage ambiguous transcendence and inhibited intentionality via limitations on space were originally created on the grounds of false information surrounding female frailty and traditional concepts of femininity and, as shown in Part 2.2, it is the employment of false information that regularly contributes to the oppression of women. In addition to this, this thesis section has argued in line with Marfell's findings (2019) that the reinforcement of a heterosexual feminine identity remains an important feature of netball, perhaps aligning with Beauvoir's claim that the woman 'aspires to passivity' and is thus 'doomed to bad faith' (2011, p. 376).

Nonetheless, there is positivity to be found in the sport of netball. Recently, netball has evolved into a fast and agile sport at the top level. However, the evolution of the game should not stop now. Due to the growing commercialisation of women's netball, such as the Vitality Netball Superleague (UK) and Suncorp Super Netball League (Australia) there is a greater need to be aware of how women's sports are perceived and how monetisation may have an impact. Netball is at a critical point in its development. The sport not only has the power to influence how women in sport are perceived, but it can also reinforce an exclusionary gender binary by remaining a 'good girls' sport. Considering the arguments for and against sex integration, it is evident that there needs to be more fluidity in categorisations whilst also preserving a space for the non-masculine to engage in physical activity.

It might be argued that some rules, such as the rule of footwork, characterise the sport of netball and distinguish it from basketball without significantly hindering woman's transcendence. However, rules surrounding contact should be revised so that netballers can explore the body more fully via aggression and physical dominance whilst also combatting oppressive gender ideals and stereotypes associated with passivity. I also recommend that schools that incorporate netball into their Physical

Education curriculum for girls either opt for more physically liberating sports such as basketball, football or rugby, or educate pupils on the origins of netball so that a greater understanding of feminine comportment can be realised, challenged and ideally, overcome.

3.6 - On Sex Segregation

Sex and gender segregation is a social practice which has been widely discussed by feminist philosophers in the West, including Beauvoir. The complexities and impact of sex and gender segregation continue to be discussed today, particularly in the domain of sport. McDonagh and Pappano provide perhaps one of the most extensive analyses of sex segregation in sport, arguing that coercive sex segregation in sport perpetuates notions of female inferiority and reinforces the exclusion of females from all areas of American society (2008, p. 19). Beauvoir echoes this viewpoint from a more general perspective, stating that a status of 'separate but equal' serves as wrongful justification for discrimination, and perpetuates the roles of the oppressors and the oppressed (2011, pp. 12-13).

Beauvoir writes that for a woman to be emancipated and seen as man's equal, she must have 'access to the male world as man does to the female one' (2011, p. 741). There is reason to believe that this claim can be understood in more nuanced and alternative ways. Taking Beauvoir's theorisation into account, it may be hypothesised that sex and gender discrimination could be reduced if female athletes were granted access to the man's 'sport world'. How the man's 'sport world' may be accessed can be interpreted twofold: the first form of access being access to the same amount of income, sponsorship and airtime as their male counterparts. The second form of access may be understood more literally, with access implying a level of sex integration in sport. I will pay more attention to the latter interpretation of access in the following section.

In assessing the claim that sex integration in sport is emancipatory, I will first discuss how persuasive sex segregation in basketball reinforces gender ideals and stereotypes. Then, I will discuss how persuasive sex segregation has allowed positive change in women's basketball regarding the flourishing of queer space and identity. Following on from this, I will address how conservational sex segregation may provide an alternative standpoint and show that integration is not a necessary condition for

achieving female emancipation. Finally, I will examine sex integration via mixed and unisex sports with a particular focus on korfball and mixed sex netball before concluding that mixed sex sports can provide us with valuable lessons about cooperation and the creation of inclusive environments, but due to their biological demands and roles, are insufficient responses in tackling the oppression of women in sport.

3.6.1 - The Emergence of 'Basket' Sports and Methods of Sex Segregation

The sports of basketball, netball and korfball differ in terms of how they segregate sexes at the elite levels. Basketball is sex segregated, and its male and female teams do not play in a mixed sex or unisex format. Netball is also sex segregated, with women's[28] netball being significantly more popular at all levels, however there is an increase of men's and mixed netball leagues at national and international levels. Contrastingly, korfball is only played in a mixed sex format. Sex segregation is a way of categorising sport so that fair competition can be ensured. Not only this but sex categorisation has also been reinforced 'so that female sport might flourish' (Parry & Martínková, 2021, p. 1488). This binary categorisation is not without problems and it often excludes or questions the status of those who identify as trans or intersex, however, this topic is addressed by Sailors (2020), Martínková et al. (2022, 2023), and Lenskyj and Greey (2023) and need not be discussed further here.

Rather, my inquiry is based on McDonagh and Pappano's concepts of 'coercive sex segregation' and 'voluntary sex segregation' (2008, pp. 7-8). Coercive sex segregation is the act of categorising participants in sport and is based on three core beliefs: that females are on average athletically inferior to males (in some sports), that because of this, females need to be protected from males in sport, and that it is immoral for females and males to compete with or against one another (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 7). McDonagh and Pappano are not explicit as to whether the three core beliefs of inferiority, protection, and morality must be employed simultaneously for coercive sex segregation to occur, or whether one of the three beliefs is sufficient. It may be implied that only one of the beliefs is required for coercive sex segregation to occur, yet

[28] Here I use the gender term 'women's' and 'men's' opposed to sex terms 'female' and 'male' as to reflect the labels used by sports organisations and governing bodies. Therefore, I am using the terms interchangeably.

the beliefs often come as a trio for they are inextricably linked. Coercive sex segregation, however, differs from voluntary sex segregation, where a 'historically subordinated group' is self-segregated to 'compensate for past and present discrimination' (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, pp. 7-8).

A terminological caveat: though I agree with McDonagh and Pappano that sex segregated sports are based on beliefs surrounding female inferiority and their consequent need for physical, emotional and moral protection, I believe that their term may be better framed as *persuasive sex segregation*. McDonagh and Pappano argue that sex segregation in sports is 'coerced by law', and this is a reference to Title IX in the US (2008, p. 8). Sex segregated sports are, however, a global matter, and whilst I will not argue against the coercive nature of American federal and state law, the application of the terminology goes beyond the US and to other countries where laws may not necessitate sex segregation; rather, it is a convention. Furthermore, coercion suggests that there is an element of force and threat in sex segregation in sports. Whilst this may be in part true, I am more inclined to use the term persuasive sex segregation hereafter on the basis that it is more inclusive of non-codified methods of sex segregation, and further emphasises how women may be socially persuaded to be sex segregated through internalised beliefs of inferiority.

Additionally, I believe that McDonagh and Pappano's term of voluntary sex segregation may be better viewed as *conservational sex segregation*. I argue this on the basis that the term 'voluntary' implies that there is a level of individual choice made, however this may not be the case if an organisation or governing body has chosen to be sex segregated for conservational purposes. If there is no option for an individual agent to join a mixed sex team and she only has the option to join a team which is sex segregated for conservational purposes, the act is arguably not a voluntary one. Therefore, the term conservational sex segregation will be employed hereafter in lieu of voluntary sex segregation.

Here, a major distinction between basketball and netball can be drawn. Basketball is arguably a persuasively sex segregated sport. Because the sport was created with young male college athletes in mind, the sport favours speed and power, but most importantly, height. Therefore, basketball is male-apposite and not female-apposite. The adaptation of basketball for women by Berenson in 1891 was based upon the beliefs that women were physically inferior to men but nonetheless required a physical education. Forward-thinking women such as Berenson, suffragist Susan B.

Anthony and physical educator Amy Morris Homans believed that women's emancipation relied on increased physical strength and self-sufficiency (Grundy & Shackleford, 2007, p. 16). Despite this, women's physical education was still taboo during this period, resulting in the game's 'feminisation' to soothe critics and their preference for rigid sex segregation rules.

Netball, however, falls upon blurred lines of persuasive and conservational sex segregation. On the one hand, netball stems from women's basketball – a game originally created to maintain femininity. Yet on the other hand, women can be considered a historically subordinated group, and their efforts to play sports were and continue to be long and hard fought. As discussed above, netball provides 'a safe space for women to play sport' according to WN's CEO Claire Briegal, as 'the world isn't an equal place yet and there is a place for women-only programmes' (Gwilliam, 2018). Though netball is strongly historically rooted in persuasive sex segregation, it has arguably grown to become a conservational sex segregated sport. In 2021 WN released their strategic plan, which states that they are driving for game development, highlighting that they will continue to 'build on [their] unique female-focused foundations while embracing boys' and men's' participation through collaboration and support' (World Netball, 2021b). This further suggests that although they are developing the game in alternative formats, the governing body aims to preserve women's netball as a conservationally sex segregated sport, despite research showing that co-participation in mixed sex netball yields positive results and noncontact sport policy ought to be developed (Tissera et al., 2018).

Arguably sex segregation in sport is a policy issue as it 'sanctions, rather than challenges, pernicious stereotypes about women's inferiority' (Sharrow, 2021, p. 260). Furthermore, sex segregation in sports has many after-effects of 'spillovers', such as reinforcing the idea of sex binary and excluding those who do not align with strict biological senses of female and male (Sharrow, 2021, p. 260). In their analysis of Title IX, Sharrow highlights how the policy allows mixed sex classrooms but sex segregated sports teams (2021, p. 260). To Sharrow, this is paradoxical for the policy has the aim of treating girls and boys the same, yet ultimately treats them as equal but different when it comes to sports, thus fulfilling the Jim Crow style laws and 'knitting civil rights policy to binary notions about sexual difference and biology' (2021, p. 260).

Though Sharrow raises some interesting points, their argument does not consider the position of sports such as netball which hold that males and females are

categorically biologically different. In sports which are male-apposite it is unusual to find significant overlaps between male and female performances, simply because the sport is unsuited to the average female athlete's physique. Even in ultra-events[29], where it has been recently speculated that women are better ultra-athletes than men, research has shown that 'males generally outperform females in most ultra-endurance events and over most distances, with the exception of extreme distance swimming' (Tiller et al., 2021, p. 897) and it is a 'rare' occurrence when females do outperform males in endurance running (though certainly and increasingly possible) (Besson et al., 2022).

Many sports scholars appear to support the 'opening up' of categories in sports where sex and gender integration is feasible. However, some sports are likely to remain sex segregated for conservation, and this issue Sharrow fails to explore fully. I cannot comment on whether we will see females outperforming males in male-apposite sports in the future, especially as their past and current subjugation in the realm of sports has created a substantial gap which will take many years to overcome. However, I will address the effects of persuasive and conservational sex segregation and its impact on women's sports.

3.6.2 - Women's Basketball, The WNBA and Persuasive Sex Segregation

Though a global game, the game of basketball is firmly fixed by its American roots and is considered a 'national pastime' which embodies American culture (Grundy et al., 2014, p. 134). The first women's basketball tournament was thought to be held in March 1892, whilst the first collegiate game was played at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1893 (Myerscough, 1995, p. 149). It is hypothesised that women's basketball rules initially differed from the men's game out of misinterpretation of Naismith's rules and were further complicated by prevailing attitudes towards sports for women (Myerscough, 1995; Treagus, 2005). From the early 1930s onwards, the game began to develop as a more physical, faster and skilful game. Guarding an opponent was introduced into the rules in 1932, and the 'Continuous, unlimited dribble' was introduced in 1966 (NCAA, 2012). Over time, the women's game in the USA began to look more like the men's game which it had originally

[29] An ultra-event may be defined as 'sporting activities lasting >6 hours', such as but not limited to running, swimming, cycling or cross-country skiing (Scheer, 2019).

stemmed from, with the only differences today being ball size, the game clock length[30] and the location of the women's three-point line. The game has always been persuasively sex segregated due to the original beliefs that women are frailer athletes and would suffer 'moral, physical and emotional breakdown' if allowed to fully enter the male sphere of sport (Cahn, 1993, p. 345).

For a long time, the effects of persuasive segregation have negatively impacted women's basketball. The women's basketball game, along with other sports at the time, was considered both physically harmful to the female reproductive system and morally harmful, causing them to build muscle and become undesirable, 'mannish', Amazonian women (Cahn, 1993, p. 343). Uptake at collegiate level saw the popularity of the game increase, however college officials had no intention of widening the audience for women's basketball: as Grundy et al. noted, 'College women had a theme, but not a stage.' (2014, 140).

Investment was therefore a major issue for the women's game. Following a World Championship gold medal in 1953 and the signing of Title IX in 1972, the Women's Professional Basketball League (WBL) was formed in 1978 (Staffo, 1998). However, the league folded after three seasons due to various reasons such mismanagement, poor treatment of athletes and a significant loss of funds, and it was not until the NBA formed the WNBA in 1997 that women's basketball began to gain momentum (Staffo, 1998). When a female sporting institution is created through the power of its male counterpart, the foundation of the institution is arguably rooted in a Beauvoirian Subject-Other power dynamic (Howe, 2022a). Through this Beauvoirian lens the NBA is seen as the 'original' or the 'Subject', and the WNBA is seen as the 'Other' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, 6), exemplifying the concept of oppression constructed as a dichotomy. Women are technically eligible to compete in the NBA as it does not prohibit female players[31], but are given their own league in concession, remaining economically and 'inextricably tied' to their male creators (McDonald, 2012, p. 213).

Whether the WNBA is still disadvantaged by its origin is debatable. On the one hand, the NBA gave women a legitimate space to play professional basketball.

[30] The NCAA men play in two 20 minute halves which the NCAA women play in four 10 minute quarters (NCAA, 2021)

[31] The NBA rulebook does not explicitly prohibit female players, however, it does assume that players will be men by using masculine pronouns he/his (nba.com, 2019). Female players have been drafted to play, but have either been denied the chance by the commissioner or have declined to try out for the team (Schwartz, 2020).

Currently, only five teams – Indiana Fever, New York Liberty, Washington Mystics, Connecticut Sun, and Minnesota Lynx – have shared ownership with their NBA brother teams. The remaining seven teams are owned by non-NBA groups or persons. The NBA's success has grown over the years, however this might not have been achieved without the billion-dollar public investments and significant media coverage which the WNBA has not benefitted from (Agha & Berri, 2021, p. 59). WNBA commissioner Engelbert states that the slow uptake of the league is because 'It's a male model discounted by 80 to 90%' and needs to prove that it is no longer the NBA's 'little sister', suggesting that the Subject-Other power relation remains (Thompson & Voepel, 2021).

Revenue has significantly increased since the WNBA's inauguration yet a significant gap in player salary remains, with the average WNBA player earning 'about $1.25 for every $100' the average NBA player earns (Agha & Berri, 2021, p. 59). NBC Sports reported that the WNBA salary is 'roughly 1.5 percent of the average NBA salary, which exceeds $7 million' (Poole, 2021). Further research has also shown that even though there are large-estimated revenue differences between the NBA and the WNBA, the players in the NBA have always received a higher percentage of the revenue compared to players in the WNBA (Agha & Berri, 2021, p. 60). Because the WNBA was established decades later than the NBA and was continually seen as the inferior league rather than a league for a different category, it may be suggested that persuasive sex segregation enables the economic exploitation of women in sport, contributing to their oppression: 'Women's professional basketball…upholds ideals of capitalism' and although the women are promoted as challenges to heteronormative femininity, their objectification 'remains firmly in place' (Hanis-Martin, 2006, p. 269).

Arguably, the economic exploitation that is enabled by persuasive sex segregation can lead to the sexualisation of athletes, an issue which has already been discussed in great detail in section 1.3. Many WNBA players are given tutorials on how to apply cosmetics during their rookie orientation (Abraham, 2013; de la Cretaz, 2019). In the late 90s, the WNBA website had a section titled 'WNBA Unveils Uniform', which considered whether the women would play in dresses, skirts, tunics, or shorts, and 'detailed information about the materials and [colours] used for the final choice of uniforms' (Baroffio-Bota & Banet-Weiser 2006, p. 530). Baroffio-Bota and Banet-Weiser argue that 'the presence of this feature tells us something about the various ways in which the players and the institution of the WNBA function to shore up

dominant notions and ideologies about the construction of womanhood' (2006, p. 530), and this further supports Krane's concept of 'balancing' femininity and athleticism for the sake of career prosperity (2001). McDonald also highlights marketing strategies used by the WNBA to secure profits, employing themes of empowerment, motherhood, and players as 'concerned citizens' in their campaigns (2012, p. 211). From this perspective, it may be suggested that the WNBA encouraged its players in the early 2000s to comply with heteronormative gender ideals and self-sexualise for monetary gain.

Contrary to the above, it is strongly arguable that the WNBA has developed considerably since its inauguration through its 'symbiotic' relationship with the NBA (McDonald 2012, 213). Though it may be suggested that the WNBA started as a league that tailored itself to the male gaze, it is evident that the WNBA has since diverged. Though make-up classes are still an option for WNBA players, there is an evident shift away from heteronormative femininity towards androgyny. Journalist Britni de la Cretaz stated the following in 2019:

> WNBA teams are changing the way they approach marketing to their fans and portraying their athletes. Instead of emphasizing sex appeal and heteronormative styles, the league is leaning into the aesthetic that many of their fans and players already prefer, one that includes androgynous and masculine looks. Beginning with the social media accounts of players and teams, continuing through media accounts like WSLAM and LeagueFits, and culminating in official partnerships, the league is celebrating and showcasing androgynous swag. (de la Cretaz, 2019)

This is further supported by Nike sponsoring WNBA player Brittney Griner to wear their menswear line (Fagan, 2013), evidencing how there is diminishing pressure for female basketball players to conform to heteronormative ideals, and in some cases going directly against them. Nonetheless, it is hard to quantify how progressive the WNBA really is with regard to gender ideals, reinforced femininity and hetero/homosexuality. Muller argues that 'WNBA spaces are contested terrains' in that they promote heteronormativity via marketing strategies yet also attract a 'large lesbian following' (2007, p. 200). Though the WNBA provides spectators with powerful female athletic performances where traditional gendered power hierarchies are challenged, the league constructs and reinforces 'naturalized, spatialized

heteronormativity' (Muller, 2007, p. 210).

Though Muller's theorisation dates back 15 years, recent marketing campaigns seem to continue to try to negotiate the images of female basketballers that WNBA creates. Ahead of the 2016 season the WNBA launched its campaign titled 'Watch Me' (Wilson, 2015). The promotional video for the 20th season of the league begins with WNBA players dribbling, tackling and scoring, and then it pans to a player walking her daughter to school, followed by an image of Griner holding the WNBA trophy (*Watch MeI,* 2015). The voiceover states "You think I can't train like a beast? Give it everything I have? Get her to school on time? Be who I want? Love who I want? You think I can't do this all whilst chasing my dream?" which suggests that the WNBA is aiming to promote is athletes as women outside of basketball, as well as within (*Watch MeI,* 2015). The campaign video further suggests that the WNBA is heteronormative as the players are possibly mothers, yet also non-heteronormative as the players possibly identify as queer. This campaign video is therefore open to interpretation: either the video is aiming to reconcile the image of Amazonian-athletes with traditional roles such as the mother, or, it is displaying the WNBA as diverse and resistant to a single gender role.

At a glance, it is possible that this evidences the WNBA's attempt to deconstruct gender ideals and stereotypes in a bid to be more inclusive towards its players and fans. Though much of the WNBA's marketing strategies arguably evidence 'pink capitalism'[32] – this being the 'co-opting of progressive movements, usually LGBTQ+ civil rights, by the media and corporations which thereby mainstream these ideas in a capitalist economy' (Verma, 2021) – the high percentage of 'out' women in the WNBA suggests women's basketball is becoming an increasingly safe space for members of the LGBTQ+ community[33] (Weldon & Zeigler, 2022). In the next section, I will consider whether women's-only, persuasively sex segregated sports allow queer expression to flourish in that they are free of problematic sporting masculinities, employing the works of multiple scholars such as Cahn (1993) and Cleland et al.

[32] This may also be referred to as 'rainbow capitalism', 'global homocapitalism' or 'capitalismo rosa'.
[33] Despite this, the LGBTQ+ community is not homogenous as experiences for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans and queer persons can differ greatly, and this should be acknowledged. Due to the scope of this thesis, transgender athletes are not discussed here. Although they are grouped under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, transgender athlete experiences in sport greatly differ compared to other members of the LGBTQ+ community (Schnell, 2022).

(2021). I will also present an alternative position argued by Mann and Krane (2019), before summarising the impact of persuasive sex segregation on women's basketball.

