

Introduction

“Sport is risky; the injuries are often hidden in the constant negotiation of gender and sexual identity.” This quote from Fleming & Fullagar (2007, p. 248) is a reference to the tension which most research to date on the topic of sportswomen and femininity has dealt with - the constant struggle sportswomen face to defend their femininity. Research has found that in the eyes of society, doing sport means doing masculine (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and therefore sportswomen are faced with a contradiction between their constructed gender (or femininity), and their passion for sport (Choi, 2000; Dworkin, 2001; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009)

While over the past forty years, women’s sport has made great progress in terms of participation, financial backing and athletic performances (Cox & Thompson, 2001; Klomsten, Marsh & Skaalvik, 2005; Messner, Duncan & Jensen, 1993), research has shown that women in sport still find themselves as part of a stereotyped minority (Klomsten et al., 2005).

Previous research on the topic of women in sport has examined the stereotypes assigned to sportswomen (Kauer & Krane, 2006; Ravel & Rail, 2007), the congruence between gender and sexuality (Plymire & Forman, 2000), the pervading homophobia, heterosexism and homonegativism associated with non-heterosexual women participating in sport (Cox & Thompson, 2001), as well as the ways in which sportswomen attempt to negotiate and deal with these conflicts through monitoring their behaviour, appearance and speech (Dworkin, 2001; George, 2005; Plymire & Forman, 2000; Krane et al., 2004; Lorber, 2003; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009; Satore & Cunningham, 2009; Van Zuydam, 2010). While existing literature has revealed much about the issues surrounding sport and femininity, no studies of which I am aware have attempted to address *how* constructions of sportswomen’s femininity are produced, reproduced and resisted in interactional environments. Due to the role of interaction as the primary cite of sociality (Schegloff, 2006), analysing naturally-occurring interactions which addressed the topic of sportswomen’s femininity allowed me to gain an understanding of *how* people construct the intersections between sport and femininity in everyday life.

What follows is therefore an exploration of the constructed links between sportswomen and femininity and the way in which these links are produced, reproduced and resisted during naturally occurring interactions. The study aims to provide insight into what these constructions

look like at their point of production and contribute towards a better understanding of the constructed continuities between sport and gender for sportswomen. Through demonstrating the interactional practices which function to (re)produce links (even at times when they are aimed at resisting links), the study will show that without a turn-around in the way in which sportswomen-femininity links are utilised and simultaneously reproduced during interaction in order to portray a more positive association; the stereotyped position of women who participate in sport will continue to disadvantage women in the sporting world.

Literature Review

According to social constructionists, gender can be defined as an agreement that resides in social interaction (Bohan, 1993). It represents the norms and expectations which stem from one's sex (Lorber, 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and varies across cultures, over time, and in relation to the other sex (Burr, 1995; Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Wood, 1994). Beliefs about gender therefore depend on everybody constantly *doing* gender as opposed to actually *having* it (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Social constructionism is therefore critical of taken-for-granted 'truth' of constructs such as gender (Hacking, 1999). Social constructionists raise consciousness through urging that most of the world we live in should be conceived of as socially constructed; and with regards to X (a particular 'truth'), claim that X does not need to exist, since it is not inevitable or determined by the nature of the world. Furthermore, social constructionists often take this further; a dominant example being the feminist movements whereby X=gender; claiming that X is not only unnecessary, but also terrible, and the world would be better off without it (Hacking, 1999). Butler (1990), adopting this feminist social constructionist stance, and in line with West & Zimmerman's (1987) theory of doing gender, states that categories such as gender are not fixed truths, rather what makes them appear 'normal' is the fact that they are continuously performed in everyday interactions. I adopt the same stance in this report, and characterise gender as a (demeaning) product of interaction.

Marchbank & Letherby (2007) state that gender stereotypes are discourses or dominant ways of speaking that maintain particular social relations and limit the way that men and women can experience themselves in relation to one another. These stem from normative constructions of

femininity and masculinity which promote certain styles of interaction (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007). They affect the way in which men and women are constructed, and create social categories for gender (Brannon, 2005). In Western society, normative constructions of femininity represent women as sensitive, warm, shy and expressive (Burr, 1994; Klomsten et al., 2005). Males, on the other hand, are constructed as being assertive, aggressive, ambitious, independent and willing to take risks (Duguin, 1976; Klomsten et al, 2005). Femininity has also increasingly become a matter of women presenting the surface of their bodies appropriately (Bordo, 1993). Normative Western constructions of the ideal female body include prescriptions such as toned, firm and fit with limited muscle definition, as too much bulk indicates masculinity (Bordo, 1993). The ideal male body, on the other hand, is required to be muscular and strong (Krane et al, 2004).

The central role of the body in portraying normative conceptions of gender produces sport; whereby attention is focussed on the body as the symbol of athleticism and physical fitness; as a social domain which emphasises gendered constructions (Kane & Parks, 1992; Theberge, 1997). The importance of the body in sport, and more specifically the emphasis placed on both the physical appearance and ability of the body, therefore produces sport as a particularly significant site for the examination of gendered constructions which are heavily implicated in the social organisation of society more broadly. Due to expectations tied to femininity; sport and physical activity are considered to be incompatible with femininity (Koivula, 1995). Competitive sports have become, for men, a way of constructing a masculine identity, an appropriate outlet for violence and aggression, and an avenue for upward mobility (Dunning, 1986; Kemper, 1990; Lorber, 1993). According to Fasting & Scraton (1997; as cited in Howe, 2001) participation in sport, for women, therefore results in masculinisation; recognised as the display of muscle, aggression, competition, and active physicality, which are attributes normatively associated with masculinity. Sport has therefore been described as having a deforming effect on women (Lenskj, 1995). Women's sporting excellence pushes gender boundaries and challenges constructions of masculinity and femininity, thereby upsetting the power balance of gender relations (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; as cited in Cox & Thompson, 2001). It is therefore this phenomenon of masculinisation which provides the connection between women participating in sport, and a lack of femininity. This connection between women who play sport, and the deforming effects of

sport or masculinisation, is included in what Knight and Giuliano (2003) termed “the image problem”.

The image problem refers to the automatic connections made between women who play sport, and their constructed gender and/or sexuality. The links between gender and sport and the resulting image problems relating to gender are experienced by women who play sport in two ways. Firstly, as discussed above, the constructed effects of masculinisation on sportswomen constructs women who participate in sport (and generally exhibit signs of increased athleticism in line with constructions of masculinity) as lacking femininity. However, in the same breath, as a result of sport being constructed as being incompatible with femininity (Koivula, 1995), women are constructed as being inferior to men in the sporting realm. In this way, women are produced as inferior athletes to men, lacking in sporting ability.

Demers (2006), highlighting the component of the image problem related to the sexuality of sportswomen and the common production that women who play sport are more likely to be lesbians (Cox & Thompson, 2001; Knight & Giuliano, 2003; Plymire & Forman, 2000; Mauer-Starks, Clemons & Whalen, 2008), points out the common occurrence of the words “lesbian” and “sportswoman” in the same sentence. This component of the image problem is grounded in gender dynamics and the tendency for femininity to be used as a proxy for heterosexuality (Knight & Giuliano, 2003; Lenskyj, 1995; Plymire & Forman, 2000). In this sense, women who play sport (particularly those who do so well) are produced as lacking femininity due to the process of masculinisation; and as a result of this, and the tendency to equate femininity with heterosexuality; lack of femininity is used as a vehicle for the construction of sportswomen as homosexual.

The degree to which different sportswomen experience the image problem is dependent on a number of factors. These include the type of sport a woman participates in (Claudwell, 2002; Klomsten et al., 2005; Koivula, 1995; McGinnis, McQuillan & Chapple, 2005), styles of sport clothing (Howe, 2001) and body shape (Dilley, 2006; Dworkin, 2001; George, 2005; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009).

While sport is generally constructed as a masculine domain, there are distinctions made between different sports, based on stereotypically male and female natures, to characterise them as

masculine, feminine, or neutral (Koivula, 1995). Sports with characteristics such as danger, violence, physicality, speed, endurance, strength, and team spirit are normatively regarded as masculine. Examples include baseball, combat sports, soccer and rugby. Sports which conform to the stereotyped constructions of femininity such as beauty (sports which emphasise aesthetic features), gracefulness and non-aggression are normatively regarded as feminine, and include sports such as gymnastics, synchronised swimming and dancing (Koivula, 1995). 'Neutral' sports fall somewhere in between the two extremes and possess aspects of both (Klomsten et al, 2005), such as swimming, softball and golf (Koivula, 1995). The type of sport which a female athlete participates in; and the common sense assumptions that are made about her as a participant in sport; are two intimately intertwined occurrences (Miller & Levy, 1996). McGinnis et al. (2005) state that as a result of men using male-dominated sports to assert their heterosexuality people find it challenging to construct women participating in normatively masculine sports as feminine. Research has found that female athletes participating in sports normatively regarded as sex-appropriate are constructed as more attractive than athletes participating in sports normatively regarded as sex-inappropriate (Kane, 1987; as cited in Kane & Parks, 1992) and are seen as more likable by their peers (Andre, 1994; as cited in Ross & Shiner, 2007). On the other hand, women who participate in sports constructed as female-inappropriate are constructed as being 'butch', 'dykey' and 'unfeminine' (Cox & Thompson, 2001). These research findings highlight the entanglement of sport with gendered constructions, and more specifically, how participation of women in particular sports is used as a vehicle to produce these women as less feminine and therefore (using femininity as an indicator of seemingly unrelated characteristics) as less attractive, less likeable, and less heterosexual.

Kauer & Krane (2006), state that attire and physical appearance are also instrumental in the construction of sportswomen as less feminine. Make-up; provocative costumes; long, styled hair and shaven legs are regarded as being essential for femininity, meaning that baggy clothing emulating male sports gear, and short hair, are interpreted as in-your-face indicators of masculinisation (Howe, 2001; Kauer & Krane, 2006). Strength and muscularity; appearances which are not in accordance with normative constructions of the ideal female body (Bordo, 1994); are also largely responsible for sportswomen being constructed as masculinised (Kauer & Krane, 2006).

Therefore, to summarise, the boundary between fulfilling the female role, and crossing over into the unfeminine, is defined by a sportswoman's characteristic displays of three qualities. These are, but may not be limited to, 1) athletic ability; including skill levels, attitude, and natural ability; 2) physique and appearance; referring to the athletic appearance of her body or degree of musculature, and 3) the aesthetic presentation of her body; and the type of sport played. Displays of qualities that are recurrently treated as male-typical, including high levels of athletic ability, a muscular physique, and participation in a 'masculine' sport; have major implications for the construction of a sportswoman's femininity, such that women displaying these qualities are faced with 'the image problem'. In this sense, women who are more athletic (have good athletic ability, and/or a muscular physique, and/or participate in a 'masculine sport') are produced as being less feminine than normative constructions of women. On the other hand, women who live up to normative constructions of femininity experience the image problem in reverse, in that they are produced as being less athletic (poor athletic ability, and/or non-muscular physiques, and/or an interest in female-dominant sports). Sport, in this way, is a production ground for gender asymmetries (Fleming & Fullagar, 2007). Grounded in constructions of gender-appropriate behaviours, asymmetries between men and women are representative of the constructed roles of men and women. Sport, originating as a space for men to display their masculinity (Dunning, 1986; Kemper, 1990; Lorber, 1993), is used as a reference point for the existence of major biological differences between men and women. Sport provides a space for the display of a woman's 'natural' lack, or 'unnatural' possession, of athletic flair (a symbol of masculinity). In this way, gender asymmetries are pronounced and (re)produced during sport, and used as a starting point for the (re)production of the constructed links between sportswomen and femininity. Sportsmen and their performances are constructed as the benchmark or reference point against which sportswomen, and their performances in sport, are compared. Constructions surrounding sport therefore produce men's sports and sportsmen as 'the ideal' or 'pinnacle', whilst all other categories of sport and participators (and more specifically women) are produced as 'other' to the ideal of men's sport.

