

Transnationalizing Title IX:
Neoliberal Formations of Women's Sport

by

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ABSTRACT

Transnational feminist scholars have increasingly recognized the need to interrogate the dominance of the US and the global north in transnational transactions. Chandra Mohanty argues that transnational feminist scholarship needs to “address fundamental questions of systemic power and inequities and to develop feminist, antiracist analyses of neoliberalism, militarism, and heterosexism as nation-state-building projects” (2013, p. 968). Following this call for analyzing power from feminist, anti-racist stances, this dissertation interrogates Title IX as a nationalist discourse with global reach. As a law created in the era of liberal feminism, Title IX still operates today in neoliberal times and this dissertation makes sense of Title IX as an instrument of neoliberalized feminism in transnational sporting contexts. The following three case studies focus on Title IX as it travels across nation-state borders through 21st century ideas of equity, empowerment, and opportunity.

This dissertation begins by exploring at how transnational sporting policy regarding the participation standards of transgender and intersex athletes operates under the neoliberalized feminism of Title IX. It then moves to a discussion of a Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) project--*Women Win's* digital storytelling project. In analyzing SDP projects, I map the cultural logics of Title IX's neoliberalized feminism in the context of training girls and women to record their stories sport participation. Finally, the dissertation connects the context of the first Saudi female Olympians to Oiselle's branding campaign of Sarah Attar, one of the first Saudi Olympians. It traces her image as an import-export product for the Olympic Committee and Oiselle through equity, opportunity, and empowerment.

Finally, these case studies are bridged by networking the discourses of investing in a girl (commodifying girls becoming autonomous actors through education and economics) to Title IX's focus on gender equity in order to show how these discourses simultaneously increase and negatively impact participation in sports by women from the global south. Moreover, it offers how future research in women's transnational sports can more ethically incorporate the standpoint of women from the global south in sport policy, SDP projects, and branding campaigns.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Olympics prominently displayed US women’s dominance in global sports. The US women won 27 of the US team’s 46 gold medals. Also, the US women outperformed the US men, winning 61 to the US men’s 55 medals. Beyond dominating the numbers, US women exhibited remarkable performances including Simone Biles’s three golds and one bronze, Katie Ledecky’s four golds and a silver, Alyson Felix reaching six lifetime gold medals—the most ever won by a female track-and-field participant, and of course the Fierce Five’s team gold.¹ Alongside celebrating the US women’s victories, the media began asking the larger question—why are women dominating, why now? Articles published by NPR, *The Washington Post*, *The LA Times*, and *The NY Times* all connect the dots from Title IX to US women’s victories in Rio. Noreen Farrell and Tuti Scott argue that “without [Title IX] today’s generation of athletes would not be as well-resourced nor as dominant” (2016). Furthermore, an article in *Cronkite News* calls Title IX the “‘tipping point’ for the increase in women in US sports” (Lind, 2016). In a *Washington Post* article titled “US women’s Olympic dominance is not a fluke,” Jennifer Rubin claims that Title IX’s “results have been seen in the plethora of women Olympic stars” (2016). Mapping the media’s commentary onto the importance of Title IX in women’s dominance at the 2016 Olympics, we see that Title IX becomes distilled to the public through the ideas of equity (through equal participation in sports), opportunity (by

¹ The members of the team are Gabby Douglas, McKayla Maroney, Aly Raisman, Kyla Ross, and Jordyn Wieber. They were originally called the Fab Five, but two days before the 2012 team final, Maroney and Wieber learned that the Fab Five referred to the highly rated 1990 University of Michigan Men’s Basketball team. Maroney told reporters: “There have been Fab Fives in the past but I like Fierce Five because we are definitely the fiercest team out there” (Samuelsen, 2012).

giving women space and resources to participate), and empowerment (by providing women with inspirational role models to carry on the desire or image of the female athlete). As evidenced by the media's need to connect the US women's dominance in sports to Title IX, Title IX becomes the framework through which women's sports in the US are represented.

There is no doubt Title IX has had an incredible impact on women's sports in the US: Title IX has increased women's participation in a monumental way. According to the annual NCAA's gender equity report, women's participation in Division I athletics rose from 15 percent in the 1970s to 44 percent in 2004 (Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007). The law has also helped women receive appropriate levels of funding for sports. "College athletic budgets for women...grew under pressure from Title IX from 1 percent to 16 percent of the total spent on all college sports" (Ware, 2014, p. 79). In fact, the impact of Title IX has scholars in the fields of legal studies and sport's sociology devoting entire manuscripts to surveying the history and citing the positive impact of Title IX (Simon, 2005; Carpenter and Acosta, 2005; Ware, 2014; Blumenthal, 2005; Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007; Suggs, 2005). This scholarship focuses on the legal ramifications of Title IX as an empowering moment in the "women's sports revolution" (Ware, 2014, p. 27). However, scholarship exists that also questions the fairness of Title IX for all women. The addition of sports like crew, badminton, golf, and lacrosse is critiqued by women of color as "'White-girl sports'...played in suburban high schools or the private club circuit where white students predominated" (Ware, 2014, p. 17). Recent statistics speak to this charge of racial inequality in Title IX enforcement. Welch Suggs points out that the majority of scholarships for black women are given in

basketball and track with only 2.7 percent of black women receiving scholarships from “white-girl sports” (i.e., crew, golf, etc.) (as cited in Ware, 2014, p. 17). Lucy Jane

Blesdoe sees homophobia as a consequence of Title IX’s equality:

As more and more straight women claim their right to play, homophobia has become increasingly prevalent on the courts and fields, and in the locker rooms.

Women's sports promoters are working hard to clean the dyke image off the face of women's athletics. (as cited in Ware, 2014, p. 83-4)

The claims by women of color and lesbians that Title IX doesn’t offer them equality mirror black and lesbian women’s complaints about the women’s movements as centralizing a certain woman (white, middle-class, heterosexuals). Clearly, some of the negative consequences of Title IX speak to the imperfection of Title IX as a law, but laws also carry with them ideological arguments. With all the attention to the legal minutiae and the historical significance of Title IX, no scholar has analyzed Title IX’s ideological underpinnings.

Analyzing the ideological underpinnings and circulating cultural logics of Title IX, this dissertation presents a transnational feminist rhetorical analysis of Title IX.

While the common conception is that Title IX merely affects the laws and regulations of sports in the US, through the case studies presented here I show that Title IX has a much farther reach. 21st century iterations of Title IX display neoliberalized feminism (or faux-feminism) through the discourse of empowerment, equity, and opportunity. When these ideas travel from the United States, “‘Feminism’ is instrumentalised...[and] brought forward...by Western governments, as a signal to the rest of the world that this is a key part of what freedom now means. Freedom is revitalized and brought up-to-date with this

faux-feminism” (McRobbie, 2008, p. 1). To illustrate the process, I provide three case studies of female sporting projects that have travelled from the United States and employ the rhetoric of Title IX in other parts of the world.

Title IX operates transnationally through branding, sporting policy, and sports for development and peace projects (SDP). Because neoliberalized feminism involves the convergence of liberal feminism and neoliberalism, a neoliberalized feminism of Title IX uses the same identity assumptions (white, middle class, heterosexual) across national borders. This discourse, through branding, policy, and development initiatives, argues for female equality in sports but fails to interrogate notions of equality along the lines of race, sexuality, religion, or nation. While Title IX does not travel transnationally in the legal sense, it does produce value symbolically. Using Rebecca Dingo’s theory of networking arguments (2012) and Wendy Hesford’s idea of intercontextuality (2011), I look at ideological trafficking of female empowerment to link Title IX to neoliberal formations of female empowerment. Thus, as empowerment travels across borders, it carries with it both the neoliberalized feminism of Title IX and the policy as an ideal. The policy ideals established in Title IX regulate women’s sports as separate from and equal to men’s sports. When thinking about how empowerment travels, I borrow from Rebecca Dingo’s analysis of empowerment in the context of microlending. She calls this the “empowerment model...whereby a set of people in power bestowed power onto another group so that they can participate within predetermined successful economic and political structures” (Dingo, 2012, p. 115). What I distill from her ideas of empowerment in economic contexts is that empowerment signals personal agency as well as successful figures. I offer a new look at Title IX through my case studies on branding, sporting

policy, and sports for development and SDP in transnational contexts. Branding campaigns that figure notions of empowerment, equality, and opportunity for women in sports actually privilege white subjects from the global north as ideal women's sports subjects, excluding performing athletes from the global north as empowering. Policy written through the ideas of equality espoused in Title IX fail to include a global sports population, privileging the global over the local. Sport Development Programs set up by Title IX-influenced organizations from the global north offer neoliberal definitions of empowerment in the global south, ignoring structural and governmental systems that impede women's lives in favor of promoting individual improvement as a way for women and girls in the global south to rise up out of poverty. It is under these conditions that a neoliberalized feminist perspective of Title IX operating in transnational contexts has negative material consequences for development initiatives in sports, sponsorship of athletes from the global south, creation of value neutral sporting policy, and credibility of athletes from the global south.

While the chapters of this dissertation are stand-alone essays, all of the chapters are related by the question of how Title IX operates in transnational sporting contexts.

Research Questions

- (1) How does Title IX operate across nation-state borders?
- (2) How does Title IX operate in the 21st through neoliberalized feminism?
- (3) How do neoliberal branding strategies of Title IX play a role in the implementation of transnational sporting policies, sport for development and peace (SDP) projects, and athlete sponsorship across nation-state borders?

Overview & Significance

This project shows how Title IX is operationalized in transnational contexts. To date, most of the scholarship concerning Title IX looks at its history and current challenges in the United States. Furthermore, scholars working in sport feminisms, women and gender studies, and feminist legal studies are failing to interrogate sport as a transnational phenomenon despite the fact that amateur and professional athletics take place in transnational spaces. Thus, as Briggs et al. suggest,

“Transnationalism” can do to the nation what gender did for sexed bodies: provide the conceptual acid that denaturalizes all their deployments, compelling us to acknowledge that the nation, like sex, is a thing contested, interrupted, and always shot through with contradiction. (2008, p. 627).

By adding a transnational feminist lens on women’s sport and specifically mapping the circulating cultural logics of Title IX in transnational contexts, I critique dominant discursive formations and regimes of truth supporting empowerment, opportunity, and equality for the way they circulate a neoliberalized feminist agenda as natural.

In performing a transnational feminist analysis of Title IX, the project furthers the social justice project of rhetorical studies, women and gender studies, and sports feminism in important ways. First, by looking at transnational sporting policy and questioning the cultural logics behind policies, branding, and SDP projects, this project promises to help analyze and compose rhetorics to question “who counts as the human, and the related question of whose lives count as lives” (Butler, 2004, p. 18). Thus, understanding how these policies map neoliberalized feminist lives unto transnational sporting practices allows scholars and policymakers to better articulate positions that

“center the experiences of the most vulnerable people first” (Spade, 2009). Furthermore, by moving marginal experiences in sport to the center, a richer, transnational experience in sport would allow for arguments that promote access to sport on the terms of a local understanding of cultures without dismissing them as backwards. Finally, if we believe, as many SDP initiatives claim, that sport really is a catalyst for change in girls’ and women’s lives, then a transnational understanding of women’s lives and sports without the baggage of neoliberalized feminism should be our ultimate goal. Such an understanding would allow a space to really listen to women from the global south to understand how they foresee and employ sport outside of narrow NGO employment.

Methodology and Methods²

In order to better get at the notion that Title IX travels beyond the US and circulates the global north’s cultural logics, I employ transnational feminist rhetorical analysis. Transnational feminism comes out of the discipline of Women and Gender Studies. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan see transnational feminist analysis as “a mode of study that adopts a more complicated model of transnational relations in which power structures, asymmetries, and inequalities become the conditions of possibility of new subjects” (2001, p. 671). Scholars located in rhetoric and composition might understand this mode of study as widening the context of rhetorical acts. However, simply saying the transnational is just another context in the rhetorical situation fails to

² The distinction between methodology and method is similar to the difference between an architect’s blueprints and the tools used to build a house. Methodology provides the critical framework for asking questions and methods are the tools used for getting at these questions.

see the complexity of transnational analysis. Rebecca Dingo, Rachel Riedner, and Jennifer Wingard, all scholars of rhetoric and composition, see the strongest transnational analyses as a “cogent analysis of globalized power— specifically, how global capital as well as state, sovereign, territorial, historical, and cultural power operate simultaneously and reinforce each other in different times, places, and contexts” (2013, p. 518). Thus, any rhetorical act must be interrogated to understand how power circulates through already existing discourses including historical, cultural, political, and social. Burke argues, “We must think of rhetoric not in terms of one particular address, but a body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill” (26). Thus, in rhetorical analysis the studying of a single speech (or multiple connected speeches) allows scholars to think about how the speech makes meaning in context. Transnational feminist analysis, however, is “grounded in a political critique of...globalized power as it is manifested in a variety of public and national discourses and texts” (2013, p. 518). Adding the political critique of power to the analysis of meaning of rhetorical acts in contexts shows the collision of rhetorical theory with transnational theory.

Specifically, my research on Title IX takes a phenomenon from the US and attempts to understand how it operates in transnational contexts. Thus, I am contesting the claim that transnational feminist research is simply about distant locations and cultures. I borrow from Radha Hegde (1998) who sees the epistemological position of transnational feminist researcher in the following ways: “(a) transnational locations and cultural authenticity, (b) recovering the politics of experience, and (c) communication and the alliance of resistance” (Hegde, 1998, p. 285). She defines transnational as the

process of cultural flow and expression in which location is viewed as mobile and which the margins and the center have porous borders. Following the mobility of location, my research questions get at understanding the global north's dominance in transnational women's sports; therefore, much of my research looks at what cultural logics are being circulated by the global north and how these cultural logics penetrate transnational contexts. Leela Fernandes (2013) understands transnationalism as the analysis of inequalities and relationships of power among local, national, and global actors with particular attention to the dominant influence of the United States. She argues that nationalist perspectives persist in transnational knowledge production despite efforts to transcend the state. I take her critique of some subsets of transnational feminist theory as being "nationalist conceptions of 'transnationalism'" as a call to researchers (Fernandes, 2013, p. 183). Along these lines, understanding the process of circulating ideology and cultural logics from privileged locations involves a close analysis of how organizations and institutions that are said to operate without a national agenda work through the cultural logics and ideologies of these dominant nations. Thus, I employ a transnational feminist rhetorical methodology that focuses on the US and the global north as ideological architects of transnational sporting institutions. This dissertation's research offers close analysis of how these institutions act through the transnational to circulate national interests for female athletes.