3.6.3 - Persuasive Sex Segregation and Queer Sport Spaces

It is without a doubt that homophobia was, and continues to be, a pervasive form of oppression in competitive sports. Types of homophobia in sport have varied in both covert and overt forms, may this be through (but not limited to) verbal and physical harassment, exclusion from sports teams and drafts, anti-gay policies, and it manifests in athletes, administrators and spectators alike. Elite level basketball, though changing, continues to harbour homophobic and heterosexist attitudes. For example, former NBA player Tim Hardaway stated in 2007 "You know, I hate gay people, so I let it be known...I don't like gay people and I don't like to be around gay people. I am homophobic. I don't like it. It shouldn't be in the world or in the United States" (ESPN.com, 2007). Two years earlier, a member of Penn State women's basketball team, Jennifer Harris, sued the university on the basis that she was being discriminated against by the head coach, who suspected she was gay and subsequently axed her from the team (*Harris v. Portland*, 2007; Sternod, 2010). More recently, former WNBA player Candice Wiggins claimed that the players in the league discriminated against her because she was heterosexual, further alleging that 98 per cent of the WNBA players are gay (Leonard 2017). Though the claims of bullying are concerning, Wiggins' claim shows that the inaccurate and potentially harmful stereotyping of queer women can come from within, as well as from the outside.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community are all likely to experience homophobia. However, the forms and manifestations of homophobia can drastically differ depending on how one identifies. In women's sports, it has been theorised that homophobia manifests in six distinct ways: silence, denial, apology, promotion of a heterosexy image, attacks on lesbians, and preference for male coaches (Griffin, 1992, P. 253). Furthermore, whilst various manifestations of homophobia will affect all genders, men and women in sport will likely experience homophobia differently as the basis for homophobic discrimination differs. Stereotypes of gay or effeminate men directly contrast masculine athletic stereotypes because they lack male 'toughness' (Braumüller & Schlunski, 2022, p. 16), causing them to stay 'closeted' so that their true identity is unquestioned by those around them (Fenwick & Simpson 2017, p. 133). Male athletes

who defy heteronormative ideals in sport may be given derogatory homophobic names and considered to 'play like a girl' irrespective of their sexuality (Symons et al., 2017, 470).

In specific sports cultures, such as American basketball culture, 'coming out' in the male population remains rare, with only one NBA basketball player, John Collins, publicly revealing his sexuality as a gay man (Felt, 2013). In other major leagues in the US, 'coming out' is few and far between, with Luke Prokop being the first openly gay hockey player contracted in the NHL coming out in 2021 (Benjamin, 2021), and defensive lineman Carl Nassib coming out a few months later in what was considered a first in NFL history (Belson, 2021). Krane hypothesises that, amongst other reasons, media-oriented, fanfare-style 'coming out' announcements in men's sports are due to the poor visibility of LGBTQ+ persons in such spaces, compared to women's sports which have exhibited high-profile lesbian athletes since the 1980s, and are therefore a little more normalised (2016, p. 240).

Lesbian women are assumed to be more natural athletes in comparison to heterosexual and cisgender women as they are stereotyped to be masculine, butch, assertive and competitive (Kauer & Rauscher, 2018, p. 55). Kauer and Rauscher write that because women's basketball demands aggression and muscularity for success the players are considered to fulfil the 'butch, masculine, and lesbian' stereotype, even if they do not identify as such (2018, p. 56). Research conducted by Cleland et al. has also suggested that this stereotype continues to exist in women's football in the UK, with the remaining presumption that 'butch lesbians are better suited to football than heterosexual women' (Cleland et al., 2021, p. 10).

Nonetheless, the label of 'lesbian' has been used as a way of limiting women athletes' power (Blinde & Taub, 1992, p. 532) and produces 'substantial challenges for lesbian sportswomen' (Symons et al., 2017, p. 470). In some cases, women who present as butch and muscular (queer or not) are considered suspicious (Cahn, 1993, p. 349; Griffin, 1992, p. 252), with suggestions that they are secretly males or using performance-enhancing drugs. Identifying as LGBTQ+ is, therefore, a double-edged sword for women in sport: on the one hand, the identification can create a sense of belonging, yet on the other hand, it can expose women to exclusionary and discriminatory experiences.

Building upon the view that LGBTQ+ identification in sport can create inclusive environments, it may be suggested that support for persuasively sex

segregated spaces in sport has allowed the flourishing of queer belonging in women's basketball due to a perceived reduction in homophobia (Waldron, 2016, p. 338). Forbes estimated in 2020 that WNBA fans are 'between 2 to 6.6 times more likely than an average sports fan to be interested in politics and especially women's rights' (Kleen, 2020), evidencing a strong sense of allyship amongst them. Furthermore, as highlighted above, Outsports.com estimate that 1 in 5 women in the WNBA are 'publicly out', however this figure is open to interpretation (Weldon & Zeigler, 2022). Nonetheless, this supports current literature that the WNBA has a strong lesbian and queer presence amongst fans (Dolance, 2005; Muller, 2007; Myrdahl, 2011; McDonald ,2012) and players (D'Arcangelo, 2022; de la Cretaz, 2022; Willis et al., 2022). From this, it would be reasonable to conclude that although the WNBA has a history of LGBTQ+ erasure (Muller, 2007; Myrdahl, 2011), the tables have turned and the acceptance and promotion of LGBTQ+ rights in the league demonstrate a new chapter.

Analysing this further, Cahn argues that sport not only has the ability to create environments where queer women can express themselves more comfortably and form communities, developing what she refers to as a 'lesbian subculture and identity', sport can also facilitate the 'coming out' process (1993, pp. 356-357). Additionally, it is theorised that women's sport can provide a space where traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity are tested and reorganised (Cahn, 1993; Hillier, 2005). Women in sport, and specifically LGBTQ+ women in sport, positively disrupt sport as a site for the reproduction of hegemonic masculine ideals, and this is because sport provides women with opportunities for 'queer resistance' via gender transgression and sexual fluidity (Broad, 2001, p. 198; Hillier, 2005, pp. 11-12). I will expand on the concept of resistance in greater detail in Part 5.

However, this disruption may be viewed as a somewhat minor threat in the wider context of sports. In an analysis of women's football in the UK, it has been shown that there is a 'lack of prejudice directed towards sexuality', with (male) football fans exhibiting accepting attitudes towards lesbian and bisexual women footballers (Cleland et al., 2021, p. 11). Men's football, like many other 'masculine sports', is strongly based on ideals of assertiveness, aggression and power (Cleland et al., 2021, p. 4), and continues to foster a less open culture surrounding queer athletes as evidenced by the only gay active footballer in British men's professional football coming out in May 2022 (MacInnes, 2022). Because football is persuasively sex segregated, the resistance to hegemonic masculinity that women's football creates and reproduces is

often inconsequential to men's football (Cleland et al., 2021, p. 14). So long as sex segregated sports favour masculine, heteronormative ideals, the possibility of altering the environment of these sports towards greater sexual inclusivity is minimised as women's sports teams do not wield enough power to go beyond their sphere and influence their male counterparts. As a result, queerness may flourish in women's sports teams due to persuasive sex segregation, but the more inclusive climate does not extend beyond these perimeters.

On a final note, it is worth highlighting Mann and Krane's analysis (2018) on the complexities of lesbian, bisexual and queer inclusion in women's sport settings. Whilst the creation of safe spaces in women's sport for LGBTQ+ athletes can be beneficial to the flourishing of inclusive cultures, it is often not so straightforward, and even counterproductive. In some sports settings, butch lesbian athletes are favoured over feminine lesbian athletes because of the stereotype that they are more naturally predisposed to sports (Mann & Krane, 2018, p. 80). However, this dynamic may also be reversed, where butch lesbian athletes are ostracised and feminine lesbian athletes are favoured on the basis that feminine lesbians are more consumer-friendly in a heteronormative society (Mann & Krane, 2018, p. 80). Ravel and Rail have expanded on the latter with a discussion of young Francophone sportswomen from Montreal who identified as 'gaie', which can be understood as 'a more feminine version of lesbian sexuality while being discursively dissociated from the butch image' (2008, p. 12). 'Othering' was also a possibility, with lesbianism being considered a hierarchically superior label over bisexual, and this has been demonstrated in research by Caudwell (2007) and Mann and Krane (2018, p. 81).

Furthermore, Mann and Krane highlight how sexuality in sport is interconnected with issues such as race, classicism and nationalism, and the eradication of homonegativism could lead to the promotion of other such issues (2018, p. 81). Whilst sex segregation in basketball has likely allowed the fruitful development of the WNBA as a safe space for queer expression, the reality is likely to be much more nuanced as Mann and Krane suggest and requires further research.

3.6.4 - Netball and Conservational Sex Segregation

As highlighted by McDonagh and Pappano (2008), the debate on whether sport should be sex segregated opens us to multiple complex questions – namely, could/would

women win if they played with men? And could/would women win enough support if they were to keep sport separate? The former has already been debated by the likes of English (1978), Sailors (2016) and Martínková (2020a), thus I turn my attention to the latter query and its application to netball: rather than *could* or *would* women win enough support for netball to be a viable woman-centric sport, I ask whether they *should*. It is evident that national governing bodies and sponsors believe that netball is a viable woman-centric sport, with England Netball receiving a sizeable grant of £21,280,390 of government and National Lottery funding from Sport England' from 2022 until 2027 (Waterhouse, 2022). In addition, Pêl-Rwyd Cymru (Wales Netball) received a grant of £100,000 from the Welsh Government in 2021 (Wales Netball, 2021), and Netball New Zealand (Netball NZ) received $1 million NZ dollars in conjunction with New Zealand Cricket by multinational bank ANZ to aid 'cornerstone' community sports post-COVID-19 (Sport New Zealand, 2020).

Support for the game of netball is seen as a specifically feminist directive, as it is viewed as an avenue for increasing women's participation and narrowing the gender participation gap in sport[34], consequently promoting female empowerment. England Netball (statement A) and Pêl-Rwyd Cymru (statement B) state the following in their justification for grant allocations:

> (A) The funding will enable England Netball to drive sustained systemic change through the delivery of its purpose-led Adventure strategy that aims to open up netball to new audiences and *help women and girls to belong, flourish and soar*. (Waterhouse, 2022) [emphasis added].

> (B) As an indoor, team sport, the pandemic has had a profound impact on netball, *played by tens of thousands of women and girls across the country*. This funding will help the National Governing Body continue to lead netball through the ongoing restrictions and will help to safeguard the future of the sport. (Wales, Netball 2021) [emphasis added].

These statements reflect the position held by World Netball (WN), who continue to be a woman-centric organisation:

[34] Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there was major concerns that women's sport was hit harder than men's (Bowes et al., 2021), impacting the gender pay gap and participation numbers. As a result, funding programmes were established to counter the impact the pandemic had on sport.

> Netball is one of the few team sports to attract girls and women to participate in large numbers contributing to addressing the current global disparity in sports participation, with the resultant benefits on health and wellbeing. This sets netball apart from many other sports which are working hard to attract females. This is netball's unique selling point and is something that should be maximised (World Netball, 2018b).

Though the origins of netball are steeped in persuasive sex segregation, it would appear that the game is continuing to resist sex integration through the conservational sex segregation. Below, I will continue my analysis of netball by examining the advantages and disadvantages which are caused by or linked to conservational sex segregation. With a great deal of national support, netball is now bidding for a position as a sport at the Brisbane 2032 Olympics. However, because of its large gender imbalance, the sport may be required to make drastic changes. In this section, I will discuss how netball has positioned itself as a 'safe space' for women to be physically active. After analysing 'space' through a Beauvoirian lens, I will discuss how recognition and respect are impacted by conservational sex segregation. Finally, I will address netball's bid to be an Olympic sport, concluding that netball will only remain as netball in a non-Olympic setting.

3.6.5 - Netball as a 'Safe Space'

In their analysis of what it means to be 'safe' for women in the UK, Lewis et al. state that women want to be 'safe *from*' something and 'safe *to* [do]' something (2015, p. 3). In particular, it is argued that women want to be safe from misogyny which enables them to act in a way that makes them feel 'fully human', which includes speaking and being heard, learning and developing cognitively, and being emotionally expressive (Lewis et al., 2015, pp. 3-7). The safety which women experience in women-only spaces is sometimes considered an 'ontological' freedom from 'heteronormative expectations and limitations' (Lewis et al., 2015, pp. 9-10), however, it is open to debate whether this freedom exists in sports environments. In relation to this, Lewis et al.'s research commented on how participants in their data collection reported negative experiences in other women-only spaces, with particular reference to school sports teams (2015, p. 11).

It is often claimed that netball is a 'safe space' for women to engage in sport – however, before I determine what is meant by this, an understanding of what 'space' is must be agreed upon, as well as how this concept is altered to become a 'safe' or a 'women's' space. According to French philosopher Lefebvre, social space cannot be conceptualised as a simple object but an arena where 'fresh actions' are permitted; subsequently prohibiting agents and permitting others in the creation of general knowledge (Lefebvre, 2012, p. 73). Simply put, space is a social product. Building upon Lefebvre, van Ingen suggests that lived space can be both oppressive and enabling: on the one hand, space enables discrimination and marginalisation, yet on the other, 'counterspaces' are 'dynamic, counterhegemonic social spaces that enable alternative geographies' (2003, p. 204). For van Ingen, space represents and materialises power (2003, p. 207).

Beauvoir discusses how women lack the means to create female spaces, writing:

> It is that they lack the concrete means to organise themselves into a unit that could posit itself in opposition. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and unlike the proletariat, they have no solidarity of labour or interests; they even lack their own space that makes communities of American blacks, or the Jews in ghettos, or the workers in Saint Denis or Renault factories. They live dispersed among men, tied by homes, work, economic interests and social conditions to certain men – fathers or husbands – more closely than to other women. (2011, p. 9)

However, it is strongly arguable that women in Western societies have increasingly created 'women-only' spaces despite Beauvoir's musings, and netball may be viewed as one of the very few strongholds for women in current modern sports. Netball is often considered a safe space for women (Marfell, 2016; Tagg, 2008a) and minority ethnicities (Doyle et al., 2013; Whitau & Ockerby, 2019) to engage in sport, where they are safe from misogynistic attitudes and the male gaze commonly found in masculine sports, whilst being safe to exercise without judgement. Elite English netballers Camille Buchanan and Eboni Usoro-Brown explained the emancipatory effect of playing netball in an interview with Sky Sports, stating that netball celebrates 'diversity and inclusion' and that 'women and girls can come to netball, feel safe and be who they are' (Sky Sports, 2021).

Supporting Usoro-Brown and Buchanan's claims, England Netball also stated that the results of their 2021 survey on Diversity and Belonging indicated that netball is 'seen as welcoming, safe, supportive and fun for girls and women' (England Netball, 2021). Statistics from this report reflect the racial diversity of the England Vitality Roses[35] team, with 61% of the team reporting as white and 39% of the team reporting as black and/or mixed heritage, however they report that there are no Asian athletes – nonetheless, the data suggests that the elite team 'significantly over indexes compared to the national average' (England Netball, 2021).

When considering all levels of the governing body, England Netball membership shows a greater range of racial diversity, however its members are predominantly (78.4%) white (England Netball, 2021). Furthermore, 25% of members live in areas with an average household income of greater than £100k, and 5.1% of members live in the bottom 20% areas for deprivation, indicating that netball is more accessible in affluent areas. Finally, an analysis of focus group discussions showed that netball is perceived as a 'straight environment' by those who play the game (England Netball, 2021). From these findings, it may be initially concluded that England Netball provides a safe space for heterosexual white women, yet fails to provide ample support for ethnic minorities, people from low-income areas, and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

It is not only England netball which appears to support white women more than other ethnicities. In a recent report, The Netball Australia Board found that 'Netball is not always a safe cultural space for Indigenous girls and women' (Australian Netball, 2020, p. 22). Between 2021-22 The Black Diamonds project was launched - this being a joint initiative between Netball West Australia, its charity arm Glass Jar Australia, and several partner organisations - with the aim of reviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander netball engagement and retention across Western Australia (Netball Australia, 2022). In its history, elite Australian netball has only seen 'two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players at the highest level of the game, one umpire, and zero coaches' (Netball Australia, 2022). In terms of LGBTQ+ participation, Netball Australia is yet to release figures which can be used as an accurate comparison to those published by England Netball, thus it is hard to determine whether netball in Australia can be labelled as a predominantly heterosexual environment or not.

[35] The national women's team for England netball.

Considering the above, it is arguable that netball is only a safe space if the women involved are white, heterosexual cis-gender women. This is possibly due to the reproduction of a 'feminized physical cultural space' that netball appears to foster (Marfell, 2019, p. 586). In her analysis of club-level netball in Hamilton, New Zealand, Marfell found that her local netball team training arena, the Hamilton City Netball Centre, heavily contributed to the gendered and heterosexualised landscape of the sport through various means such as advertisements for whiteware, homewares and domestic services, a pink-painted netball retail outlet, and spaces such as a playground dedicated to mothering and childrearing (Marfell, 2019, p. 591).

Further to this, Marfell's research discusses how the New Zealand media contribute to the reproduction of netballers as heterosexual women, may this be through 'inconspicuous' references to a players' femininity and/or heterosexuality, referring to the players as 'girls' or 'mums', and articles on players in lifestyle magazines which 'frequently downplay sport and instead focus on women's looks, relationships, sexual orientations and their lives outside of the game' (2019, pp. 592-593). From this discussion, it may be initially concluded that the 'safe spaces' that netball governing bodies promote themselves as are heavily gendered, contradicting the concept of a safe space for women. Thus, it is important that this research examines if and how conservationally sex segregated sports such as netball can be a directive suitable for all players.

3.6.6 - Recognition and Respect for Women in Netball

It may be argued that if sport is segregated by sex, female athletes will be denied the opportunity to demonstrate athletic excellence alongside their male counterparts, reinforcing beliefs that female athletes are physically incapable of 'playing with the boys' when the truth often is that the constraints are purely down to sex categorisation. Consequently, female athletes do not receive the recognition and respect[36] they deserve which results in females being perceived as inferior athletes. Many scholars (see Burke, 2010; Martínková, 2020a, 2020b; Sharrow, 2021; Travers, 2012) advocate for various forms of sex integration in modern sports competitions. Nonetheless, these theorisations of sex integration are not without their problems. A major problem

[36] For further discussions on the relationship between respect and gender in sport, see Burrows (2020) and Howe (2020).

highlighted by Tamburrini (2020) is that female-only teams and leagues become watered down when their best players move up to play alongside men.

However, these studies have often focussed on sports that have historically favoured male participation, or sports that are considered unisex sports. Sailors (2014) argues that the decision to segregate sports by sex depends on four major distinctions, these being whether the sport is individual/team sport, direct/indirect competition, contact/non-contact, and amateur/professional. Though she discusses how the conservational sex segregation of female teams can be empowering, the decision on whether to segregate or integrate requires further investigation with these distinctions and the 'conditions of its genesis' in mind (Sailors, 2014, p. 71). In sum, the decision to integrate the sexes in sport is not a decision that can be made lightly.

Expanding on Sailors' insight, the focus of this thesis now returns to the sport of netball and the problems of recognition and respect. Firstly, whether the 'recogniser' in sport should have specific qualities must be questioned. Leaning on a definition given by Charles Taylor, Howe suggests that the key criterion for a recogniser is that they are a human being (2020, p. 500). However, it is arguable that some scholars implicitly believe that there are extra criteria for determining who qualifies as a recogniser. In discussing the benefits of sex integrated karate, Maclean states that male and female athletes training together allows 'women to be seen, accepted and respected as better than some men', consequently fostering egalitarian attitudes amongst athletes (2016, p. 1376). However, this may indicate that Maclean - and others who promote this 'promise' of sex integration (see Channon et al., 2016) – implicitly believe that if females are to be granted respect, the recogniser has greater authority if they are male, and more specifically, a male who shares the same space as a female.

This view assumes that male sports are of superior value, and if female athletes can play on a similar level and garner respect from males, they are more like men and are thus physiologically superior females. Consequently, this would indicate that when participating in sex segregated sports, females are less likely to be recognised and respected because there are fewer males in the space (if any) to grant it. This appears to be problematic for those endorsing the benefits of sex integrated sports, for they are arguably putting too much weight on the value of male recognition when it is not even clear that female sports really require it. Furthermore, the importance of male recognition presupposes that the 'male game' is the golden standard - something which Burrow seems to assume (2020, p. 77) – thus, it is males who are more entitled to

distributing respect. Although the overall goal of athletes being seen as equal irrespective of sex is promoted, the foundations of this claim – that female athletes require male athletes' respect and approval in the pursuit of equality – expose a deeply sexist fault in this line of thinking.

As highlighted earlier, netball is considered primarily a sport for females, and the governing bodies are keen on preserving the sport as first and foremost, female-oriented. Providing that the above discussion is true, netball, as it stands, appears to suffer. If female netballers play against female netballers, are watched by female spectators, and are coached by female coaches, they are capable of achieving a limited amount of respect as athletes for their recognisers are rarely male. From a more radical understanding of the above discussion, it could be hypothesised that if male recognition is the only way for sport to obtain respectability, then female-only sports are not worth playing. Despite netball being the number one sport for women and girls in England (England Netball, 2021b), Australia (AusPlay, 2022), and New Zealand (McCarthy et al., 2021), it is possible that the sport will only achieve sex and gender equality if it includes more male recognisers, may this be through more sex integration in the game or appealing to more male spectators, thus welcoming more males into the netball space. The implications also reach beyond netball, and could be applied to other sports which are categorised by sex. Not only would women's netball and its athletes fail to be recognised as respectable, so too would women's sports as a whole.