It is clear that the tensions between participation in sport for women and constructions of femininity are numerous and complex. Sportswomen, whether as a result of a lack of femininity due to masculinisation, or a lack of athleticism due to displays of 'normative levels' of femininity, face the image problem and are in danger of either being produced as inferior

athletically or alternatively as lacking femininity. Previous research has explored gender and femininity and the ways in which they intersect with the fundamental elements of sport in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the stereotyped and disadvantaged position of women who play sport. However, while the literature on sportswomen and femininity discussed above describes and explores the content of the constructed links between femininity (or lack thereof) and women who play sport, the mechanisms through which these links are interactionally produced, reproduced and resisted have not been extensively examined.

Despite previous research not having yet addressed questions of *how* these links between sport and gender (and particularly sportswomen and femininity) are (re)produced, questions of how have been addressed in other similar areas. Research which focuses on questions of how has, for example, been done on the construction of normative heterosexuality within interactional contexts (Kitzinger, 2005; Speer & Potter, 2000) and the role of the media in ‘othering’ women who play sport (Cavender, 2002). Butler (1993) addresses *how* the term “queer” is used during interaction and functions to shame the subject it names, and in doing so, reproduces the negative homophobic connotations associated with the term. Butler (1993) refers to this reproducing action as a “performative”. She claims that a performative is only successful as a result of a prior action which it echoes. Through repetition of a set of practices, the action accumulates the force of authority. Therefore, for a term to function performatively it must accumulate and draw on historical force. In this way, her “queer” example demonstrates how a term can draw on its accumulated force (reinforced by the prior actions which it echoes) in order to produce identity categories. Butler’s (1993) explanation of performative actions gaining their ability to ‘perform’ from historical authority highlights the inherent difficulty in resisting the terms and the actions which result from the use of such terms. She explains that the act of resisting categories within discourse will only function as a reminder of the risk that comes with the use of such a category (as it has been historically formed), and therefore will in fact function to reinforce the category as opposed to resist it. Therefore, while ‘how’ research has not yet been conducted in this realm, meaning there is little literature to guide my exploration, Bordo’s principles provide insight into how these links may exist, and indeed, how they may be studied.

The aim of this research is therefore not simply to reiterate or confirm the links between sportswomen and femininity that some of the abovementioned literature has identified, but rather

to draw on the works of writers such as Bordo in order to explore *how* these links are mobilised and contested; or in other words, what interactional practices are used to produce, reproduce and resist links within situated interactions.

Research Questions

1. How are links between sportswomen and femininity produced within interactional contexts?
2. How are links between sportswomen and femininity resisted or contested in interactional contexts?

Methods

Data

The sample for this study consisted of various types of naturally occurring interactions. A purposive sampling strategy was employed in order to collect various interactions where the links between sportswomen and femininity were discussed, mobilised or resisted. There was no specific set of criteria for the interactions to be used in the study (other than the topic at hand being addressed), and interactions took place in a range of contextual environments. These interactions consisted of open discussions in internet chat rooms, commentary on internet videos from a popular social media site, and recordings of various radio and television segments which discussed, mobilised or resisted the links in focus.

The internet was a valuable and viable source of pre-existing data for this study in that it is free from the gatekeepers of traditional media who filter out inappropriate ideas and points of view. It therefore provided a site for people to communicate and express themselves publicly without suppression or consequence (Foster, 1997). Discussions made available on the internet, which are uncensored and naturally-occurring, met the requirements for data in this study in that they provided an opportunity to analyse people's constructions of sportswomen and femininity as they occur in everyday interactional contexts. The majority of interactions which take place online are

asynchronous or semi-synchronous as opposed to real-time. As Burge (1994; as cited Muirhead, 2000) states, consequences of this form of interaction include discussion fragmentation, lack of visual and aural cues, deciding when and how to contribute to the interaction, and feeling out of sync with the discussion. Other challenges which have been raised include keeping to a specific topic and maintaining the flow and momentum of the discussion (Beaudin, 1999). Jarvela and Hakkinen (2000) state that these challenges arise from the fact that participating parties are continuously having to construct their common cognitive environment due to a lack of visual information which results in social distance. While these issues did present analytical challenges, according to Gibson (2009) the approaches to analysis which have been used have proved useful for addressing the challenges which result from asynchronous interactions. This will be discussed in more detail in the analysis section.

Constructing a data corpus from all the above sources and sampling to redundancy enabled me to obtain a rich and detailed data set which allowed for the detailed exploration of the constructed links between sportswomen and femininity (Tuckett, 2004). Sampling to redundancy entailed collecting interactions until there were reoccurring patterns and themes (Marshall, 1996) and interactions failed to provide me with any new angles on the production, reproduction or resistance of the links between sportswomen and femininity (Ezzy, 2002; Patton, 2002).

In order to capture the broadest possible spectrum of data for the study, as mentioned above, various sources of data were used. In order to obtain these sources, general key phrases such as “women’s sport”, “female athletes”, and “sportswomen”, and more specific phrases such as “sport and femininity”, “throw like a girl”, and “masculine women in sport” were entered into internet search engines. These searches produced results for data in the form of online forums and commentary on online videos. These were then downloaded and stored in PDF format, or copied and saved in their original format in a new document.

A radio segment, which I came across during day-to-day activities, was recorded and transcribed. A television programme, based on the lives of four iconic sportswomen in South Africa and consisting of four episodes, was also included in the data set. The broadcasters were contacted, and copies of the episodes were purchased. These were then transcribed.

Generalisability

Due to the fact that issues relating to sport and sexuality are not restricted to any particular national or geographical context, the data collection and analysis did not focus exclusively on the South African context. Data was collected with the goal of obtaining the widest range of interactional practices possible in mind, regardless of their context. This was grounded in Perakyla's (1997, 2004) claim that people produce constructions that are socially shared, in that in producing them, constructions are treated as intelligible to anyone who may be listening to or reading them. In this way, this study did not aim to make claims about which types of people produce particular types of interactional practices; rather, it aimed to explore the range of possible constructions that people produce in day-to-day interactions and how they produce them, regardless of the particular identity or identities of the people producing them (Silverman, 2000). In order to ensure as far as possible that results are credible, I focussed on providing as much detail and description as possible and attempted to showcase multiple examples of each finding from a range of different sources. While this cannot guarantee the accuracy of my findings, I hope that through demonstrating, rather than simply describing the claims in this paper the reader will gain a broader understanding of the topic at hand and will adopt my interpretation of the data due to its 'proven' plausibility (Fossey et al., 2002; Long & Godfrey, 2002; Tracy, 2010).

Data Analysis

This study provides a discourse analysis of the various sources of data collected. The term Discourse Analysis is descriptive of a variety of approaches born from different disciplines and theories (Gill, 1996; Parker, 1999). These approaches, however, share the common assumption that language is not simply a means of describing the world. They emphasise the importance of discourse, claiming it plays a central role in the construction of social life (Gill, 1996). The term discourse can take on a variety of meanings depending on the approach of discourse analysis (Titschers et al., 2000). However, broadly speaking, discourse refers to all forms of talk and texts (Gill, 1996).

More specifically, the analysis was grounded in discursive psychology, whereby psychological categories are analysed as constructs which are managed and produced in talk, as opposed to

existing outside of the talk (Edwards, 1997). Furthermore, as opposed to treating thoughts, intentions and cognitive structures as the starting point, and discourse as merely the *expression* of these things; discursive psychology starts with discourse itself and treats psychological concepts as being categorised, topicalised, handled and managed within the discourse. It therefore focuses on descriptions of people and events within talk and text and addresses how presumed facts are assembled, reproduced as true, or undermined as false (Edwards & Potter, 2005).

A discourse analysis was therefore the most appropriate approach to achieve the goals of this study due to the three underlying assumptions of a discourse analysis, being anti-realism, constructionism and reflexivity (Silverman, 2001). The approach therefore allowed for questions regarding the production of sportswomen's femininity during interaction, and how constructions are produced and resisted, to be answered.

The analysis was also informed by insights offered by membership categorisation analysis (MCA). According to Schegloff (2007), a membership categorisation device is composed of one or more collections of categories as well as some rules of application. A person who is seen as belonging to a particular category is automatically presumed to be representative of that category, and 'knowledge' of the category is assumed to be true of that person. Categories and the knowledge which they are built from are therefore treated as common-sense and are taken-for-granted in everyday interaction. MCA allowed for the exploration of how two categories, namely female and sportswoman, are combined to produce two categories of sportswomen which in turn function to infer knowledge about a woman as a result of her membership to a particular category (Schegloff, 2007). These categories, in conjunction with discourse analysis, allowed for insight into how constructions of sportswomen are produced, maintained, and in some cases resisted during day-to-day interaction through the use of common-sense, taken-for-granted knowledge.

Reflexivity

As a member of the South African Ladies Touch Rugby side, I pride myself on my strength and physical fitness. "Sportswoman" is a pervasive and dominant component of my identity, and it is this component which has fuelled my passion for research in sport.

During the six hour drive down to Durban for an Inter Provincial Tournament in March 2011, with three of my team mates, I found myself in a conversation about the South African Ladies Sevens Rugby side. One of my team mates was describing her experience of playing a Sevens Rugby game for the Gauteng Ladies side; “Those chicks are so hectic! I remember before the game this one chick on the other team screamed ‘Come on ladies, let’s tackle their panties off!’ I’ve never been so scared in my life!” Throughout her story my brain was frantically creating images. I pictured women with bulging muscles tackling each other and grunting. This is despite the fact that my team mate had not mentioned either the build or appearance of any of her team mates. Thinking about it afterwards I was ashamed at how easy it was to create these images in my head. As a sportswoman, and more specifically, a woman participating in a sport which is generally typed as being masculine, I have fought against these very constructions, and yet I had no problem assigning them to the Sevens Ladies.

As a sportswoman I have had firsthand experience of “the image problem” (Knight & Giuliano, 2003, p. 272) that women who play sport experience. I have also, however, had experience of reproducing the links between women who play sport and femininity (as my experience described above demonstrates). This positioning of being both the categorised and the reproducer of categories, I believe, afforded me the advantaged position of being able to explore the data which this study produced from both perspectives. This therefore allowed me to produce a holistic account of the constructions of sportswomen and femininity and the ways in which people negotiate these constructions.