To get at the transnational qualities of the three different iterations of Title IX, I use mixed methods. Each chapter takes on a distinct area and data set and given the context of each situation, I use mixed methods that help me get at the way Title IX circulates power across nation-state borders.

Chapter 2 uses the policy of transgendered and intersexed athletes from the IAAF and the IOC and the stories of Caster Semenya, Dutee Chande, and Santhi Soundarajan as data. I use the method of transnational rhetorical analysis—networking arguments—to link the policies and their enactments on athletes from the global south to discourses of female empowerment that originate in the global north. As Dingo argues,

Networking arguments, then, means not only looking at how rhetorics travel but also looking at how, within individual policies, there are vectors of power (i.e., colonial history, supranational relationships, economic plans, gendered assumptions, etc.) that we need to unpack to understand the cultural (i.e., how neoliberalism structures our intimated lives) and material (i.e., how it impacts out economic well being) work that policy does. (2011, p. 25)

Thus, this method helps me uncover how these policies link to popular representations of the female athlete, colonial relationships between the global north and south, sex separatism as the basis for women’s sports in the global north, policies and procedures that attempt to “fix” transgender and intersexed individuals in the global north, and global capitalism’s hold on transnational sport.

Chapter 3 looks at the ethical and social justice dimensions of transnational development initiatives through a case study of *Women Win’s*, a transnational NGO, digital storytelling (DST) project. This qualitative case study analyzes 37 DST videos, coding recurring discursive themes in both their language and visual iconography and examining the ownership rights, authorship, and sharing practices of these videos. The videos are coded for the following: visual narratives (i.e., real images vs. cartoon drawings), language used (agent, rights, empowerment, girls, reproductive health, school,

capacity, confident, leader), and stories narrated (stories of winning, stories of employment). The methods of content analysis, discourse analysis, and transnational feminist rhetorical analysis, help me parse through both the themes of the video quantitatively and the videos' narratives qualitatively. By bridging qualitative and quantitative analysis, I am able to ask and answer questions about both the deep layers of meaning within these videos and how power circulates in these videos through dominant discourses that create the surface processes and appearances of "The Girl Effect" logic.

Chapter 4 uses the media surrounding the 2012 Olympics and Oiselle's branding campaigns of Sarah Attar as data. I combine the methods of transnational feminist rhetorical analysis with Foucauldian discourse analysis to trace the discourses, regimes of truth, and links between texts (popular media, branding campaigns, Sarah Attar inclusion in the 201 London Olympics) in transnational contexts. As such, I trace the female athlete's representation as white, middle-class, and heterosexual as a regime of truth. These discourses, when networked with commodified images of women from the middle east and the politics of US feminism and the middle east, uncovers the neoliberalized feminist cultural logics surrounding the branding of Attar.

Chapter Overviews

The remainder of this dissertation is divided into three stand-alone chapters, much like an edited collection. However, there are many connections between the chapters that explore the main question in this dissertation: How does Title IX operate in transnational contexts?

Chapter 2 analyzes transnational policies that regulate the participation of intersexed and transgendered athletes. Through this analysis, I ask how policies that are created and shaped through the cultural logics and ideological frames of the global north function when applied transnationally. I analyze recent policy changes by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) that claim to more fairly include transgendered and intersexed athletes. These policies were authored to in direct response to mishandled cases involving intersexed athletes from the global south, Dutee Chande, Caster Semenya and Santhi Soundarajan. Considering the rhetorical occasion of these mishandled cases as well as the historical, cultural, and ideological contexts of these policies illuminates the transnational rhetorical work these policies perform and questions their efficacy in serving the needs of both transgender and intersex athletes. By networking arguments that favor sex separatism in sports to hegemonic feminisms from the global north, I reveal that the sex testing policies of IAAF and IOC fail to understand gender as a continuum and, as such, reinforce the global north's binary gender norms on a global sporting arena.

Chapter 3 analyzes Digital Storytelling narratives composed by girls from the global south under the instruction of *Women Win*, a SDP regranting NGO located in the Netherlands. In collecting data for this chapter, I coded each story for narratives of empowerment to call these narratives into question as neoliberalized feminist formations Title IX (i.e., evidence that Title IX operates transnationally). While these stories are meant to speak to empowerment and self-reliance of the girls, the setup, ownership, production, and ultimate representations of these stories position the girls as agents of immaterial labor in service of *Women Win*, not themselves. The girls and women telling

these stories may design and “produce” them, but their stories produce capital for *Women Win*. Through affective data and emotional stories, *Women Win* is able to hail northern donors.

In chapter 4, I look at the rhetorical occasion of the first Saudi female Olympians. While two women competed in the 2012 Olympics for Saudi Arabia, a dual citizen residing her whole life in the US, Sarah Attar, became the privileged female athlete in advertising and press. I link her status as a model multicultural subject (Puar, 2007) to neoliberalized feminist networks operating in women’s sports. I look at how Sarah Attar is branded as a bridge figure by both the IOC (a sport governing body) and Oiselle (a US women’s running apparel company). As a dual citizen of both the US and Saudi Arabia, Attar becomes the model multicultural (Puar, 2007) worthy of becoming a feminist icon for Saudi Arabia; yet, given that her iconic accomplishment aligns with the desires of the IOC and western human rights organizations, I question what geographical location her iconic status serves. By linking liberal feminists’ agenda to modernize Saudi Arabian women to Attar’s media presence and also linking the IOC’s gender equality mission to neoliberalized feminism, I offer a reading of Attar’s participation in the 2012 London Olympics and subsequent branding by Oiselle that critically questions how closely her image in both contexts aligns with a western desires. In both brandings, we see the desire of the IOC, western human rights organizations, and neoliberalized feminism operating to forward “safe” multiculturalism and women’s rights within a western frame; thus, her image and achievements bring very little back to Saudi Arabia and act more so as a vector for western power.

Placed together, all three of these chapters offer different ways in which Title IX either directly or indirectly informs transnational sporting policy, brandings, and development projects. The conditions that required Caster Semenya to fight for participation and recognition by transnational sporting organizations that I discuss in Chapter 2 arose out of the brandings of the ideal multicultural athlete explored in Chapter 4.. Furthermore, when the organizations like *Women Win* train women in the global south to tell their sporting story, they do so under the framework of Title IX. Instead of recognizing the conditions for participation as a local occurrence, these organizations map the global north ideas of equity, empowerment, and opportunity onto the global south. These chapters all draw a map of Title IX's dominance in transnational sporting contexts.

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CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS TRANSNATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF SEX: THE CASE OF TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX ATHLETES

In 2006, Santhi Soundarajan, a sprinter from Southern India, was presumed not female (but also not male) after failing female sex verification tests. Although the practice of blanket sex testing stopped in 2000, the IAAF and IOC still tested when either “a medical professional...observe[d] unusual genitals during a doping test [or] an athlete...lodge[d] a complaint against a competitor for an out-standing performance or masculine looking features” (Shapiro, 2012).¹ Because of Soundarajan’s breakthrough performance and seemingly masculine traits, the IAAF requested sex verification tests.² Her case reveals sex “verification [as] a somewhat subjective process,” for her failed sex test in 2006 came after being cleared to compete in the 2005 Asian Championships (Wood & Stanton, 2012, p. 151). The 2006 test, however, diagnosed Soundarajan with Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS), a condition that labeled her as

¹ Sex testing has had a troubled history in elite athletics. From nude parades to chromosomal tests, women have undergone invasive and often embarrassing tests to prove themselves medically female. However, these tests caused more controversy than clarity. In 1985, Spanish hurdler, María José Martínez-Patiño “failed” the Barr Body test; conversely, on closer inspection, the test revealed a chromosome disorder in which she was born with 46, XY chromosomes and a female phenotype (a complex biological articulation of sex). She successfully argued that this condition made her unresponsive to testosterone, giving her no unfair advantage over XX females. Another test relied on detecting the SRY gene, a gene leading to testis development. Yet this test also failed to account for unique situations and in the 1996 Olympics, eight female athletes were “outed” as having intersexed traits, something that none of them knew before. The lack of efficacy in sex testing pushed athletic governing bodies to discontinue blanket testing in 2000.

² At the 2014 Asian Junior Athletics Championships in Taipei, Coaches and participants complained that: “Her muscles were too pronounced, her stride was too impressive for someone who was only five feet tall” (Padawer, 2016)

intersex. She possessed female genitalia and a Y chromosome. The IAAF wrongly interpreted these markers as an indication that she wasn't female and stripped her medal. Yet bioethicists suggest that the IAAF made a mistake, for "if only taking chromosomal, gonadal, or hormonal factors into account, one would label these individuals male. Yet these women have a completely feminine phenotype, with breast development and female typical genitalia, because their androgen receptors are not responsive to androgens" (Karkazis et al., 2012, p. 6). Furthermore, Soundarajan's own local situation wasn't fully taken into account. Soundarajan had self-identified female and in her homeland, Kathakurichi, a rural, impoverished village in southern India, Soundarajan's female gender was never questioned. Thus, when the news broke, she found out about her "condition" at the same time the world did, adding shame and embarrassment to this situation.

Similarly, Caster Semenya grew up in Limpopo, a South African province where 78% of its inhabitants live below the poverty line. In 2009, Semenya shocked the world, winning the 800m World Championships by nearly 2 seconds. Instead of celebrating her performance as impressive, her competitors questioned her gender. Elisa Cusma, the runner who came in sixth place, stated, "These kind of people should not run with us...For me, she is not a woman. She is a man" (as cited in Levy, 2009). The fifth-place finisher Mariya Savinova declared, "Just look at her" (as cited in Levy, 2009). The IAAF followed up these complaints by subjecting Semenya to sex tests that revealed inconsistencies between anatomy and biology identifying her as intersex. Because of a breach within the IAAF's confidentiality, the results of her sex tests became public, subjecting an emotionally fragile teenage girl to the violence of gender humiliation.

Semenya went from being one of the most promising runners in South Africa in late 2009 to being disallowed to compete in early 2010. In July of 2010, the IAAF cleared Semanya for competition. Because of the privacy laws, it is not known if Semanya's return required any fixes to her anatomy or hormones. Since her return, Semanya has slowly regained her speed and is a favorite for gold in the 2016 Olympics.

Dutee Chand's case bears a striking resemblance to Semanya's. In 2014, Chand, a rising 100m runner for India and daughter of poor weavers, learned that she would not be able to compete in the Commonwealth Games due to testing positive for hyperandrogenism. Once again a brown-skinned athlete from the global south became the subject of scrutiny. Following the IAAF's policy, the test was requested by either an "official or a competitor at the Asian Junior Athletics Championships" (Macur, 2014). Like Semanya, Chand was given the option to either undergo hormone therapy or surgery to "fix" her hyperandrogenism; Chand chose to do neither. Instead, Chand filed an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). In July of 2015, the CAS ruled that testosterone alone wasn't sufficient enough to ban a woman from competing as a female and as a result, the CAS gave the IAAF two years "to provide the CAS with scientific evidence about the quantitative relationship between enhanced testosterone levels and improved athletic performance in hyperandrogenic athletes" (CAS, 2015). While the CAS waits for the IAAF's scientific data, the regulation asking hyperandrogenic athletes to "fix" their test has been suspended, providing a loophole for athletes like Soundarajan, Semanya, and Chand to compete in transnational athletics, including the 2016 Olympics.

Using these three cases as challenges to the IAAF and IOC's policies, this chapter analyzes transnational policies that regulate the participation of intersex and transgender

athletes. Through this analysis, I ask how policies that are created and shaped through the cultural logics and ideological frames of the global north function when applied transnationally. I analyze the history of these policies as well as the recent policy changes by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) that claim to more fairly include female identifying transgender and intersex athletes.³ These policies were authored in direct response to mishandled cases implicating intersex athletes from the global south, Caster Semenya, Santhi Soundarajan, and Dutee Chand.⁴ Considering the rhetorical occasion of these mishandled cases as well as the historical, cultural, and ideological contexts of these policies illuminates the rhetorical work these policies perform and questions their efficacy in serving the needs of both transgender and intersex athletes. I contend that networking Title IX's sex separatism in sports and the resulting neoliberalized feminism to these sex verification policies uncover the centrality of the global north's cultural logics in transnational sporting administration. The policies of the IOC and IAAF fail to account for gender as a continuum and, as such, reinforce the global north's gender norms on transnational sports, causing unethical testing and suspensions for athletes from the global south.

³ Transgender athlete policies were changed in 2003 & 2015 by the IOC. Intersex athlete policies were changed in 2011 by the IAAF and this policy was subsequently followed by the IOC.

⁴ The Intersex Society of North America defines intersex as "a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male" (ISNA, 2008). Hyperandrogenism, a condition which females produce a high amount of testosterone naturally, falls under the category of intersex.

Calling into question the meaning, function, and ethical dimensions of both sex testing and regulatory practices of the IOC and IAAF, I use the method of transnational feminist rhetorical analysis to critique sex regulation in global sports competitions. In *Networking Arguments*, Rebecca Dingo offers an operational definition of transnational feminist rhetorical analysis:

A transnational feminist analysis does not simply recover lost voices nor does it ask who suffers more or how two (or more) groups are similar; instead transnational feminism illustrates a matrix of connections between people, nations, economies, and the textual practices present in, for examples, public policies and pop culture. (2012, p. 12)

Because of the complexity of stakeholders, nations, economies, cultures, individuals, sporting histories, and organizations involved in global athletics, networking the policies regulating transgender and intersex athletes to liberal and neoliberalized feminism bring to the surface the global north's failure to deal with structural inequalities in global athletics. These networks must be disentangled, for they are veiled and effectively circulate power behind the façade of "fairness" and "inclusivity." Thus, my method disentangles these networks to look at how discourse in these contexts has been coded in such a way that make arguments for fairness and inclusiveness in athletics through the hidden networks of liberal and neoliberalized feminism.