This intermediate conclusion is extreme, and the increase of English elite netball being televised (Sky Sports [online], 2021) and participated in (Rowbottom, 2019) suggests that something in this argument is amiss. With this in mind, whether female athletes really need male recognition to qualify as worthy of respect must be considered. The image which springs to mind from this question is the philosophical thought experiment of a female utopia, where males are excluded from society and are no longer needed, and so sports are not split into female sports and male sports, but rather female sports are just sports. In this case, the only possible recogniser is female, so it is impossible for recognisers to be more favourable and authoritative on the basis of their sex. Alternatively, the authority of the recogniser may be based on their athletic prowess, and so the athletes who are the fastest, strongest, most tactical and most skilled in their sport, are the ones capable of giving legitimate respect. Yet this thought experiment does not resolve our issue: in reality, many would agree that male athletes on average are (at least in male apposite sports) the superior athletes when compared to

female athletes because their biology allows them to – again, on average – be stronger and faster than females[37].

To address this issue, what is required is a change in perspective on how agents should be granted respect. If one is to respect the fastest or the strongest athlete, there is an adherence to a 'winning at all costs' mentality, where one respects the victors in sport the most, even if they are less deserving – recognition then becomes 'an assessment of one's labour rather than the person who labours' (Howe 2020, p. 506). Furthermore, if one is to only respect those who are considered the best, either due to their technical abilities or tactical know-how, those who may fall outside these parameters are denied equal status, which is, according to Howe, a denial of their basic human rights (2020, p. 506). In applying this perspective to netball, one is forced to view sport not as a mechanism of winning medals, but as an outlet for achieving much more in a holistic sense. Though research may show that sex integrated sports can foster greater respect for female athletes, the abandonment of a 'winning at all costs' mentality would allow for netball to remain conservationally sex segregated yet also equally worthy of respect. The threat of male netballers being viewed as athletically superior compared to female netballers which governing bodies currently fear would in fact no longer be a threat at all, thus it would make no difference to governing bodies if they were to remain conservationally sex segregated or sex integrated – the emphasis would be on the benefits of netball as place for physical exertion and exploration of character.

If one views sports as a mechanism for achieving success beyond winning at all costs – improved physical fitness, socialisation, and development of moral character – those who participate in such sports should be granted equal respect. Though it has been suggested that sex integrated sports are preferential for females if they are to be recognised as athletes of equal merit, this analysis emphasises that respect should not be given on the basis of female athletes being seen by male athletes, nor that men are more authoritative recognisers on the basis of their biological advantages, but that female athletes, as persons, are due respect on the basis of their status as humans. Female athletes can independently demonstrate athletic excellence without men being the frame of reference, and because of this, both female athletes in persuasively sex

[37] Note that tactical ability and skilfulness are not biological.

segregated sports and conservationally sex segregated sports can achieve equal recognition.

3.6.7 - Netball and the Olympic Problem

To finalise the discussion on netball and highlight the relevance of the debate on sex segregation I will now examine netball's plan to become an Olympic sport.
Netball has never been a featured sport at the Olympics, however, it has been consistently featured in the Commonwealth Games since 1998 (Ochman, 2013, p. 76). In 2021, World Netball and Netball Australia announced that they were going to lobby the Olympics for netball to be a sport at the 2032 Olympic Games in Brisbane (Thurston, 2021), and was subsequently supported by England Netball (England Netball [@EnglandNetball], 2021). However, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice-president John Coates stated that netball 'is a very, very long way off' inclusion for Brisbane 2032, citing that the sport is not seen as gender neutral, nor is it played by enough countries at an elite level for it to be viable (Barker, 2022). Nonetheless, World Netball stated that they are hoping to drive development in order to be considered for inclusion[38] when the IOC makes the decision (World Netball, 2021a). In the following, I will briefly address whether sex segregated netball should be an Olympic sport. In doing so, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages that netball faces in its drive to be an Olympic sport, concluding that the requirements for netball to become an Olympic sport would demand excessive changes to the game.

Firstly, I will examine why netball wants to become an Olympic sport, and why the status as an Olympic sport is seen as desirable. The Olympics, having been televised since 1936, is possibly one of the most watched events in the world, with Tokyo 2021 being watched by more than three billion people globally (International Olympic Committee, 2021e). The Games prides itself as not only a sporting mega-event but also a social and cultural event 'without parallel in kind or in scope' (Seppänen, 1984, p. 113). The funding a sport receives for an Olympic cycle is also significant. For example, UK Sport published the Tokyo Olympic Funding Figures revealing that grants were between £630,000 and £24,655,408 for each sport (UK Sport, 2021). To compare, the French government have proposed a budget of

[38] It is unclear whether these bodies are hoping for netball to be a core sport or a demonstration sport at Brisbane 2032.

€90,000,000 for all high-performance Olympic and Paralympic sports as they move towards hosting the 2024 Olympics (Harris, 2021). For netball, becoming an Olympic sport would mean more interest, visibility, outreach and funding.

The Olympics is not only an exposition of multiple sports over two weeks, but a movement based on the philosophy of 'Olympism', this being a 'social philosophy that emphasises the role of sport in global culture, international understanding, peaceful coexistence, and social and moral education' (Parry, 2006, p. 190). The founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, suggested that the values upon which Olympism rested upon are 'equality, fairness, justice, and respect for persons and excellence', however, Parry highlights that these values can be interpreted differently depending on the era that they are interpreted in (2006, p. 191). Building upon the value of equality, The IOC has stated that one of its missions is to 'encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women' (International Olympic Committee, 2021a, p. 13).

Over time, the IOC has made a significant effort to focus on gender equality at the Olympics. This quest began in 1991, when the IOC sought to address the imbalance of male and female events, later recognising the commitment to gender equality in 1996 by adding it to the Olympic Charter. This mission has been steadily growing, and the IOC published an extensive Gender Equality and Inclusion report in 2021. However, it is arguable that this report includes two distinct understandings of gender equality, and this causes problems for the IOC. On the one hand, it is stated that the IOC will continue to champion women's representation and participation at every level 'beyond balancing the number of women competing in the Olympic Games' (International Olympic Committee, 2021b). On the other hand, this report makes frequent references to 'balancing' the genders at the Olympics, reflecting their goal of 'statistical' parity which was set out in 2014 under recommendation 11 of Olympic Agenda 2020 which called to achieve 50 per cent female participation in the Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c).

It may be suggested that these ideas of gender equality employed by the IOC are conflicting. Either they plan to add women to the existing sports events so that a 50/50 split is achieved, or they plan to increase female participation by expanding the sporting structure of the Olympic Games, going beyond statistical parity. If the IOC is aiming for statistical parity of the genders, netball cannot be part of the Olympics. However, if

the IOC is to go 'beyond balancing' the genders, sex segregated netball can make a stronger case for its inclusion at future Olympic Games.

3.6.8 - Arguments in Favour Of and Against Netball's Inclusion at the Olympic Games

It has been previously argued in Part 1 of this thesis that institutions should not aim for a 50/50 balance in representation on the basis that it fails to make real attitudinal changes towards women (Finlayson, 2018), particularly within a sporting context (Howe, 2022b). By focussing on this strict sense of balance the IOC is acknowledging that the female category is a protected category and that they should not be treated in a gender-blind manner – otherwise, they would not focus on such a ratio.

Whether this is a positive approach to addressing gender inequality in sport has already been debated (Avena Koenigsberger, 2017; English, 1978; Schneider, 2000; Tännsjö, 2000), however, it should be acknowledged that in achieving a 50/50 split women are simply added to the sports, which are often gender-coded as masculine sports. Gender-coded sports, these being sports which are assigned the gender labels 'men's sports' and 'women's sports' (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 10) are likely to be gender-coded because the sport has what Western society considers 'masculine' or 'feminine' qualities, is male or female apposite, or has been historically dominated by men. The vast majority of the Olympic sports which were included at the 2021 Olympic Games can be considered male apposite[39]. Adding more female athletes within these sports and boosting their participation numbers does allow for a better gender balance, which can foster egalitarian attitudes, but it is also limiting for women as they are bound by the sports being historically male-defined (Koenigsberger, 2017, p. 332). If the IOC is to truly champion women in sport, their mission to increase gender equality would be bettered by a greater inclusion of popular women's sports such as netball which do not have such historical ties.

[39] I consider athletics, basketball, beach volleyball, boxing, canoe flatwater, canoe slalom, BMX freestyle, BMX racing, mountain biking, road cycling, track cycling, football, handball, hockey, judo, karate, modern pentathlon, rowing, rugby sevens, softball, sport climbing, swimming, taekwondo, tennis, triathlon, volleyball weightlifting and wrestling to be male apposite. The remaining sports I consider to be female apposite or neither male nor female apposite, however this is open to debate.

A further thought could be that the IOC is wrong to stop at a 50/50 split. Near-statistical parity is only a recent achievement, with the Tokyo Summer Olympics in 2021 achieving 48.7% and the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022 achieving 45.4%. It should not be forgotten how women have only been included in the modern Olympic Games since 1900, and their participation levels have only reached over 40% since Athens 2004 (International Olympic Committee, 2021a). It may be suggested that a more effective way of combatting gender discrimination at the Olympics would be to see female participation above the 50% threshold as a kind of reparation, which can be achieved through the addition of female-only sports. The only problem here is that it would go against the IOC's concept of gender equality as statistical parity, thus, they would be required to redefine their conceptualisation of gender equality. For the IOC to go 'beyond' statistical parity, the inclusion of a sport with high female participation and governance could be a way to achieve this.

Despite this, it is clear that netball does not adhere to the IOC's conditions for a gender equal sport. In each sport at the Olympics there is space for both male and female categories, with some disciplines, such as equestrianism, triathlon, kite foiling[40], table tennis, tennis, and badminton offering a mixed sex category. This can be seen as a way for the IOC to encourage the cooperation between both sexes, fulfilling the wider goal of Olympism where 'international understanding, peaceful coexistence, and social and moral education' are central (Parry, 2006, p. 190). It is here that the reluctance of netball governing bodies to have a more balanced gender divide is particularly problematic. Though their female-first motivation is, from one perspective, a feminist directive, it is arguably an exclusive form of feminism, as I have established in previous parts of this thesis. Although some netball governing bodies have acknowledged the growth of male and mixed netball participation to the extent that they have expressed support (Ratcliffe, 2021), it is hard not to assume that this support has a dual and possibly immoral motive.

In hope of being considered as an Olympic sport at Brisbane 2032, it is clear that World Netball needs to rapidly increase male membership and the quality of male netball competition on a global scale. With this end-goal in mind, it could be possible for male netball to be used as a means to an end, with the boost of participation numbers being used as a way to box-tick the IOC's requirement of statistical parity. If

[40] This sport will make its debut at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

netball is to genuinely fulfil the Olympic philosophy, it would be better for World Netball and national governing bodies of netball to slowly nurture the male and mixed sex game. Whether this can be done by the governing bodies before Brisbane 2032 is open to debate.

Another argument which I shall consider against netball's becoming an Olympic sport is that World Netball and national netball governing bodies should not desire to be so. I argue this on the basis that in becoming an Olympic sport, netball would have to concede its female-focussed foundations which the sport is strongly based on. By expanding to cater for all genders netball may no longer be as safe a space for women, which is a major appeal for some athletes, particularly in nations where netball is one of the few spaces where female physicality can be explored without the impact of a male gaze. Additionally, it must be considered whether netball will still be netball if it concedes to the IOC's conceptualisation of gender equality. The historical foundations of netball are based on the premise that the sport is conservationally sex segregated, and that women choose to be separate from men, rather than it being imposed. Providing that this is true, a level of sex integration at the Olympics could be seen as the forcing of Westernised ideals on netballers from nations where this is opposed, such as those from Islamic countries (Benn & Dagkas, 2013). As a result, the opportunities for netballers to compete at the Olympics would be reduced and directly conflict with Olympism.

Though the advantages of becoming an Olympic sport are highly attractive, this brief analysis has shown that netball's bid for involvement at Brisbane 2032 is mildly problematic. By becoming an Olympic sport, netball must make compromises, specifically surrounding its status as a female-focussed sport. Although this is arguably beneficial to some aspects of the sport, in that opportunities to integrate the sexes on a larger scale will increase playing possibilities for those who do not identify within the gender binary, are trans, or simply do not want to conform to netball's historically heterosexual norms (i.e. dress codes). To make netball a sport which is truly a sport for all, however, appears to be far-fetched task. In making such changes, netball may have to compromise the foundations which make the sport unique. Whether these changes would be a positive reflection of the society which we now live in are up for further debate.

3.7 – Debunking Korfball as the Best Basket Sport For Fostering Egalitarian Attitudes

The final part of this section aims to examine the sport of korfball as a basket sport which was formed as an egalitarian sports model (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011; Summerfield & White, 1989; Thompson & Finnigan, 1990). As previously mentioned, mixed sex sports are commonly promoted as the ideal avenue for fostering egalitarian attitudes amongst men and women in sport as well as those who do not align with a binary concept of gender. This idea is also supported by the Olympics which has looked to increase mixed sex categories in Olympic sports (International Olympic Committee, 2018, pp. 9-16). Korfball contrasts the ideas of persuasive and conservational sex segregation that were discussed earlier in this section, so this final section will aim to determine whether sex integration via the mixing of sexes in a sport is a satisfactory response in the pursuit of sex and gender equality. This section will conclude that korfball does not adequately address the issue of sex and gender inequality in the basket sports, and will further suggest that mixed netball presents a better opportunity to do so.

Ahead of this analysis I will give a brief history of korfball in relation to basketball and netball. In 1902, having attended a course at the Normal School for Handicraft of Otto Salomon[41] in Nääs, Sweden, Dutch educator Nico Broekhuysen learned the rules of American basketball (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 4; Crum, 2003, p. 59). The 'international diffusion' of basketball, netball and korfball greatly differed due to power disparities between the US, Britain and the Netherlands (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 637). Whilst basketball grew from an American game into a global game and netball internationalised via the Commonwealth, the Netherlands (the home of korfball) had much less global influence in comparison to the US and the UK. As a result, korfball did not spread far beyond the Netherlands, Dutch-speaking Belgium and former Dutch colonies (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 637). Korfball has spread since its genesis, with the International Korfball Federation being established in 1933 in Antwerp, Belgium, and now boasts 69 member countries over five continents (International Korfball Federation, 2022).

[41] Bottenberg and Vermeulen note that Senda Berenson also taught basketball rules at this college, but it is unclear whether her and Broekhuysen came into direct contact (2011, p. 636).

Nonetheless, korfball remains to be a comparatively small sport and a 'local peculiarity' (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 633).

Korfball was created with equality in mind, and was seen as a modern sport that fostered cooperation between the sexes (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 640). This unique feature has effectively characterised the sport. To visualise how korfball can be typified, the following table breaks down basket sports into the following categories: Olympic status, creative origin, male/female apposite, internationalisation[42], and sex segregation rules. Compared to basketball, korfball has stark differences. However, compared to mixed netball, korfball is similar and can be differentiated by its rules and style of play. Table 1 demonstrates this further:

		Sport			
		Basketball	**Netball**	**Korfball**	**Mixed Netball**
Grouping	**Olympic Status**	Olympic	Non-Olympic	Non-Olympic	Non-Olympic
	Creative Origin	Created by men, for men	Created by women, for women	Created by men, for men and women	Created by women, for men and women
	Male/Female Apposite	Male Apposite	Male Apposite	Male Apposite	Male Apposite
	Internationality	Internationalised – 212 National Federations	Not Internationalised – 82 National Federations	Not Internationalised – 69 National Federations	No Data
	Sex Segregation Rules	Persuasively Sex Segregated	Persuasively Sex Segregated	Sex integrated/Mixed Sex	Sex integrated/Mixed Sex

Table 1

Bottenberg and Vermeulen describe the image of korfball as 'problematic', partially due to its mixed sex format (2011, p. 640). In the following, I will address Bottenberg and Vermeulen's concerns regarding defensive play, the division of tasks, dress codes and attitudes by applying research presented by scholars such as Martínková (2020b) and Gubby and Wellard (2016).

[42] As it is debatable as to how 'internationalised' may be defined, this thesis suggests that a sport can be considered internationalised if there are 127 or more national federations. This equates to 50%+ of all states in the world, independent and non-independent.

3.7.1 - Understanding Korfball as a Mixed Sex Sport

Mixed sex sport is not a novel idea and has multiple formats which I will break down into three subcategorizations: a) individual mixed team, b) designated mixed team and c) undesignated mixed team. An individual mixed team can be defined as a sports team where there are an equal number of males and female athletes and they will compete individually for a common end goal, such as a 4x100m relay in track running. Although there is only one athlete on the course at a time, males and females compete directly against one another. A designated mixed team is where there are an equal number of males and female athletes in a team and the male and females have designated positions, for example in ice skating the male athlete leads and lifts and the female follows and is lifted – this designation may be written into the rulebook, or it may be a convention. Finally, there is the undesignated mixed team category, where there are an equal number of males and female athletes but the positions in the sport are neither male nor female specific. An example of this may be the Nacra 17 mixed sailing category where crew and helm positions are not sex specific, or mixed rowing categories in the Paralympics – unlike designated mixed team, it is common in these sports to see the positions in the game frequented by either sex. Undesignated mixed sex teams should not be confused with unisex teams: whereas mixed sex teams require an equal number of males and females on the team, this is not necessary for unisex teams, for unisex teams compete in unisex sports where biological advantage is mitigated or fully removed.

Korfball falls into the designated mixed team subcategory. Although it does not designate positions of attack and defence to a specific sex, it does not permit male-on-female defending or vice versa (Rule 6.6, IKF Playing Rules Committee 2022). For example, if a female athlete was to attempt to shoot the ball in a game of korfball, a male opponent could not attempt to block her – only a female opponent could. Although cooperation between sexes on the same team in the game of korfball is encouraged, biological differences are emphasised between opposing teams. Though it must be acknowledged that males are – on average – taller than females, making it easier for them to block the shot, this is not always the case as highlighted by Kane's continuum theory (1995, 2015). By enforcing this rule, female athletes are perceived as subordinated because they are being protected from male opponents, consequently circulating the gender binary (Martínková, 2020b, p. 255).

Whilst male-on-female and female-on-male defending is still prohibited in korfball, tasks are no longer divided on the basis of sex. Originally the game encouraged female athletes to pass the ball and male athletes to shoot the ball (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 640). Such a division ran counter to the overall goal of korfball as an egalitarian sport, for although males and females learned to cooperate, the idea that male athletes are superior and should take on the more skilful, high-pressure roles in the game was reinforced. Research from 1989 has suggested that, despite male and female athletes having equal access to the attacking zone, female athletes were reduced to 'facilitators and supporters' in the game, whilst men were the ones taking the shots (Summerfield & White, 1989, pp. 149-150), thus fulfilling the Beauvoirian theory of male activity and female passivity. However, more recent research has shown that this may not necessarily be the case in junior korfball, although pre-conceived notions of gender roles remained evident off the court (Gubby & Wellard, 2016).

What may add to the reinforcement of gender roles in korfball is the dress code. The International Korfball Federation (IKF) lists shirts, socks, skirts and shorts as the prescribed 'costume' for competing, outlining the requirements for colours, numbering, advertisement and sponsorship for the kit, however they do not prescribe shorts or skirts for either sex (Article 9, IKF Playing Rules Committee, 2022). The fact that the IKF has not addressed gendered clothing has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, male and female athletes have the right to choose what they wear – in theory, male athletes could wear skirts and female athletes could wear shorts, and this would not violate the rules. As established earlier in this thesis section, a choice of clothing is key when it comes to fostering inclusivity in a sport. However, the choice that IKF outlines in the rulebook seems to occur only in theory, and not in practice. In photographs of korfball players, it is particularly common to see male athletes in shorts and female athletes in skirts, again reinforcing a binary. If players were to deviate from the traditionally gendered costume of males in shorts and females in skirts, it has the potential for athletes to become Othered by their opponents and their teammates (Gubby & Wellard, 2016, p. 13). As a result, the IKF may circulate gender ideals through clothing, causing female athletes to be reduced to gendered roles in a sport that is supposed to be motivated by egalitarianism.