However, although I regard my positioning with respect to the topic an advantage, I am also aware that at times it may have acted as a disadvantage. There were times during analysis that my sensitivity towards the topic influenced me to read more into a particular quote than what empirical evidence allowed for. For example, reading these discussions often resulted in me feeling angry, frustrated and defensive. Feeding off of these emotions and my personal experiences of the mobilisation of sportswomen categories, there were instances where I exaggerated or made claims that were beyond the availability of evidence which the source provided. Therefore, although my research, by virtue of being situated within a social constructionist paradigm, did not seek to uncover an objective reality, I made use of strategies to aid in ensuring that my analysis was grounded in the empirical details of my data, and thus that

my conclusions were based on available evidence as opposed to merely reflecting my own positioning. For example the inferences I drew from the data were reviewed by my supervisor, in order to ensure that sufficient justification was available for my claims. As a result of the discursive nature of this study, the validity and strength of results relied heavily on visual evidence for claims regarding the (re)production, mobilisation and resistance of sportswomen categories. My supervisor's input allowed me to stay grounded during analysis, and to not go beyond the visual evidence which the extract provided. As a result of these precautions, I believe that my subjective and active role in the research has helped contribute to the depth and quality of the data and subsequent conclusions which the study has produced.


Analysis and Discussion

There are two broad categories associated with sportswomen which are recurrently used and oriented to during the interactions in the data set. These categories are *more feminine-less athletic* and *more athletic-less feminine*. The recurrent surfacing of these categories is consistent with previous research (George, 2005; Van Zuydam, 2010) which has shown that sportswomen continuously grapple with the two conflicting sides of their identity. On the one hand, women; in accordance with hegemonic society; are expected to present themselves and act in feminine ways. On the other hand, however, sport is constructed as a masculine domain, and therefore, is incompatible with the feminine identity. In this sense, sportswomen face 'the image problem' (Knight & Giuliano, 2003) and must constantly juggle with the two opposing sides of their identity, at the risk of compromising on their ability to fulfil one or both roles.

The taken-for-grantedness of the two categories of sportswomen; namely more feminine-less athletic, and more athletic-less feminine; and the exclusive nature of these categories (in that sportswomen are constructed as fitting into either one, or the other category) is demonstrated by the following quote from an online forum:

07-19-2011 08:42 PM #28

pcr
Reptilian Shapeshifter



Forum Staff
mod

Status : *Offline*

Join Date : Feb 2011

Location : The Fourth Reich (EU)

Posts : 2,499

Liked : 3139 times
Reputation : 2394

I don't watch the special olympics either. I do watch female hockey and tennis games sometimes, but that is not for the high level of the competition.

Female soccer especially disgusts me. It is supposed to be a hard sport with lots of speed and teamwork, sacrifice and dedication. These women look either like men and have the same attraction level to me, or look nice and don't pull their weight in the team (don't slide, attack or coordinate).

PCR

Share

Tha Big Daddy C-Master likes this.

In this quote, pcr makes use of taken-for-granted knowledge of gender-appropriate behaviour in order to produce soccer; which he¹ characterises as a sport which requires “speed and teamwork, sacrifice and dedication”; as a male sport. His use of the phrase “supposed to be” implies that women’s soccer is *not* (and moreover *should not be*) characterised by “speed and teamwork, sacrifice and dedication” and produces soccer as being unsuitable for women. More specifically, he produces female soccer as “disgust[ing]” as a result of the ‘mismatch’ between women and soccer. He then elaborates on why the ‘mismatch’ is disgusting, and draws on sportswomen categories in order to do so. He divides female soccer players into two categories. These two categories are produced as being mutually exclusive from one another through the use of the word “either”, which indicates that all women who play soccer either fit into one category, or the other, with no exceptions. He produces female soccer players as either “looking like men”, implying that they physically resemble and/or conduct themselves in ways which are normatively deemed appropriate for men, and as a result of this, as unattractive (more athletic-less feminine); or as being women who “look nice” in terms of normative constructions of femininity, and as a result of this, as inferior athletes who do not “slide, attack or coordinate” (more feminine-less athletic). This quote emphasises the importance of the body and more specifically physical appearance in (re)producing sportswomen categories. In this example

¹ Assuming that the participant is male due to his comparison of women as either “look[ing] nice” (which, judging by the context of the quote, implies feminine) or alternatively as “look[ing] like men and hav[ing] the same attraction level to [him]” (implying that they look masculine, and as a result of this are not feminine). While this is merely speculation and it is entirely possible for this to be a female participant, I am assuming that a woman would not openly imply that she is unattractive in comparison to ‘normal’ women, and use herself as an example of what she earlier refers to as “digust[ing]”.

femininity, and more specifically “look[ing] nice” is (re)produced as being incompatible with “slid[ing], attack[ing] or coordinat[ing]”, and therefore, with soccer in general.

During interaction, these two categories of women who play sport are recurrently (re)produced, and (less frequently) resisted or contested. Categories are (re)produced when participants in interactions either explicitly or implicitly draw upon (what they treat as) common-sense knowledge associated with sportswomen during the course of interactions. On the other hand, common-sense knowledge is resisted during interaction when new ‘knowledge’; or ‘knowledge’ which is not regarded as taken-for-granted by receiving participators in an interaction; are produced.

In the sections that follow, I examine how normative constructions of gender-appropriate characteristics and behaviour are mobilised in order to (re)produce sportswomen categories, as well as how shared, taken-for-granted knowledge of sportswomen categories is used as a tool for the ‘doing’ of other interactional practices, thereby (re)producing and reaffirming the existence of these categories. I also address how resistance of sportswomen categories, or the ways in which they are mobilised during interaction, function to either (re)produce or contest their existence. The extracts which follow in the analysis section represent good exemplars of particular discursive mechanisms which (re)produce and resist both the more feminine-less athletic, and the more athletic-less feminine categories. Examples of (re)production and resistance of sportswomen categories are divided (roughly, as a result of the overlapping nature of these actions) into two sections and addressed separately.

(Re)Production

MORE FEMININE-LESS ATHLETIC

The following extract (as do the remainder of the extracts in this section) demonstrates how the common-sense knowledge and taken-for-granted nature of gender asymmetries (often referred to as stereotypes) are used to (re)produce the more feminine-less athletic category of sportswomen. The extract was taken from an online forum discussing why certain sports are characterised by different rules and equipment when being played by women as opposed to men. The taken-for-granted, common-sense knowledge of gender-appropriate behaviour is used to (re)produce the

more feminine-less athletic category such that women's sport (women's basketball in particular) is undermined.

Extract 1

women's sports problems Options ▾

 **brooklynest05** May 9 2009, 06:49 PM Post #1



I'm Jc
██████████

Group: **Mentor**
Posts: 14,517
Joined: Jul 2006
Member No: 437,596

why are women's sports so stupid? i don't understand certain aspects of women's sports. my two biggest annoyances have to do with softball and basketball, but i'm sure there are other sports where women for some reason have arbitrary different rules.

why can women not play baseball? why do they have to play softball? i don't get why women aren't capable of hitting a ball that's smaller than a grape fruit. to add insult to injury, now most the softballs are florescent colors. not only can they not hit a normal sized ball, they cant even see it coming if it's not the shade of highlighter. i don't see what aspect of baseball women couldn't do though or why they only get to play softball.

as far as basketball, the biggest thing is again with ball size. why do women use a smaller lighter ball. i've never known a girl who played basketball that couldn't shoot a men's ball. most girl players i knew could palm a men's so if you can palm that then what's really the need to have a smaller ball for girls. i get that typically their hands are smaller but it's not like a men's size basketball is that huge to begin with. i don't see why they can't just use the same size.

[Up] [Quote][+]

reupONtrees May 11 2009, 05:33 PM Post #2

they use girl balls too for kids leagues


Guest

[Up] [Quote][+]

In the first post, Brooklyneast05 poses a question to participants in the forum, seeking explanations for the use of different equipment (designed to make the game easier) in women's sport, and his observation that women's sports are not as fast paced as men's despite their *ability* to play at the same pace. Batman attempts to offer some explanation for part Brooklyneast05's puzzle, stating, "women's sports are less fun to watch because women don't have testosterone, which makes it... less aggressive and less competitive". This response draws on common-sense knowledge that women lack testosterone in order to account for women's sports being less "fast paced". Batman makes use of taken-for-granted knowledge that women lack testosterone in order to produce sportswomen as biologically handicapped in comparison to men, and therefore, as incapable of playing sport at a fast pace. In doing so, the common-sense, taken-for-granted knowledge of a biological (testosterone) handicap in women is drawn upon in order to justify the slow pace of women's sport, which in turn (re)produces the more feminine-less athletic category of sportswomen. Batman, however, concludes his/her post by stating, "Idk, though, just my thoughts". This statement functions to lessen Batman's accountability to the statement they have just made. It implies that while s/he thinks that a lack of testosterone could potentially be the cause of a lack of pace in women's sport, s/he is by no means sure. In this way, Batman positions his/her own contribution towards solving the puzzle as merely an educated guess, which functions to decrease their vulnerability to opposition and criticism by others reading the post. This statement, however, simultaneously functions to reproduce the more feminine-less athletic category through emphasising the taken-for-granted, common-sense nature of the athletic inferiority of women. Framing this solution to Brooklyneast05's puzzle as a guess as opposed to an informed, educated, supported answer; (re)produces the solution as something which can be deduced from general, day-to-day knowledge, and in this way as something which stems from common-sense.

[Up] [Quote] [-]

brooklyneast05 May 11 2009, 06:58 PM Post #2




yeah but i mean even if it does exist it's not like it's an option for most girls i don't think. most of them their only option offered is to play softball. people always treat it like the women's alternative to baseball.

I'm JC
 [Progress bar]
 Group: Mentor
 Posts: 14,517
 Joined: Jul 2006
 Member No: 437,596

[Up] [Quote] [-]

kryogenix May 12 2009, 08:33 AM Post #3



They should let them wear high heels in the WNBA. It'd be more funny to watch imo. Plus, maybe you'd see dunks more often.

Women need to stop bitching about equal pay. Their games are always less exciting, less memorable, and it's always about f*cking stupid group hugs and "we love each other win or lose" bullshit like that instead of working as a team to obliterate the opposing team piece by piece.