In the following pages I disentangle the networked arguments of the IAAF and IOC's policies, looking at discursive formations from the global north that help create, protect, and regulate the female athlete in global contexts. To understand how sex separatism in athletics became the norm, I look at the ability of Title IX to circulate ideas

about gender globally. Title IX created “a sport of her own” in the United States. Yet, it is my contention that this discourse travels in transnational sporting contexts and fully engages neoliberalized feminism with it. Through the sex separatist discourse of Title IX, the terms of fairness and equality result in the desire to police the female in female athletics with the global north’s definition of female as the driving force. Furthermore, sponsorship, branding, and endorsement play a huge role in maintaining identity norms for female athletes. “Female athletes were once oddities, goddesses, or monsters, exceptions to every social rule. Now the female athlete is an institution” (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003, p. xiv). It is in this context that global companies like Nike and Reebok have a vested economic interest in the image of the female athlete. Thinking through a transnational feminist lens, the story of sex testing in female athletics intersects the rise of the female athlete and the commercialization of female sports with polarizing consequences for athletes from the global south. In the marketplace of athletics, female athletes that don’t appear anything like the “ideal” created in the global north are more often subject to unfair treatment. It is here that we must understand how the policies of the IAAF and the IOC, when linked to branding, sponsorship, and endorsements, operate in the context of neoliberalism. Neoliberalized feminism, through the framework of governmentality, “encompasses a discourse, which generates individuals as entrepreneurs of the self and favours the creation of external environments that lead individuals to self-monitor so that they conduct themselves in ways that respond to market principles” (Prugl, 2014, p. 7). Through lack of sponsorship and endorsements, untreated intersex and transgender athletes are seen as subject to market demands. Thus, these policies, when linked to sponsorship, branding, and endorsements, unveil a neoliberal agenda that

reinforces gender norms of the global north. Considering different arguments, policies, and practices in the context of female athletics widens the rhetorical occasion for the IAAF and IOC's policies.

From uncovering the networked arguments of the IAAF and IOC's policies, I turn now to analyzing the discourse and the function of these policies. Simply looking at the policies but failing to take into account the transnational meaning of the tests would only offer a narrow understanding of how these tests operate to regulate and police global sport. Because the IOC and IAAF adopted these new policies in order to respond to the increased participation of global, intersex and transgender athletes, I question their efficacy in serving the needs of these communities. In looking at how these policies are regulated and administered, I argue that these policies circulate power in hidden, networked ways that ultimately support "normal" transgender and intersex identities that originate in the global north.

Review of Literature: Framing Sex Verification and Transgender Inclusion in Athletics

In the past twenty years, critical analyses and critiques of sex testing in athletics have emerged in sports sociology, women, gender, and sexuality studies, biological sciences, and legal studies. This research establishes two functions of sex testing in female athletes: to maintain female weakness and to uphold gender norms. Along these lines, sport became a venue to think through the constructed nature of biological sex and the injustices committed at the hands of biological science because of its absolute "belief in female physical inferiority and male superiority" (Dworkin and Cooky, 2012, p. 22).

The history of gender verification reveals “a clear disjuncture between the characterization of western women and their seemingly more muscular and masculine” competitors, suggesting that practices developed overtime preserved a certain type of femaleness within women’s sports (Henne, 2014, p. 790). Thinking through the issue of “fair play” in sport, sex verification regulates gender in sport under the veil of fairness. “Governing bodies are being pressured to formulate these policies...to manage binary gender designations [to] creat[e] a climate of fair play” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 402). Along these lines, sex testing practices become policing technologies similar to regulations of bathrooms and employment documents in the transgender community (Westerbrook and Schilt, 2014). Sex verification reacts to what is called “gender panic”—instances in which “people react to disruptions to biology-based gender ideology by frantically reasserting the naturalness of a male–female binary” (Westerbrook and Schilt, 2014, p. 34).

Newer research from bioethics critiques sex verification policies on their effectiveness of establishing an accurate measure of sex. Karkazis et al. (2012) offer a detailed analysis of the 2011 IAAF sex verification standards. Similarly attempting to measure the fairness of these policies, they reach the conclusion that testosterone cannot be seen as the single marker of verification for sex in athletics because it is an unstable marker of sex, citing instances in which testosterone levels vary based on situation. Submitting that the elite athletic field can never be completely fair and referencing past research on sex verification practices, Karkazis et al. suggest that the fairest way to regulate sex in athletics is by allowing “all legally recognized females to compete with other females, regardless of their hormonal levels” (2012, p. 13). While their critique of

sex verification offers interesting insight into the manipulation of testosterone data to make an argument about female weakness, their “solution” to the problem offers a limited understanding of complexities of changing sex on legal documents in different national contexts. Much of the research that analyzes the fairness of these policies only narrowly understands these injustices along the lines of gender.

Recently, the conversation of sex verification has shifted to include race and nation, offering a more intersectional approach. Intersectional frameworks theorize that “the major systems of oppression are interlocking,” believing “the synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives” (*Combahee River Collective*, 2013, p. 115). Zine Magube places Caster Semenya’s verification in conversation with a racial history of medical research on intersex individuals. Magube characterizes the different ways medical research treated black and whites:

White deviant bodies were hastily and summarily normalized in ways that reflected a concern with preserving the foundations for white citizenship enshrined by US liberalism—heterosexual reproduction and highly specific gendered habits and behavior codes—black intersex bodies were treated with callous indifference. In a world where sexual difference (both biologically and behaviorally defined) is precisely what marked the distance between blacks and whites, the urge both to normalize black bodies and narrate stories about this normalization was considerably muted. (2014, p. 776)

Magube connects the different treatment of intersex individuals along racial lines to the South African medical establishment’s complete ignorance of intersex as a medical condition. Thus, she frames the sex verification of Caster Semenya as illuminating “that

the archetypal intersex body was presumed to be white” (2014, p. 782). Another intersectional analysis of sex verification practices comes from a conversation within bioethics. Stridently against using testosterone to verify gender Katrina Karkazis and Rebecca Jordan-Young ask,

Why are women from the Global South most likely to be affected? Women of color also may be targeted for investigation because of long-standing and widespread conflation of whiteness with femininity, as well as mistaken but common ideas that people of African descent have higher testosterone levels. (2013, p. 66)

Karkazis and Jordan-Young raise these questions as conclusions, offering that issues of race and nation need to be more deeply interrogated in the research on sex verification.

By disentangling the networks of power associated with the IAAF and IOCs policies, my analysis delves into areas previously overlooked by scholars. These policies have yet to be unveiled as serving the cultural logics and ideological frames of the global north. I also consider nation and race in the analysis of gender, offering a transnational, intersectional approach that looks at the matrices of power and investment within the policies themselves. Furthermore, I offer a look at how the policies are administrated, positing the conditions by which these policies establish normal transgender and intersex identities that originate in the global north.

Title IX’s Impact on Transgender and Intersex Athletes

Reporters and policymakers located in global north fail to fully understand the cultural conditions for sport participation and sporting policies in the global south. Under

these conditions, cultural formations of liberal feminism and neoliberalism converge and map a homogeneous idea of women's sports onto the global south. This happens in two ways: sex separatism, coming from the liberal feminism of Title IX, makes being a woman the requirement for participation in woman's sports, and neoliberalized feminism celebrates sex separatism as equality by corporatizing and rewarding actors that represent the global north's notion of equality.⁵ I consider Title IX among "social discursive assemblage of (neo)liberal feminism" (Calkin, 2015, p. 305). Title IX, the law in the United States disallowing sex based discrimination from educational institutions that receive federal funding, is often evoked as a primer of equality, empowerment, and opportunity for women. Under Title IX a homogenous idea of rights (articulated as equity, empowerment, and opportunity) is recognized as achievable to a similarly homogenous group of women. Through liberal and neoliberalized feminism, Title IX has become *the ideal* framework for understanding women's sports in transnational contexts, much to the detriment of women the global south. I wonder in what ways has Title IX, the law that paved the way for women in the US to participate in sport, negatively affected athletes in the global south, imposing impossible ideals of woman in regions and circumstances vastly different from the US. I do this by looking at Title IX's feminist history as constructed and providing examples from contemporary sporting media that

⁵ In the US, liberal feminism dominated second wave feminism. Women of Color feminist, lesbian feminists, and third-world feminists took issue with the hegemony of liberal feminist of the second wave, offering the name "white feminism" in place of liberal, mainstream feminism. Audre Lorde critiques second-wave, liberal feminism for not acknowledging "the role of difference within the lives of American women: difference of race, sexuality, class, and age. The absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political" (1984, p. 110). Similarly, understanding neoliberal feminism as co-opting feminism relies on a homogenous idea of feminism that intersectionality challenges.

idealize female athletes from the global north as heroines of sport. For me, the link here is that Title IX functions in transnational policy (specifically the IAAF and IOC policies strictly policing the “femaleness” of female athletes) as both the framework of claiming sex separatism and also the vehicle for creating the ideal female athlete. Thus, while helping (by way of mimicry) to instantiate strict sex separatism across nation-state borders, Title IX has also created, commercialized, and commodified an ideal image of the female athlete as white, middle class, and heterosexual which, has dramatically affected the policies regarding transgender and intersex athletes.

Establishing Separate-But-Equal Women’s Sports

What started out as the ninth statute in the Educational Amendments Acts of 1972 has morphed into Title IX, a law that has since stood as an important cultural force in women’s sports. Histories of Title IX read as fiery manuscripts written by second-wave feminists filled with emotional language pertaining to rights, empowerment, and winning (Simon, 2005; Carpenter and Acosta, 2004; Ware, 2014; Blumenthal, 2005; Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist, 2007; Suggs, 2005). These histories all tell a very similar story—women’s sports could not exist without Title IX.⁶ Currently, the history told about Title IX accepts the liberal feminist connection without question, offering the type of equality upheld by liberal feminists as good for all women. While certainly the numbers attest to

⁶ Famous female athletes of the 1990s and 2000s began articulating a thanks to Title IX in popular media. These athletes include Brandi Chasten, Mia Hamm, Cynthia Cooper, Hope Solo, Sheryl Swopes, and Serena Williams. While this list isn’t exhaustive, it shows a growing trend of Title IX praise narratives among successful female athletes.

Title IX as being the catalyst for the creation and growth of women's sports, the cultural forces involved in making Title IX a discursive regime cannot be overlooked.

Although historians tout Title IX as a major feminist victory for sports, initially, Title IX was written to correct gender disparities in education. Many legal theorists give Bernice Sandler the credit for planting the seeds for Title IX to grow (Brake, 2010; Sandler, 2007). Named the "grandmother of Title IX," Sandler was passed up in 1969 for a full-time lecturer position at the University of Maryland because she was "too strong for a woman" (Sandler, 2007, p. 474). She began researching equal pay legislation and discrimination clauses and as a result, she was encouraged to send her complaints to the Department of Labor. She sent her complaints, as well as the complaints of 250 other women in Higher Education, forward and consequently, a massive investigation was launched into sex discrimination in hiring practices in higher education. Because of her work, Sandler garnered the attention of Edith Green, congresswoman of Oregon named the "mother of Title IX," and the two began work on composing and lobbying for Title IX. Sandler narrates: "Edith Green was smart. She didn't let us lobby for the bill. We came to her and we said, 'What can we do?' And she said, 'Nothing. Nobody knows what's in this bill. And if you start making noise about it, they'll ask'" (as cited in Gavora, 2003, p. 22-3). Green purposefully kept debate on Title IX silent. Although, representatives from the National Organization for Women and Women's Equity Action League were present at the hearings, the support and press for Title IX was dwarfed by women's groups lobbying for the Equal Rights Amendment around the same time.⁷

⁷ As a comparison, NOW staged a number of pickets and protests during the early 1970s to support the ERA.

Unlike popular retellings that overplay the “feminism” of Title IX, this historical data shows that Title IX really developed from a small working group that carefully controlled the rhetorical conditions under which it was introduced. Furthermore, few legislators questioned or understood the impact Title IX would have on athletics. Patti Minsk, R-Hawaii, a key supporter of the original legislation said: “When it was proposed, we had no idea that the most visible impact would be in athletics. I had been paying attention to the academic issues. I had been excluded from medical school because I was female” (as cited in Ware, 2014, p. 3). In the hearings, the only mention of athletics was an off the cuff comment by Senator Bayh remarking that “the law would not mean that football teams had to be coeducational” (Ware, 2014, p. 3). As result, the regulation of sport through Title IX became an unintended consequence. Also, because of the lack of debate and lobbying for the bill, much of the debate on the bill took place after its passage. As will be shown through later enactments and enforcements of the law, Title IX’s impact on sport was later crafted by the liberal feminist movement, which continues to shape the enforcement and culture of Title IX.

Once legal practitioners began to explore Title IX, it became clear that the law’s vagueness would mean that enforcement would be up for debate. The law would make sure that: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Title IX, 1972). Within the vague wording the meaning of exclusion, denial, and discrimination needed clarification. Stakeholders debated the following question: Did the law mean to integrate men and women’s sport or to keep them separate? Once Title IX’s impact on sport was

made clear, the NCAA began lobbying for its immediate removal from sport for fear of its impact on men's sports. Liberal feminism, through NOW and AIWA, took up the enforcement debate of Title IX to advocate for sex separatism in sports. Sex separatism as "a reaction to the powerlessness, frustration and anger experienced by sportswomen who have suffered serious discrimination and blatant male chauvinism" (Hargraves, 1994, p. 30) speaks to liberal feminism's insistence on equality between the sexes. The argument for sex separatism offers a correction to sexist behavior and according to this logic, keeping women's sports separate would also keep sexism out of sports, giving women a safe space to compete. Because of strong arguments provided by liberal feminist organizations, NOW and AIWA, Title IX institutionalized sex separatism in sports. This separatism also attempted to ensure equity through amendments to Title IX that would introduce 1) equal resources based on sport (not automatically giving women half the resources but giving women the percentage of resources based on the percentage of women enrolled in each educational institution) and 2) the three prong test, establishing "rules" for sex separatism. Deborah Brake, critical of sex separatism in Title IX, argues that "Title IX's allowance for sex separation has facilitated a legal approach that emphasizes results over process and actual opportunities for girls and women over a more formal gender neutrality" (Brake, 2010, p.15). Brake reveals Title IX's insistence on sex separatism *was an ideological choice*, not a fact written into the law. The construction of Title IX as sex separatist is something that's often overlooked in the histories of Title IX. As an instrument of liberal feminism, Title IX carves out a legal space for women in athletics that focus on establishing equality, yet this equality comes

at the cost of strictly enforcing a gender binary. Consequently, this type of “feminism” in sports also serves

as a vehicle for male empowerment...by the perpetuation of gender ideology in the daily conduct of social life helped to exert social control over women and their bodies, on one hand, and yet, paradoxically, was used as a vehicle for women's emancipation. (Mangan and Park, 1987, p.10)

Upholding women's sports as something unique and separate from men's sports articulates a clear choice of separate-but-equal over integration. It is this liberal feminist sex separatism that would define the entire history of Title IX and women's sports as separate-but-equal.