As outlined in the table above, korfball is not considered a global sport but a 'provincial' one (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 637). Coupled with the sports'

style of play, this has led to the sport being labelled as a 'sissy' or 'wussy' sport (Crum, 1988, p. 239; Gubby & Wellard, 2016, p. 16), meaning that it is perceived as a game for the cowardly and effeminate. It has also been suggested that, because of the lack of masculine characteristics in the game of korfball, it is a sport for girls and not for boys or men (van Bottenburg & Vermeulen, 2011, p. 641; Gubby & Wellard, 2016, p. 16). The result of gendering korfball as feminine-appropriate over masculine-appropriate is problematic on several levels. Firstly, the labelling of a sport as feminine-appropriate because it is for 'sissies' exposes the disparaging attitudes towards sports which are not overtly masculine, demonstrating that sport remains 'a territory of gender-stereotype expression' (Plaza et al., 2017, p. 215). Secondly, gendering korfball as feminine-appropriate could possibly lead to low uptake in newcomers and decreases in participation – male participation in sports which are not considered masculine-appropriate require 'careful negotiation' on the basis that their activity can become 'satirized and demeaned' (Tagg, 2008b, p. 414). Research has shown that gender stereotyping in sport may have a negative impact on participation levels and the willingness of adolescents to do sport, especially if the sport is not considered gender appropriate (Alley & Hicks, 2005; Plaza et al., 2017). Overall, if korfball continues to be stereotyped this way, the sport may only be egalitarian and emancipatory in theory and not in practice.

Nonetheless, research produced by Gubby and Wellard (2016) has shown that korfball does have the potential to foster egalitarian attitudes within the game itself for junior korfball players, however these attitudes do not go beyond the court itself into everyday practices (2016, p. 1182). Addressing Crum, Summerfield and White's theorisations, Gubby and Wellard's exploration of the game showed that korfball was sometimes seen as a solution to sex and gender inequalities amongst its players, rather than contributing to the problem (2016, p. 1182). Though the korfball players interviewed sometimes expressed gendered understandings of how themselves and others ought to behave and look, it was theorised that these understandings did not come from korfball, rather, they were beliefs shaped by broader society (Gubby & Wellard 2016, p. 1182). In sum, korfball could present opportunities for both sexes to play together, facilitating harmonious relations between players. This being said, issues which remain in korfball such as unspoken dress codes and designated sex roles prevent the game from fulfilling its egalitarian motives by emphasising differences between males and females. Further research on conceptions of gender roles is

required, particularly at adult and elite levels of the sport so that a broader picture of the situation can be acquired.

3.7.2 - Mixed Netball

An emerging mixed sport in Western countries such as England, Australia and New Zealand is mixed netball. Currently, it is predominantly played as a 'social' sport – this being a sport which is played for fun, with no major commitments and with the purpose of meeting people and making friends. Though its rules are yet to be codified by national or international governing bodies, generally accepted rules are beginning to emerge. Analysing six documents – two from the UK (Aga Khan Youth and Sports Board and Totally Netball), two from Australia (Melbourne University Sport and UniSA), and two from New Zealand (Social Sport and New Zealand Men's and Mixed Netball Association, hereafter NZMMNA) - detailing the rules of mixed netball regarding the division of sexes on court, positions, contact, and uniform, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In all games of mixed netball, the maximum number of males on the court at any one time is limited to 3
- All but one of the documents[43] specify that the minimum number of males on court should be 1. This implies that there should be a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 6 females on the court at any one time, though it is not stated.
- All documents suggested that, with the maximum number (3) of males on court, only one male per third of the court is permitted. Positions are thus designated, and the sport is categorised as mixed sex, not unisex.
- Only one document specifically highlighted contact rules between sexes, stating that 'Umpires may adjust their calls regarding contact depending on matchups e.g. male-on-male contact will be called less, male-on-female contact more' (Social Sport, 2022).

[43] The document for tournament rules provided by New Zealand Men's and Mixed Netball Association did not specify a minimum number of males on the court, implying that the team could be entirely female.

- Uniform rules generally did not specify items of clothing, rather they suggested that teams wear matching or approved colours and netball bibs to determine positions.

Addressing the issues that have been previously identified in this section regarding mixed sex sports, it can be argued that mixed netball addresses some of the issues which concern women's netball and korfball. All documents analysed specified that positions must be allocated so that there is only one male per third of the court. A reason behind this may be to limit male dominance in the game. Although netball has been dominated by women since its creation, the game does favour the male apposite characteristic of height. For example, if there is both a male goal attack and a male goal shooter on court in the same third, it could be much harder for the female defenders to regain possession if they were shorter.

This being said, netball does tend to attract taller women because of the height advantage which they possess and the historical association of netball being a women's game. Thomas et al. reported that (female) defenders were 'significantly taller' than other playing positions at the England netball academy at an average of 177cm (Thomas et al., 2019), this being roughly 15cm taller than the average English female and roughly 1cm taller than the average English male (Moody, 2013). It must also be noted that the average age of Thomas et al.'s sample was 15 years old, and so it is possible the players will grow even taller as they mature. The average height of competitive male netballers is yet to be reported on, and so it is hard to make the argument that male players have an advantage over female players because of their height at this point in time, though it may be assumed in the future that taller than average males will play mixed or men's netball if it gains popularity.

Research by Summerfield and White (1989) may provide an alternative insight as to how male dominance can arise in mixed sex basket sports. After analysing five English korfball teams it was found that the male players dominated in team play, with female players being reduced to supporting roles, and males undertaking the more physical and high-pressure roles such as throw-ins and goal scoring (1989, pp. 149-150). They concluded that the physical advantages of the male players were not enough to explain the overwhelming levels of male dominance in the game, suggesting that korfball is 'characterized by patriarchal power relations' that were formed beyond the sport and perpetuated within (Summerfield & White, 1989, p. 150).

Though it may be argued that sport has developed radically since Summerfield and White's research on korfball, their conclusions present pertinent worries for today's sports scholars, this being whether sport has the power to disrupt social roles so that the change comes from within, rather than reflecting the social ideals that society generates. In their paper, it is recommended that if korfball is to truly achieve egalitarianism certain policies should be implemented, such as ensuring females take penalty shots, centres and throw-ins, female captaincy obligations, and the encouragement of females into the roles of game officials. Despite these additional measures, Summerfield and White expressed doubt that females could achieve equality in a male apposite game. Mixed netball, however, may address some of the problems which Summerfield and White discussed.

There are two key differences between korfball and mixed netball, these being the rules of marking and the rules on uniform. In both korfball and mixed netball, positions are not sex-specific, meaning that either a male or female can occupy the positions of attack and defence. Mixed netball, however, permits male-on-female defending and contact, contrasting the same-sex defending in korfball. Rules published by Social Sport NZ stated that 'Umpires may adjust their calls regarding contact depending on matchups e.g. male-on-male contact will be called less, male-on-female contact more', however, other mixed sex rule guidelines did not make this distinction, and sometimes stated that 'normal' contact rules (these being women's netball contact rules) should be followed (Social Sport, 2022). The possibility of male-on-female defending directly challenges the belief that male athletes are the superior athletes, even in games that are supposed to be female-centric. It enables both cooperation and disruption, which may be key if mixed sex sports are to achieve egalitarianism.

Additionally, uniform in the game of mixed netball is much more inclusive than women's netball and korfball. Rules provided by the University of South Australia (UniSA) and NZMMNA prescribed matching or approved coloured kit is to be worn in a game (New Zealand Men's and Mixed Netball Association, n.d; UniSA Sport, 2022). None of the documents assessed suggested that a particular clothing item was to be worn with the exception of appropriate footwear, meaning that players could play in shorts, dresses, skirts, leggings and so on. The flexibility of the uniform in mixed netball directly addresses opposition to women's netball kit and challenges the sports' problem of enforced heterosexuality.

Although mixed netball appears to solve several issues surrounding the reinforcement of gender ideals, it may never go as far as being totally egalitarian. For egalitarianism to be achieved, physical, sex-based advantages should be removed so that dominance of one sex cannot occur. In essence, a sport should be unisex instead of mixed sex if true egalitarianism is to be achieved. For mixed netball this is particularly difficult as it favours the male apposite characteristics of height, speed and explosiveness. The game does favour some sex neutral characteristics such as 'creative thinking, accuracy/precision, cooperation and timing', as well as female apposite characteristics such as coordination and balance (Martínková, 2020b, p. 258). The game requires technical and tactical skills, but netball would not be netball without the fast passes, high jumps and explosive throws. Where sex-specific characteristics can be amplified in a sport, the sex possessing the characteristic in question can dominate, perpetuating beliefs that one sex (usually male) is athletically superior. This clearly undermines the goal of egalitarianism in a sport game. Furthermore, the modifications that netball would require to be a unisex sport would stop the game from being the one which many watch and play, and I suspect that many netball traditionalists would oppose such radical changes.

3.8 – Summary – Can netball – and other sports – create harmful gender ideals and stereotypes through conservational sex segregation?

This section examined three basket sports - netball, basketball, and korfball - concluding that because of their histories, cultures and timelines, they have diverged greatly. Basketball arguably deconstructs oppressive gender ideals, whilst netball arguably perpetuates them. Korfball, on the other hand, seems to both deconstruct and perpetuate oppressive gender ideals. However, as I have highlighted, these claims are relative. Though basketball seems to give women greater opportunities to express themselves through physical movement and dress codes, it is hard to detect whether the institutional support they are receiving is genuine or a product of 'pink capitalism'. Also, netball has evidently grown in recent years to tackle claims of netball being a 'game for girls' – may this be by making the game faster paced, or by increasing the inclusion of a wider gender spectrum.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the evolution of netball is particularly slow in comparison to basketball, and because of this it is hard to escape the history of the sport without radical change. Caution should be exercised towards netball governing

bodies' progressiveness, as it could be argued that policies towards gender inclusivity are not genuine pledges, but pledges fuelled by the desire to become an Olympic sport. Thus, their improvements in gender policy arguably use those other than women as a means to an end, viewing non-women as a way to fill quotas. To many scholars in women's sports studies this is a familiar position for it is women in sport who are often viewed as statistics. The Olympics have brought about an interesting role reversal which poses significant challenges to the game of netball.

The research which I have presented suggests that basketball is a more fluid sport in terms of rule changes, whereas netball is comparatively rigid. Basketball's rules regularly change, and so do its marketing techniques, national governing body policies and the attitudes of fans, players and administrators. These changes which basketball has welcomed have seen the sport progress in an attempt to be more inclusive and more reflective of Western society. Hence, not only men and women play the game, but also women of different ethnicities, nationalities, backgrounds and sexualities. It may even be claimed that the women's basketball game is more socially advanced than the men's game, which arguably still fosters a heterosexual and masculinist culture. In comparison to basketball, netball governing bodies have been slow to broaden the appeal of the game to those who do not identify as heterosexual white women. This is evidenced by the continuation of the netball dress as uniform, which was recently identified by England Netball as a 'barrier to participation' (England Netball, 2021, p. 22), and the lack of racial diversity in some national netball teams.

The Beauvoirian lens which was utilised in this research has provided particularly interesting and novel insights. The concept of 'Otherness' in Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* frequently positions the woman as the subordinate when compared to man, highlighting how the oppression of women can be dichotomous. The WNBA continues to position woman as Other, for many women's teams continue to be tied to the men's teams, reinforcing the men's teams' status as the original and absolute. However this concept has also allowed us to view women in netball as both Subject and Other – historically women were the Others in sport as they were denied full bodily autonomy. Now, it is arguable that women in netball are the Subjects, for they are the dominant grouping and hold a significant amount of power in determining the future of men's participation.

The Beauvoirian concept of 'access' was also applied, in that for women to be seen as equal to men they must be granted access to the men's world, as men have access to the women's. This concept has produced a policy proposal for basketball and netball. Firstly, and contributing to many other calls from scholars who have discussed this topic, is the need for equal salaries. At the time of writing, the largest women's basketball league, the WNBA, continues to pay women less than men in the NBA and it has been theorised that the average base salary gender pay gap sits at 98.75 per cent (Báčová, 2021). Female athletes continue to be economically exploited, and this pay gap suggests that women in basketball hold an oppressed status. In recognising women as people who demand equal human rights, equal pay should be a major requirement regardless of the team's sex categorisation. Professional sports should support teams of either sex and any gender, and women should not be deterred from sport on the basis that it is not a viable career.

Finally, a theme which emerged in this research was 'subordination'. It is becoming increasingly hard to argue that women in sport are subordinated, and this is entirely positive. Regardless of this knowledge, policies which continue to infantilise and feminise women remain, contributing to the wider social system of women's oppression. With the aim of ending women's subordination and bettering women's experiences in sport, this research has shown that policies such as the increase of contact rules and greater flexibility in dress codes have the power to do this by gradually changing attitudes and improving inclusivity. Though these changes seem minor, the impact they could have on the game of netball would see the sport have greater prosperity.

In conclusion, some sex integrated sports such as korfball have the potential to promote and reinforce oppressive gender ideals more than other sex segregated sports such as basketball. Contrastingly, this research has shown that mixed netball may challenge gender ideals more than sex segregated netball. Although korfball, basketball and netball are of the same genus, their histories, cultures, and locations have caused them to radically differ in terms of the ideals they challenge and sustain. Sport has the ability to mimic and reflect social values, and these three sports are no exception. With this in mind, it can be hypothesised that these sports can all learn something from each other, and adapt their gender equality policies and outreach from these insights. Basketball is a truly international sport, and the women's game is rapidly advancing in the USA. Other nations which participate in basketball ought to nurture the women's

game similar to how the NBA has supported the WNBA. However, this is a demanding recommendation which requires slow and careful change. To advance the women's basketball game and continue the tackling of women's oppression in sport, lessons may be taken from netball. Netball is a sport that is run for and by women and has proven to be a thriving sports model, as demonstrated by leagues in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and the high netball participation levels of women globally. However, if netball is to be a sport that empowers *all* women, tackling *all* oppressions, the sport should adopt policies and practices utilised by basketball to improve diversity and inclusion.

Finally, mixed sex sports such as mixed netball and korfball can give us valuable lessons about cooperation and the creation of inclusive environments. It must be stressed that the very nature of these sports, due to their biological demands and roles, cannot achieve total egalitarianism. Nevertheless, this should not stop sport organisations in their quest for equality and empowerment, may this be through equal pay, participation numbers, inclusivity, diversity, and the reworking of rules which perpetuate and reinforce oppressive gender stereotypes, ideals and practices.

PART 4 – NOVEL MANIFESTATIONS OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IN SPORT[44]

In Part 2, this thesis discussed how women's oppression is systemic, exploitative and internalised, and Part 3 discussed how women's oppression could be woven into the very layers of sports games, rules, categorisations and histories. Now, in Part 4, this thesis will examine how oppression can manifest in more novel ways. As Western society has advanced, so has technology, leading to the digitalisation of many aspects of human life. One of these aspects is health. The digitalisation of society has improved human health in many ways, making access to health care faster, more efficient, and more accessible. Female-specific healthcare, such as healthcare relating to the menstrual cycle (hereafter MC), is one of the more recent aspects of healthcare to be digitalised. However, as the discussion below suggests, new technologies are often promoted for their benefits whilst overlooking the disadvantages and ethical considerations. I argue that this social issue deeply affects women's sports. Before this argument is explored, a brief overview of the significance of MC research must be presented.

The discussion of the MC has historically been considered taboo (Hyde & Zipp, forthcoming; Marais et al., 2022; O'Loughlin et al., 2022; Verhoef et al., 2021; von Rosen et al., 2022); however, scholars have recently noted that '[In] broader society, breaking the taboo nature of the menstrual cycle seems to be gaining momentum' (O'Loughlin et al., 2022, p. 150). For example, in 2017, menstrual product advertisers in the UK challenged the stigma by using red fluid instead of blue in their marketing campaigns to depict a more accurate representation of menstruation, and this change is slowly being adopted by other brands within and beyond the UK (BBC News, 2017; Deighton, 2023). However, breaking the taboo of menstruation is not as straightforward as the advertising example suggests. Nonetheless, scholars have suggested that normalising conversations surrounding the MC is a good place to start (Findlay et al., 2020; McHaffie et al., 2022; von Rosen et al., 2022). It may be suggested that with a greater focus on the MC, scientific research into the deeper effects of the cycle on the female body can advance more rapidly as there is no longer fear or embarrassment

[44] The majority of this section (Part 4) will be published as an article online:
Olivia R. Howe (forthcoming) Ethical Risks of Systematic Menstrual Tracking in Sport, Journal of Bioethical Inquiry.

associated with menstruation, and it is consequently normalised as a biological fact rather than a 'curse' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 356; Gottlieb, 2020, p. 145).

Over the past decade, research into the MC and its impact on women's sports has grown. This is partially due to the breakdown of taboos, with recent research on female footballers by Forsyth et al. suggesting that open dialogue between the coach and the athlete surrounding the MC 'may go towards improving the health, wellbeing and social development of the footballer' (2023, p. 1292). It is also partially due to the realisation that sport science is historically male-centric (Meignié et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022), and this one-size-fits-all science has prevented many female athletes from unlocking their true potential. An example of a one-size-fits-all application of sport science is the use of male football boots in women's football. A widely available, female-specific football boot is yet to be made available to players, despite the increasing number of women in football (Downey, 2023). A major consequence of this gap in research and engineering is that female footballers are at a heightened risk of injury, severely impacting their performance and demonstrating the demand for 'more products based on an enhanced understanding of women's specific needs' (Okholm Kryger et al., 2022, p. 25).

In order for athletes to unlock their potential and perform optimally, their biological and mental well-being must be prioritised. To support female athletes' well-being, it may be suggested that coaches and support staff (nutritionists, doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists) should monitor their athletes' MC to determine whether the body and mind are experiencing excessive stress. A key indicator of biological or emotional stress in female athletes is amenorrhea[45] and/or impaired menstrual function. Advances in MC research suggest that amenorrhea and impaired menstrual function are key indicators of Relative Energy Deficiency syndrome (hereafter RED-s) (Mountjoy et al., 2014, p. 1). If untreated, RED-s can end an

[45] For the purpose of this discussion, the distinction is not necessary. Amenorrhea is caused by the body trying to self-preserve often due to stress, not meeting the calorific needs of the body, and low body fat. To prevent further stresses such as pregnancy, the body produces less oestrogen, resulting in health issues such as 'increased rate of musculoskeletal injuries, stress fractures, abnormal lipid profiles, endothelial dysfunction, potential irreversible bone loss, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and increased mortality' (Berz & McCambridge, 2016). It is worth noting that there are two types of amenorrhea: primary amenorrhea and secondary amenorrhea. Primary amenorrhea can be described as 'a failure to reach the first menstrual period', whereas secondary amenorrhea can be described as 'as the absence of menstruation for three or more months in women with previous regular menses' (Gimunová et al., 2022, pp. 15-16).

athlete's career and cause long-lasting detrimental physiological and psychological effects that often go beyond sport.

In a review of literature on the prevalence of menstrual disorders in female athletes from different sports disciplines, Gimunová et al. found that the prevalence of menstrual disorders in athletes could be as high as 61%, with higher prevalence of menstrual disorders in sports such as gymnastics and endurance disciplines (2022, p. 17). Team sports such as volleyball and football (soccer) 'also presented a considerable percentage of menstrual disorders compared to the general population' (Gimunová et al., 2022, p. 17). The review concluded that the prevalence of menstrual disorders is notable, and 'reinforces the importance of coaches and physicians…to monitor the menstrual cycle regularity of the athletes as the occurrence of these disorders can be associated with impairment on some health components' (Gimunová et al., 2022, p. 17).

Due to technological advances in the past decade, monitoring of the MC is easier than ever. The widespread use of smartphone applications has enabled the 'quantifying' of the self, meaning that habits and bodily functions can be reduced to numbers and small data (Sharon & Zandbergen, 2017, p. 1696) as a way of 'understanding' the body (Lupton, 2015, p. 446). Tracking our health data through mobile applications is promoted as a more efficient way of handling public health, aiding self-management and accessibility on a global scale (Lucivero & Jongsma, 2018). Research has asserted that menstrual tracking (hereafter MT) can be viewed as 'empowering' for users as it improves menstrual cycle and health literacy (Levy & Romo-Avilés, 2019; Robertson et al., 2022; Zhaunova et al., 2023).

Research by Eschler et al. claims that over 300 MT applications are available for download 'and an estimated 200 million downloads worldwide' (2019). Since their publication, the numbers are likely to have increased. In 2022 it was reported that two of the most popular MT applications, Flo and Clue, have more than 55 million users combined (Garamvolgyi, 2022). Individual MT applications today are relatively user-friendly, and allows athletes, users and coaches to fully understand what phase of the MC the athlete is experiencing. By understanding at what point of the MC an athlete is at, there are hypothesised benefits. Studies have shown that tracking and understanding the MC can improve athlete knowledge and support for nutrition (Helm et al., 2021; Rehrer et al., 2017; Sims & Yeager, 2016), injury prevention (Forouzandeh Shahraki et

al., 2020; Khowailed et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2021), anaerobic performance (Kissow et al., 2022; Rodrigues et al., 2019), and psychological well-being (Ramey, 2023).