Sarcastic Mr. Know-It-All
 [Progress bar]
 Group: Staff Alumni
 Posts: 32,665
 Joined: Dec 2003
 Member No: 29

[Up] [Quote] [-]

In his² response to brooklyneast05, Kryogenix makes use of taken-for-granted knowledge of the lack of athletic ability in sportswomen; in the form of physical build (height) and attitude; in order to produce a joke. The production of this humour; which relies on readers of this post picking up on the humorous tone and therefore sharing a common knowledge of what *makes* this statement humorous and why such a statement should not be interpreted as factual and serious; would not be possible without the existence of taken-for-granted, common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories. As a result of this, the production of humour in this post relies on knowledge of sportswomen categories, and therefore, functions to (re)produce the common-sense nature of this knowledge and the more feminine-less athletic category of sportswomen. Through his statement: “They should let them wear high heels in the WNBA. It’d be more funny to watch [in my opinion]. Plus, maybe you’d see more dunks more often”, Kryogenix implies that women who play sport are out of their comfort zone. His use of the phrase “more funny to watch” constructs women’s basketball as being a joke. His use of the word “more” implies that even without high heels it is already funny to watch and can only be enjoyed for its sheer absurdity, and hence, comical value, as opposed to its display of athleticism and skill. The word “let” and the phrase “maybe you’d see dunks more often” reproduce sportswomen as inferior athletes as a result of their physical make-up. His use of the word “let” implies that women have

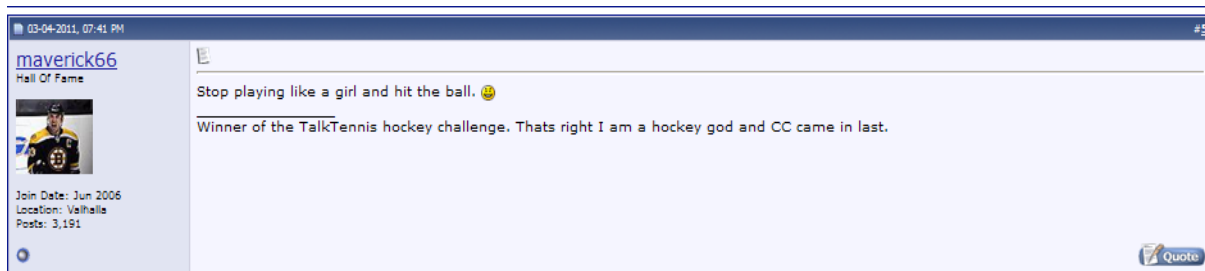
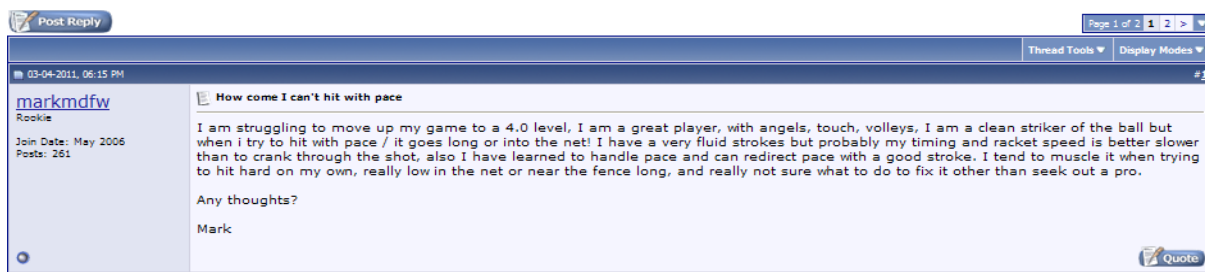
²Assuming he is male due to his use of the subtitle “Sarcastic *Mr.* Know-It-All”

a height handicap which could be addressed by the advantage of wearing heels. High heels make one taller, therefore it is implied that female basketball players need this advantage in order to perform at the same level as male basketball players. He then connects high heels to dunking (“maybe you’d see dunks more often”), which makes the connection between height (which females do not have) and ability to dunk. This suggests that dunking; a crucial element of the game; is missing from women’s basketball at the present time, which in turn produces female basketball, as inferior to male basketball. His solution of female basketball players wearing high heels does not, however, constitute a sincere suggestion. Instead; as a result of common-knowledge of sportswomen categories, as well as common-sense knowledge of the nature of sport (and more particularly basketball); it is produced as an absurd suggestion which again functions to produce female basketball as being absurd and comical. His final comment; “Their games are always less exciting, less memorable, and it’s always about f*cking group hugs and ‘we love each other win or lose’ bullshit like that instead of working as a team to obliterate the opposing team piece by piece”, constructs women as being ill fit, to be competitive whilst playing sport. At the same time, it takes for granted the fact that competitive sport should rightly be all the things that women’s basketball is not, and therefore should not incorporate “group hugs” and “we love each other win or lose” as these elements get in the way of being able to “obliterate the opposing team piece by piece”. In this sense, he constructs sportswomen as being inferior athletes due to their attitudes and the prevailing culture within women’s sports (produced as an awkward mix between normatively feminine characteristics such sensitivity and softness, and the normatively masculine characteristics of sport), whilst at the same time discrediting women’s basketball for lacking competitive “fire”.

Therefore, batman directly undermines women’s sports by claiming that they are less entertaining to watch. By attempting to explain the difference in entertainment value between men’s and women’s sports, s/he refers to the biological handicap which women carry in the form of a lack of testosterone. In this way s/he justifies the existence of the more feminine-less athletic category by inferring that the ‘less athletic’ characteristic of sportswomen is as a direct result of the *biological* ‘less masculine’ (i.e. more feminine) characteristic. Kryogenix similarly makes use of taken-for-granted knowledge of women’s biological height and temperament (attitude) handicaps in order to (re)produce women’s sport as inferior to men’s, and in doing so, (re)produce the more feminine-less athletic category.

Similarly to the above extract, the following extract demonstrates another example of how categories of sportswomen (and specifically in this case the more feminine-less athletic category) is used as a vehicle for the production of humour, and simultaneously, insult. As illustrated above, common-sense knowledge of the category is relied upon for the production, and understanding, of humour and insult; and in the process, the category is (re)produced. The following is a portion of an online tennis forum.

Extract 2



When a person (generally a man) is described as doing something “like a girl”, taken-for-granted knowledge of this category allows one to make the connection between what the person is doing, and the inferior nature of this performance. It therefore provides the background knowledge required in order for the statement to be understood as an insult, and in doing so simultaneously (re)produces the category. In this interaction, Markmdfw is asking for advice concerning how to improve his tennis swing in order to hit the ball harder. Maverick66’s response; “stop playing like a girl and hit the ball. 😊” uses the taken for granted category more feminine-less athletic in order to produce a joking (and more specifically, jokingly insulting) response to Markmdfw’s question. His use of the ‘smiley face’, indicating a light-hearted, joking tone, changes his remark from an insult; grounded in the taken-for-granted inferior athleticism of women; to a joke. This humour, however, would not be understood and the joke would therefore not be funny if it were

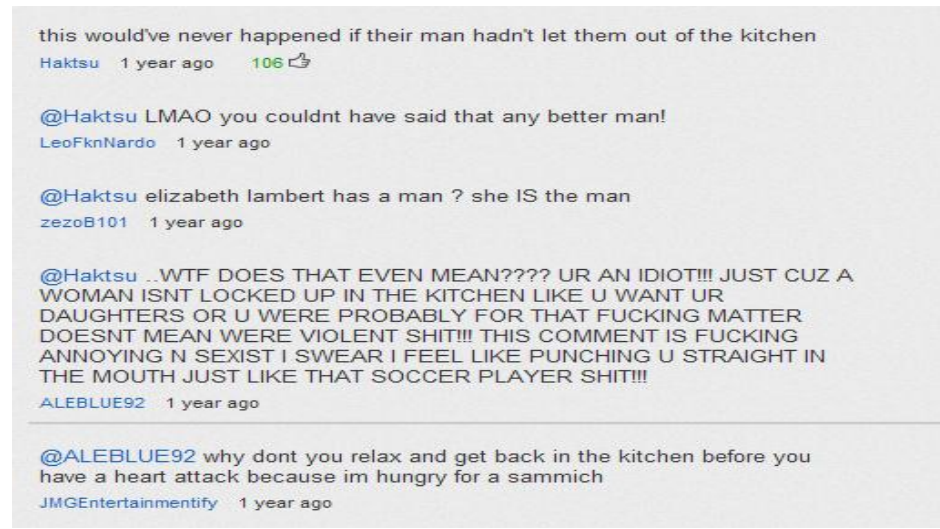
not for taken-for-granted knowledge of the more feminine-less athletic category. Furthermore, his lack of further explanation for why there would be a connection between “playing like a girl” and “[not] hit[ting] the ball”, treats this connection as self-evident and as knowledge that any person reading the post would have without the need for further explanation; and therefore, reproduces the taken-for-granted knowledge of this category. This therefore reproduces women, and in turn sportswomen, as having inferior athletic ability to men.

MORE ATHLETIC-LESS FEMININE

As seen with the (re)production of the more feminine-less athletic category, (re)production of sportswomen categories occurs through; 1) the use of taken-for-granted knowledge of gender-appropriate behaviours and resulting gender asymmetries as tools for the (re)production of sportswomen categories, 2) the use of taken-for-granted knowledge of sportswomen categories as a tool for the performance of other actions during interaction, such as the production of an insult and humour.

The following extract demonstrates how taken-for-granted knowledge of gender-appropriate behaviour is used as a resource to comment on a YouTube video which features all the instances during an international women’s soccer match, where a player, Elizabeth Lambert, had fouled players from the opposing team. The video provides a space for taken-for-granted knowledge surrounding the appropriateness of aggression in women to be (re)produced, resulting in the (re)production of the more athletic-less feminine sportswomen category.

Extract 3



The interaction commences as a result of Haktsu using the behaviour of Lambert in this video as an appropriate occasion for making his opening (and notably sexist) comment. Haktsu uses the ‘bad’ behaviour of Lambert in the video as a resource for highlighting the ‘bad’ things that women playing soccer (and women’s rights in general) can result in. In order to highlight these ‘bad’ things, Haktsu draws on normative constructions of gender roles (and particularly a woman’s domestic role) as resources for producing a joke. As in previous examples, the ability of others to understand, and enjoy this humour (which is evident in the way that LeoFknNardo treats it as one by responding with “LMAO”, and zezoB101 uses it as an occasion to produce another joke which expands on the humour created by Haktsu) is reliant on the existence of taken-for-granted, shared knowledge of gender roles, and sportswomen categories between them. The joke therefore functions to (re)produce women as not belonging in the sports world, and more specifically, in soccer. The phrase, “their man hadn’t let them out of the kitchen” implies that the kitchen is the woman’s rightful place, and that she is subordinate to “[her] man” in that she would need to be *permitted* to leave by “[her] man”. The phrase “this never would have happened” implies that the woman’s behaviour in the video represents something that never *should* have happened, and constructs this ‘bad’ behaviour as something that happened as a result of gender roles not being fulfilled. Haktsu therefore jokingly treats the ‘bad’ behaviour in the video as a serious consequence of women playing soccer; and in doing so, (re)produces women as being ill-fit for the sporting world. In this way, the more feminine-less athletic

category is (re)produced through constructing women as not being ‘built for sport’, and this is then justified by the claim that it is ‘what is best for all’, thereby (re)producing the more athletic-less feminine category as the consequence of women participating in sport. LeoFknNardo responds with “LMAO” (laugh my ass off), which once again, uses taken-for-granted knowledge of sportswomen categories as a vehicle for producing humour. What allows Haktsu’s comment to be interpreted as humorous by LeoFknNardo is the shared knowledge of sportswomen categories which they possess, and subsequently LeoFknNardo’s agreement with Haktsu’s statement. Their agreement is further implied by their statement, “you couldnt have said that any better man!”.³

ZezoB10’s response draws on Haktsu’s original joke and attempts to further the joke by being even more extreme. ZezoB10 therefore uses Haktsu’s original joke, as well as taken-for-granted knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category of sportswomen, as resources for producing another joke. ZezoB10 tries to outdo Haktsu’s joke by implying that she wouldn’t have a man to let her out of the kitchen in the first place, because she *is* a man. This comment in this extract is what classifies this extract as a blatant example of (re)production of the more athletic-less feminine category. The statement, “she IS the man” draws on constructions of gender-appropriate behaviour in order to produce humour (which is reliant on others having a common understanding of gender-appropriate behaviour), which therefore (re)produces women who display normatively constructed male behaviours such as aggression and competitiveness (as the woman featured in this video did) as less feminine. Since these characters are deemed appropriate, if not essential, during sports participation, the line between athleticism and masculinity is reproduced and therefore the construction that women that display high levels of athleticism, or athletic qualities, are less feminine is (re)produced.