As the legal ramifications of Title IX trickle down, it becomes clear that Title IX fails to enact equality for women who do not fit within the dominant identity of liberal feminism (white, heterosexual, middle class women). In a 2002 study shows that despite Title IX's claims to equality, women athletes are more likely to come from privileged backgrounds (i.e., non-minority and upper to middle class) (Ware, 2014). Furthermore, because Title IX's equality had to balance the books of female sports with male sports, many schools added female sports with large rosters (crew is the prime example) to balance with the large male football teams. The addition of sports like crew, badminton, golf, and lacrosse was critiqued by women of color as ““White-girl sports’ ...played in suburban high schools or the private club circuit where white students predominated” (Ware, 2014, p. 17). Recent statistics illustrate the charge of racial inequality in Title IX enforcement. Welch Suggs points out that the majority of scholarships for black women are given in basketball and track with only 2.7 percent of black women receiving

scholarships from these “other” sports (i.e., crew, golf, etc.) are black (as cited in Ware, 2014). Lucy Jane Blesdoe sees homophobia as a consequence of Title IX’s equality:

As more and more straight women claim their right to play, homophobia has become increasingly prevalent on the courts and fields, and in the locker rooms. Women's sports promoters are working hard to clean the dyke image off the face of women's athletics. (as cited in Ware, 2014, p. 83-4)

Both the claims by women of color and lesbians that Title IX doesn’t offer them equality furthers the idea that the liberal feminist agenda behind Title IX carves out a “sport of her own” for a certain class of women (white, middle-class, heterosexuals). As we will see in the sex separatist policies of the IAAF and IOC, sex separatism in transnational contexts also works as a policing mechanism to uphold female athletics for privileged women.

Title IX and the Creation, Commercialization, and Commodification of the Female Athlete

In the 21st century, the most prominent shift in Title IX happens in the cultural realm. In today’s age, Jessica Gavora argues, “It is unusual to read a story about a successful female athlete without also reading that her success owes to Title IX” (Gavora, 2003, p.15). Title IX has gained tremendous symbolic value in the United States. The 1999 World Cup Women’s soccer team praised Title IX for creating the space for them to become athletes. Similarly, an entire clothing company took its name and inspiration from Title IX, calling itself *title nine* and selling women’s athletic clothes in an empowering way. Advertisements picture women active and engaging in athletic endeavors, mirroring what Anita Harris would call the “can-do girl” (Harris, 2004). *Title*

nine created a whole line of t-shirts called “the power of nine” which “commemorate[s] the power of a third generation of girls coming of age under Title IX. Our tees, as well as the girls and women, say—‘we got game’” (Title Nine, 2015). Not just female athletes, but also t-shirts with empowering slogans, represent the feminism of Title IX of the 21st century. These examples barely touch the surface of visual and narrative discourses that praise Title IX. This praise discourse creates a sisterhood around Title IX and women’s sports as a right. This discourse has a rallying effect on women to both position and see themselves as similar to each other. When women participate in sports, it is much bigger than setting a goal for training or personal achievements: in this instance, the personal is political. Symbolically, Title IX represents female empowerment and women’s rights and in these ways, by wearing a t-shirt and/or participating in sports, the participants are engaging in political action. Yet, this political action is actually apolitical, for it only celebrates women without actually helping women. Under these conditions, Title IX, still functional as a law, has become a symbol of neoliberalized feminism.

While Title IX’s early iterations are linked with liberal feminism, it is in the 21st century that Title IX becomes operationalized by women to circulate neoliberalized feminist discourses. Media scholar Angela McRobbie describes post feminism as the process by which:

Elements of feminism have been taken into account, and have been absolutely incorporated into political and institutional life. Drawing on a vocabulary that includes words like ‘empowerment’ and ‘choice’, these elements are then converted onto a much more individualistic discourse, and they are deployed in

the new guise, particularly in media and popular culture, but also by agencies, as a kind of substitute for feminism. (2008, p. 1)

As liberal feminists campaigned and rallied for Title IX in the 20th century, the later corporatization of Title IX implies that female equality in sports is over. In the 21st century the celebration and sisterhood narratives of Title IX link to neoliberalized feminism to offer that the work of equality is over in the global north, signaling these feminists to look to the global south to fix inequality. However, as these 21st century feminists of the global north turn their attention to women's sports global south, the same liberal agenda of equality, opportunity, and empowerment follows them.

As female athletics became popular in the 1990s, corporations staked their interest in female sports, creating products and campaigns through the image of the ideal female athlete. In discussing how the female athlete came to be a cultural icon, Leslie Heywood and Sheryl Dorkin highlight the 1996 Olympics as resignifying moment for the female athlete. "Rather than being ridiculed or ignored, female athletes were being used to make a mainstream argument for women's political activism" (2003, p. 28). The darker side of Heywood and Dorkin's analysis lies in how this image of the ideal female athlete has become normalized over time. Linking this image to critiques of neoliberalism, Leslie Heywood observes

On the level of representation, for instance, the ideal image of female athletes perfectly incorporates the neoliberal ideal of the can-do, do-it-yourself, take responsibility-for-yourself identity that is mapped particularly on girls in order to demonstrate neoliberalism's supposed extension of opportunity to all. (Heywood, 2006)

This “can-do” image of the female athlete controls the market share of representation for women in sports and impacts sponsorships and endorsements of athletes globally.

To better understand how the market for female athletics function, a comparison of sponsorship and endorsement of athletes in the global north and global south is useful. While brands offer sponsorship globally to athletes and teams based off of performance and talent, many of these athletes don’t become the “face” of their sponsor. Looking at the history of women runners in Nike commercials, they mostly feature mostly women from the global north. Paula Radcliffe, Kara Goucher, Jean Benoit-Samuels, and Dena Kastor all have starred in at least one Nike commercial. However, similarly successful runners from the global south fail make it to the level of product endorsement, including successful female runners like Tegla Loroupre (first African woman to win a major marathon), Mary Keitnay (fourth fastest female marathon run ever), and Rita Jeptoo (three-time Boston Marathon champion and record holder). To go along with their role as product endorsers, Radcliffe, Goucher, Samuelson, and Kastor all have public stories that speak to the global north’s ideas of women’s rights and empowerment. Goucher and Kastor both have stories about how motherhood has changed their careers, speaking to rhetoric of women’s empowerment and rights. The women’s marathon record holder Radcliffe’s story offers a narrative in which women can be competitive and valued. In winning the first-ever Olympic marathon for Women in 1984, Samuelson stands in as a token of a right won by women. The combination of these stories with the athletes’ public personas and their role as product endorsers positions them as ideal female athletes. The ideal female athlete, as articulated through advertising and endorsements, is a fierce, feminine, (white) woman. This ideal becomes a mechanism for establishing a “normal”

female athlete. This norm links up with sex separatism of *Title IX*, offering an image of the female athlete through the gender norms and binaries of the global north.

Returning to Rebecca Dingo's imperative that we look at how "old" discourses still inform progressive policy, I see the "old" discourses of *Title IX*, as establishing the global north's sex separatism in sports through hegemonic ideologies (liberal and neoliberalized feminism) that have powerful control over women's sports. These discourses fully shape the framework on women's sports as separate-but-equal and the image of the ideal female athlete. However, these "old" discourses become buried under newer initiatives towards inclusion, as in the case of the IOC and IAAF's policies on transgender and intersex athletes. The language of inclusivity, when placed at the surface of media surrounding these modern sex tests, effaces connections to the regulatory facets of *Title IX* that arbitrate women's sports through liberal and neoliberalized feminism. Yet, thinking through the "old" discourses, we can see the residues of *Title IX*'s liberal feminism. These old discourses homogenize the female sporting subject and as a result, these discourses circulate cultural logics and ideological frames from the global north under the veil of inclusion through the IAAF and IOCs transgender and intersex policies.

Regulating and Administrating a "Normal" Transgender & Intersex Athletic Subject

Although the policies authored by the IOC and the IAAF regarding the participation of transgender and intersex athletes claim to eschew older, embarrassing sex tests in favor of a science-based method of proving sex, these policies act as institutional

technology regulating the female in female athletics.⁸ These policies offer in reverse what Title IX did for women in the US. While Title IX created a sport for women in the US, the IAAF and IOC's transgender and intersex athlete policies take Title IX to extremes by arbitrating what the standards by which women must observe to in order to participate in global athletics. These policies, regulated through the "science" of testosterone, are seen by the global north as fair and inclusive. Helen Carroll, leader of Homophobia in Sports Project at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, considers the IAAF and IOC's policies on intersex and transgender athletes "sincere attempt[s] to be fair to all athletes" (as cited in Marech, 2004). These policies walk the tightrope of providing a level playing field for all female athletes, while simultaneously including transgender and intersex athletes. Despite attempting to appear fair, the reoccurrence of cases like Semenya, Soundarajan, and Chand's stand as the strongest critique of the IOC and IAAF's policies, for these cases "out" individuals that were assumed to be women by both individual and community assessments. Yet, when placed under the microscope of medical experts and policies from the global north, these women fail to live up to the definition of woman put forth by these discursive regimes which fail to problematize the sex/gender binary. Sex, for these policies, is represented as the stable "truth" of a person's chromosomes and hormones, whereas gender is characterized as the identity that a person assumes through adornments like dress, action, make-up, etc. Thinking along these lines, these policies fail to understand what poststructuralist theories and scholars of feminist science studies have recognized for almost three decades—that previous scientifically "fixed" notions of sex

⁸ While male athletes are mentioned, the majority of the policies and all of the resulting controversies encompass female athletes.

have more to do with social and cultural notions of gender (Butler, 2006). Anne Fausto-Sterling suggests, “our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex...and effect what kinds of knowledges scientists produce about sex in the first place” (2000, p. 3). By articulating sex as a stable, scientific signifier, the IOC and IAAF’s policies assume and produce norms for intersex and transgender individuals. In their policies, both of these “conditions” rely on the global north’s medical technology to fix and “norm” people into properly scientific females and males without understanding how the global north’s social and cultural beliefs about gender inform the science of sex. By isolating testosterone as the sole marker of one’s sex, “the experiences of whole groups are ignored, misunderstood, or erased” (Dill and Zambrana, 2009, p. 1). Thus, these tests, as instruments of institutional discipline, fail to fully understand how interlocking inequalities like race, nation, sexuality, and class produce sex differently on the female body and as such, these tests operate as a globalized policing mechanisms that map sex norms from the global north on to the bodies of intersex and transgender athletes.

In analyzing the sex testing and transgender participation policies of the IAAF and IOC, it’s important to uncover what *kind* of female subject they assume as they regulate the participation in female athletics. The discourses of liberal and neoliberalized feminism set the standard for “fairness” in female sports and that standard leans heavily on a strict representation of gender binaries coming out of the global north. The equality discourse left over from liberal feminism argues that sports for women need a level playing field and instead of understanding this level playing field in terms of race, nationality, ability, or economic factors, these policies establish a level playing field through gender. Thus, ideologically speaking Title IX continues to resonate forty-plus

years later in transnational contexts despite the fact that it has no legal authority across US national borders. Therefore, the bottom line for women's sports has become being a "woman." As increasing challenges were made to the classification system of sex by both intersex and transgender athletes, the IOC and IAAF increased regulation to reassert the power of these classification tools. In order to establish the truth of the female sex, sports looked to medicine, specifically western medicine, to provide the boundaries for being a woman. After almost half a century of less ethical sex tests, the IOC and IAAF's new policies claim to more accurately verify femaleness, yet, the only lens they work through is the search for medical determinants of sex. By setting the standards for femaleness, these "inclusive" and apparently more ethical policies instead produce a "normal" female subject by policing sex along strict binary lines. My analysis of these policies looks at how each policy defines "woman" to link these "progressive" policies with "old" discourses that produced a normal female subject through women's rights and privileging gender binary in women's sports. It is my contention that these policies regulating transgender and intersex athletes further standardize sex separatism in athletics by defining "woman" through testosterone, setting a definition for fairness in female athletics through the global north's single-vector definition.

Transgender Policies

Both the IOC and IAAF's seemingly progressive and transgender friendly policies continue to produce a narrow definition of woman and these policies also come from an ideological position that understands transgender as a temporary identity category that can easily be fixed, not as a category of its own. In 2003, the IOC ruled transgender

athletes eligible to compete in their gender identities if they have undergone sex reassignment surgery, gone through hormone treatments for at least two years, and received legal recognition of their transitioned sex (IOC, 2003). Along these lines, a woman is a woman with female vaginal anatomy (surgery) and female hormones (less testosterone). The IOC's policy treats transgender individuals as diseased and offers reassignment surgery as the fix. Thus, the truth of "sex," for the IOC policy can only be reiterated through medical interventions. This policy also assumes a "normal" transgender identity. In narrating his own attempt to obtain non-normative sex surgery, Dean Spade calls medical professionals "gatekeepers employ[ing] dichotomous gender standards" (2006, p. 324). His narrative shows how transgender medicine is actually highly binary-producing and gender-normative, for "a patient wanting intersex genitals...fall[s] on deaf ears" (Spade, 2006, p. 324). In the case of the IOC and IAAF's policies, in order for transgender women to actually assume the identity of woman, they must do it "properly": receive two years of counseling, have a diagnosis for Gender Identity Disorder (GID), and hormone treatment for two years prior to surgery. This script for transition, as laid out by the medical professionals from the global north, produces "transsexuals [who] are more deeply invested in gender norms than non-transsexuals" (Spade, 2006, p. 328). The work of gender reassignment surgery (SRS) is masked by the IOC regulations because it understands surgery as the goal and reinforces the same gender norms as the medical field. The centrality of surgery upholds US medical standards for transition so that someone who, like Spade, fails approval for bodily alterations in the medical establishment will not be allowed to participate in their felt gender. Alternatively, this policy is very classed, for it assumes that everyone who

identifies as transgender can afford the time and money to completely transition. SRS costs between \$13,000 and \$50,000 based on insurance coverage and the working being done.

The IOC's 2003 policy concerning transgender athletes also works through the global north's "norm" of transition. The policy fails to understand transgender in the way that transgender community has been currently articulating it. Susan Stryker characterizes transgender as a troubling of sex/gender.