Providing that the body of evidence grows to support these findings, it may be hypothesised that tracking the MC can be of great benefit to athletes who are hoping to improve performance through marginal gains and even prolong their career by ensuring that their bodies are adapted to the strain of rigorous training. Systematic MT, which is large-scale, organised tracking of the MC by a sport team or organisation, is now making its way into elite sports such as football. In 2019, the success of the United States women's team win at the FIFA World Cup was partly accredited to their MT practices (FitrWoman, 2019; Pender, 2019; Saner, 2019). More recently, it was reported that the Welsh women's rugby union team partnered with Vodafone to conduct MT (Gauci, 2023; Sky Sports, 2023; Vodafone, 2023), and the elite English football team Chelsea uses MT 'in a bid to mitigate the impact' of the MC on the athlete body (Smith, 2023).

Even though the benefits of MT may unlock further potential in women's sports, systematic MT is a cause for concern. Writing on the topic of mobile health applications, Lucivero and Jongsma warn that 'there is often a gap between expected technology-driven scenarios and their actual realisation in specific societies', causing technologies to 'bite back' with unintended but possibly predictable consequences (2018, p. 688). If the bite back is to be avoided, mobile health applications and systematic MT ought to be scrutinised. Casto gives a strong overview of the potential issues of systematic MT in sport, arguing that if systematic MT is going to be implemented on wider scale, issues surrounding data protection, selection policies and discrimination, privacy, and autonomy must be addressed (2022, p. 1725).

In developing and disentangling Casto's suggestions, this thesis section will address the problems highlighted by identifying the ethical issues behind each concern and providing a conceptual analysis. In doing so, I first propose that the ethical issues at hand can be divided into two, broad[46] categories: 1) data access and ownership 2) protection of digital privacy and vulnerable persons. Additionally it will be argued that there are further issues to what Casto (2022) has mentioned, and this thesis section will comment on how systematic MT of athletes might be considered oppressive from a

[46] I would like to further add that although I have presented these categories as distinct, they will at times overlap considerably.

Beauvoirian perspective. Briefly expanding on this claim, I will advance the view that women's oppression systemically criss-crosses with and reinforces other intersecting oppressions such as homophobia, racism, ableism and classism, and will defend the view that the socialisation of women has also normalised a state of 'Other' to such an extent that it is internalised.

It must also be noted that arguments will not be made specific to individual MT, and although there are some references to the practice of individual MT, the main discussion focusses solely on systematic MT in sports. It is worth noting that the risks of individual 'self-logged' menstrual health data - misinterpretation, over-diagnosis, and privacy - in a non-sporting context have already been expressed by Robertson et al. (2022). Finally, I will propose five policy recommendations. These recommendations are intended as starting points for academics and sports governing bodies in addressing issues with systematic MT in sports. The recommendations focus on promoting athlete bodily autonomy, education and safeguarding before concluding that systematic MT in women's sport has the potential to cause serious harm to athletes if unscrutinised.

4.1 - Data Access and Ownership

The main issue concerning data access and ownership is who *accesses* the data and who *owns* the data, and these questions present several ethical issues. Before we discuss how issues of data access and ownership affect systematic menstrual tracking, a conceptual clarification of ownership is required. For this conceptual clarification, I will rely on the work of Hummel et al. (2021). Problematically, it is hard to determine whether data is something that can be *owned*. According to Hummel et al. 'The dominant view in legal theory tends to be that data cannot be owned' (2021, p. 547). The view that data can indeed be owned may in fact be paradoxical, for if data-related rights are a subset of fundamental human rights, the suggestion is that they are 'inalienable and unsuitable for propertization, commodification, commercialization' (Hummel et al., 2021, p. 547). Hummel et al. expand on their view in great detail, however, it is not necessary to repeat their perspectives here. What is relevant is that they propose the concept of quasi data ownership as 'a live option' that 'deserves to be taken seriously' (Hummel et al., 2021, p. 555). Ownership, in this context, is better understood as 'a proxy for certain access, usage and control rights', comprising of

jointly sufficient rights and duties, such as the right to possess and the prohibition of harmful use (Hummel et al., 2021, p. 553).

Opponents of this conceptualisation may argue that problems arise when access to an individual's health data is severely restricted, and could 'hinder valuable biomedical research' and 'may result in less effective research and flawed health policy' (Contreras et al., 2018). Whilst this may be a valid concern with regards to research which requires mass participation, there is still a deep need for scrutiny as to when it is ethically permissible to override an individual's wishes of how their data is used in the name of an uncertain greater good (Hummel et al., 2021, p. 555). Quasi data ownership thus primarily concerns control, and the ability for agents to 'distribute, retract, shield' and 'share their data for a variety of purposes' (Hummel et al., 2021, p. 554). With this clarification in mind, the focus now turns to systematic menstrual tracking.

Casto writes that the 'systematic tracking of women's reproductive data conjures a particularly dystopian future for female athletes' on the basis that an athlete's menstrual and reproductive[47] health data may become 'common knowledge' amongst those overseeing athlete health (2022, p. 1725). Although this does not initially seem problematic, especially if the data sharing is consensual, it is nonetheless strongly arguable that all health data – which includes menstrual health data – is an extremely private issue for many people, and one may go as far as arguing that health data 'is the most private information about one's self' (Bartoletti, 2019, p. 8). Depending on the amount and the type of data collected, reproductive and menstrual health data can contain a whole host of information, such as a woman's fertility window, biological and psychological symptoms, if she menstruates, when she menstruates, how regularly she menstruates, hormone levels, if and what kind of contraception she uses. It is at this point that we come to our first problem, which is where we draw the line for who and who does not get to access the data.

4.1.1 - The Team

[47] Although Casto (2022) uses the term 'reproductive' for health and data, I have opted to use the term 'menstrual' on the basis that not all women choose to reproduce, ergo menstrual health and menstrual health data are more accurate terms unless the topics of pregnancy and abortion are discussed.

The first argument which should be explored is whether certain persons in the wider sports team should have access to the data in cases where there is little evidence that the MC impacts certain aspects of athlete health. A hypothetical scenario: if it is found that the MC has minimal effect on nutritional requirements, this would perhaps warrant the claim that this knowledge is irrelevant to nutritionists, and consequently, they should not have access to an athlete's menstrual health data. However, if it came to light that the MC severely impacted methods of physiotherapy and when physiotherapy was conducted, it would be arguable that access to the data by the physiotherapists is appropriate, providing that the athlete consented to sharing this data.

Contrastingly, there is emerging evidence that certain types of sport may not benefit from systematic MT, and because of this the athlete is the only person who would benefit from data access. In 2020, it was found that 'Strength-related qualities are minimally affected by changes in sex hormones over the course of the menstrual cycle' in eumenorrheic women, which led to the conclusion that women in strength-dominated sports do not need to consider their cycle to enhance performance (Blagrove et al., 2020, p. 7). This research is also supported by findings by Dasa et al., who concluded that the MC 'does not alter acute strength and power performance on a group level in high level team athletes' (2021, p. 1).

Although the research is still in its early phases and more research is required to strengthen the findings, it may be argued that athletes who participate in strength sports such as Olympic lifting and powerlifting would not benefit from systematic MT. From this, it could be suggested that in sports where it is unclear or unproven that the MC affects the athlete's training, it is inappropriate for team staff such as coaches, doctors, physiotherapists, nutritionists and so on to have access to this information. Of course, if an individual athlete feels they would benefit from individual MT, they should be able to do so, and sharing the data with team staff should be done on the athlete's terms.

4.1.2 - The Coach

Though the above arguments work for menstrual health data which does not impact a sport, who has access to the data when there is evidence that tracking the MC is beneficial to performance becomes more ambiguous. This leads to Casto's claim: 'To assume outright benevolence in the coach-managed or coach-sponsored application of menstrual tracking would be naïve at best' (2022, p. 1725). It is true that in a culture

where an excessive win-at-all-costs mentality is fostered (such as elite sports), violations of safeguarding can occur (Lee et al., 2022, p. 309). Coaches who have large and/or disproportionate amounts of power in sports organisations have the potential to abuse their athletes via methods such as coercion, which can be defined as the act of persuading someone by the use of force or threat. It is not unimaginable for a coach to coerce an athlete into sharing their menstrual health data under the guise of performance enhancement. Even if MT was individual instead of systematic, coaches may promise better results to an athlete if she were to consent to sharing her menstrual health data, putting her under unreasonable pressure to comply with the coach's requests.

This leads to another issue which Casto highlights: when there is a complex athlete–coach relationship that 'often includes a deep trust and willingness, from the athletes, to do what coaches ask of them' (2022, p. 1725), the level of autonomy the athlete has comes into question. Although she has the right to control the data as an individual entity, who has the right to access the data when she becomes part of a larger team could become ambiguous. Theoretically, it could be possible for teams to include clauses in contracts that, once signed, an athlete consents to sharing her data with the wider team staff. In the European Union (EU) this seems unlikely as long as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws are being enforced, however, there are many countries outside the EU which do not have the same levels of data protection. Scholars have also argued that 'many people do not consider the implications of signing up to apps or other software in terms of how their personal data may be used by others' either because they do not understand to what extent their data may be used, or they feel 'that they have little choice' in sharing their data (Lupton & Michael, 2017, p. 265). If athletes are not talked through what their contracts entail, it is imaginable that they could sign away their data rights without fully realising. Another likely issue is that athletes will feel obliged to share their information, especially in athlete-coach relationships where athletes feel dependent on the coach or as if they owe them something, or where athletes don't want to feel excluded in a team setting.

Sharing menstrual health data with coaches where there is a power imbalance is arguably perilous. Firstly, as Casto highlights, it is possible that this menstrual health data could be misused in that it is manipulated to inform selection policies (2022, p. 1725). Hypothetically speaking, a coach would be able to see who is menstruating, who is ovulating, who is in the follicular phase, who is in the luteal phase and so on. A

thought experiment: say that evidence emerged which supported the theory that female rowers were significantly slower during the ovulation phase and athletes *a*, *b* and *c* were going to enter this phase during the World Championships. The coach might then feel obliged to withdraw these athletes from the World Championships, which raises questions of whether such data could be manipulated to justify cutting athletes from teams rather than adjusting their training to best support them. MCs are also very individual, so it is possible that, despite the research, the athletes won't actually experience the detrimental effects associated with certain phases. Such access to data where a coach might not be so well informed or empathetic could also lead to the occurrence of stereotyping. For example, a coach may discover an athlete on their team suffers from premenstrual syndrome (PMS), and having mistakenly associated PMS with irrationality and mood swings, he cuts her from the team ahead of a vital competition. This calls for coaches to be well-informed about the MC so that they don't use this information under false pretences.

4.1.3 - Sports Betting Companies

An additional scenario is the sale of female athlete's menstrual health data. Lucivero and Jongsma warn that 'digital health…brings about new ways of exploitation and commodification of data' (2018, p. 688). In sport it is common for spectators to know about athlete biological characteristics; height and weight tend to be public knowledge, and so too are other factors such as stride length and arm span. Such information is often obtainable with a quick internet search. Whilst biological data is very important in sports, the fact that the biological data is online and accessible to the public does not necessarily have a direct impact on the outcome of a sport. However, if it is proven that the phases of the MC significantly impact athlete performance in a sport such as football (soccer), this data could be of significant value to sports betting companies, leading to the commodification of systematic MT data. Female menstrual health data is already considered valuable, as proven by a report by the New York Times, which revealed that 'From 2016 to 2019, the company behind Flo… passed on certain intimate health details of its users to marketing and analytics companies like Facebook and Google' (Haridasani et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in sports betting is becoming an increasingly reliable way to predict outcomes due to AI's ability to access

and process a significantly larger amount of data than a human (Fialho et al., 2019). If systematic MT experiences a large uptake by sports clubs and teams, the future may entail mass collection and analysis of MT data. Who this data is used by and for what purpose requires ethical scrutiny. If women's menstrual health data is already being sold (but not published), the next step of female athlete menstrual health data being sold to *and* published by AI sports betting data collection systems seems theoretically possible, which, given the private nature of such information, is of grave moral concern.

Several of the scenarios which have been presented above suggest that systematic MT could be oppressive due to its potential to exploit female athletes. In line with Siapka and Biasin, there are grounds to believe that the collection of systematic MT data could be characterised as, or may lead to, 'unpaid, digital and, to a certain degree, gendered consumer labour' (2021, p. 21). Additionally, systematic MT could be considered oppressive due to its potential to exploit female athletes emotionally. Although systematic MT can be used as a way to enhance performance, the data that is collected can be manipulated in that it is used as a means to an end. Coaches can take advantage of female athletes who feel pressured or powerless by using menstrual health data for purposes which the athlete may not have consented to, and cannot speak up against in a system that is not athlete-centred. Research has shown that, in many countries and contexts, women who work in and play sport continue to be exploited as they are paid less than their male counterparts (Katsarova, 2019; Kluska, 2022; Velija, 2022; Wicker et al., 2021). This scenario clearly exhibits a Beauvoirian characterisation of oppression. If manipulated, systematic MT has the potential to continue the exploitation of women, contributing to the wider system of inequality. As long as women are not considered the sole owners of their menstrual health data, and the data is considered to be something that can be purchased, women will continue to produce the data without physically or financially gaining from its collection. Instead, it will be the sports teams, media outlets and sports betting companies that will profit, perpetuating the economic disadvantage women experience in sport.

4.2 - Protection of Digital Privacy

A key concept that must be analysed regarding systematic MT is the protection of digital privacy. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 12 states: 'No

one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy' (*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR],* 1948). The protection of digital privacy is increasingly valued in Western societies, as evidenced by the ePrivacy Directive and GDPR in the European Union, the 2018 Data Protection Act in the UK and various consumer privacy laws in the US. A universal definition of privacy is hard to agree upon due to cultural differences, historical complexities, confusion and conflation of the term (Nass et al., 2009, p. 16). Prior to the digitalisation of society, privacy in the West has been very generally understood as an individual right to be 'left alone' and have our 'own domain' (Becker, 2019, p. 308). For example, when we are in our homes we are separated from the public, that is unless members of the public begin looking through our windows and watching us – this is understood as a violation of our right to privacy. However, with the increasing growth and reliance upon surveillance technology, geolocation software, social media and more, our understanding of privacy has expanded.

Keeping in line with the focus of this thesis section, an increasingly digitalised aspect of our lives is health data. Health data can contain a whole host of information, starting with the basics such as age, sex, blood type, height, and weight, and detailing more complex or sensitive information such as what our genetics reveal, what surgeries we have had, and also whether we can reproduce offspring. Typically, those who produce health data want to keep it private to some extent, on the basis that, if breached, this data could 'affect a person's dignity and cause irreparable harm', and its disclosure to unauthorised persons 'can result in stigma, embarrassment, and discrimination' (Nass et al., 2009, p. 18). Nonetheless, it is becoming increasingly easy to keep track of our health on a personal level with the use of mobile applications. For example, Apple Health, an application by tech giant Apple Inc., allows users to input data such as their body measurements, what medications they are taking, daily symptoms and so on, and collects data such as heart rate, noise exposure, calories burnt, walking speed and more. The application advertises itself as 'a central and secure place for your health and fitness information', yet discloses that the data 'may be collected but [it] is not linked to your identity' (Apple, 2022).

Evidently, the digitalisation of society has led to privacy being a social concern as well as an individual one, with the growth of technology causing us to be more closely linked to friends, family and strangers than before. Becker writes that 'privacy guarantees social boundaries that help to maintain the variety of social environments'

whilst also facilitating 'interactions among people along generally agreed patterns' (2019, p. 311). To contextualise social privacy, we may think of coach-athlete relations. An athlete may tell their coach and their gynaecologist that they are experiencing painful menstrual cramps because this information may be of value to them, leading the coach to reduce the intensity of their training session and allowing the doctor to prescribe pain relief. However, an athlete may withhold more sensitive information from the coach, such as the intention to start a family, on the basis that it could lead to discrimination and bias (this will be discussed further in the following section). The athlete may, however, disclose this information to the gynaecologist, as they can give practical advice on conception. Though there are many social complexities to this case which have been ignored for the sake of simplicity, one crucial point must be highlighted: privacy should be understood not as the restriction of the flow of information but a process which ensures that it 'flows appropriately' (Nissenbaum, 2009, p. 2), in the context and from the point of view of the athlete.

4.3 - Vulnerable Persons

Vulnerable persons are at greater risk of their privacy being interfered with, or alternatively, their private information is what makes them vulnerable. Who should be considered vulnerable is often debated, as it fully depends on how the term 'vulnerable' is understood. In the following, vulnerable persons will be understood as those who are at higher risk of being harmed, and/or those who are unable to adequately recognise when they are at risk of harm. Within the debate of systematic MT, youth athletes, athletes in high-pressure sporting environments, pregnant athletes, transgender athletes and athletes with differences in sex development should all be considered vulnerable athletes, as detailed below.

4.3.1 - Youth Athletes

Beginning with youth athletes, a major issue that requires consideration is the age limit for the collection of data on athletes. For many women, menstruation begins in the early teenage years[48], which coincides with the time many young girls take up sport or

[48] There are of course exceptions, however due to the nature of the argument it is also worth noting that some female athletes who started sport from a young age may experience delayed menstruation or primary amenorrhea (see note 45).

begin to take sport more seriously. Research on the MCs of athletes is steadily growing but is still lacking in some areas of research, especially on specific age groups such as teenagers. This kind of research on minors also requires serious ethical considerations. However, if there was to be a sudden growth of research on the effect of the MC on teenage athletes which unlocked further possibilities of improving athlete wellness and performance, what would we do with this information? Youth athletes are vulnerable and are at greater risk of being coerced because they tend to perceive their coach as being 'more powerful' than adult athletes would (Rylander, 2015, p. 118).

4.3.2 - Athletes in High-Pressure Sporting Environments

It is not only youth athletes who are at risk of being coerced by malevolent coaches. Any athlete who is in a high-pressure sporting environment is vulnerable to such abuse, particularly if there is a hierarchical relationship between athlete and coach. It has been suggested that female athletes 'rarely, if ever' challenge abusive behaviour exhibited by coaches (Lenskyj, 1992a, p. 27), and this is possibly due to a gendered relationship of dependency between female athletes and male coaches that sport fosters (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997, p. 151). Considering that these claims were made over 25 years ago, it may be more accurate to claim that Western society is experiencing a significant shift towards athlete advocacy after the #MeToo movement, which saw an increase in athletes whistle-blow sexual abuse cases in sport, most notably USA Gymnastics and the case of Larry Nassar (BBC News, 2018). Although female athlete voices are getting more attention than before, research suggests that these gendered power relations between male coaches and female athletes still exist (de Haan & Norman, 2020; Gaedicke et al., 2021; Hartmann-Tews, 2022).

4.3.3 - Pregnant Athletes

Casto also highlights the issue of pregnancy (2022, p. 1725). The sharing of menstrual health data with coaches will quite easily reveal to them the possibility that an athlete is pregnant. Athletes who become pregnant, particularly elite athletes, often conceal their pregnancy for a long period of time due to pay insecurity and team selection concerns (Casto, 2022, p. 1725). It is not unheard of for athletes to be dropped from a team or their sponsorship cut once they have announced that they are pregnant (Felix et al., 2019). Athletes such as Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka have received unwanted

speculation regarding their careers after announcing their pregnancies during their career. If this information was leaked before the athlete wanted to announce their pregnancy, it is plausible that a sponsor or a team would respond negatively, leaving athletes scrambling to secure maternity coverage. Pregnancy is, however, not the only issue which is impacted by systematic MT. In the following paragraphs, I explore three further issues which Casto does not address.

Firstly, it is possible that systematic MT could reveal whether an athlete may have had an abortion, as the calendar will show an absent period of menstruation, possible pregnancy symptoms, and later the possible symptoms associated with having an abortion, such as heavy bleeding, heavy cramping, fevers, nausea, vomiting and so on (Cleveland Clinic, 2021). Since the ruling of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022) and the consequent overturning of Roe v. Wade (1973) and Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992) in the US, debates surrounding MT for athletes have arisen, specifically due to the fear that this health data could be subpoenaed by the U.S. Supreme Court and used against athletes who seek abortions (Blanco, 2022). Currently, abortion in the USA is banned in 14 states[49], plus Georgia which bans abortion after six weeks (The New York Times, 2023). If this theory becomes reality, athletes who seek or have sought abortions could be penalised. Although most European countries have legalised abortion, there are some outliers such as Malta and Andorra, where abortion is totally banned, and Poland, Lichtenstein and the Faroe Islands, where abortion is highly restricted. Other countries, such as Hungary, have imposed more bureaucratic laws to deter abortions (Cursino, 2022). Though the subpoenaing of menstrual health data seems far-fetched at this moment in time, it is still a matter of concern and demands that scholars look into how menstrual health data in sport should be protected as we enter a digital age.