³ While this may not be directly relevant to the study, it seems worthwhile to point out LeoFknNardo’s assumption that Haktsu is a man, evident through the use of the term “man” in their response, despite any hard evidence to show that Haktsu was actually a man. Since these comments are anonymous and participators do not have personal profiles which reveal personal details about themselves in this case, it is likely (unless they are familiar with one another from previous online interactions) that LeoFknNardo assumed Haktsu’s sex from his comment. It is possible that sex of the producer is implicated in the production of interaction and is therefore is deductable from constructions in interaction depending on the way in which a particular construction is produced. While this is not the focus of this research, the way in which sex and gender are implicated and assumed in the production of interaction, and how they are used as vehicles for the (re)production of particular constructions, is a worthy topic for research. Whitehead (2009) addresses this kind of reproduction of racial categories and it seems that gender categories are produced in a similar way.

The following extract once again demonstrates how taken-for-granted knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category is used as a resource for the production of humour, which in turn (re)produces the category. The extract represents a portion of transcription from a popular morning radio show. The presenters were discussing the noises that female tennis players make whilst hitting the ball. Listeners had been asked to phone in with impersonations of popular female tennis players and the presenters were attempting to guess the player according to the noise. In this extract, taken-for-granted knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category and its automatic, common-sense ties to physical appearance is used as a platform for identifying a particular sportswoman. Common-sense, taken for granted knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category is then once again used as a resource for the production of a joke, which in turn (re)produces this category.

Extract 4⁴

- 1 B: Francesca Schiavone's got a very manly (0.4) [grunt].
- 2 A: Yes she [does].
- 3 B: She goes (1.0) ((putting on deep voice)) IIIIIII! HAAAAIIII! [HAAIIIIII! HAAIIII! HAAAI!]
- 4 [((All laugh))]
- 5 A: ((Takes call from public)) Hello?
- 6 L3: Hi, I was actually gonna talk about Francesca Schiavone.
- 7 A: Okay no, go ahead, let's see if yours is any better.
- 8 L3: Okay, she goes ((puts on deep voice)) HAAAI! Huh huh huh!
- 9 ((All laugh))
- 10 L3: And like my husband's like what the hell are we watching karate here? Huh huh huh!
- 11 ((All laugh))
- 12 A: Keep going I want to hear more.

⁴ I have used a simplified version of Jeffersons (2004) transcriptions conventions in order to transcribe this extract.

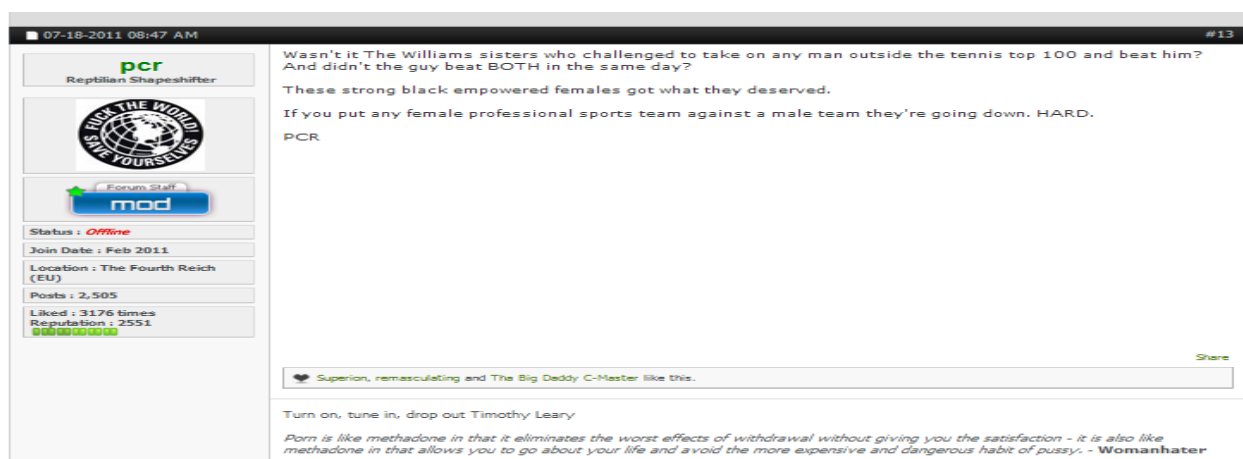
- 13 L3: Okay (0.3) HAAAIII! Huh huh huh!
- 14 ((All laugh))
- 15 L3: Okay cool, thanks.
- 16 A: Which one is she? I don't know what she looks like.
- 17 B: She's the reigning champion right now.
- 18 D: Ja, she's playing today.
- 19 C: Is she the one who looks like a woman?
- 20 A: ((sarcastically)) They all look like women ((C)), what kind of comment is that to make?
- 21 C: Huh huh huh!

The portion of the extract which is of interest begins with a question from A regarding the visual recognisability of the player; “Which one is she? I don't know what she looks like” (line 15). B, in response to A's question, identifies or explains her identity in terms of her status as a professional tennis player as opposed to her physical appearance. This explanation is however treated by C as an insufficient explanation, as she enquires again about the players physical appearance by asking; “Is she the one who looks like a woman?” (line 18). This proposes that the way she could be recognised is by virtue of being “the one” with a feminine appearance – which presupposes that all the others from which she needs to be distinguished in order to recognise her do not look like women. A, in response to C's comment, then treats this as objectionable, but by doing this sarcastically rather than seriously, shows an understanding of the way in which C has used the taken-for-granted recognisability of female tennis players as “not feminine-looking”. The sarcastic, joking tone is evident in that C treats it as a joke, as she responds by laughing. This is likely to be funny due to a shared knowledge of the sensitivity surrounding the topic of women's rights, and hence the need to respond to C's controversial question in a way that counteracts the controversy. In this way, while A responds to C's question regarding the search for recognition of a player, he uses her question as an opportunity to produce humour, relying on the shared knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category as well as the controversial nature of C's question, and therefore does not actually answer her

question. In this way the non-femininity of female tennis players is (re)produced in the course of a sequence of joking responses to a (potentially more serious) question. It is the shared or common-sense knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category of female athlete which acts as a resource through which this sequence of joking can be done. If they did not all take it for granted that many; if not all; female tennis players *don't* “look like women” then the sarcasm which they are producing here would not be recognisable or make sense and therefore would not be recognised as being funny.

The following extract demonstrates how taken-for-granted knowledge of gender asymmetries, as well as gender roles, is used as a platform to criticise and demean sportswomen, which in turn (re)produces sportswomen categories. In the article, “In sports, women are winners, men are not”, the American reporter, Bill Plaschke, praised the desirable qualities of female athletes. He stated, “If I was asked to assemble a team of American athletes.. I would take a team of women. I would take a team that would play like a team, unselfish and unaffected, tough and tireless, playing for victory not credit, playing for each other instead of themselves”. The article subsequently became the topic of an online forum; a suitable space to draw on common-sense knowledge of sportswomen, in order to criticise the writer (and female athletes) for his remarks, and dismiss his absurd claims about sportswomen. This extract was taken from that forum.


Extract 5



The screenshot shows a forum post interface. At the top left, the time is 07:18-2011 08:47 AM and the post number is #13. The user profile for 'pcr' (Reptilian Shapeshifter) is visible on the left, including a 'mod' badge and statistics: Status: Offline, Join Date: Feb 2011, Location: The Fourth Reich (EU), Posts: 2,505, Liked: 3176 times, Reputation: 2551. The post content reads: "Wasn't it The Williams sisters who challenged to take on any man outside the tennis top 100 and beat him? And didn't the guy beat BOTH in the same day? These strong black empowered females got what they deserved. If you put any female professional sports team against a male team they're going down. HARD. PCR". Below the post, there is a 'Share' button and a quote: "Turn on, tune in, drop out Timothy Leary. Porn is like methadone in that it eliminates the worst effects of withdrawal without giving you the satisfaction - it is also like methadone in that allows you to go about your life and avoid the more expensive and dangerous habit of pussy. - Womanhater".

07-18-2011 07:12 PM #17

Golem
Senior Member



Senior member

Status: *Offline*

Join Date: Jun 2011

Posts: 438

Liked: 482 times
Reputation: 949

1 - I never heard about the Williams tennis thing. That is some funny stuff (just looked it up).

2 - Cris Cyborg is one scary woman. I don't think anyone short of a guy or maybe a post-op transexual is going to be beating her any time soon. Unfortunate, since I liked the chick from American Gladiators (I always forget her name) who held the belt before her.

3 - I don't have an issue with women who want to compete in sports with other women. The dude who wrote the article has his head up his ass, though.

4 - (Off-topic-ish) One disappointing thing I heard is that, due to the North American dominance of the sport, they might (are going to?) cut women's ice hockey from the Winter Olympics. If you look back when ice hockey was first added, Canada was apparently winning by 20-30 (could have been higher) point margins, but they gave it enough time to achieve a bit of parity.


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Closed Thread Results 21 to 30 of 30 Page 2 of 2 First 1 2

Thread: **In sports, women are winners, men are not.** ❤️ 41 Likes

07-19-2011 03:49 AM #21

zuberi
Banned



Banned

Status: *Offline*

Join Date: Apr 2011

Posts: 1,622

Liked: 1304 times
Reputation: 148

Originally Posted by **Golem**

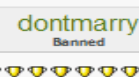
2 - Cris Cyborg is one scary woman. I don't think anyone short of a guy or maybe a post-op transexual is going to be beating her any time soon. Unfortunate, since I liked the chick from American Gladiators (I always forget her name) who held the belt before her.

You do realize that she uses performance enhancers, right? Her strength is a lie.

Share

07-19-2011 03:51 AM #22

dontmary
Banned




Banned

I think the idea of seperate mens and women's leagues is sexist.

Not really. In sports, people want to see competition and talent.

07-27-2011 04:29 AM #30

zuberi
Banned



Banned

Status: *Offline*

Join Date: Apr 2011


Posts: 1,622

Liked: 1304 times
Reputation: 148

Originally Posted by ImperialChina

I agree, and I am a 8 year avid MMA fan, she is juiced to the gils (likely also HGH Human Growth Hormone, You cant test for it, many fighters like shane carwin as well et cetera....). And guess what she needs as well as any pro-female bodybuilders(I'm not saying male BB'ers don't all juice)....TESTOSTERONE supplementation or its precursors...hmmmmmmmm? Kind of goes against the whole point, eh? This is not sexist discussion at all, there are clear physical differences, almost to the point of being 100% absolute.

Another thing that the gynocentric media won't mention is that these steroid popping female bodybuilders and MMA fighters are infertile. The performance enhancers and harsh exercises greatly lowers their chances of child bearing.



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Tha Big Daddy C-Master likes this.

Golem's second comment, "Cris Cyborg is one scary woman", simultaneously reproduces both categories of sportswomen. His use of the word "scary", which he justifies by stating that only a man, or somebody born with a man's genetic make-up could beat her, implies that she has very masculine qualities and that she is far superior in terms of her athletic ability to any of the other women she competes with. He therefore produces her as "freakishly" good in comparison to other women and almost in the league of men (which reproduces the more athletic-less feminine category). This therefore serves to criticise women who take supplements on the basis that they become more like men. However, he then points out that despite her superiority in comparison to other women, men (or post-op transsexuals) would still be able to beat her, which in turn reproduces the more feminine-less athletic category. Zuberi then confirms this production highlighting her use of performance enhancers. In stating, "Her strength is a lie", he claims that without the help of medication, she would not display as much athleticism (in this case strength) as she does. In this way, he undermines her athleticism by claiming it comes from an unnatural source, and in doing so reproduces the more feminine-less athletic category.