Transgender theory and activism call[s] attention to the operations of normativity within and between gender/sexual identity categories, raise[s] questions about the structuration of power along axes other than the homo/hetero and man/woman binaries, and identif[ies] productive points of attachment for linking sexual orientation and gender identity activism to other social justice struggles. (2008, p. 149)

In Stryker's description, transgender as an identity category hinges on fluidity and troubling of binaries. Transition, in Stryker's definition, does not involve the strict process of becoming a woman or man. Nevertheless, that's the normal narrative sold in movies like *TransAmerica* and shows like *I am Cait*. Stryker as a spokesperson for the transgender community rejects a blanket definition of transition. By allowing medical professionals in the global north to define transition for global athletes, the IOC's transgender policy polices athletes, even gender non-conforming ones, along strict binaries and fails to represent the actual desires of the transgender community.

Using the global north's understanding of transition to administrate a policy that needs to act globally has negative consequences. First, getting countries to legally accept

a transgender individual's new sex is problematic due to some countries unwillingness to allow people to formally "change" their sex identification. Thus, even people who go through a transition in the "normal" sense, run into problems getting recognized in their "new" gender by their nation. A 2014 report published by *Open Society Foundation* conducted case studies of transgender individuals' experiences in sixteen different countries including nations from the global north and the global south. The findings discuss a variety of issues faced by transgender people across the world. Definitions of transition vary across nations in the following ways: allowing individuals to more freely seek surgery treatment, pathologizing treatment along "normal" gender lines, and not having a safe, medical option for transition. Along these lines, the report concludes that the standards for changing government documents pertaining to sex range from allowing a change without verification to not allowing a change at all (Open Society Foundation, 2014). The IOC's policies fail to recognize that transgender people face administration unevenly across nation states and these policies further limit transgender participation to narrow conceptions of western gender identity.

While the IOC maintains the same policy for transgender men and women, the IAAF applies different policies to transgender men and women. IAAF's policy asks transgender men to produce "a sex recognition certificate or other form of identification of sex confirming that he is recognized in law as a male" (IAAF, 2011). On top of producing a legal recognition of sex, the IAAF requires transgender women to undergo extra scrutiny by a board of medical representatives including: extensive endocrine assessment (including assessment of testosterone levels), full release of medical records relating to sex re-assignment surgery/treatment, and regulation of hormones through

removal of the testes and ingestion of female-typical hormones. Based on these conditions, the IAAFs “Expert Medical Panel” can approve, deny, or make further medical recommendations for eligibility. The fact that the IAAF treats transgender men and women differently reinforces gender norms in athletics.

In 2015, the IOC changed their policies for transgender athletes, once again placing no restrictions on transgender male participation but providing three guidelines for transgender female participation. These guidelines require a stable declaration of identity for a minimum of 12 months, testosterone “below 10 nmol/L for at least 12 months prior to her first competition” (IOC, 2015), and testosterone below 10nmol/L for the entire desired period of eligibility as a female. Any instance of non-compliance (i.e., failure of a testosterone test) will result in suspension. While the policy no longer requires surgery, the insistence that testosterone levels solely make a “woman” further produces gender norms through the global north’s idea of woman as white, middle-class, and heterosexual. In terms of accessibility, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can be expensive and/or dangerous depending on other identity categories, including class, race, or nation. “In Ukraine, trans* people who seek to legally or medically transition face inhumane obstacles, including the requirement that they be surgically sterilized and hospitalized for one month in a locked psychiatric ward” (Knight & Ghoshal, 2016). In Malaysia, Kuwait, Uganda, and Nigeria, transgender individuals can be arrested under anti-gay laws and laws prohibiting posing as another gender, rendering transgender people non-existent in these countries (Knight & Ghoshal, 2016). Even in the US, a region where removing the requirement for surgery seems most humane (a country that boasts some of the most progressive rights for transgender individuals in a global

comparison), the price of HRT is an economic barrier. In order to obtain HRT, an individual must attend psychiatric counseling and, based on the diagnosis, an individual may have to wait anywhere between three months or two years to receive a prescription for HRT. While IOC asks for twelve months of HRT, which costs a US patient approximately \$1,500/year, the time and cost of psychiatric counseling can be a burden for the economically underprivileged (Bradford, 2015).

The IOC's latest transgender policy offers fairness for female athletes without placing global transgender women at the center of the IOC's concerns. Based on these policies, the 2016 Olympics are seeing the first transgender individuals participating, Chris Mosier, US Duathlete, and two unnamed transgender females representing Great Britain. This piece of information should question the fairness of the IOC's policies. That a male transgender athlete feels comfortable enough to publically reveal his transgender status and two females feel they must hide their identity belies the inclusiveness of the IOC's policy. The IOC's policy does nothing to fix the standard of fairness in female athletics, for these athletes, despite being legally allowed to compete *as female*, fear being "exposed and ridiculed" (Manning and Gallgher, 2016). Furthermore, Delia Johnston, an adviser to sporting governing bodies on transgender issues, believes "If they [these transgender females] were in a gold or silver medal position they would probably drop back because their fear of ridicule and total humiliation is so massive" (Manning and Gallgher, 2016). These athletes, deemed fair to compete, feel the need to regulate themselves for fear of negative repercussions, which pose a real, physical fear.⁹ This

⁹ The HRC reports, "transgender women face 4.3 times the risk of becoming homicide victims than the general population of all women" (HRC, 2016). Also, approximately

shows the central concern of IOC's policy as keeping sport fair for cisgender females, allowing transgender females to compete so long as they don't upset the standards of fairness for cisgender females. Through this framework, transgender females go further than just HRT to participate, for they face the threat of ridicule, violence, and heightened scrutiny. Until a policy fully incorporates all the nuances of transgender life, thinking also through the interlocking oppressions of race, nation, and class that transgender individuals face, it will not be fair for transgender females.

Intersex Policies

The IOC and the IAAF's 2011 policy regulates intersex athletes through hormones (i.e., being within the correct range of testosterone for participation within the selected gender). If an athlete is found as not conforming to these levels, they are required to "fix" their hormone levels with replacement therapy and surgery. The IOC and IAAF's policies represent intersex "as deviations from the norm who need to be 'fixed' in order to preserve a two-gender system" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 74). In her study of intersex treatment and lived experiences, Katrina Karkazis characterizes the fixing of intersex conditions as a practice that originates in the global north. She writes,

Raising a child with a gender-atypical anatomy (read as gender ambiguity) is almost universally seen as untenable in North America: anguished parents and physicians have considered it essential to assign the infant definitively as male or

50% of transgender people experience sexual violence at some point in their lifetime (Stotzer, 2009).

female and to minimize any discordance between somatic traits and gender assignment. (2008, p. 7)

Similarly, the IAAF and IOC's policies assume that intersex individuals globally wish to be fixed into stable genders. The case of Dutee Chand illustrates the opposite. Chand told reporters from the *New York Times*, "I feel that it's wrong to have to change your body for sport participation," adding "I'm not changing for anyone" (as cited in Macur, 2014). Even after medical professionals explained her intersex conditions, Chand still maintained that "the body she was born with—every chromosome, cell and organ—makes her the woman she is" (Macur 2014). Chand's emphatic pronouncement of femaleness, despite the IAAF's diagnosis labeling her not woman, speaks to the inability of medicine in the global north to fully regulate and maintain strict gender binaries. In this instance, the policies and hormones may mean that, for the time being, Chand can't participate in sport; however, Chand refuses to let medical professionals from the global north "fix" her because she already believes that she's a woman. Thus, the IAAF and IOC's policies unjustly attempt to fix athletes from the global south to fit gender ideas from the global north.

The policy also regulates the process by which athletes are subject to testing. Through the policy, IAAF takes seriously allegations from both competitors and athletic officials reporting signs of gender abnormalities. Once again, gender (outward appearance—looking masculine) becomes the standard for understanding sex ("chromosomes, gonads, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, external genitalia, and internal genitalia" (Karkazis et al., 2012, p. 6). In the case of Caster Semenya, her rivals' complaints were placed above Semenya's own lived experience as a woman. Here, the

IAAF failed take into account a woman's own understanding of her body. Athletes from the global north have access to medicine, technology, and cultural practices that enhance certain female qualities (slender figures, larger breasts, feminine hairdos, etc.). In this context,

Concerns about gender seemed to be raised more frequently about African or African-American athletes, and it's not a coincidence. When the public eye gazes on black athletes and judges them against a standard of white femininity, it's much easier to find differences and departure. (as cited in Shapiro, 2012)

Because the IAAF's policy assumes the gender norms of the global north, any differences observed in female athletes from the global south often get misread as not female. The concept of local gender becomes of importance here to "increasingly acknowledge the diversity among women and men and the need to understand multiple (local) gender identity constructions" (Bock & Shortall, 2006, p. 279). The IAAF's actions against Semenya reveal their conception of gender as a limited, single-axis framework that upholds medical norms from the global north.

Additionally, the 2011 policy's focus on testosterone levels establishes fairness in women's sports only through one metric: hormonal levels. One major critique testosterone's importance in this policy is the other markers of sex, "including chromosomes, gonads, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, external genitalia, and internal genitalia" are ignored (Karkazis et al., 2012, p. 6). Karkazis et al. represent the complexity of sex through the following example:

Women with a condition known as complete androgen insensitivity syndrome (CAIS), who are born with XY chromosomes, testes, and testosterone levels in

the typical range for males. If only taking chromosomal, gonadal, or hormonal factors into account, one would label these individuals male. Yet these women have a completely feminine phenotype, with breast development and female typical genitalia, because their androgen receptors are not responsive to androgens. Designating women with CAIS as male would be inappropriate, given that they are presumed female at birth, are raised as girls, and overwhelmingly identify as female. (2012, p. 6)

Along similar lines, women who have undergone a hysterectomy are still considered female in terms of the policy, yet, women with CAIS who born without a uterus are doubted as female participants (Karkazis, 2012). Using only one of the sex markers as the measuring tool for female participation merely produces a normal female through the regulation of intersex athletes. Also, fairness is taken as a scientific measure in elite athletics. In reality, this is further from the truth. Elite athletes represent some of the most biologically advantaged individuals alive. Exceptionally long arms for swimmers, heightened endurance for marathoners, long legs for basketball players—these biological factors represent natural occurring advantages certain athletes possess. There’s also the question of testing, for “both female and male athletes facing a competition consistently have been shown to experience a rise in testosterone” (Karkazis, 2012, p. 8).

Social advantages in athletics are rarely discussed, but can provide a huge advantage in the success of elite athletes, which begs the question why sex is the only category considered when regulating fairness in women’s sports. The seriousness of youth athletics has highlighted a class-disparity in athletics in the US.

Because their parents can afford to live in areas with athletic fields and to ship them hither and yon for club teams and private lessons, middle-class children and especially white ones have been the direct beneficiaries of the professionalization of amateur sports. (Suggs, 2005, p. 178)

Nation can also play a factor in the success of athletes. In Saudi Arabia female athletic facilities aren't abundant and sports aren't encouraged for girls; thus, Saudi Arabian women participating in sports start with a huge disadvantage.¹⁰ Despite the numerous biological and social advantages in elite athletics, the only one that the IAAF and IOC are trying to fix links with the strict policing of female athletics along sex separatist lines.

Despite the fact that the CAS ruled in favor of Dutee Chand, asking the IAAF to provide scientific data that links heightened testosterone in women with exceptional athletic performance, the two-year suspension of the IAAF's intersex athlete policy has caused more scrutiny for female athletes previously classified as intersex. Leading up to the 2016 Olympics news articles reignited the question of fairness for athletes Chand and Semenya (Layden, 2016; Gladwell and Thompson, 2016; Tucker, 2016). Even the popular author Malcom Gladwell chimed in on this issue, emphatically arguing that Semenya should not be allowed to compete on the basis of her femaleness being against the rules. Gladwell writes, "We have a situation where one woman, born with the biological equivalent of a turbocharger, is now being allowed to 'compete' against the ninety-nine per cent of women who have no such advantage" (Gladwell & Thompson, 2016). The news speculation of Semenya's advantage has been so overwhelming that the

¹⁰ Both Saudi women participating in the 2012 Olympics placed last in their respective sports.

African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) issued a statement condemning the US press for baseless speculation (Madia, 2016). Yet the silent parties in the debate are the sport governing bodies—the IAAF and IOC. In 2015, the CAS gave the IAAF two years to produce scientific data linking heightened testosterone with elevated athletic performance. Knowing that lifting the IAAF's policy would cause controversy at the 2016 Olympics, the IAAF could have made their case before 2016. If the CAS deemed the evidence sufficient, then intersex athletes would not be allowed on the basis of sound scientific evidence, or if the evidence was deemed insufficient, then the speculation at the 2016 Olympics would face further scrutiny because the highest court in sport, the CAS, found the evidence lacking. Either situation would be better than the murkiness that the lack of response from the IAAF and IOC has caused. Right now, what's playing out in the media is an attack on Semenya despite the fact that she is legally allowed to compete in the Olympics as a female.

Take for instance the topic of sexism in the reporting and coverage of female events at the 2016 Olympics. A *Mashable* article names the following things “the most sexist moments at the Olympics—so far”: NBC's tweet claiming that women viewers were the cause of the large number of commercials, *The Chicago Tribune* calling a female bronze medalist someone's wife, NBC attributing a woman's gold medal to her husband, and NBC's constantly referring to a talented female athlete as the female version of a talented male athlete (Dockray, 2016). A number of similar articles list sexist moments, yet, strikingly, none of these articles add the press's questions about the fairness of Caster Semenya's participation as sexist. Questioning Caster Semenya's participation, however, follows the same sexist discourse as calling Katie Ledecky the

female version of Michael Phelps. Semenya, legally allowed to participate, is under attack for being a dominant athlete. One article wondered just how much Semenya could win gold by and makes that margin the evidence that her participation is unfair. “Only 11 women in history have run faster than her winning time of 1:55.33, and only two have done it since 1997” (Layden, 2016). A similar *New York Times* article focuses on Katie Ledecky’s 11-second victory, something nearly unprecedented for swimming. Yet, instead of wondering of Ledecky is secretly a man or if she has high testosterone, the article celebrates Ledecky’s dominance. “Historically, it’s the second-largest margin of victory in the 800-meter freestyle” (Buchanan et al., 2016). This quote was left unqualified. One *Sports Illustrated* article before the Olympics raised the question of how Ledecky became so dominant, but instead of accusing her of being a man, the article is a puff piece, detailing hardships she had to overcome to become a successful swimmer including swimmer’s ear, growing up in a competitive Ivy-league attending neighborhood, and a shorter body (Price, 2016). This bootstraps narrative links very nicely with neoliberalized feminism. Ledecky, clearly privileged by race and class, is celebrated through the narrative of hard work, a quality (along with being white, middle-class, and heterosexual) that makes up the ideal female athlete. Similar stories are hard to find on Semenya. There aren’t stories detailing her training regiment, background, parents, or hardships. Even the IAAF publically leaking her intersex condition in 2008 and the resulting emotional stress are often underplayed in articles. The narratives converge along the lines of race and nation and because of this, Ledecky is seen as a hardworking, fierce female athlete and Semenya is seen as an opportunistic cheat.