It is also possible that systematic MT, in revealing an athlete's pregnancy, could lead to female athletes feeling pressured into abortion[50]. At present, maternity pay for

[49] This figure is likely to change due to the fluctuating and polarised nature of US politics.

[50] A further issue which has been brought to the author's attention is the problem of pregnancy/abortion doping. Pregnancy/abortion doping may be defined as 'the misuse of pregnancy and/or abortion by a female athlete, her coach or support person to artificially induce physiologic advantage, increase red blood cell mass, enhance the delivery of oxygen and boost athletic performance' via impregnation and (potentially) consequent abortion (Sorensen, 2009, 723). Though it is possible for pregnancy to affect an athlete's biological passport (Mullen et al., 2018), research has shown that pregnancy/abortion doping has been scientifically debunked as an effective method of doping (Sorensen, 2009). Despite this, it is possible that some athletes, in extreme circumstances, could still be pressured into such methods.

athletes at an elite level is gradually being introduced with the Women's National Basketball Association (U.S.), Rugby Football Union (U.K.) and the Football Association (England) announcing maternity leave policies. Nonetheless, pregnant athletes still face stigmatisation and battle with views that their pregnancy shows a lack of dedication to the sport (Davenport et al., 2022, p. 456). Research has shown that few sport organisations possess policies that support female athletes to return to sport postpartum (Tighe et al., 2023, p. 1). In 2007, an article by ESPN.com reported that U.S. college athletes were terminating their pregnancies due to fear of losing their athletic scholarships (Rovegno, 2007). Under federal law in the U.S. athlete scholarships cannot be revoked due to pregnancy, however, it is evident that athletes are uneducated about their college or team's maternity policies. It is also thought that discriminative practices remain, such as female athletes being told to sign statements that they will not get pregnant (Sorensen, 2012). Along with the plethora of issues women continue to face regarding pregnancy in sport, systematic MT only exacerbates this issue by exposing female athletes and putting them under undue pressure.

4.3.4 - Athletes with Differences in Sex Development and Transgender Athletes

Systematic MT could reveal other private information, for example, if an athlete is intersex or has hyperandrogenism. Whereas intersex bodies may experience amenorrhea (Cleveland Clinic, 2022), hyperandrogenous bodies may experience menstrual irregularities, such as amenorrhea, oligomenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, or abnormal uterine bleeding (Cleveland Clinic, 2023). The sharing of this data has the potential to violate the privacy of these athletes. Firstly, it is possible that these athletes are unaware of their biological differences and have participated in sport without any issues. Sharing the data with medical staff in a sport team may lead to an unwanted diagnosis, but it could also lead to stigmatisation and bullying. Caster Semenya was heavily targeted by the media when the information that she underwent a sex verification test after her win at the 2009 World Championships was leaked by someone, possibly within Athletics South Africa (BBC Sport, 2019). The subject of a racist, sexist and imperialist discourse, Semenya experienced 'shameful and traumatic humiliation' because her biological status became known (Nyong'o, 2010, p. 96).

Data collected by systematic MT could also highlight if an athlete is transgender. Even if an athlete has undergone gender-affirming surgery which gives

them functional female genitalia, they will not menstruate. Regardless of whether an athlete should be categorised according to their biological status (see Martínková et al., 2023, p. 28), the sharing of such confidential data sets a dangerous precedent[51]. If sports governing bodies cannot keep such private information confidential, there is little hope for smaller scale organisations and teams. Until guidelines and policies are developed, athletes who are intersex, hyperandrogenous or trans are at risk.

If unregulated, systematic MT has serious potential to cause violations of privacy. If menstrual health data is shared beyond the athlete it has been collected from, the information is arguably no longer private. If this data is shared non-consensually or it is leaked, systematic MT effectively removes an athlete's power to make decisions on what is and what is not known about her body. This power is consequently transferred into the hands of people such as coaches and doctors, rendering female athletes into subordination. According to Beauvoir, the subordination of women pressures them into complicity, acting within a patriarchal system that they cannot control but must comply with for their continued participation and livelihood depends on it. Systematic MT could therefore, in extreme circumstances, contribute to female athletes internalising the belief that they must submit to the staff which oversee their well-being, facilitating abusive cultures which silence athletes in the name of performance.

4.4 - Moving Forward – Ensuring Systematic Menstrual Tracking is Implemented Safely

In order to ensure that systematic MT is implemented safely, policy recommendations must be proposed. The first recommendation focusses on athlete bodily autonomy, and to protect this it is recommended that sports organisations establish that those who produce menstrual health data (the female athletes) have the right to control that data. By establishing that female athletes have the right to control MT data, the consent process can be better facilitated, in that athletes understand that their data is not the possession of others such as doctors, governing bodies, or the team which they are a part of. This enables the athlete to have control over their body, and should be able to

[51] Biological data is required if an athlete is competing in a sport which is categorised on the basis of sex, which would suggest that this data should be shared between an athlete and the competition. Sports which are categorised as unisex would not warrant such information. However, further debates surrounding definitions of sex and sex categorisation (see Martínková et al., 2023) are beyond the scope of this analysis and detract from the intended focus of the discussion, this being data leaks and privacy of athlete health information.

do with it as they please, whether this is keeping the data entirely private or sharing it with the wider team. In addition to this, it is recommended that athletes are consulted and informed of their rights regarding their data – for example, athletes who reside in the EU should be informed of their personal data rights in accordance with GDPR legislation. Applying the recommendations made by Lucivero et al., the consultation and informing processes must be transparent about 'the purpose of data collection, the types of data collected, the parties who have access to them, the extent, modalities, and timeline for data deletion' to maintain legitimacy (2020, p. 4). This also applies to athletes whose personal data rights may be less protected, such as athletes in the U.S. whose MT data could be subpoenaed.

The second recommendation overlaps with the first recommendation, and this is to ensure that informed consent is given by the athlete if they choose to share their MT data. As highlighted by Thompson and McNamee, what constitutes a reasonable level of 'informedness' is 'open to interpretation' and, in reality, researchers and data collectors cannot predict every single possible outcome (2017, p. 51). Informed consent requires that an athlete is fully informed about why her MT data is collected, who it will be shared with, and how it will be used. Informed consent to track the MC should only be given by the athlete and not a proxy, such as a team representative or coach. Considering the recommendations of Lunt et al., it is also recommended that the process of informing the athlete should include a face-to-face meeting with a professional who will be collecting the data, as it is the data collector's ethical duty to ensure that athletes fully understand what they are signing up for (Lunt et al., 2019, p. 924).

Although eConsent is commonly used for individual MT applications due to its efficiency, its effectiveness for assessing user comprehension is questionable and arguably reduces the consent process to a 'tick box exercise', resulting in a 'loss of quality and ethical rigour' (Thompson & McNamee, 2017, p. 51). At this point in time, it is recommended that athletes are walked through each step of the consent process to ensure that they have all the information they need to make an informed decision about MT and the complexities that come with the continuous digitalisation of athlete health. It is also proposed that consent is obtained dynamically, meaning that consent is requested from the athlete every time their menstrual health data is used for new purposes. Although dynamic consent runs the risk of 'consent fatigue', this method of consent is preferred over a 'blanket' consent process as it allows for greater specificity

regarding how athlete menstrual health data is used, ensuring better protection of individual interests (Thompson & McNamee, 2017, pp. 53-54). Obtaining informed consent with ethical rigour is only part of the solution. Nonetheless, it is a fundamental step that should not be ignored.

Special attention must also be paid to the issue of systematic MT and youth athletes. Though an initial recommendation would be to ensure that predatory coaches are banned from all sports settings, preventing improper power dynamics between athletes and coaches, a second recommendation would be to introduce age restrictions on systematic MT. In line with McNamee, youth athletes ought to be viewed as persons at a life stage that 'does not typically permit autonomous decision making' and thus unable to give informed consent (2009, p. 116). As a result, it is recommended that youth athletes should not participate in systematic MT.

The third policy recommendation is to raise awareness and provide education to athletes, coaches, and support staff about the MC. In line with other scholars (Bruinvels et al., 2022; Clarke et al., 2021; Solli et al., 2020; Zipp & Hyde, 2023), educating athletes, coaches and support staff about the MC is of great importance if female athlete performance is to improve and coach-athlete relationships are to become more harmonious. However, this thesis section has shown that, as well as MC education, there is a great need for MT education. Although the usefulness of systematic MT should be acknowledged in this education, so too should the risks, such as the sale of data and what could happen in the case of a data leak. In line with the first and second policy recommendations, athletes should be made aware of who can access the data that they have shared, whether their information may be sold to third parties, and, in worst-case scenarios, how this data could be manipulated. Therefore, in conjunction with MC education, MT education must include information on the risks associated with MT data and how this data should only be used for the greater good of female athlete health.

The fourth recommendation is for sports organisations to recognise that systematic MT may facilitate abusive behaviour. It is clear that MT data is of high value, and as a result, coaches may use coercive behaviour in an attempt to obtain the information. At present, there is a great deal of attention being paid to how social media facilitates abuse in sport (Kavanagh et al., 2022; Kearns et al., 2023; Litchfield et al., 2018; Mountjoy et al., 2016; Osborne et al., 2021; Sanderson & Weathers, 2020). However, relatively little attention is being paid to how other technologies, such as MT

applications, could facilitate athlete maltreatment in a different form. As society becomes increasingly digitalised, sports scholars and those in positions of power in sports organisations have a duty to scrutinise and identify how digitalised technologies may impact athletes positively and negatively. Safeguarding practices in sport must be updated to reflect the technological changes in society so that athletes can reap the empowering benefits rather than suffer the oppressive consequences.

The final recommendation is potentially the most controversial: the blocking of data access for sports staff who have not been educated on the topic of the MC and MT. At this point in time, it is strongly arguable that research on the MC is limited, and as a result decisions regarding athlete rosters may be made with unsupported or misinterpreted information provided by systematic MT. The severity of these decisions are not to be underestimated, as they can have serious impact on an athlete's career. In line with the third recommendation, coaches and support staff must be educated on the MC and MT, and they should not be able to access MT data until they have completed this training. It is clear that understanding the full effects of the MC on the female athlete body can help coaches form training plans specific to their athletes, and this should be the sole goal of using systematic MT. How this education should be implemented within coach education and safeguarding requires further research.

4.5 – Summary – Systematic Menstrual Tracking: An Empowering or Oppressive Digital Tool?

Although there are clear benefits to tracking the MC for female athletic performance, there is an urgent need to investigate systematic MT from a critical perspective, ensuring that the promoted advantages of systematic MT do not overshadow the risks of its usage. Furthermore, the concerns expressed in Casto's (2022) paper are very much warranted, and by developing the ethical debate further it is clear that more research into the topic is required, as well as more large-scale scientific investigations into the MC. Unscrutinised and unregulated, systematic MT in women's sport has the potential to cause harm to athletes. In the most serious of cases, systematic MT may contribute to the wider system of women's oppression by financially and emotionally exploiting female athletes, as well as enabling the internalisation of submissive behaviour in cultures where athletes are expected to comply without question. The

continuous digitalisation of the female athletic body requires that more stringent protective measures are put in place to prevent abuse and to uphold safeguarding regulations. Enabling athletes to understand their MC and to take their menstrual and reproductive health in their hands is empowering, for it allows them to advocate for themselves as well as improving their MC and health literacy. Nonetheless, the ability to track the MC systematically should not come at a price. A more in-depth understanding of the links between data, privacy, and the MC are required by sports organisations and governing bodies if athletes are to be protected in a future where systematic MT is inevitable.

PART 5 – ON EMPOWERMENT

So far, this thesis has established that sport may oppress women if masculinist approaches continue to determine the policies and practices of sports organisations and governing bodies. Acknowledging the obvious – that oppression is, in the most basic and normative sense, bad – what should we strive for if we want women's sports to be good[52]? The Beauvoirian framework adopted in this thesis suggests an overarching goal: freedom. To Beauvoir, to be free is to be a 'creator' – that is, a being who can put forth original ideas and make change – and many women cannot achieve this position for they continue to be recognised as a gendered being first and a human second (2011, p. 767). Notably, and what is quite critical in relation to this thesis, the term 'empowerment' does not appear in the most recent (and arguably most accurately translated) version of *The Second Sex*. Does this mean that empowerment is synonymous with liberation? Before stating my position on this, terminological clarification is needed. Throughout *The Second Sex,* Beauvoir uses the terms 'freedom', 'emancipation' and 'liberation', all of which have different meanings and appear in different stages. To be emancipated is to be freed from control and being overpowered or 'power-over', may this be economic, social, psychological or physical control. 'Power-over' can be understood as 'the ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices available to another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way' (Allen, 1998, p. 33). Arguably, 'power-over' is not always synonymous with 'domination'; rather, domination is a particular application of 'power-over' (Allen, 1998, p. 34).

However, emancipation does not necessarily require that an agent is free and has the power to act or 'power-to', which Allen defines as 'the ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends' (1998, p. 34). This is the key difference between emancipation and liberation. Liberation is the obtaining of power-to, where an agent is not only released from constraints, but has the power to go forth into the world and change one's situation individually or collectively[53]. With this definition in mind, I

[52] A terminological clarification that should be made is that, due to the intricate dynamics of oppression and empowerment, the concepts 'empowerment' and 'oppression' cannot be reduced simply to opposites – as stated by Samie et al., empowerment is 'more than having/gaining power, privilege and voice', and oppression is 'more than not having power, privilege and voice' (2015, p. 932). Nonetheless, this thesis will regard empowerment as an appropriate response to oppression.

[53]Allen also introduces a third term, 'power-with', which is defined as 'the ability of a collectivity [sic] to act together for the attainment of a common or shared end or series of ends' (1998, p. 35). However, I argue that the term 'power-with' comes under the umbrella of 'power-to', and thus the definition of 'power-to' should be the acknowledged ability of an individual actor *or* a collective to attain an end or series of ends.

argue that Beauvoir's term 'liberation' should be understood as synonymous with 'empowerment'. It is empowerment which leads to freedom - the ability to act without restraint - and going back to Beauvoir's understanding, to be a creator; a being who initiates change and can forge their path authentically.

Beauvoir's musings on the problem of freedom and the quest for emancipation can be found in the fourth and final part of *The Second Sex*, titled 'Toward Liberation – The Independent Woman' (2011, pp. 735-768). A key quote from this chapter states that

> Even the woman who has emancipated herself economically from man is still not in a moral, social, or psychological situation identical to his. Her commitment to and focus on her profession depend on the context of her life as a whole. And, when she starts her adult life, she does not have the same past as a boy; society does not see her with the same eyes; she has a different perspective on the universe. Being a woman poses unique problems to an autonomous human being today (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 739).

In this passage there is a key problem for the woman who wishes to be free from oppression. For Beauvoir, a woman's existence is contradictory; if society is to accept her, she is required to be both 'object and prey' (2011, p. 739), dooming her to inferiority. Her situation in the world is heavily influenced by the objectification of her body, and to understand this objectification, and possibly internalise it, changes a woman's outlook on the world and impacts how she interacts with the world psychologically and physically. This is not the same for men, who are not as easily or less commonly objectified, and are thus less aware of their gendered existence.

In conceptualising Beauvoir's understanding and requirements of freedom, this thesis interprets the rejection of femininity as a key starting point for women's emancipation. Femininity, to Beauvoir, is (amongst other things) a psychological condition experienced through the body and has been prescribed to women as an 'immutable essence' (2011, p. 770). It is femininity, argues Beauvoir, that prevents women from fully realising their potential – she goes as far as to say in *The Independent Woman* that femininity convinced girls that they have 'limited capacities' and leads woman to 'doubt her professional opportunities' (2011, p. 754). The social construction of femininity, and its endorsement by men and women alike, has created a history of women doubting their ability to act freely. This constant position of

inferiority through time 'weighs on her' and it keeps her 'from feeling responsible for the universe', causing the woman to reject positions of superiority (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 766). Only when the woman realises that femininity is imposed on her can she begin to resist it and challenge the oppressive structures she faces (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 767). By resisting femininity, the woman can be psychologically and physically liberated, and 'be left to take her own chances' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 768), enabling women to fight for further liberation in the economic and social realms.

Though Beauvoir's account of oppression and the consequent call for women's liberation is original, she pays little attention to the concept of bodily empowerment. Despite this, Beauvoir does seem to indicate that bodily empowerment is an important experience denied to women, as detailed in the following extract from *The Independent Woman*:

> 'Her wings are clipped.' At eighteen, T. E. Lawrence went on a grand tour through France by bicycle; a young girl would never be permitted to take on such an adventure: still less would it be possible for her to take off on foot for a half-desert and dangerous country as Lawrence did. Yet such experiences have an inestimable impact: this is how an individual in the headiness of freedom and discovery learns to look at the entire world as his fief. The woman is already naturally deprived of the lessons of violence: I have said how physical weakness disposes her to passivity; when a boy settles a fight with punches, he feels he can rely on himself in his own interest; at least the girl should be allowed to compensate by sports, adventure, and the pride of obstacles overcome. But no. She may feel alone *within* the world: she never stands up *in front* of it, unique and sovereign (Beauvoir [de], 2011, pp. 765-766).

Given that Beauvoir views the body as 'situation'(Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 46), it is perhaps arguable that she is undervaluing what it means to experience the body without passivity, relying on economic and social empowerment as the key to emancipation too heavily. I will however contend that, without bodily empowerment, a woman cannot be empowered in the fullest sense possible, as it is bodily empowerment, or more commonly *dis*empowerment, that determines how she interacts with and her position within the physical world.

5.1 - Case Studies

In recognising the body as a vital component of women's empowerment, this thesis will examine how bodily empowerment may be understood. To do so, this section will examine how bodily empowerment may occur in sport. I will propose that there are two criteria for bodily empowerment, these being the experience of uninhibited movement and the experience of the body as resistance to the status quo. In discussing these criteria, I will draw upon literature relating to the sports of roller derby, combat sports, and motorsport. I will also discuss how bodily empowerment can be experienced collectively, drawing on the sport of netball, as well as the need for feminist pedagogies. Following this examination, this thesis section will answer three questions: 1) does sport empower women? 2) if women in sport are empowered, can they challenge oppressive systems within and beyond sport? and 3) how does empowerment directly respond to the Beauvoirian characterisation of oppression? The discussion will conclude that sport has the potential to enable women to regain control of their bodies, consequently empowering them to challenge oppressive systems.

5.1.1 - Roller Derby

Though this thesis has predominantly focussed on automotive racing and basket sports, the attention of this section will first turn to the sport of roller derby. A relatively new sport which is not commonly found outside the US (though this is set to change), scholarship examining roller derby often suggests that empowerment is a common theme and possible consequence of engaging in the sport (Finley, 2010; Gieseler, 2014; Paul, 2015; Paul & Blank 2015; Sailors, 2013), though there are some sceptics towards this claim (Davis & Edwards, 2021; Pavlidis & Connor, 2016). Paul and Blank report that 'roller derby clearly provides a space in which women feel as though they "get something done" and enjoy a sense of bodily empowerment' (2015, p. 58). Due to the explicit claims made regarding empowerment, roller derby seems like an apt place to start an examination of bodily empowerment.

First, it is necessary to briefly discuss how roller derby should be categorised. I argue that roller derby is a full-contact sport. Full-contact sports are sports where the body and its parts come into contact with the opponent with specific aims, such as blocking, tackling, and submission. Roller derby only permits blocking 'using one's torso, arms above the elbow, and legs above mid-thigh', and the block is only legal if

the player comes into contact with 'an opponent's chest, front and sides of the torso, arms, hands, hips, and the front and sides of the legs above mid-thigh' (Women's Flat Track Derby Association, 2023, *2.4 Blocks and Assists*). Full-contact sports are different from combat sports. Combat sports can be defined as those which include 'open direct fighting' (Martínková & Parry, 2016, p. 155). Sports that include or are centred around open direct fighting include boxing and wrestling, as well as those that developed from martial arts such as judo and various forms of karate (Martínková & Parry, 2016, p. 155). There is often overlap between combat sports and full-contact sports. For example, MMA and judo can be considered as both combat and full-contact sports, as they both include open direct fighting, and this fighting includes the use of the full body, such as chokeholds and joint locks. Boxing, however, may only be considered a combat sport, for although it includes open direct fighting, competitors cannot kick or wrestle their opponent, and so the contact is very much limited to the hands which throw the punches, and the places on the body where the hands are permitted to land. The relevance of this distinction will become clear in the second case study I employ.