ImperialChina, similarly to Zuberi, undermines her athleticism by claiming that without testosterone supplementation, she would not be as good of a fighter as she is. While they do not deny that male fighters take the same medications in order to enhance their performances, "I'm not saying male BB'ers don't all juice", they produce this as being acceptable in comparison to female counterparts, implying that in taking testosterone supplements, female MMA fighters are making themselves like men, which defeats the point of having a female division;

“hmmmmmmmm? Kind of goes against the whole point, eh?”. In this way, they produce female fighters who take supplements as trying to alter their bodies in order to become more like men, or *create* athleticism where there was little to begin with. On the other hand, through acknowledging that male fighters take supplements, and then only specifying that the use of supplementation in female fighters defeats the point; they produce supplementation in male fighters as acceptable and as a strategy which simply *emphasises* natural athleticism. This therefore reproduces women as athletically inferior to men, and in doing so, reproduces the more feminine-less athletic category.

The final portion of this interaction, and more specifically Zuberi’s contribution to the discussion, makes use of normative constructions of gender-appropriate behaviours, and specifically a woman’s biological responsibility of bearing children, as the resource to reproduce the more athletic-less feminine category and undermine the femininity of sportswomen. Through stating that “performance enhancers and harsh exercises greatly [lower bodybuilders and MMA fighters] chances of child bearing”, Zuberi implies that these women sacrifice their femininity (including their biological ability to bear children) to increase athleticism. In this sense, female bodybuilders and MMA fighters; and to an extent athletic women in general; are produced as lesser women due to a possible self-inflicted biological ‘handicap’. In this way the more athletic-less feminine category of sportswomen is (re)produced.

This post, therefore, represents the complex interplay between the two categories of sportswomen. The women discussed in this forum are criticised for taking supplements in order to becoming more like men in order to be more competitive, but are simultaneously criticised for being unable to be as competitive as men without (“artificially”) becoming more like them. In this way, sportswomen categories within this post remain mutually exclusive, and as a result of this, the women being talked about are exposed to criticism on the basis of membership in either of the two categories. Regardless of whether the woman is produced as more athletic or more feminine, she will be criticised regardless due to what she is automatically produced as lacking (as a result of the common-sense, taken-for-granted nature of these categories).

Therefore, the above two sections have demonstrated how common-sense, taken-for-granted knowledge of the more feminine-less athletic, and the less athletic-more feminine categories of

sportswomen; grounded in gender roles and asymmetries; is used as platform to produce humour (which may be produced through sarcasm), and insult. These practices in turn function to (re)produce sportswomen categories, and reinforce the ‘truth’ of this shared, taken-for-granted knowledge. The extracts further demonstrated the complex interplay between the two categories, and how the exclusivity of the two categories (in that a woman cannot be produced as fitting into both categories at the same time) exposes sportswomen to the image problem (either too feminine to be good at sport, or too good at sport to be feminine) regardless of the category within which they fall. The following section demonstrates how these categories can be resisted, or contested, during interaction.

Resistance

This section will address four resistance practices; namely exception to the rule, restriction, resistance of use, and implicit resistance, in order to demonstrate how common-sense, taken-for-granted knowledge of sportswomen categories is resisted or contested through interactional practices. As the analysis demonstrates, even when these practices of resistance are produced, the categories they serve to resist are recurrently still reproduced, even if largely implicitly.

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

The following extract has been taken from the commentary on a video of the American women’s soccer team, posted on YouTube. This extract demonstrates how categories of sportswomen are used as resources for the production of surprise or disbelief when a woman does not fit one or the other category, and therefore, is an exception to the rule. In this particular case, surprise is produced as a function of taken-for-granted knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category of sportswomen, which in turn functions to (re)produce the category.

Extract 6

anyone else thing Solo's voice is higher than you would think? I mean I saw her interview and stuff, and she is an amazing soccer player.

SquiddySpacePirate 7 months ago

@SquiddySpacePirate i thought it would be a little deeper. i was surprised when i heard her talk.

kybaee20 7 months ago

@kybaee20 thats what I said, it was higher than I thought, meaning I thought it would be deeper. Especially after that Pressure Makes Us commercial.

SquiddySpacePirate 7 months ago

@SquiddySpacePirate YAI thats what i said, though her voice was going to be deeper not high like that

juki0h 6 months ago

@juki0h lol, we've both said the same thing now, sorry I guess we've both been reading each other horribly. :P

SquiddySpacePirate 6 months ago

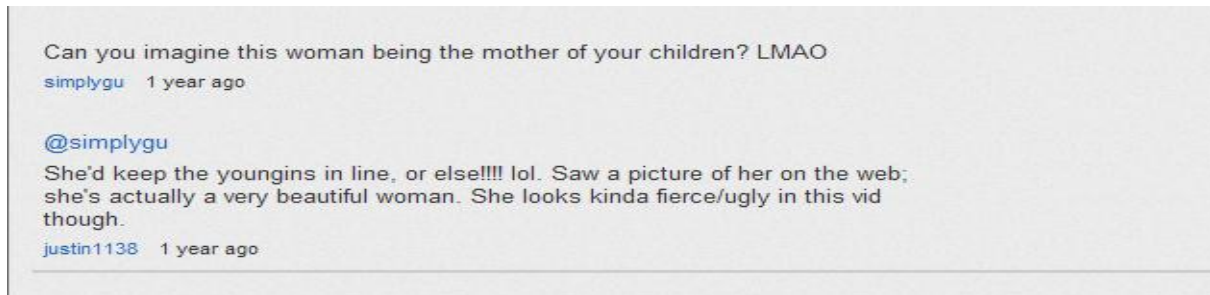
SquiddySpacePirate's opening comment sparks this interaction, and produces a suitable space for others to rely on common-sense, taken-for-granted knowledge of sportswomen categories. The second part of SquiddySpacePirate's initial comment when taken in isolation; "she is an amazing soccer player", resists the more feminine-less athletic category of sportswomen since it uses the assessment "amazing soccer player" in a general, non-gendered way. It does not, for example, contain a restricting phrase, such as "she is an amazing *women's* soccer player" or "she is an amazing soccer player *for a woman*" which would rely on taken-for-granted knowledge of gender asymmetries, and would therefore function to reproduce it. Rather, it effectively resists normative constructions by failing to engage with taken-for-granted gender asymmetries, and therefore by failing to differentiate between men (produced by sportswomen categories as the standard against which women who play sport are compared and should aim to [but never will] achieve) and women (produced by categories as failing to meet the high standards of athletic ability which men can achieve). As a result of this, it produces men and women as being equal in sport. However, his/her question produced prior to this assessment, "anyone else thing (sic) Solo's voice is higher than you would think?", indicates that s/he is surprised that she is such a

good soccer player, and yet has such a high voice. SquiddySpacePirate seems to be implying that, seeing what an “amazing” player Solo is, s/he expected her to have a deeper voice, which apparently draws on an association between voice pitch and gender. That is, s/he expected a player of Solo’s quality to exhibit more masculine qualities (i.e., a deeper voice) in order to fit into the more athletic-less feminine category. Having presumably witnessed her high levels of athleticism first due to evidence of existing expectations, “though (sic) her voice was going to be deeper not high like that”, the participators all placed Solo within the more feminine-less athletic category. As a result of this (and the produced exclusivity of sportswomen categories), they expected her to fit the full profile and exhibit higher levels of masculinity in other areas; which accounts for juki0h’s comment, “though (sic) her voice was going to be deeper not high like that”. The surprise in SquiddySpacePirate’s tone, which is portrayed by his/her use of a question, is as a result of the contradiction demonstrated by Solo’s characteristic traits. The surprise therefore highlights the contradictory nature of Solo’s identity, and in doing so, constructs Solo as an exception to the norm. By treating someone as an exception to the more athletic-less feminine category, the norm that they are an exception to is effectively maintained for others that do fit the category. As a result of this, her “exceptional” status is applied in accordance with the norm, rather than serving to challenge or undermine it (Heritage, 1984), thereby reproducing the more athletic-less feminine category.

The comments following SquiddySpacePirate’s initial post also function to (re)produce the taken-for-grantedness of the more athletic-less feminine category. Both kybaee20 and juki0h reinforce the original post, and despite some confusion regarding their repetition of each other’s statements, the surprise at Solo’s mismatch with the more athletic-less feminine category remains clear and unquestioned by the three participators throughout the interaction. That consensus emerges among these participants over the surprise in this regard further reinforces Solo’s status as an exception to the rule, which in turn demonstrates and reproduces the taken-for-grantedness of the more athletic-less feminine category, even in a case where the category is in effect being resisted.

The following extract represents another portion of the commentary on the YouTube video featuring Elizabeth Lambert’s fouls on other players during a particular soccer match.

Extract 7



Once again in this instance, Lambert's 'bad' behaviour witnessed in the video is used as a resource to make a joke about her in a mothering role which in turn reproduces the more athletic-less feminine category. Lambert's question, "Can you imagine this woman being the mother of your children? LMAO (laugh my ass off)", appears to draw on the assumption that since she has a competitive attitude and exhibits normatively masculine traits, such as aggression, while playing soccer (despite these being valued traits for athletes, and sportswomen who lack them are criticised for not having them), she would as a result of this be lacking in femininity and nurturing instincts, and therefore, would be an ill-fit (if not very strict) mother. The contrasting nature of her 'bad' behaviour in the video with what would be expected from "the mother of your children" is treated as humorous; "LMAO", and by taking for granted the shared nature of knowledge of sportswomen categories and gender roles, s/he produces a joke which s/he assumes others will also find humorous as a result of this shared knowledge. Justin1138's response confirms and elaborates on simplygu's joke through reciprocating with humour, "She'd keep the youngsters in line, or else!!!! LOL (laugh out loud)", however, he then makes a comment which he constructs as being in contradiction to his first comment; "she's actually a very beautiful woman". His use of the word "actually" shows that since her behaviour is treated as incommensurate with what might be expected from a mother, and therefore as unfeminine; he is surprised by the fact that she does not, as a result of this, exhibit an appearance in line with normative constructions of masculinity. His description of her as "a very beautiful woman" sets up an incongruity with the more athletic-less feminine category, since she is very athletic, but still "very beautiful". This could be taken as a form of resistance to the more athletic-less feminine category, however, knowledge of the category is used as a resource for the production

of surprise. This in turn (re)produces the more athletic-less feminine category of sportswomen in a statement which, without the production of surprise, would resist it.

The extract further demonstrates how sportswomen categories are maintained during interaction despite evidence to the contrary. Justin1148 resolves the incongruity surrounding Lambert by making a distinction between Lambert's appearance generally; "she's actually a very beautiful woman", and her appearance in this video; "fierce/ugly". This distinction functions to produce these two characteristics, "fierce" and "beautiful" as being inconsistent with one another and incapable of presenting at the same time, in the same way that a person cannot be described as being both "beautiful" and "ugly" at the same time. Therefore, while Lambert is produced as being a "beautiful woman" in the normal course, this is limited to when she is not being "fierce", in which case she is produced as being "ugly".