Conclusion: Re-networking Arguments to Account for Varied Lived Experiences

In *Normal Life* Dean Spade asks advocacy to shift from rights to “think more broadly about how gender categories are enforced on *all* people in ways that have particularly dangerous outcomes from trans people” (2011, p. 29). Sport governing bodies that focus on global participation and inclusion should take into account the contexts in which policies are created and administered. The IAAF and the IOC’s situation offers a cautionary tale for policymakers that fail to understand the links and networks through which their policies function. From my own analysis of the different contexts surrounding the IOC and IAAFs policies on transgender and intersex athletes, I suggest that policymakers can—and should—avoid short-sighted versions of policies by purposefully networking arguments in contexts that promise to aid the most individuals. In the case of global transgender and intersex athletes, policymakers should be asking how to center the lives of global transgender and intersex athletes. Along these lines, when someone has lived as a woman for her entire life, who should have a right to call this lived experience a fiction? As Karkazis et al. argue, “the demarcation between male and female categories depends on context” (2012, p. 6). Lived experience should play a critical role in understanding gender. Kimberle Crenshaw argues that activism should “be centered on the life chances and life situations of people who should be cared about without regard to the source of their difficulties” (1991, p. 166). Her insistence that lived experience should inform politics and policy helps us understand the violence done by decontextualized administration of gender norms. The IOC and the IAAF need to learn from the shame and violence initiated by outing Santhi Soundarajan, Caster Semenya, Dutee Chand. Without understanding the context of a person’s gendered life and the

context of these policies, transnational governing systems cannot adequately regulate gender. Therefore, policies should be reworked to operate for the populations they wish to serve—the intersex and transgender athletes. Until the IAAF and the IOC acknowledge and attempt to fix the bias of their policies towards the global north, intersex and transgender athletes will remain at the margins of participation and acceptance by the elite sporting world.

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CHAPTER 3: DO *WOMEN WIN?*: TRANSNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NGOS,
DISCOURSES OF EMPOWERMENT, AND CROSS-CULTURAL TECHNOLOGY
INITIATIVES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The global north now accepts the cultural logic of “The Girl Effect,” or the notion that aid to girls in the global south is economically impactful.¹ or the notion that aid to girls in the global south is economically impactful. This cultural logic relies on data-driven communication that presents said impact: in essence, numbers rendered visually and verbally through narrative compellingly communicate both effect and affect to Western donors. Evidence of girls-in-need and girls-doing-for-themselves incites the emotions of those in the global north and results in the continuous addition of affective stories, visuals, and animations which add to the economic properties of The Girl Effect (Murphy, 2013). It is in this context that many transnational development NGOs initiate programs that train girls in the global south in digital technology in order to produce their own narratives through digital storytelling projects.

In this article, I examine the ethical and social justice implications of the cross-cultural communication in these initiatives through a case study of one transnational development NGO’s digital storytelling (DST) project. *Women Win* partners with large multinational corporations (donors/investors) and then re-grants to local grassroots NGOs in the global south for strategic projects in which girls make their own digital media narratives. This qualitative case study involves two components. First, I examine the 37 videos in the DST project, coding recurring discursive themes in both their language and

¹ The Girl Effect is both Nike’s global corporate social responsibility campaign and a language for framing development initiatives involving women in the global south (Hayhurst, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Switzer 2013).

visual iconography. After consideration of the videos' contents, I analyze the economic context for this DST project, specifically looking at how *Women Win* controls the ownership rights, authorship, and sharing practices of the *Women Win* videos.

The results of this study indicate that the girls in the DST project labor to produce affective evidence for *Women Win* that ultimately communicates their positions narrowly as (post) feminist development subjects, using the language of empowerment (as imported from Title IX's influence on women and girls sports in transnational contexts) in the service of development initiatives.² These new positive images “confirm [a] neoliberal narrative in which the empowerment of the developing world's women via the market is the solution” (Wilson, 2011, p. 323). Constructions of the empowered agent in digital media culture do not translate as democratic representation when they operate in transnational contexts. In other words, the concept of participatory culture does not happily travel from the global north to the global south, especially in the context of development organizations and NGOs. Thus, this case study illustrates the danger of neoliberalized feminism enacted through the empowerment- and rights-based discourse of Title IX, for the evidence produced here in the DST not only furthers the global north's top-down notion of rights, binary model of gender, and western ideals of femininity but additionally imposes these ideas on girls in the global south.

² Switzer (2013) argues that “promoting institutional access to formal schooling for adolescent girls as a means for economic development serves neoliberal aims to predict female productive and reproductive capacity by managing adolescent bodies and thereby reifying postfeminist female exceptionalism as the singular ‘solution’ to global poverty” (p. 347). In her assessment, (post) feminist development subjects are these narrow subject positions created by the intensification of female exceptionalism.

Literature Review

The Girl Effect and its website may serve as a starting point for discussion of how The Girl Effect is promoted by its data-driven communication to the global north. In an article on that website, Posada (2012) argues that good data is critical to further programs for girls. “Girls need unique, targeted programmes, centered around them. But if we haven't got the right kind of data to prove this, those programmes don't get funding and therefore they don't happen” (n.p.). Posada represents the data as instrumental to programming and funding: The Girl Effect created through the discourse of aid to girls is just “smart economics” (Revenga & Shetty, 2012). While the data is meant to help policymakers eliminate wasteful spending and intensify their impact, this way of thinking simultaneously positions the data itself an emotional appeal to an audience from the global north.

In tracing the discursive history of The Girl Effect, Murphy (2013) makes the case that data has a representative property, arguing that “The Girl is animated as a colorful circle, a pulsing pie chart, a blooming flower, or a stop-motion, living marionette—all constituted in an overdetermined vortex of statistical studies that correlate girlness with either extremes of poverty and abjection or compliant and community beneficial forms of waged and unwaged labor” (n.p.). The evidence of girls in need and their stories of living in poverty, unaware of their rights, dominated by controlling parents and backwards cultural norms are meant to incite the emotions of viewers from the global north.³ The

³ The language here simply qualifies how the representations are set up to appeal to viewers from the global north. I am not calling these narratives intrinsically backwards; rather, I am using the word “backwards” to qualify how these representations appear to a global north audience.

addition of affective stories, visuals, and animations adds to the economic properties of The Girl Effect by purposefully hailing sympathetic audiences to support a girl.

“The Girl Effect” and Programming of Transnational Development NGOs

Critiques of The Girl Effect circulate primarily in academic discourse. Wilson (2011) argues that The Girl Effect emerges from a new representational regime in which female subjects from the global south are represented through positive imagery of empowerment and agency. However, these positive images conform to neoliberal globalization and ultimately obscure exploitative relationships. One example of this in the *Women Win DST* is the way the girls exclaim the power of leadership (i.e., how becoming leaders in their community has empowered them as agents of change). However, the notion of girls as leaders places responsibility for large, systemic social change on the shoulders of impoverished girls and relieves national and local governments of this responsibility. In the discourse celebrating feminist ideas travelling to the global south, the context in which these feminist ideas are employed gets lost. Koffman and Gill (2013) question the imposition of feminist ideas in the global south by asking if The Girl Effect is about “global sisterhood and/or cultural imperialism” (p. 87). In Switzer’s (2013) assessment, the feminist ideas portrayed by the girls from the global south do more to hail a Northern audience than to help girls in “need” (p. 347). Murphy (2013) calls attention to the creation of The Girl Effect through discourses of feminism and finance by claiming that “The Girl is not a subject effect, but rather a subject figure—a stereotyped representation of a subject figured out of a matrix of social science correlations and financial probabilities” (n.p.). These critiques of The Girl Effect question

representations that continue to produce these girls and women as passive subjects for a neoliberal economy.

By looking at the representational regimes operating in *The Girl Effect*, scholars have created space for further study of how *The Girl Effect* operates discursively in certain contexts. As Switzer (2013) argues, “Discourse is a social project; representations become real inside institutions that enable certain interventions and prevent others” (p. 357). Critiques of *The Girl Effect* as a discursive regime highlight the limitations placed on the ability for transformation. A girl must be taken out of context to thrive and, thus, this rhetoric paves the way for NGOs to lift girls out of their local economy and educate these girls to then return to their home and incite change. Switzer describes this occurrence as witnessed during her research with Maasai schoolgirls, for the discourse of “investing in a girl” means investing in her as human capital via education to secure her future regardless of her local situation. Alternatively, girls that become child-brides do not have any value in this system and are thus overlooked (Switzer, 2013). Thus, *The Girl Effect* as a representational regime defines empowerment and agency through narrow ideas of the neoliberal subject (i.e., a self-reliant, entrepreneurial subject) to the detriment of more complex understandings of transnational, national, and local, structural imbalance in power that create unfit conditions for girls in the developing world. As *The Girl Effect* shapes specific development programs, there is an exigency for further study of how empowerment, self-reliance, and agency may be reproduced by development organizations through their cross-cultural DST projects.

These critiques of *Girl Effect* discourses impel us to understand other linked discourses. Rebecca Dingo calls for “a transnational feminist rhetorical analytic...[that]

show[s] how these rhetorical acts relate to one another and how they shift and change as they cross national developmental boundaries” (2012, p. 15). Under this directive, Title IX, the US law disallowing sex discrimination in sports, informs The Girl Effect’s assumptions about gender, sports, and rights. Title IX is often evoked by female sports icons as a primer of equality, empowerment, and opportunity for women. Under Title IX, a homogenous idea of rights (articulated through equity, empowerment, and opportunity) is recognized as achievable to all women. Astrid Aafjes, founder of *Women Win*, argues:

Title IX provides evidence of the positive effect of rights-based programming upon a population whose rights had been denied. This has been particularly noticeable in regards to women and sports. After the passage of Title IX, the total number of girls playing high school sports increased from 300,000 in 1970 to almost three million today. Studies are starting to demonstrate the successes in education and careers achieved by women who grew up playing sports in the United States. (2011, p. 57)

Like The Girl Effect’s use of the girl as a data point, Aafjes calls on Title IX as data that proves giving girls rights through sports will also initiate equality to girls in the global south. Aafjes’s statement reveals the way in which NGOs (like her own) import ideas of empowerment, self-reliance, and agency from the global north and use these ideas to train girls from the global south towards gender equity. Yet, like scholarship that criticizes the Girl Effect for not understanding the local situation of development, Aafjes’s positive assessment of Title IX fails to articulate how a piece of legislation crafted for a specific time and place could be useful across nation state borders. Furthermore, like The Girl Effect, Aafjes takes for granted the responsibility placed solely on individual girls for

change within their communities and nations. Thus, her naive embrace of Title IX for girls in the global south positions these girls similar to from the global north with the exception of lacking rights. Because Aafies uncritically uses Title IX as a precedent for understanding and implementing rights-based programming in the global south, the framing of girls and their connection to rights must be analyzed to bring forward the global north's discursive influence on the content and sharing rights of the DST videos. The girls in the DST videos present themselves as empowered subjects and their communities as backwards and this narrative must be questioned for its connection to the larger discourses of Title IX and The Girl Effect.

Problematizing Participatory Culture in Cross-Cultural Technology Training

Initiatives

The Western-focused concept of digital media in participatory culture complicates cross-cultural technology training initiatives such as the DST project. Jenkins and his collaborators (2006) define participatory culture as “a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” (p. 3). This type of creation and sharing aligns with a bottom-up control of the creative process and an empowered digital citizen.

Jenkins (2013) favorably portrays what he calls participatory culture in the context of globalization and web 2.0, stating:

Spreadable practices offer them [non-Westerners] perhaps the most effective means to achieve this expanded communication practice [transnational media]. In

a world where everyday citizens may help select and circulate media content, playing active roles in building links between dispersed communities, there are new ways of working around the entrenched interests of traditional gatekeepers and in allegiance with others who may spread their content. (p. 288)

Jenkins sets up an us/them binary and the “them” of Jenkins’ examples are individuals and small local media companies in the global south. Jenkins (2013) argues that these projects help spread cultural awareness that flows from the bottom up (i.e., from the global south to the global north). In the case of media produced for projects like *Women Win*, however, the purposes, production, and distribution of that media are different. While the girls do produce and edit their digital stories, they do it under the training and support of the NGO; thus, the claim that this media is democratic, free flowing, or bottom-up (Shirky, 2009; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Baym, 2010; Lessig, 2009) is problematic.

Jenkins’ positive assessment of transnational media fails to assess media created contexts. In the DST project of *Women Win*, while the media is created from what seems like enthusiastic desire on the girls’ part, the influence on and control of the media by an NGO from the global north problematizes any claims of democracy. The girls are not creating the media solely from their own minds but are trained in storytelling practices by the NGO and they are not sharing the stories themselves because the NGO distributes, copyrights, and owns them. Claims of participatory culture in the context of transnational media therefore need to be further assessed. By questioning linearity and uncritical assessments of power in flows of information across borders, transnational feminist thought complicates Jenkins’ bottom-up, linear flow of information from the global south to the global north. Mediation may actually increase the distance between individuals

(Rajagopal, 2001). The teaching of culture that Jenkins assumes in exchanges between the global south and the global north does not actually close cultural gaps or make differing nations closer; rather, Rajagopal argues that what media produced through globalization actually creates is only the façade of closeness and contact. In the case of *Women Win's* DST, their assertion that these videos are girl-created offers a global north audience first-person testimony detailing the challenges facing girls in the global south as well as the impact that girls as leaders have within their region. The use of new media obfuscates more complex factors facing global development initiatives by instead providing an uncomplicated forward-facing campaign that only appears to come directly from the speech of development subjects. Hedge (2013) suggests that “the global is performed, reproduced, and contested” through the collision of cultures with new media practices (p. 6). Dingo (2011) argues that “transnational feminist rhetorical analytic is necessary to show how...rhetorical acts relate to one another and how they change as they cross national developmental borders” (p. 15). Transnational feminist scholars answer Jenkins’ concept of transnational media flow with an analytic in which media flows must be questioned in terms of power dynamic, location, and cultural work. In terms of the DST project, these questions complicate the notion that digital media produced by the girls simply gives them the agency to help themselves and their community because the project originates from a sport for development non-profit located in the culture, ideas, and norms of the global north. Thus, power does not solely reside and belong to the girls that author these videos. Power also—and more centrally—circulates through the way in which the development organization—*Women Win*—educates the girls on digital media and frames the girls’ videos.