Roller derby is unusual in that, similar to the sport of netball discussed in Part 3, it is one of the few sports created by and for women. Revived in the early 2000s in Texas, the Women's Flat Track Derby League sought to create an inclusive, feminist space that 'opens up new possibilities for what it means to be a woman and an athlete' (Sailors, 2013, p. 248). A key characteristic of roller derby is that it is aggressive and violent, distinguishing itself from other woman-made sports. Roller derby is thus viewed as a curiosity for scholars in the fields of sports and feminism, for it provides a site where challenges to women's 'physical inferiority' can be studied (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 54). By observing and interviewing roller derby athletes, Paul and Blank gained insights into how the sport made women feel, which included notions of accomplishment, liberation and control (2015, pp. 58-60). They argue that the aggression and physicality of roller derby allowed women to understand their bodies as non-passive and, to put it in the terms of I.M. Young, a feeling of 'I can' over 'I cannot' (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 58; Young, 2005). To reframe this in a Beauvoirian light, a woman in a patriarchal society does not experience her body as her own, but rather as 'something other than her' because it is objectified by the self and by society (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 42). The roller derby athlete experiences uninhibited movement through previously prohibited actions that extend the body outwards. It is this experience of

power and freedom that makes her body her own again and enables bodily empowerment.

Not only does roller derby allow women to experience uninhibited movement, it also enables them to resist the status quo. Before I examine bodily empowerment as resistance to the status quo, it is necessary to address what the status quo exactly is. The status quo or existing state of affairs for women is that to be accepted socially as 'women' they must be both 'object and prey' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 739). They are oppressed, and society coerces them into accepting it. As this thesis has argued so far, women's oppression is woven into the fabric of all parts of society, and this includes sport. Yet the outlook is not as bleak as Beauvoir sometimes makes it seem. Though these sites of socialisation may at times reinforce the status quo, they can also provide avenues to challenge and resist it. For women to successfully resist the status quo, it has been argued, one must reconstruct how the female identity is created psychologically and physically through socialisation (Guthrie, 1995, p. 109).

Following on from the above claim that roller derby allows women to resist the status quo, Paul and Blank highlight how the sport of roller derby is unusual in that it has fostered a 'feminist' strategy by resisting masculine definitions of sport (2015, p. 51). Unlike other popular sports, it is arguable that roller derby has been able to do this because it is a relatively young sport. Due to the slowly changing climate of women's sports in the 1990s and 2000s, roller derby's founders were arguably able to reflect on what was needed for a women's sport to be empowering. Roller derby revivalists saw that there was a clear need for women to be able to play sports which did not focus on performing feminine qualities, but rather allowed them to explore previously forbidden masculine qualities found in sport such as aggression, competitiveness, dominance and physicality. Roller derby became a site where women could reject and challenge notions of 'traditional femininity' (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 54) - or in Beauvoirian terms, the expectation of being both 'object and prey' - by affirming and exploring the body's limits and capacities.

Another key concept which was adopted in roller derby and continues to be a central tenet of the sport is body inclusivity. Sailors writes 'One finds an amazing diversity of bodies at a derby bout and senses an amazing acceptance of them all' (2013, p. 248). Roller derby is open to athletes of all shapes and sizes – short, tall, fat, thin, muscular and so on – providing that they can take a hit and maintain their balance. By promoting the sport as a sport for all women's bodies, roller derby directly

challenges the more socially accepted feminine athlete body which is tall, muscular and taut. The body diversity on a roller derby track can also challenge stereotypes and misconceptions of female physical inferiority – for example, women who carry more fat on their bodies can show that they are as skilful as their lither teammates. The principle of inclusivity also fosters a cooperative environment amongst athletes and a consequent 'symbolic challenge to sexist stereotypes' (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 54), preventing cultures of shame and elitism.

5.1.2 – Combat Sports

The second sport (or sport category) which I will use to frame this discussion of bodily empowerment is combat sport. Similar to roller derby, recent scholarship on female participation in combat sport highlight the theme of empowerment, commonly arguing that combat sports are liberating and challenge assumptions of female frailty (Channon, 2013; Channon & Phipps, 2017; De Welde, 2003; Guthrie, 1995; Maclean, 2015; Mierzwinski et al., 2014; Velija et al., 2013). Interestingly, Beauvoir's text on combat is one of the few times she directly refers to sport in *The Second Sex*. She writes

> At about thirteen, boys serve a veritable apprenticeship in violence, developing their aggressiveness, their will for power, and their taste for competition; it is exactly at this moment that the little girl renounces rough games. Some sports remain accessible to her, but sport that is specialization, submission to artificial rules, does not offer the equivalent of a spontaneous and habitual recourse to force; it is marginal to life; it does not teach about the world and about one's self as intimately as does an unruly fight or an impulsive rock climb. The sportswoman never feels the conqueror's pride of the boy who pins down his comrade. In fact, in many countries, most girls have no athletic training; like fights, climbing is forbidden to them, they only submit to their bodies passively; far more clearly than in their early years, they must forgo *emerging* beyond the given world, affirming themselves *above* the rest of humanity: they are banned from exploring, daring, pushing back the limits of the possible. In particular, the attitude of defiance, so important for boys, is unknown to them (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 354).

Here we can see that Beauvoir dismisses organised sport on the basis that it does not provide people with the opportunity to move spontaneously, as the rules dictate what movements are permitted. Though this is partially true, it is arguable that Beauvoir does

not have a full understanding of sports which permit acts of violence, such as full-contact and combat sports. Though certain movements are not permitted – for example, eye gouging or eye poking is banned in mixed martial arts (MMA) – this does not mean that the body is prevented from moving spontaneously or without inhibition. Submitting to artificial rules does not necessitate that movement is inhibited as Beauvoir claims, but ensures that the values of safety, fairness, justice and equality are protected. With this rebuttal in mind, it can be argued that organised combat sports can teach women about one's self as much as an unruly fight or an impulsive rock climb.

What ought to be addressed is whether Beauvoir's account of women and their inability to fight is outdated. Beauvoir claims that 'most girls have no athletic training' and fighting is forbidden to them. At the time of *The Second Sex*'s publication, this was likely true. For example, boxing was prohibited in many US and European states in the 19th century (Woodward, 2015, p. 141), and this prohibition continued until the 1990s, with the International Boxing Association (AIBA) sanctioning international women's fights in 1994 (Tjønndal, 2019, p. 133). In addition, historical variations of MMA have not typically included women at an organised level, but this changed in 2013 when the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) signed its first female fighter (Jennings, 2021, p. 156; Weaving, 2014, p. 129).

However, there are instances today where women continue to be banned from combat sports. For example, the martial art of sumo wrestling in Japan prohibits women from not only participation but also entering the ring (Almonacid, 2023; DeWitt, 2021). Additionally, Cuban women only recently gained the right to spar and competitively box in December 2022 (Augustin, 2023). Though women's participation in combat sports is increasing, the sports remain 'socio-historically masculine' (Maclean, 2015, p. 155), causing many women and girls to avoid sports which are characterised as aggressive, violent, or contrary to feminine values. As a result of this, Beauvoir's theorisation can still be understood as relevant; women are more likely to submit to their bodies passively by avoiding or being dissuaded from violent sports, forgoing opportunities to affirm themselves through attitudes of defiance and boundary-pushing.

Combat sports may, however, give critical insight to women's empowerment on the basis that they enable women to experience force and power (Velija et al., 2013, p. 525). Beauvoir theorises that women are taught to understand that their body as weak, and in doing so, they are 'doomed to docility' (2011, p. 398). Once women become

aware that their bodies are, on average, less physically strong than the average male body, it is theorised that they accept their status as passive: 'To lose confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in one's self' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 399). However, if this is true, it is also possible that confidence – or perhaps a sense of empowerment – can be gained if the body is seen as a trustworthy and reliable tool. Velija et al.'s interviewees expressed that by practising combat sports they were able to reject notions of bodily incompetence and were challenged to reject narratives of victimisation (2013, pp. 530-531).

Similar to roller derby, some combat sports may provide an avenue for resistance to the status quo as it trains women to exert force. Typically, women who wish to pursue sport have been steered towards 'soft' sports which focus on feminine values, outright rejecting masculine values such as competition, dominance and aggression. Combat sports are often conceived as highly masculine in that they appear to be dangerous and violent, and as a result, they are considered less appropriate sports for women (Follo, 2012, p. 712). Although some scholars have claimed that 'over-aggressiveness and the "win-at-all-costs" mentality [are] stigmatized, while caring [is] valued' in the subculture of MMA (Abramson & Modzelewski, 2011, p. 156), it is nonetheless arguable that MMA, jiu-jitsu, karate and judo are male-apposite. Though technique is key, there is a demand for strength and power in the sport, and the male body holds a greater advantage. This is evidenced by the lack of organised mixed sex competitions in combat sports - although it is common for men and women to train together (Abramson & Modzelewski, 2011), and maybe even spar with one another (Channon, 2013; Kavoura et al., 2018; Maclean, 2015), organised mixed sex competitions are unusual, presumably due to safety concerns. By participating in combat sports women are resisting the status quo – they are willing to make the body stronger and more dominant, rejecting the view that they are prey.

An alternative viewpoint which should be explored is that self-affirmation for women is a form of resistance. For women to recognise their existence and value as meaningful in a patriarchal society is resistance, for they are conditioned to accept that they are the second sex where the male is the Absolute and she is the Other (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 6). Russell argues that dangerous sports, such as the combat sports of judo and karate, have moral value in that they are activities of self-affirmation: 'dangerous sport invites us to confront and push back the boundaries of the self by creating contexts in which some of the ordinary bounds of our lives can be challenged'

(2005, p. 2). By choosing to face the possibility of being hurt, injured, permanently impaired and possibly even killed, practitioners of combat sports exercise their agency, and have the opportunity to test the body to limits which may not occur in everyday life (Russell, 2005, p. 14). Learning and accepting that the body is a passive object requires women to 'forgo emerging beyond the given world' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 354), and so combat sports help women to undo this social conditioning. Self-affirmation – in essence, 'challenging one's whole self at the limits of one's being' (Russell, 2005, p. 15) – is a goal of combat sports, meaning that the sport can provide a site of resistance to the status quo.

5.1.3 - Motorsport

Unlike roller derby and combat sport, there is little scholarship on the topic of bodily empowerment in motorsport. There are at least two possible reasons for this knowledge gap: firstly, there are so few women at the very top of the motorsport leagues it is hard to conduct research on participants and discuss how they understand empowerment as drivers. Secondly, as established in Section 1 of this thesis, motorsport is often disempowering for women drivers (Howe, 2022b; Kochanek et al., 2020; Næss & Tjønndal, 2021). Though there are very few women in elite motorsport at present, the number is steadily increasing, with the organisation More Than Equal reporting that there has been a 'small but positive growth in female participation in recent years' (2023, p. 7). Furthermore, although W Series is no longer in operation, an all-female driver series, F1 Academy, was established in November 2022 with the aim of spring-boarding female athletes into Formula 1 (formula1.com, 2023). This thesis has argued that there are multiple barriers which prevent women from participating, and it is only when these barriers are drastically minimised that women will have an equal footing with men in the sport (Howe, 2022b). Motorsport, though often considered an oppressive system for female athletes, has the potential to be a fruitful avenue for women to experience bodily empowerment, as described below.

At first glance, the body is arguably inhibited or 'trapped' by the car in automotive racing (sometimes literally as a driver is encapsulated in a roll cage in the cockpit), with bodily movement limited to the feet pushing the pedals and the arms turning the steering wheel. However, when a driver enters a car their body is better

understood as a ‘driver-car assemblage’ (Dant, 2004, p. 62; Pflugfelder, 2009, p. 415), meaning that they create a new identity in addition to their identity as a person outside of the car. Driving the car and interacting with the technology it holds unites the body and car, allowing the car to be seen as an extension of the body. Historically, the unaided human body has never moved faster than 43.99 kilometres per hour unaided (and only one person, Usain Bolt, has ever produced such speed), yet it is possible to exceed 350 kilometres per hour in Formula 1 cars. Because they form a driver-car assemblage, drivers can experience uninhibited movement in a more abstract form compared to roller derby, boxing and karate. Through acceleration, braking, and cornering, the body moves in ways that it cannot outside of the car, breaking the biological boundaries of the body.

Not only is the body abstractly uninhibited whilst driving the car, it is pushed beyond its limits. Though a driver may experience 4.5-6 units of G force during a Formula 1 race, when a car crashes it experiences much more. A famous crash of recent in Formula 1 saw driver Romain Grosjean suffer ‘a peak impact of 67G’ (Galloway, 2021). Grosjean’s crash was one of the luckier incidents, as he came away with minor injuries – other drivers have not been as lucky, and the risk of death is an acknowledged characteristic of motorsport. Some motorsports have a higher risk of death than others. For example, The Isle of Man TT, a 37.73-mile motorcycle race in the UK, caused a total of 266 fatalities between 1911 and 2023 (Petrie, 2023). Though death is an undesired and unintended outcome of sport, the act of risking harm and death is a form of self-affirmation. As previously established in the discussion of combat sports, dangerous sports allow us to overcome obstacles ‘that would not, or should not, be present in ordinary life’ (Russell, 2005, p. 14). In Section 1 this thesis evidenced how women are frequently presented with attitudes that they are unsuited to motorsport, biologically, psychologically and even neurologically. By risking serious physical harm and death, women are able to contradict these claims, showing that not all females are hardwired to avoid the risk of physical harm so that they can better procreate and protect offspring. Once again, through participation in motorsport, women are given the opportunity to resist and challenge the status quo, physically empowering themselves and others in the process.

5.2 - Can Bodily Empowerment Be Experienced Collectively?

The body and how we experience it is inherently individual. In acknowledging this, an

issue arises: can bodily empowerment be experienced collectively? Collective empowerment can be defined as an instance 'where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone' and there is a focus on 'cooperation rather than competition' (Rowlands, 1995, p. 103). Though individual empowerment is important, individual empowerment alone is insufficient if institutional change is to be brought about (Rowlands, 1995, p. 106). It would appear that, in tackling oppressive patriarchal structures in sport, collective empowerment is necessary. I argue that we can turn to a Beauvoirian characterisation of empowerment to understand the importance of collectivism, and this, in turn, gives key insights as to how bodily empowerment can be both an individual and collective goal for women in sport.

Though Beauvoir's philosophy is existentialist, it can be argued that this does not necessitate an individualist understanding of freedom, deeply contrasting Sartre's work which many contend[54] is the basis of her work (McCall, 1979; Simons, 1986). In stark opposition to an individualist take on liberation, Beauvoir highlights that the lack of cohesion by women has historically hindered their fight for gender equality, writing in the introduction of *The Second Sex* that 'Women…do not use 'we'; men say 'women', and women adopt this word to refer to themselves; but they do not posit themselves authentically as Subjects' (Beauvoir [de], 2011, p. 8). Later, when writing on women's history, Beauvoir highlights the slow uptake of women workers unionising, stating that 'A tradition of resignation and submission as well as a lack of solidarity and collective consciousness leaves them disarmed in front of the new possibilities available to them' (2011, p. 136). From these quotes we can see that Beauvoir is critical of women and their complicity in their own subjugation, yet her critiques also point the reader in a more positive direction: if women could come together and organise themselves as a political collective, the fight for gender equality would be far more forceful.

Bodily empowerment as an experience of uninhibited movement can be experienced collectively in sites such as sport. To demonstrate this, I will use the

[54] On this, Simons writes 'Once a closer study of the actual differences between Beauvoir and Sartre is undertaken, it becomes clear that the simplistic view reducing Beauvoir to Sartre is inadequate for a full comprehension of her work. And such a view, by ignoring the considerable influence that Beauvoir had on Sartre's work, obscures the interpretation of his work as well. An appreciation of Beauvoir's influence on Sartre can provide a helpful context for understanding the often puzzling transition in Sartre's work in the 1950s as he struggled to come to terms with the social and historical forces that Beauvoir had analyzed so effectively in her landmark work of 1948-49, The Second Sex' (Simons, 1986, p. 167).

analogy of an elite netball team. Elite netball today has drastically changed from the original game, as demonstrated by a recent account of an international netball match by ESPN.com which described the England netball team as 'aggressive' and commented on player Helen Housby's 'bullishness' (Moonda, 2023). As discussed in Part 3, netball is characterised by several rules which were arguably put in place as a way of restricting player movement. However, these rules, namely the 'Over a Third' rule and the rule of footwork can also be interpreted as rules which encourage co-operation amongst the team. It is impossible for an individual to dominate the game as one might do in basketball or football – a player cannot simply run around with the ball in their possession and score without interacting with other members of their team. For the ball to get from one end to the other, the ball must be passed between the netball court thirds. Referring back to ESPN.com's report, the England Netball coach commented that the team's 'greatest strength' was their 'ability to defend as a whole', further adding 'Our strength is in the collective, and their strength lies with individuals' (Moonda, 2023). Each individual netball player can experience uninhibited movement through interception, jumping and throwing, however their bodily empowerment is arguably enhanced by their reliance on each other. By working together towards an outcome, bodily empowerment through the experience of uninhibited movement can be realised as a collective.

Bodily empowerment as resistance to the status quo can also be experienced collectively, and this may be in more simple formats such as team sports, or in more complex formats such as political groups within sports. Women may experience resistance to the status quo collectively by being in a team which challenges the male hegemony that sport has embodied for so long, or by occupying spaces which are or have been considered primarily male preserves. For example, a football pitch can be considered a site of resistance, and female footballers entering the space demonstrates resistance to the 'promotion of male hegemony' in football (Harris, 2001, pp. 23-25).

As previously established, participation alone can be considered as resistance to the status quo, and an example of this is the Afghan women's football team. At the time of writing, FIFA does not recognise Afghanistan's women's football team as national representatives as they cannot overrule the national governing body, the Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF). Due to the Taliban regaining power in 2021, women no longer have rights in the country, including the right to any kind of physical activity. Currently, the Afghan national women's football team live in exile in Australia and,

despite their displacement, the women continue to play football at A-league club Melbourne Victory (Pender, 2023). This is a strong example of collective resistance to the status quo; by playing football, the Afghan women's team experience bodily empowerment and defy the Taliban's regime, challenging multiple perceptions and stereotypes of refugees and women from the Global South.

Additionally, it should be noted that collective bodily empowerment is not limited to team sports, but can also be experienced by those who participate in more individual sports. Although boxing is a particularly individual sport in that the matches are one on one, the athlete is never truly alone. Although athletes may compete as individuals, the larger sporting experience is commonly in a team setting. The boxer may be a member of a larger academy or a training centre where she trains alongside other athletes. She will also be surrounded by her team, these being her coach, her physiotherapist, her nutritionist and so on. This argument could even be extended to include her opponent. Although the boxers are separate individuals they engage in play together as a collective of two, and without one another the competition ceases to exist. Though a boxer can train by herself, throwing punches at a bag or jumping rope, it is not as gratifying as sparring with her opponent. Although they are competing against one another, the boxers cooperate to experience the bodily power and the limitations of their bodies, and in doing so they challenge the status quo together as a collective.

5.3 - Bodily Empowerment and the Need For a Feminist Pedagogy

Contrary to the above, Blinde et al. claim that 'women's participation in sport may challenge traditional notions of women's capabilities and provide positive role models for girls and women', however, 'sport does not appear to be an effective vehicle for developing the athlete's consciousness as a woman or encouraging activism regarding the concerns of women' (1994, p. 57). Though these findings were made nearly thirty years ago, similar conclusions have been drawn more recently regarding women's participation in MMA, with Hamilton[55] arguing that the transformative experiences

[55] Although women are able to gain impressive skills and strength in MMA, Hamilton argues that instead of enabling women to challenge the status quo, MMA may 'disempower' women (Hamilton, 2022, p. 671). The disempowerment of women in MMA, according to Hamilton, is the result of multiple factors. Firstly, interviews showed that there was a stark lack of solidarity between the women athletes (Hamilton, 2022, p. 662). Arguably this is a result of the neoliberal ideology MMA is governed by, promoting ideas of competition and individuality, which can ultimately lead to selfishness and a lack of cohesion (Hamilton, 2022, p. 662). An example of this neoliberal ideology manifesting itself is Project Spearhead (see McClearen, 2021). Secondly, the athletes saw themselves as superior to women outside

women undergo is misguidedly labelled as 'empowerment', and in reality their development of physical power is not 'accompanied by a critical feminist consciousness' (2022, p. 671).

Echoing Hamilton's (2022) findings, Velija et al. found that the female athletes they interviewed did not question 'dominant notions of gendered embodiment that position women's bodies as weaker than male bodies', despite also voicing that they felt they were physically and mentally empowered by combat sports (2013, p. 538). A strong example of this was the theme of weight loss and thinness which emerged from the interviews, possibly highlighting that although combat sports may physically empower women by teaching them how to utilise and strengthen their bodies, it can also be a site which encourages internalised self-surveillance and even the policing of other bodies (2013, pp. 536-537). Similar to Hamilton (2022), the prescription to a female-athlete paradox was evident in Velija et al.'s study for the female athletes expressed opinions which demonstrated their complicity 'in accepting dominant notions about female bodies' (2013, p. 538).