RESTRICTION

The following extract was taken from a four-part television programme, aired on a popular channel, which documented the lives of four idols of South African women's sport. In an episode dedicated to Hazel Gumede, a pioneer for the game of netball in South Africa, this was one of the concluding remarks from the voiceover. The extract demonstrates how restriction, or the use of gender-specific language, functions to reproduce sportswomen categories.

Extract 8

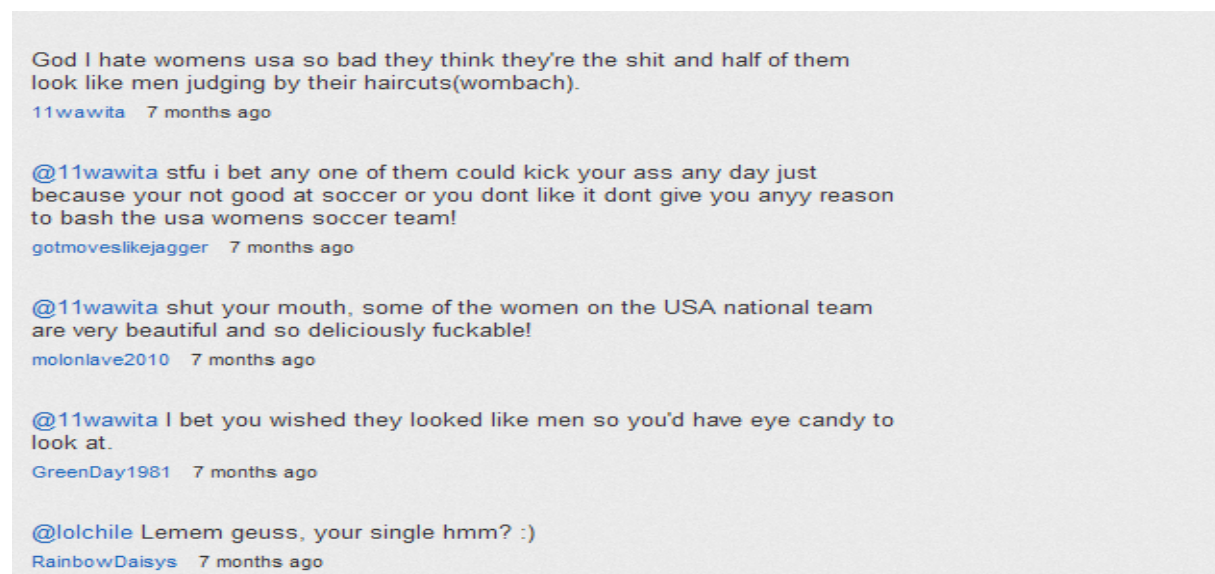
- 1 R: Netball is a special game in South Africa (0.3) the biggest sport for women in the
- 2 country (0.3) and Hazel Gumede is a very special player.

This extract begins with a phrase which resists constructions of women's sport as inferior; "Netball is a special game". This phrase functions to resist constructions of women's sport as inferior since; as demonstrated above in extract 7; the claim about the specialness of netball is made in a general, non-gendered way. In this way, the specialness of the game is not determined by whether you are a man or a woman. It is special irrespective of gender. It is then, however, followed by a claim which ends up reproducing constructions of women's sport as inferior as a result of the use of a restricting phrase. The claim, "the biggest sport for women in the country",

which extends on the previous sentence and functions to explain why netball is a very special game, is restricted by the phrase “for women”. As a result of this restricting phrase, the ‘specialness’ of netball and the popularity of the game are restricted to the female population of South Africa. The specialness of netball is therefore treated as being particularly applicable to women. In this way, sport is not treated as special in an un-gendered way; rather the specialness is dependent on gender. Therefore, what is initially an un-gendered assessment of netball as “special” gets converted into a more restricted, gender-specific assessment, which therefore transforms a phrase which could potentially resist gendered constructions of sport, into a phrase which serves to maintain them.

An extract taken from the commentary on a YouTube video of the USA women’s soccer team further demonstrates the use of restriction in (re)producing, and in some ways resisting, the more athletic-less feminine category.

Extract 9



The video featured extracts of the women in the USA women’s soccer team being interviewed and videoed whilst training in preparation for the women’s soccer World Cup. 11wawita uses the message of superiority and excellence of the team produced by the video as a platform to criticise the team and (re)produce sportswomen categories in general. His/her comment constitutes a direct reproduction of the more athletic-less feminine sportswomen category by

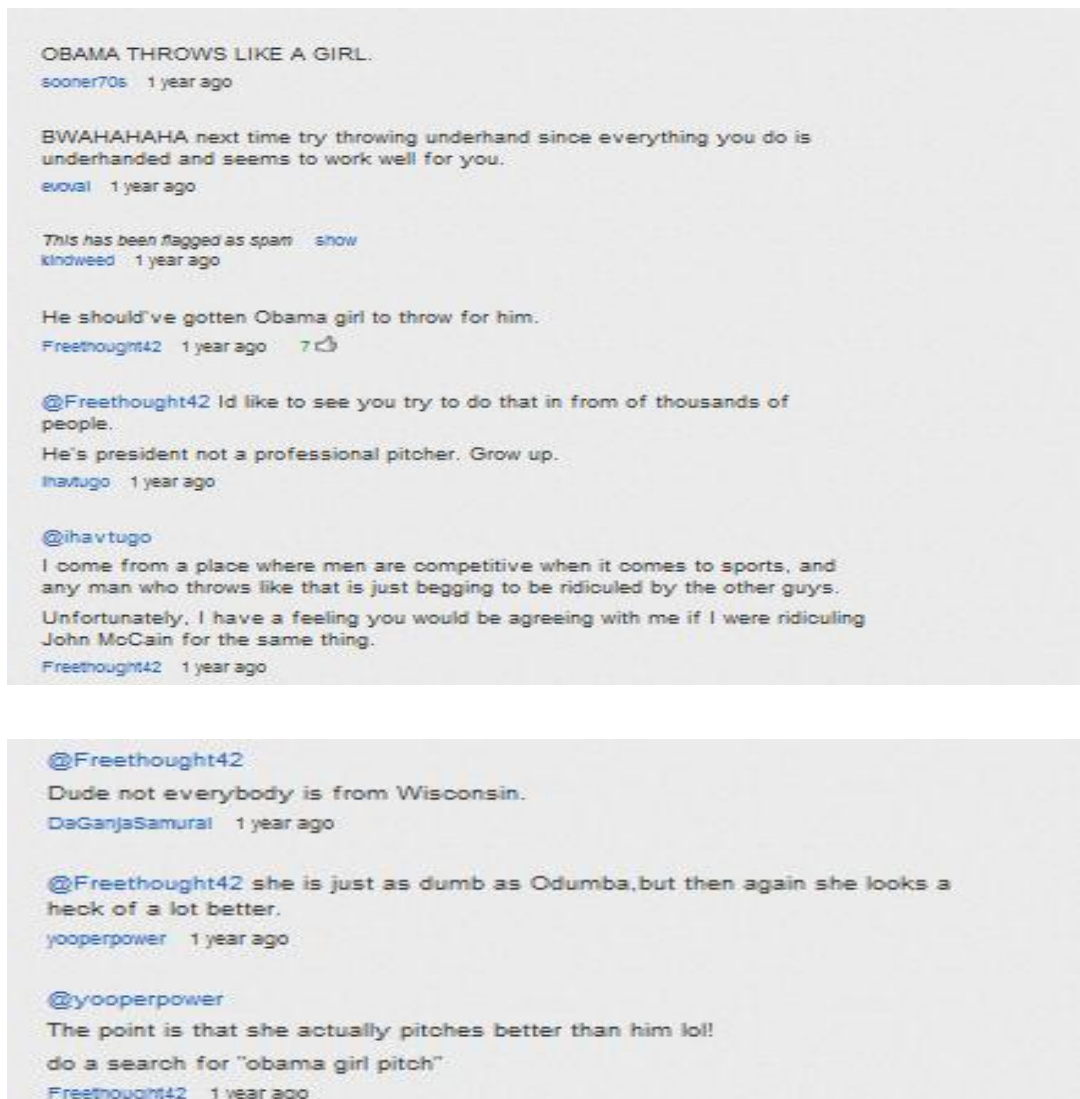
stating; “half of them look like men”. Molonlave2010’s negatively sanctioning (and therefore disapproving) response, indicates disagreement with mololave2010’s comment and indicates that 11wawita’s statement that half of the USA women’s soccer players “look like men” is inaccurate and objectionable. However, his/her response, being restricted by his use of the word “some”, only partially (if at all) resists 11wawita’s comment, and therefore (re)produces the more athletic-less feminine category. “Some” functions to claim that there are exceptions to 11wawita’s comment, but does not produce his statement as entirely false. Therefore, the basis for his/her objection to wawita’s comment is that it is not *entirely* accurate. Molonlave2010 reproduces the category by inferring that while 11wawita’s comment may be true of some of the players, there are some women who are “very beautiful”. Moreover, his response does not challenge the taken-for-granted negativity associated with highly athletic, professional sportswomen who “look like men” and therefore fit into the more athletic-less feminine category. Furthermore, his/her response serves to sexually objectify the women in the process of positively assessing them; “so deliciously fuckable!”, which therefore produces these exceptions as women most importantly, as opposed to skilled athletes. This therefore serves to subtly reproduce the more feminine-less athletic category.

Therefore, at the most, molonlave2010 response only serves to challenge the *use* of this category in describing “some” of the women on the USA national soccer team. S/he does not resist the existence of the more athletic-less feminine category; rather s/he only resists its use in certain (exceptional) circumstances. This resistance of the use of categories is addressed in more depth in the following section.

RESISTANCE OF USE

In response to the posting of a video of the President of the United States, Barack Obama, pitching the ceremonial first ball at a baseball game, the following interaction ensued. The extract demonstrates how the use of sportswomen categories can be challenged in interaction, whilst leaving the accuracy or truth of the category itself unchallenged.

Extract 10



In this extract, the common-sense knowledge that girls do not throw as well as boys is used in a number of instances to insult the president about his ability to pitch a baseball. Freethought42 states “He should've gotten Obama girl to throw for him”, this implies that a girl, specifically his daughter, could have pitched the ball better than he did. This is an insult only because of taken for granted knowledge and the acceptance of the more feminine-less athletic category. The common-sense knowledge of this category is used as a resource to produce humour in a number of instances which therefore functions to reproduce the category. In one instance in response to yooperpower Freethought142 states, “The point is that she actually pitches better than him lol

(laugh out loud)!” What makes this a joke and an insult to Obama is the taken-for-granted, common-sense knowledge that a girl should not be able to pitch a ball better than a man can.

However, the quote of particular interest in this extract; since it represents resistance to gendered humour and insult; is ihavtugo’s response to freethought42’s negative comment about the president. His/her response, “Id like to see you try to do that in from (sic) of thousands of people. He's president not a professional pitcher. Grow up.”, challenges freethought42’s comment that “Obama throws like a girl”, and negatively sanctions him/her for making it, by implying that his duties as president do not include being able to pitch a ball, and therefore he is not (and should not be) expected to be able to pitch a ball properly. In this way, his/her comment resists freethought42’s *use* of the more feminine-less athletic category in order to insult the president by implying that he does not *need* to be able to ‘throw like a boy’. However, s/he does not disagree with or challenge the assumption that girls do not throw as well as men (or at least as well as men *should*). In this way, the *use* of the common-sense knowledge associated with the more feminine-less athletic category is challenged, but the *truth* or accuracy of this knowledge is left unchallenged. Ihavtugo treating the construction that women do not throw as well as men as taken-for-granted, common knowledge therefore (re)produces this knowledge; and as a result of this, the more feminine-less athletic category is reproduce

The following extract, produced during the commentary on the Lambert YouTube video, demonstrates an example of how use of the more athletic-less feminine category is resisted whilst leaving the truth of the category unchallenged.