The Political Economy of Affective Labor in Digital Media Projects

Scholars have also begun to address the question of affective or immaterial labor in participatory digital culture. This affective “immaterial labour involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p.293). For autonomist Marxist scholar Lazzarato (1996), immaterial labor refers to the actual “activity that produces the cultural content” (p. 137). Examples of this include “the fixing of cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion” (p. 133). These definitions and considerations explain the emotional, cultural work that this labor performs.

Current scholarship tends to view affective labor as non-exploitative, overall accepting that laborers in this political economy control their means of production. For example, in her study on the immaterial labor of “tweens,” Pybus (2011) contends that although tweens’ habits and information are mined in order to intensify the tween market, the relationship is ultimately productive in the sense that the tween has some agency in creating their own subjectivity that marketers will use to hail them. For Pybus and others, the immaterial labor in digital media creation is not always exploitative.

We must consider the context of these studies. Specifically, scholarship that claims that digital media and the Internet are free and democratic look at these technologies solely as they operate in the global north. Questioning the power dynamics behind technology, Alzouma (2005) critiques the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as solutions for development problems in Africa, skeptical that

implementation of ICTs will send African nations into full-scale modernity and “solve quality of life problems” (p. 344). While Alzouma does make tricky claims about Africa that seem to suggest the continent is a unified construct, abstracting his critique about seeing ICTs speaks back to scholars who claim ICTs solve social inequality. Alzouma aptly questions the amount of agency Africans will have over their subjectivities with the full-scale adoption of ICTs (focusing mainly on internet access and cell phone technology) that flow from the global north to the global south. This is an issue that those who celebrate the positive outcomes of immaterial labor and digital media fail to fully consider.

In a similar vein, scholars and practitioners should consider how girls producing DST projects in the context of training in the global north are positioned as subjects. In the context of global development initiatives, subjectivities presented through digital media must be investigated so as to understand what regimes of truth they uphold about individuals from the global south. Branding and creating a self through digital media must also be regarded as labor (Banet-Weiser, 2012). This type of labor, when performed in *direct* service of global development initiatives, must be questioned in terms of who is benefiting from this work.

DST projects that involve girls often present these girls as postfeminist development subjects (Switzer, 2013). Switzer uses what she calls “(post)feminist development fables” to describe the false binary of “durable schoolgirl subject” and the “pregnant child-bride” created through the instillation of mythic postfeminist stories in the global south (n.p.). In describing girls from the global south as a postfeminist development subject (not agent), some scholars uncritically use the language of

empowerment as imported from the feminism of the global north in the context of development. This language mimics the representation of girls from the global south in *The Girl Effect*, including repeating terms like empowerment, capacity building, change agent, and leadership. Furthermore, concepts from northern development organizations such as reproductive health, education, gender based violence, and rights also get directly imported into the vocabulary of these development subjects. Yet, as McRobbie notes, this seemingly positive empowered subject position actually serves as a “re-colonizing mechanism...[that] re-instates racial hierarchies within the field of femininity by invoking, across the visual field, a norm of nostalgic whiteness” (p. 43). These girls—ostensibly empowered agents of change—present their stories of fighting their way out of oppressive families and local cultures, stories that take into account a feminism from the global north. This feminism, as McRobbie notes, fails to be flexible as it travels across continents and instead reinscribes the norms of a feminism from the global north that is mainly white, middle class, and heteronormative. With cross-cultural technology training initiatives such as a DST project, we must look at the cause each girl works for and whether it is directly in service of the outcomes authored by development institutions from the global north.

Women Win Case Study and Methods

It is through the representational properties of data discussed above that *Women Win*, a re-granting and leadership training NGO, created its digital storytelling (DST) project for women and girls. The mission of the *Women Win* initiative overall is “to equip adolescent girls to exercise their rights through sport” and is currently supported

financially by sponsors from the global north as varied as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the Human Dignity Foundation, Nike, and DLA Piper (“Supporters,” n.d.). Through stories-as-evidence, *Women Win*’s DST project highlights “stories of girls’ sport achievement and impact.” Girls participating in DST travel to different locales (Amsterdam, Killifi, and Nairobi) to take part in a 2-5 day workshop where they learn both narrative and technical skills to tell their stories in digital video formats. While *Women Win* facilitates the training, during the workshop, the girls create, produce, record, and edit their own videos. The training and development workshops included in the DST project claims to give “storytellers’ ultimate control over the medium—words, images and audio—so stories are told by those who lived the experience” (“About DST,” 2013).

Women Win indicates that both the process and the product of the DST project benefit the girls. The website explains that

Once a young woman learns the skills needed to share her story through DST, it becomes her task and responsibility to share those skills with members of her organization, capturing more stories and multiplying the effect of the tool. Born out of this approach, our ultimate goal with DST is to strengthen our partners’ capacities to build girls’ leadership and communicate the impact of the work they do locally and globally. (“About DST,” 2013)

Yet, these two claims—the girls’ control over their stories and the ways in which DST benefits the girls—implicitly construct a narrative around the DST project. The narrative constructed here aligns with two discourses: participatory culture in digital media and The Girl Effect. The DST project uses the language and grammar of The Girl Effect and

replicates subject positions offered by The Girl Effect but produces them through real narratives and the digital means and claims of participatory culture.

The language and grammar of The Girl Effect is a way of discussing women in the global south as impoverished, backwards, needing assistance, and plagued with problems of developing nations (HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, child marriage, etc.). The solution in this language involves empowering girls to rise up and become leaders in their community so as to create a cycle of change through neoliberal values of self-reliance and empowerment. I call this a language and grammar because Nike's Girl Effect campaign so effectively branded the story of girls in need and girls as agents of change that this style has dominated the way of discussing girls in the global south. The language and grammar includes the repetition of key words: abilities, potential, active, goals, leadership, voice, rights, action, empowerment, and agent of change. Thus, in order to trace Girl Effect discourses within *Women Win's* DST, I use these words as the code through which I analyze the videos.

To further study the intersection of Girl Effect discourses and claims of participatory culture, I conducted a qualitative case study of the videos produced in the DST project of *Women Win* from February 2013 to March 2014. I designed this study to analyze how the stories of *Women Win's* DST project, told through the discourse of participatory culture in digital media, may operate through The Girl Effect. The data collection and analysis had two major components. First, I viewed and coded by hand in Excel all 37 videos (all videos in the project as of December 2014) using attributive coding (or coding for metadata such as video and girls' names, origin locations, local NGOs, date video produced, and location video produced) and descriptive coding and

subsequent thematic analysis of these codes. Within the videos, I focused on recurring elements in the narrative and visual representations and iconography. Through my descriptive coding procedure, I quantified if, when, and how a narrative of empowerment appeared in the girls' stories. Then, I examined the visual components of the video, analyzing how each girl's story presents visually.

In the second portion of my study, I examine the economics of *Women Win* by looking at the ownership and sharing of these DST videos. I closely attend to the means of production of each video, thinking about the technologies used and how those technologies position the girls as creators. I also consider the author, the ownership, and creative commons license of each video. Through this analysis, I conclude that the girls selected to participate in *Women Win* labor to produce affective evidence for *Women Win*. This evidence ultimately circumscribes their subject positions very narrowly as postfeminist development subjects and positions *Women Win* as a successful training and re-granting NGO. Ultimately the greatest beneficiary in the DST project is not the girl creating the video but rather *Women Win* because their organization is able to raise money and brand itself through the low-cost and high-impact mode of new media.

Results and Discussion: *Women Win* and the Flattening of the global south

To better understand the *Women Win* DST project and the cultural logic of The Girl Effect in cross-cultural technology training initiatives, I first analyze the *Women Win* website, which serves as the primary vehicle for the circulation of this cultural logic and the frame for the DST project. I begin with the results of this analysis, followed by the results and discussion of the video content. Finally, I present a rhetorical analysis of the

Women Win DST project, with specific focus on the ownership and sharing practices of the videos.

Framing the DST Project: The *Women Win* Website

The *Women Win* website provides background information for the DST project, a synopsis of the training program, and an introductory video about DST. This information constructs the discursive frame through which viewers are meant to consider the project. Each piece of information constructs a narrative of *Women Win* as a facilitator of the girls' stories, defining the project in line with both participatory culture and Girl Effect discourses. A web audience from the global north may draw parallels of these videos with other types of media created through the framework of participatory culture, such as Kickstarter campaigns. Viewers also see a repetitive offering of The Girl Effect mantra: "invest in a girl and she will do the rest" (The Girl Effect, 2005). Through an analysis of major elements of the website, the participatory culture frame that *Women Win* creates in order to condition viewers' experiences becomes legible.

Under "Stories," the DST tab of the *Women Win* website, there is an introduction video called "Girls are Leaders. Girls are Storytellers." The video uses the visual and verbal language of empowerment to position the sporting girl as a worthy investment to northern donors. The girls represent positive affirmations of development through their engagement in sport. However, these positive representations do not directly represent these girls as agents. Rather, in light of a northern donor audience, they are produced as subjects of development. The girls do not speak on their own behalf, rather, all the information about them comes directly from the narrator. The video opens with close-up

shots of brown-skinned girls and moves to photos of them participating in sports. The narrative voice defines “girl” through the language of empowerment. As the narrator moves through a monologue that begins with “Girls are leaders.” Words like “abilities,” “potential,” “active,” “goals,” “leadership,” “voice,” “right,” “action,” and “agent of change” accompany photos of girls participating in sports. Viewers are positioned as voyeurs in the sense that they are meant to derive pleasure from watching the stills of empowered girls participate in sport. Donors see that their investments are secure in the images of the hardworking girls of sports. The narrator uses the collective “we” to frame and define the potential of girls. “We” are meant to see empowered girls, and by watching and supporting these girls, “we” are involved directly by activating winning girls. While the narrator articulates girls as agents-of-change in the video, it is only through the narrative voice, the “we,” that girls are allowed this agency, making agency a narrative construction.

As *Women Win* presents its leadership program (a program by which girls become agents-of-change), the narrative frame reproduces the power of the northern donor as the ultimate agent of development.⁴ The images are purposefully positive to stay consistent with “current neoliberal development consensus which...portrays an intensification of labour applied by women in the South as the ‘solution’ to poverty as well as gender inequality” (Wilson, 2011, p. 328). This video hails northern donors through positive images that elicit a narrative in which these girls are “deserving” subjects.

⁴ Development discourse defines agents of change against the recipients of charity. In this light, agents of change are situated to both change themselves through education and their community through leadership.

About halfway through the video, the images of girls transform into racialized geometric figures on graph paper. The video visually abstracts the girls, moving them from specific, visual subjects to geometric stand-ins. Through this abstraction, *Women Win* takes the audience from seeing specific girls to seeing all girls. The empowered sporting girls take on more generalizable representations in the form of the empowered third-world girl as the figures are positioned on a stage speaking to an audience of black silhouettes. The narrator proclaims that speaking out “gives girls greater control over their bodies, their choice, their lives and eventually their communities” (“Girls are Leaders,” 2013). However, in this instance, the captive audience (presumably the “we” of the narration, the northern donors) grants agency to the speaking subject. As a result, speaking out gives the girls a sense of agency without giving them actual agency because they can only speak out in the presence of a captive audience from the global north. If agency and empowerment only took girls speaking out and this act alone facilitated their ascent from poverty and gender equality, then organizations from the global north would not be necessary to aid the girls. Yet, as represented here, *Women Win* represents only this solo act of speaking out making viewers believe these girls have agency on their own. However, a larger look at the context shows that the girls appear as self-reliant agents on stage, but their agency is contingent upon a sympathetic audience—donors from the global north. As the visuals move again from abstraction to representative images of girls, the outcomes of development are placed with the collective “we.” The narrator charges the viewers in that “by 2016 we are on the hook to help 1 million girls realize their leadership potential through sport” (“Girls are Leaders,” 2013). The narrator hails the “we,” the northern donor audience, to help these girls become leaders. Even

though the video represents girls as leaders, the video positions northern donors as having the ultimate power in these girls' future, and the economic reality mimics this power dynamic because northern donors, by funding (or continuing to fund) projects that support girls in the global south, can help solidify a future for girls through these organizations.

As an introduction to the DST project, "Girls are Leaders" sets the terms for what viewers should see in the DST videos produced by girls. It offers the promise to see empowered girls engaged in sports, hear stories of girls overcoming obstacles, and witness girls employed as leaders. However, *Women Win*'s decision to not let the girls speak for themselves positions girls as subjects in service of *Women Win* instead of women with agency.

The "About DST" page appears to suggest that the girls have complete narrative control, adherence to feminist methodology, a promise of ICT skill building, and access to affordable technology. This page does not just explain the theory behind the project; rather, it also discursively frames DST as a positive iteration of participatory culture. On the surface, the explanations and rationale for the project provided by *Women Win* mirror bottom-up creations of media (i.e., crowdfunding, self-presentation). Yet, thinking more contextually, the claims of bottom-up creation function as a façade. In terms of narrative control, *Women Win* naïvely suggests, "Participants actively construct and reconstruct themselves and their stories through the process of narration." In no way does this account for the ways in which participants are also *constructed* by already existing discourse—namely discourses of postfeminism and global development. While the girls have the power to say what they want to say, my analysis of the narratives themselves

challenges this claim, for the narratives produced by the girls follow similar themes and use similar terminology.