It is clear that, although some sports can empower women through the experience of uninhibited movement and through resistance to the status quo, a deeper understanding of how helplessness and weakness are learned and socially encouraged needs to be addressed through the accompaniment of a feminist pedagogy[56] in sport, thus making women's sport empowering in the fullest sense possible. In Velija et al.'s words, 'empowerment underpinned by a feminist ethos enables women to move beyond individual empowerment' and will help women in sport 'consider a more collective resistance that results in the destabilisation of the gender order' (2013, p. 538). Given the inherent philosophical and ethical nature of this thesis, as opposed to a pedagogical one, I contend that proposing a novel pedagogical theory for a feminist philosophy of

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of MMA; although they considered themselves empowered, the athletes 'constructed their empowered status in relation to other women' (Hamilton, 2022, p. 667) and viewed women who did not participate in MMA as weaker or cowardly. Thirdly, due to the demand to keep one's self marketable, and in line with the consumerist nature of MMA, athletes often fulfil the woman-athlete paradox, this being a balancing act of the feminine identity and the athletic identity (Krane, 2001; Krane et al., 2004; Weaving, 2014). Not only did athletes prescribe to this woman-athlete paradox, it was found that they saw it as a source of pride (Hamilton, 2022, p. 664). Finally, Hamilton found that mixed-sex training scenarios contributed to female athlete's reification that the male body was always superior in MMA, contrary to findings by Channon (2013) and Maclean (2015, 2016).

[56] In acknowledging how 'pedagogy' may have multiple definitions, this thesis understands a pedagogy of sport to be a method of teaching which 'should enable us to better understand how and what knowledge is (re)produced related to physical activities, bodies, and health' (Tinning, 2008, pp. 418-419).

sports lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this thesis will suggest a pedagogy proposed by Sharon Guthrie (1995) as a useful starting point.

Guthrie proposed that a feminist 'care of the self' ethic ought to be implemented if sports is to empower women (1995, p. 108). For Guthrie, 'care' entails many things – it is both physical and psychological, and it requires developing 'a strong sense of self' through various practices (1995, pp. 109-110). Importantly, these practices (of which Guthrie lists four: health and nutrition, meditation, physical education and self-defence training, and the study of feminist theory) can 'become the basis for developing empowering relationships with other women and collective structures capable of sustaining feminist goals and values' if they are experienced in feminist spaces (1995, pp. 109-110). This research was carried out at Thousand Waves, a feminist dojo in Chicago, and interviews with women who practised seido karate at the dojo revealed that women gained feelings of bodily acceptance, the ability to 'mediate patriarchal environs', and a deeper understanding that they have the right to self-defend (Guthrie, 1995, pp. 111-114). Whether Guthrie's ethic of self-care could translate to sports beyond karate is a question best answered by sports pedagogists. However, referring back to the findings of Hamilton (2022), it is arguable that a feminist pedagogy which focuses on building collective structures capable of sustaining feminist goals and values is the best place to start in addressing attitudes which prevent women from coming together as a collective. By giving women a voice and informing them of their rights and their abilities, women in sport will be able to speak up about the injustices they experience as an unstoppable force.

5.4 – Summary

At the beginning of this section, three questions were presented. The first question asked: does sport empower women? It is evident that sport does empower women, but only in certain conditions. Though it is not necessary that all of these conditions be fulfilled simultaneously, the more criteria fulfilled the better. Firstly, sport empowers women when it gives them a sense of bodily power. Throughout time, women have experienced the body as something other than themselves. It has not belonged to them, and what it is capable of has been taught to them, without the possibility of finding out for themselves what their body can do. Experiencing uninhibited movement enables women to realise that they can be powerful, fast and aggressive, and that they have always been so, and that the limit of their bodies is much farther than they have been

told. Secondly, sport empowers women when it enables them to resist the status quo. Resistance can take on many forms, may this be resisting masculinist definitions and values of sport, psychologically resisting narratives of victimhood and negative stereotypes, and resistance through self-affirmation.

The second question asked: if women in sport are empowered, can they challenge oppressive systems within and beyond sport? I argue that it is certainly possible, yet the success of challenging oppressive systems wholly relies on the ability of women working collectively for a common cause. Instead of positioning women against one another as fierce rivals, sport should work to unite women and help them to see that there are pragmatic political reasons to form a collective, namely that their voice is strengthened when speaking up against inequalities. Although many sports are, by definition, competitive, the values of cooperation and respect must be emphasised. Elite sportswomen also need to understand that they may hold the power to influence and demand that these values are demonstrated. For example, during the 2022 US Open, tennis player Serena Williams told the crowd not to boo her opponent, Anett Kontaveit. Although Williams could have seized this opportunity to levy the crowd against her opponent, she instead stood up for Kontaveit and used her influence as the favourite to demand respect from the audience. Although Williams was clearly competing against Kontaveit, she was also cooperating to ensure that the match between them was as fair as possible. This is a small yet clear example of how empowered sportswomen can bring about small but effective changes.

Moreover, and in line with the above example of Williams and Kontaveit, the studies which this section has relied upon all indicate a clear response: when empowered, women in sport feel more confident about speaking up and challenging sexist attitudes which they encounter in sport and outside of sport. Though we shouldn't rely on sportswomen to enter complex political battles, it is possible to recognise their influence and the fuller understanding of the self that they may possess thanks to bodily empowerment. This is not to say that women in sport are superior to other women, but rather women in sport can often provide a unique standpoint where matters of the body are concerned. Without sportswomen and their allies campaigning for change, sport cannot become a force for good.

The third and final questions asked: how does bodily empowerment directly respond to the Beauvoirian characterisation of oppression? In Part Two of this thesis, it was concluded that a Beauvoirian characterisation of oppression understands women's

oppression to be systemic, exploitative and internalised. Therefore, in response, this section sought to discuss whether bodily empowerment could be an adequate response in combatting oppression. This section has argued that sport has the potential to enable women to regain control of the body. By regaining the body as one's own, by removing it from the hands of others, a woman is able to begin the undoing of the socialised body. When she undergoes this process, she becomes more aware of what has been forbidden to her and the role she plays in accepting the forbidden. She also begins to affirm her sovereignty over the world, understanding what it means to be empowered. This new sense of empowerment gives the woman the strength to speak up against the various oppressions that she and others experience, and thus, we begin to see the gradual breakdown of a systemic, exploitative and internalised oppression.

Yet issues remain: what is the first step? Do we need to empower women first, so that sport can change as a result of their empowered actions? Or does sport need to be good in the first place, so that women are empowered as a consequence? In recognising the vicious cycle that the debate of empowerment presents us, this thesis contends that the onus for change should come from both the individual and the sport institution, but the division of responsibility should not be equal; to place the responsibility of addressing sexism upon women does not acknowledge how sexism affects all people and is reinforced in larger social contexts. Regarding the individual, change can only occur once the individual realises how they contribute to the wider system of oppression, and to what extent the oppression is internalised. This introspection is a crucial step in recognising the complexity of oppression, as well as acknowledging how complicity is manifested in different degrees. Nonetheless, change should not come from the individual alone. Sports institutions wield far greater power when it comes to making meaningful and effective change, and as a result, they are more accountable for ensuring that sports is a practice and a site which fosters feminist empowerment. To successfully foster feminist empowerment, policy must change. In the following section, Part 6, I will propose a limited number of policy changes that may act as starting points for sports organisations and governing bodies who are looking to improve the position and participation of female athletes.

PART 6 – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TACKLING OPPRESSION AND ENABLING EMPOWERMENT

Throughout this thesis multiple policy recommendations have been made in Parts 1, 3, and 4 in response to specific issues concerning sports and the oppression of women in sport. These recommendations are as follows:

- Formula 1: the need for a merit-based, equally financed championship for women, which is broadcast on live, national television, that gives women the opportunity to address detrimental stereotypes without concerns surrounding sponsorship and money.

- Netball: the reformation of netball rules, especially with regards to contact, dress codes, sex segregation, and Physical Education curriculums.

- Female-specific technology in sport: scrutiny of systematic menstrual tracking applications, ensuring that informed consent is obtained by team physicians, the protection of privacy, the protection of vulnerable athletes, and improvement of education.

Although these specific policies are sufficient for narrow-scope issues, there is a need to develop broader policies which can be adopted by other sports governing bodies who have not been directly addressed in this thesis. By taking into account the thesis as a whole, I propose three broad policy proposals which sports governing bodies ought to adopt if they are to contribute to the tackling of women's oppression and the enablement of women's empowerment. These broader policy proposals have been grouped into three stages – review, respond, reform – and are intended to be undertaken sequentially. Each stage is divided into three more specific, yet non-exhaustive, ways that they may be implemented for effective change is to occur. The policy proposals which are a result of this research are as follows:

6.1 – Review

A strong starting point for making institutional change is a review, this being a critical assessment and evaluation of the situation at hand. A foundational issue that this thesis

is built upon is that the oppression of women in Western society is so far-reaching that it is entangled with other spheres of society such as sport. This research found that the oppression of women is so deeply engrained it has permeated sports rules, in that sports have been created or adapted to maintain the status quo by promoting inhibited movement and prohibiting displays of power, competitiveness and aggression. The sport of netball, discussed in Part 3, is a key example of a sport where oppression has manifested in the rules and conventions. The investigation of the research pointed to other sports which, although labelled 'egalitarian', also promote problematic gender ideals, behaviours and roles. Although this thesis is extensive, it only pays direct attention to a few sports categories. Given that sports is such a broad term, encompassing multiple categories, this thesis proposes that other sports categorisations require similar review and research.

There are important areas of sport that need attention and constant review. In narrowing down the scope of what ought to be reviewed, I propose the following:

1) Feminine dress codes – This is a problem which has been discussed frequently in feminist sports scholarship as well as popular culture, and it appears that the tide is beginning to turn. It is clear that some sports enforce feminine dress codes for women, such as mini dresses in netball, skorts in korfball, high-cut leotards in gymnastics, bikinis in beach volleyball and so on. The research presented in this thesis has concluded that feminine dress codes enforce heterosexuality and femininity, and contribute to gender roles which sports do not require. A thorough review which incorporates the voices of the athletes affected is required and should ask whether feminine dress codes are beneficial to athletes in terms of movement and safety. A review of whether alternative and more flexible dress codes could encourage diversity and inclusion in other sports is also required.

2) Anti-contact rules – Specifically, this review should address sports which have historically prohibited contact with paternalistic aims, such as the protection of women's health and the prevention of the masculinisation of women. This thesis has highlighted how netball ought to review the contact rules and introduce greater contact, and this review should extend to other sports which have an equivalent male game which differs by contact rules, such as lacrosse and ice

hockey. The review should require sports governing bodies to determine whether the anti-contact rules perpetuate gender stereotypes and contribute to the wider system of women's oppression in sports. This review should also consider whether men's sports which have high contact in comparison to the women's game should reduce their contact on the grounds of safety and long term health. Although uninhibited movement and empowerment in sport is the goal, this review should also acknowledge that genuine safety concerns must be considered, as sports organisations do have a duty to protect their athletes, regardless of their sex.

3) Sex and gender segregation rules – Another broad policy proposal which has emerged is the need to grow mixed sex/gender and unisex sports games parallel to the women's game. Although women's sports in the West are generally increasing in popularity, it is clear that there are also stark benefits to mixed sex/gender sports and unisex sports. It is true that larger investments, more prime time coverage on television and improved reporting on women's sport is still required, and I cannot state this enough. Nonetheless, simultaneously growing mixed sex and unisex sports will also benefit people who want to experience bodily empowerment, especially those who are not gender-conforming. Furthermore, sports governing bodies ought to review whether mixed sex sports are contributing to gender roles and stereotypes, ensuring that the rules are as egalitarian as possible, challenging social divides rather than encouraging them.

6.2 – Respond

Following the review process, governing bodies ought to evidence a response to demonstrate that they are paying attention to the situation at hand and are willing to make changes. Issuing a response is critical for a sports governing body if they want to gain the trust of their stakeholders. In addition to institutional responses, responses can also come from individuals who desire change. In using a Beauvoirian conceptualisation of oppression and, consequently, empowerment, a particular criticism which this thesis acknowledges is the issue of individual freedom. Though Beauvoir

appears to respond to Sartre's theory of 'bad faith' and argues that women are inescapably complicit, there is an underlying assumption that, if she *really* wanted to, a woman could stand-up to her oppressors and challenge her unfree status. Problematically, this leads to an over-emphasis on the fight for freedom being a bottom-up responsibility – the responsibility of individual women - rather than top-down responsibility which lies with large organisations such as sports governing bodies. However, this thesis has also highlighted that Beauvoir places importance on both individual freedom and collective empowerment. This thesis therefore proposes that there needs to be both individual, bottom-up responses to oppression and empowerment as well as organisational, top-down responses, but the response to oppression must begin at the top.

I propose the following three areas for sports organisations to begin responding to systemic oppression with the goal of empowerment:

1) Regulation – acknowledging that oppression is a systemic issue, sports governing bodies have a duty to respond to this fact and must do what they can to ensure that it is tackled from the top down. Sports organisations are often embedded in history and conventions, resulting in them being oblivious to how oppression is manifesting in a sport in more covert ways. In response to this issue, it is suggested that organisations undergo regular regulatory investigations from an external ombudsman specialised in gender equality and ethics.

2) Protection – It is known that sports governing bodies can be resistant to change. One of the biggest changes that many sports governing bodies are beginning to see or will eventually see is the increase of female athletes and an increase of interest in women's sports. If governing bodies are too slow to adapt to this rapid growth, female athletes will likely feel the need to challenge sports governing bodies to ensure that the governing body is compliant and protects their human rights. In order for athlete voices to be heard, sports governing bodies have a duty to encourage and protect athlete voices, responding with appropriate measures to empower athletes to speak up without the risk of retaliation.

3) Outreach – Structural change requires a top-down response. This thesis highlights that elite women's sports are greatly affected by grassroot participation numbers. Not only this, elite women's sports are often lacking diversity, particularly where race is concerned. Bodily empowerment is important for all women, regardless of their sexuality, ethnicity, race, ability, location or class. In an attempt to make elite women's sport more diverse and inclusive, outreach is key to boosting participation in grassroot programmes. Sports governing bodies have a clear duty of ensuring that all women can experience bodily empowerment, no matter where or who they are in the world.

6.3 – Reform

A theme that emerged from the research conducted is the need for sport governing bodies to reform. The scale of this reformation varies, and it would be impossible to highlight which sports governing bodies need to reform and which do not. Consequently, the reformational policies which this thesis proposes are not specific to an organisation, as this requires in-depth and first-hand knowledge of the organisation itself. This thesis therefore proposes some very general requirements which sports governing bodies should adopt depending on the results of internal reviews. Preferably, these requirements would be enforced by an external ombudsman.

The reformational requirements are as follows:

1) Rules – Providing that reviews of sports rules corroborate the findings of this thesis (in essence, that sports rules have the potential to encourage the internalisation of oppression) it is of paramount importance that these rules are reformed so that the opportunity for bodily empowerment is maximised. Whether this reformation is a total abandonment of the rule or a major revision is at the discretion of the sports governing body in question. Commonly there is a fear that a sport will no longer be the sport that the founders intended if the rules undergo significant change, however this should be seen as a positive outcome in that the rules are changing for the purpose of improving the sport.

2) Education – A key finding in this thesis is that women in sport need a more comprehensive education on what their rights entail and how they may be able

to challenge oppressive structures themselves. Although top-down change is particularly important in tackling oppression, there is also a need for bottom-up change. However, for bottom-up change to be effective there needs to be adequate provisions. As well as regular physical training, athletes should have the option of enrolling in education provided by the governing body so that they can make effective changes in the organisations they play within. Sports governing bodies should not fear athletes standing up for themselves but should actively encourage it for a more democratic system, and education is one way of enabling this.

3) New sports – A third recommended area for reformation is the inclusion of new sports which seek to promote empowerment. Arguably, this policy proposal may be better conceptualised as 'formation', rather than reformation. Alongside the reformation of oppressive rules and structures in sports there is a need to make way for new sports that are founded on the principles of diversity, inclusion, and bodily empowerment. It is recommended that sports governing bodies which act as umbrella organisations ought to foster these new sports more readily through funding and outreach programmes, encouraging the emphasis of bodily empowerment for all.

6.4 – Summary

Overall, these policy recommendations aim to tackle women's oppression in sport, with the eventual goal of achieving gender equality through empowering women. These policies are not intended to be the final and defining response to gender inequality in women's sports. Rather, these policy proposals provide alternative perspectives and responses to the current climate, acknowledging how far the women's movement in sport has come, whilst also acknowledging that there is still much more to be done. If these policies are taken on board by sports governing bodies, it is strongly suggested that women in sport will feel more empowered to challenge the status quo, empowering others as a consequence, encouraging women to be an unstoppable force for change. New issues are continuously arising in women's sports, and because of this, novel

solutions are required. This calls for not only updated policies and reviews, but also novel research.

PART 7 – THESIS CONCLUSION

In the beginning, the following questions were asked: does sport contribute to the oppression of women, reifying their inferior position in Western society, or does sport empower them, giving them the tools to challenge prejudices and enabling a full, physical exploration of the body? In answer to this question, it has been shown that sport has the potential to be a vital source of bodily empowerment for women, enabling them to explore the limits of the physical body individually and collectively. However, this thesis has also shown how there are multiple conditions required in ensuring that women are empowered and not oppressed, and that the responsibility of empowering women in sport heavily lies with sports governing bodies. The discussion evidenced how the oppression of women in sport can manifest in a multitude of ways, whether this be through the rules and conventions, through categorisations, through financially and emotionally exploitative practices, and through novel methods such as health data manipulation. Utilising a Beauvoirian approach has shown that oppression is a complex and multifaceted issue, but also an issue that can be tackled and addressed once recognised. The importance of physical empowerment and its role in elevating women to recognise that their bodies are not inferior or handicapped was also demonstrated.

The research conducted was particularly important, for although many scholars and sports governing bodies freely use the terms ‘oppression’ and ‘empowerment’, few have dissected what these terms really mean in relation to women’s sports and bodies. Because of this, many organisations have failed to identify effective methods of preventing oppression and enabling empowerment, which this thesis aimed to rectify. As well as technological clarifications, novel insights into several sports, such as Formula 1 and netball, were produced. These sports, until now, have had little theorisation despite presenting important points of discussion. This study was also important from a philosophical perspective, demonstrating that Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* remains a substantially relevant text in the 21st century.

When constructing the research there was a clear need to identify sports which had been largely overlooked in the field of sports philosophy and sociology. Until now, several questions regarding women’s sports had gone unanswered, such as how the rules of netball could be considered oppressive in extreme circumstances, what barriers women face in Formula 1 racing, and whether systematic menstrual tracking in sport requires more scrutiny before mass usage. In the beginning I started by reviewing unexplored avenues of discussion in sports ethics and women’s studies. As a result, I

found that little attention was being paid to women's involvement in automotive racing. Automotive racing, specifically Formula 1, appeared to be a fruitful topic due to the interesting typologies that it presented, namely that it is a unisex sport which is almost entirely dominated by men. This peculiarity provided the ideal starting point for this thesis, and led to other avenues of research relating to sports categorisations with the aim of creating extensive case studies where concepts of oppression and empowerment could be applied. Although it is impossible to address each and every sport which women participate in, I have addressed multiple sports categorisations, thus providing widely applicable insights as to how the oppression and empowerment of women may manifest in some sports.

The use of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* showed that second-wave feminist thought can still produce interesting and important insights regarding the position of women in society today. Beauvoir's texts and lines of thought have received criticism in recent years, and they are largely justified, for so much has changed since the original publication and updates are undoubtedly required. However, thanks to the scholars who analysed Beauvoir and published their hypotheses before the production of this thesis, interpreting and critiquing *The Second Sex* with a balanced approach was possible. The variety of insights enabled me to take all positions into account and form my own opinions, which produced some different insights towards the text, and a new application to the philosophy of sport.

This leads to the final recommendations, addressing areas for further investigation. What has been made starkly clear is the need for further social and philosophical research into sports which may not be considered 'mainstream', such as Formula 1, netball and korfball. At present, there is little information on women's involvement in these sports, resulting in a lack of international and first-hand perspectives. If scholars are to produce results which can be considered wholly accurate, there is a great need for input from those with differing backgrounds: people of different ethnicities, classes, locations, sexualities and genders are required if the oppression of women in sport is to be tackled from every angle, and their empowerment can be enabled in a plethora of ways. Additionally, my research has shown that philosophical and ethical research is still very much needed. The nature of philosophical thinking allows researchers to dissect what we mean by important terms such as oppression and empowerment, and how it relates to areas of society in sport. This careful examination of value and meaning helps facilitate the creation of

actionable policies that aim to protect and empower women in sport so that their participation can be both prosperous and enjoyed.

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