Extract 11



IIIhittmanIII (re)produces the more athletic-less feminine category through implying that women, whilst playing sport, behave in similar ways to Lambert. In this way, they construct participation in sport as the causal link between women and displays of aggression (as demonstrated by Lambert). IIIhittmanIII therefore implies that women who are more athletic

(participate in sport) are less feminine (display higher levels of aggression than deemed appropriate by constructions of gender-appropriate behaviours). Through stating, “This is why women *shouldn't* play sport”, they produce this constructed link between sport and aggression in sportswomen as negative and inappropriate. SpOiLeDeQuAISmE’s response, however, functions to resist this implied negative connotation. Through implying that ‘men are also aggressive whilst participating in sport’, gender-appropriate behaviour constructions are resisted. SpOiLeDeQuAISmE implies that while Lambert’s behaviour may have indeed been inappropriate, sportsmen are just as likely to act inappropriately (and “fight”) during sports. In this way, inappropriateness of aggression during sport is treated as being independent of gender. In this way, the negativity associated with women playing sport and being more aggressive during participation is resisted through treating displays of aggression by sportswomen as no more inappropriate than displays of aggression by sportsmen. However, the more athletic-less feminine category itself, is not resisted. SpOiLeDeQuAISmE does not state or imply that the link between being more athletic and being less feminine (or showing more aggression) does not exist. S/he only resists the suggestion that women *in particular* shouldn’t be allowed to play sport because of the negative effects that it has on them. In this way, it functions to reproduce the common sense knowledge of the more athletic-less feminine category by taking for granted the fact that when women play sport, they do become more aggressive. However (in his opinion) there is nothing wrong with the fact that they are as aggressive (and therefore unfeminine) as men.

IMPLICIT RESITANCE

The following extract presented itself in an episode of a television programme on South African women’s sport which focussed on the success of Geraldine Pillay, an Olympic sprinter. This extract demonstrates how resistance is done through not mentioning gender. In this case the more feminine-less athletic category is resisted, however, the more athletic-less feminine category is left implicitly available.

Extract 12

- 1 Janice: We really attracted crowds.
- 2 Geraldine: They wanna see the rivals. They wanna see that listen this is serious business.
- 3 Reporter: It i:s sparks all the way!
- 4 Geraldine: it caused us to run faster at times. It was really good for the sport.
- 5 Janice: There will never be (.) in South Africa ever two sprinters that really attacked
- 6 each other like me and Geraldine Pillay.
- 7 Janice: Our focus was always on each other to win each other because look we wanna
- 8 go home as (.) that's South Africa's best.
- 9 Janice: She attacked me I attacked her. And that was brilliant and that got us to (.)
- 10 being (.) one (0.2) the the two best sprinters ever in South Africa.

In this extract, it is the practice of referring to athletes in a non-gendered way which implicitly resists alternative gendered ways of referring to them (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010). Janice and Geraldine are constructed as two idols of South African athletics, as opposed to two idols of South African *female* athletics. As a result of this, the existence of common sense knowledge of gender inequalities in sport (or specifically athletics), and sportswomen categories is resisted, since in essence this extract takes for granted the knowledge that men and women are equally competitive and equally exciting to watch. There are a number of references of this sort within this extract. The first three lines make reference to spectator value which the rivalry between Geraldine and Janice brought to athletics. Janice's comment implicitly resists the more feminine-less athletic category through her statement, "We really attracted crowds" (line 1). This statement produces women's athletics (and particularly the high levels of competition witnessed whilst watching women's athletics) as being 'a crowd pleaser'. Geraldine extends on this by referring to women's athletics as being "serious business" (line 2), which resists the common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories which is so often used to produce humour, as demonstrated by numerous examples above. Geraldine describes her rivalry with Janice as being

“really good for the sport” (line 4) as opposed to being really good for *female* athletics. Janice then states “that got us to (.) being (.) one the the two best sprinters ever in South Africa” (line 10). Again in this instance, the lack of restriction; such as by specifying the two best *female* sprinters; breaks down the athletic gap constructed between males and females and acknowledges female athletes as successful in their own right, as opposed to being successful in the absence of males. Therefore, in a sense, it resists gender asymmetries in sport by including these known-to-be-female athletes in a non-gendered category of athletes, therefore, in a sense, this extract resists the more feminine-less athletic category. However, while the extract thus implicitly treats women as being capable of being as athletic as men by not including a restrictive gender category, it does not produce these women as being both highly athletic *and* feminine. Therefore, it leaves open the possibility that they could still implicitly be seen as members of the more athletic-less feminine category.

Conclusion

From the data, two categories of sportswomen emerged; the more feminine-less athletic category, and the more athletic-less feminine category. These categories are informed by gender roles and asymmetries, and therefore stem from the produced incompatibility of femininity and athleticism. Women who are treated by the participants as feminine (more feminine-less athletic), are also recurrently treated as possessing less athletic ability and are assumed to take part in female-appropriate sports or alternatively to take part in an inferior version of the men’s game (whether due to specialised equipment or inferior skill levels). Women who are treated as having superior athletic ability (more athletic-less feminine), meaning that they possess superior athletic ability (in the form of attitude, skill, and natural ability) and/or a muscular physique, and/or take part in a male-appropriate sport, are also treated as failing to meet what are treated as normative standards of femininity.

Knowledge of these categories is treated as common-sense and is taken-for-granted, and therefore serves as a foundation upon which to perform other interactional practices. The extracts within this analysis demonstrated how the taken-for-granted common knowledge of sportswomen categories serves as a platform for the production of humour, insult and

undermining statements. Without this shared knowledge, and the ability for people to take for granted the fact that it *is* shared; humour and insult, as they was produced in the above extracts, would not make sense and/or be understood as humorous or insulting by the receivers of the production. The ability of these productions to be understood by receivers as a result of the shared taken-for-granted knowledge, simultaneously functions to confirm and support the truth of these categories, and therefore the categories are reproduced. Analysis of the extracts included in the data revealed three interactional practices which are implicated in the production of links between sportswomen and femininity. The production of humour, insult, and undermining statements in day-to-day interaction has been demonstrated to rely on taken-for-granted common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories as an interactional resource; and in doing so, these practices function to reproduce sportswomen categories.

The severity of the image problem which sportswomen face as a result of sportswomen categories is fuelled by the mutually exclusive nature of these two categories. The women in these extracts are treated as members of one category or the other, but are not treated as both feminine and athletic at the same time. This exclusivity is the cause of the first type of resistance discussed within the analysis.

The data for this study presents four types of resistance of sportswomen categories. These are exception to the rule, restriction, resistance of use, and implicit resistance. Exception to the rule occurs when taken-for-granted common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories results in the display of surprise when a sportswoman is treated as not fitting snugly into one of the categories. In the extracts included in this section, surprise was used by participants to acknowledge the contradictory nature of a sportswomen's identity. However, the use of surprise treated the women as exceptions to the norm (fitting into either one or the other category) as opposed to demonstrations of the inaccuracy of these categories, and therefore the norm that they are treated as an exception to, is maintained for others who *do* fit the category. In this way, in both of the cases presented in the analysis, the sportswomen category is reproduced as opposed to successfully resisted.

Restriction refers to the practice whereby an un-gendered, potentially resisting comment is transformed into a comment which functions to reproduce sportswomen categories through the use of a gender-specific assessment. The extract provided in the analysis presented an example

of how taken-for-granted knowledge of gender inequalities in sport informs the impact or strength of a particular assessment. As a result of taken-for-granted knowledge of male superiority in sport, specification of gender in a production that would otherwise make a general assessment of sport or athletes, stipulates that the statement needs to be received and interpreted in light of male superiority. Restriction therefore functions to reproduce male superiority in sport, which in turn reproduces the more feminine-less athletic category of sportswomen.

The data reveals instances during interaction whereby the *use* of common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories are challenged, however the *accuracy* of the knowledge is left unchallenged. This has been termed, resistance of use. While in these cases the producer resists a particular production which is reliant on knowledge of sportswomen categories, the reason for resistance is not in response to the inaccurate knowledge surrounding sportswomen which is taken-for-granted as true; rather, it is in response to the way in which this knowledge (which is taken as true) has been applied to the situation at hand. As a result of this, the accuracy of taken-for-granted, common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories is reaffirmed, which therefore reproduces sportswomen categories.

The final form of resistance, implicit resistance, comes closest to meeting the requirements of successful resistance. It carries out its resisting role through resisting gender asymmetries as they apply to *one* of the sportswomen categories through the use of un-gendered language. In this sense knowledge of one of the sportswomen categories (in this case the more feminine-less athletic category) which is in ordinary cases treated as being common-sense, is not treated as such during cases of implicit resistance. However, while this successfully resists one of the sportswomen categories, the other category is left unchallenged, and therefore its truthfulness is implied. Following this, while this type of resistance may fight against one side of the image problem which sportswomen face, it does not completely resist the existence of any sportswomen categories.

Despite my analysis of countless discussions, I am yet to come across an example of true resistance of sportswomen categories. As a result of the two-sided nature of the image problem, unless both sides of the image problem are resisted simultaneously; due to the common-sense nature of sportswomen categories; the other category is immediately implied if not resisted.

Therefore, this analysis has explored the image problem which sportswomen face, and the foundation of this image problem within the production of sportswomen categories. The taken-for-granted, common-sense knowledge of sportswomen as belonging to one of two categories; more feminine-less athletic, or more athletic-less feminine, and the exclusive nature of these two categories, forms an interactional resource upon which people draw during interaction in order to perform actions such as producing jokes, producing insults, and producing undermining statements. While these jokes, insults and undermining statements may or may not directly refer to sportswomen categories, their doing functions regardless to reproduce the truth of the taken-for-granted common-sense knowledge of sportswomen categories, which is needed in order for the interaction to make sense. In this way, jokes, insults and undermining statements are three everyday interactional practices which can function to reproduce sportswomen categories. While resistance of these categories is done through four identified practices, results revealed that resistance practices simply function to reproduce sportswomen categories. Interactional mobilisation of, and orientation to, common-sense knowledge about sportswomen categories; even during resistance; reproduces these categories and acts as reinforcement for the ‘truth’ of these productions. A statement such as “sportswomen are not less feminine”, regardless of whether the speaker’s intention is to resist normative constructions, still draws attention to the fact that such a construction exists in the first place, and in doing so, functions to reproduce it. In all of the data collected for this study in which resistance or challenges is produced, there is still a sense in which the categories are reproduced even when they are resisted, which makes it very difficult to conceptualise whether, and if so how, successful resistance could be achieved. Therefore, the strategy for combating the two-dimensional image problem which sportswomen face needs to go much deeper than a movement towards equality during participation. In order to address and eliminate the disadvantaged and stereotyped position of women in sport, a shared knowledge of sportswomen categories stemming from positive associations between sport and women, needs to be developed. However, without evidence of true resistance of current sportswomen categories ever taking place, this goal of equality in sport may never be achieved.

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