This suggests that these narratives replicate regimes of truth that operate in the context of *Women Win* as a development program. In the terms of a feminist methodology, the DST project claims that through speaking out, these girls destabilize gendered hierarchies. Yet, these stories all take girls out of their local context and position them as leaders in development programs. The claim of destabilizing gendered hierarchies remains unrealized. Both the claims of ICT skill building and access to technology suggest that just educating girls on using technology will give them skills they can take into the community. However, educating them uncritically (as the education does not involve the critique of these technologies) gives them a narrow conception of technology. Furthermore, the skills that these videos articulate are basic, so we must question at what level these girls are meant to produce media as autonomous agents. If the goal is to bring the skills back to their communities and their local NGOs, *Women Win* ill-equips these girls technologically to fully produce dynamic media for consumption. Yet, these explanations of technology reproduce accounts of technology and storytelling through the lens of participatory culture. As I move into analyzing the DST videos themselves, we see how much the framing of these videos as participatory culture under the influence of The Girl Effect shape the videos themselves.

Discourses of Empowerment in *Women Win*'s DST Videos

The thirty-seven videos that comprise the DST contain stories from girls from origin locations in Africa (Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nigeria, and Kenya),

Cambodia, Colombia, and India. The girls worked with 21 local NGOs to produce the videos between 2013 and 2014. Despite the disparate geographic locations and NGOs, the narratives told in the videos follow a similar narrative structure. The introduction video itself establishes two types of stories: epic wins in sport, and the power of sport to overcome traumatic life events. Of the thirty-seven videos, 16 included stories of a win in sport, and 30 included a resolution of a girl's gainful employment. 31 of 37 videos discuss or portray "rights" while 35 of 37 videos mention empowerment, in either explicit language or theme.

While there is no evidence that these narratives of empowerment are explicitly taught by *Women Win*, this data set suggests that *Women Win*'s recruitment and training program (produced through postfeminist ideas of empowerment) aided the girls in reproducing postfeminist development regimes of truth. The connection between sports as rights and the empowerment of girls and women come from Title IX, a law only legally applicable in the US. However, the law travels when linked discourses of empowerment and choice are taken up by development organizations like *Women Win*. A majority of the stories explain how each girl rose from cultural oppression or economic impoverishment to take leadership roles with sports-in-development NGOs. The opportunity to play girls' sports, in this vein, gives these girls the space to realize their rights and as such, they take on leadership roles hoping to incite change within their communities. Other themes of empowerment articulated in these videos include overcoming obstacles such as lack of education, showing girls-as-potential, overcoming gender norms, learning to understand and wield "rights," and participating in development initiatives (combating gender-based violence, child abuse, HIV, and seeking

reproductive health). It is likely not a coincidence that these themes directly coincide with the goals of *Women Win*. While girls who participate in the DST projects may not be taught these discursive regimes explicitly, *Women Win* operates through The Girl Effect and its programming that circulate postfeminist regimes of truth. Contact with *Women Win* staff—who are trained themselves in the discourses of The Girl Effect—may contribute to this replication of narrative. The selection process of the specific girls who participate in the DST may also contribute to the recurrence of specific themes.

To focus even more closely on the discourses of empowerment circulating in these DST videos, I briefly analyze two representative videos, “Sport is an Amazing World” and “How Football Changed my Life,” as paradigmatic of the entire DST library to illustrate the replication of discursive regimes. In “Sport is an Amazing World” Pallavi Jaywant Gaikwad of Mumbai, India tells her story of empowerment and opportunity through sport in the third person. As the narrative begins, we learn that Pallavi’s teachers and family did not take her love of sport seriously but that instead of quitting, she became resourceful. Her involvement in sports eventually leads her to secondary education as well as finding employment in a local sporting NGO, *The NAZ Foundation Trust*. The narrative leads us to see her drive and desire as directly aiding her in getting an education, finding employment, supporting her family, and challenging gender norms (i.e., becoming the first girl in her family to travel abroad alone). Pallavi’s story represents no complications or setbacks. Rather, the narrative progresses linearly from participation in sport to economic empowerment through employment. In the video, she goes from explain how she “use her uncle’s pant and tied its bottom using a rope to give it the shape of track pants and use that to practice” to joining the *NAZ Foundation Trust*

where she “learned about development sector and its function,” “join[ed] Goal program as senior coach,” and became “first girl to travel alone in country and abroad” (“Sport is an Amazing World,” n.p.). This narrative simplifies the lives of girls in the global south to donors from the global north by furthering the idea that investing in a girl is “smart economics” (Revenge & Shetty, 2012).

In “How Football Changed my Life,” Furaha Pascal Karimiko narrates her struggles coming from a polygamous family of twenty-two children. Raised in this environment, she explains that her community and family had few expectations of her because of her gender. Though her narration, Furaha represents her drive to do something greater. However, her family had no money for school fees. It is at this point that Furaha pauses and tells the audience directly, “I didn’t know I had rights.” The turning point in her story comes when she begins playing football. She explains, “I like feeling stronger than the boys despite all the discrimination from the community.” Being discovered by a coach, Furaha received a football scholarship and she exclaims, “I will prove to my father that girls can do it.” Curiously, Furaha tells the audience that in school she learned reproductive health and rights (not just traditional math, science, humanities curriculum). Furaha tells us she is currently a coach and from her salary she is able to take care of herself and her family. Also, because of her actions, Furaha’s younger sister now attends secondary school. Furaha’s story also linearly progresses from a portrayal of a seemingly (at least to northern donors) backward culture to economic empowerment—yet another simplification of the development narrative. The narrative suggests that she already possessed the means to challenge traditional gender norms—that this potential was something born inside of her. When she says, “I like feeling stronger than the boys

despite all the discrimination from the community,” the audience is meant to see her as an empowered, postfeminist subject. This narrative creates an affective element by which donors can feel for these girls, get angered at their situations, and see these girls as animated characters (i.e., *real* people); thus, by replicating postfeminist regimes of truth Furaha’s story provides northern donors with a mirror (the feeling that these girls are or could be “just like our girls”). This shared representation enables donors to give the girls the gift of agency by helping them out of their local families and cultures through financial gifts entrusted to third-party organizations like *Women Win*.

The perceived realness and authenticity of these narratives created through the discursive frame of participatory culture helps uncritically circulate the postfeminist regimes of truth operating within these stories. While The Girl Effect discourse became persuasive through its combination of hailing narratives and political economy, the “realness” of the DST project furthers these regimes of truth by masquerading as authentic. Dingo (2011) argues that we must

look carefully at policymaking practices through the lens of transnational networks so that we can identify the multiple strands of influences that give a policy argument clout and demonstrate how repetitive lore often circulated on a translocal scale, blending the local and the global across national or political boundaries. (p. 7)

Representational practices need to be analyzed through a transnational lens, for these also dictate the terms of circulation. In the DST project, these narratives portray these girls as positive, postfeminist development subjects through the replication of themes operating in postfeminist regimes of truth (empowerment, education, employment, challenging

gender norms, backwardness of local cultures). Furthermore, through the frame of participatory culture, the realness of each of these stories helps them circulate as true, uncritically. At stake here is the view of the global south as backwards as well as the lack of agency allowed to the girls within this framework, for their stories perform the work of *Women Win*. Although employed and empowered by their local NGO, these girls are simultaneously exploited as representational labor through their digital storytelling. Thus, within this setup the girls, once empowered, are meant to shoulder the responsibility of social change with only the aid of *Women Win*'s education on digital storytelling. Alternatively, *Women Win* is able to provide direct data through the girls' emotional videos to solidify charitable contributions from inspired donors, ostensibly keeping *Women Win* funded.

Visually Flattening the global south

The *Women Win* DST videos rely exclusively on the use of still images—effectively slideshows with voice-over audio—and this technique lends itself to a particular kind of representation of the girls and their lives. Through the use of still images, these “empowered” girls become visually immobilized. I coded the images used with the following categories: photos of the girls, their families, participation in sports, their schools, photos of the girls “employed,” and group pictures of girls (team or female community). I also coded for stock photos of objects and hand-drawn animation of “difficult” events. In the videos, 21 of 37 utilized stock photos in their videos, and 9 used cartoons or drawings. These stock photos and drawings serve to fill in transitional space in the narrative visually.

Through these images the audience is given a glimpse into these girls' lives akin to leafing through a scrapbook, but these images are not fully explained, as the voice-over narrative in the videos does not always match or elucidate the images. In the majority of the videos (27 out of 37) there are instances when the image and the voice-over do not align, meaning that the narration does not describe what is shown in the still image. The viewers instead view these images through their pre-existing discursive frames, or the discursive frames offered in the website itself, namely, global northern ideas of gender and the global south. With this line of thinking, dirt fields signify cultural backwardness and poverty, photos of large families signify neglected girls, action shots of girls in both sport and education represent empowerment, and group shots of girls embody a supportive, female community. Through these stills, none of these discursive frames are challenged; rather, they are further upheld. In this way, *Women Win* must be questioned for its lack of attention to the politics of representation.

These still images further the limited agency of girls by representing them as visually immobile. In analyzing the positive images of female empowerment, Wilson (2011) argues that “agency, like empowerment, is projected as a gift to be granted by the consumer of images—and potential donor—implicitly reaffirming the civilizing mission” (p. 329). The relationship between donor and visual subject that Wilson describes is intensified through the stillness of DST's images. In DST, the girls do not speak directly to the camera and this contributes to the flattening of their subject positions. The audience does not see girls visually as participants and agents in their lives. The stills and voice-overs represent the girls as narrators of their lives in the past tense.

In this sense, the girls' thankfulness and indebtedness to *Women Win* becomes intensified. In this discursive frame, donor audiences see these passive girls as needing their help. The representational choices made through the direction and production of the DST project—direction given by the *Women Win* training and production staff—directly impact the girls' agency and position them as subjects rather than agents of *Women Win*.

Sharing and Ownership Practices with DST Videos

While *Women Win's* DST defines its methods as in line with participatory culture, the sharing and ownership of the girls' videos complicate *Women Win's* full commitment to the girls' complete control over their videos. During the 5-day workshop, the girls are taught by a workshop leader everything from how to write an impactful story to how to edit their video using iMovie. The final products of these workshops, then, are the girls' Digital Stories and they write, record, and edit these stories with the help of workshop leaders. Returning to the question of exploitation in terms of the immaterial labor involved in digital media creation, the question of ownership complicates scholarship affirming affective labor of digital media as non-exploitative. While *Women Win* upholds the myth of the digital space as free space, these videos represent and sell *Women Win's* development programs through these girls' "self" produced stories. Furthermore, the Creative Commons licenses for each of these videos clearly articulates that *Women Win* owns these girls' videos. Creative Commons explains this particular license as the "most restrictive of our six main licenses, only allowing others to download your works and share them with others as long as they credit you, but they can't change them in any way or use them commercially" (Creative Commons, 2013). Because *Women Win* owns the

license and hosts these videos on both their website and their *Vimeo* page, the “you” explained in the Creative Commons license refers to *Women Win*. The CC license would restrict the girls from sharing their own, self-produced videos without crediting *Women Win*.

With this sharing practice, the celebratory framing of participatory culture completely unravels and is exposed as a façade through which *Women Win* positions their organization as a benevolent helper. As the owner of these videos, they directly profit from sharing these girls’ videos in the financial marketplace by attracting donors. While the girls certainly see some benefits of their labor, the return on investment is diminished because it is funneled through both *Women Win* and their local NGO. As Rajan and Desai (2013) notes, “Women from the global South not only do a disproportionate part of the work of globalization, but they are also caught in the chaotic, intended and unintended machinations of global forces” (p. 6). The paradox here is that while *Women Win* carefully constructs the girls as empowered, entrepreneurs of themselves, it is *Women Win* as an organization that benefits from these representations, not the girls, furthering the use of feminized labor in the process of globalization—even in spaces that seek to liberate women from the oppressive forces of globalization.

Conclusion: Implications for Intercultural Professional Communication

As this chapter suggests, the arrangement between global development programs, postfeminist subjectivity, and “democratic” digital media requires further scrutiny. Digital media’s democratic elements do not happily travel from the global north to the global south. Understanding both the regimes of truth operating in digital representations

as well as the means of production helps to further contextualize and understand the political economy of affective labor. Through the case study of the *Women Win*'s DST project, unpacking subject positions of girls through Girl Effect programming and participatory culture enables us to see the hidden power dynamic operating between the girls and *Women Win*.

Empowerment in the forms of girls-as-leaders and money from northern donors structure the production and circulation of the girls' narratives. This form of empowerment, taken from top-down models of change in the global north like Title IX and The Girl Effect, sets up a relationship whereby girls need the global north's ideas and coaching to enter the circle of empowerment. However, proponents of participatory culture celebrate the simplicity of self-representation through digital media. After analyzing these videos, I wonder why the girls were not just given the technology and sent out to record their stories free from the ideological influence of *Women Win* and postfeminist ideas of empowerment. Yet, because *Women Win* is so insistent that the girls learn about "rights" from the global north, they neatly structure the training to include both technology and ideology. As seen through the limited subjectivities presented by the girls, the idea of rights and empowerment acts as binaries, for from the DST training, the girls learn their place in the world of globalization as powerful agents rising up from depraved local situations. However, the idea of rights that these girls learn from the global north is just as over-simplified as the savior complex northern NGOs have about the global south. Rights from the global north are easily won battles that espouse equality between genders. Wendy Hesford offers a critique of human rights discourse "as a site of power for normative expression of American nationalisms, cosmopolitanisms, and

neoliberal global politics” (2011, p. 3). Lacking a transnational or intersectional lens, rights are taken from the norm of the global north and presented uncomplicatedly to the girls. A better DST project would help girls articulate complicated transnational and intersectional identities for both themselves and a transnational audience. Narratives from lived experiences of girls that highlight their identities as intersectional and transnational place these girls back in their local contexts and highlight structural inequalities that help produce these girls as vulnerable subjects. Allowing the girls to provide evidence that speaks back to overwrought and simplistic dualisms of cultured/uncultured, rights/oppression, women/men, and global north/global south would help NGOs center developing nations in their aid work.

In providing a critical case study of *Women Win*'s DST project, my hope is that future deployments of digital media in transnational contexts will interrogate the intricate layers of subjectivity and agency produced by both the representations themselves and the means of producing representations.

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CHAPTER 4: MOBILE ATHLETE, IMMOBILE SUBJECTIVITY: A
TRANSNATIONAL APPROACH TO SARAH ATTAR'S EXCEPTIONALISM

In 2012, the media celebrated Sarah Attar and Wojdan Ali Seraj Abdulrahim Shahrkhani for being the first female representatives of Saudi Arabia to compete in the Olympics. The two participated under an equity clause allowing them to represent Saudi Arabia despite not meeting qualifying standards in their respective sports. Curiously, the two women's stories diverged along east and west lines. Attar, a resident of California and an American citizen from birth, was able to represent Saudi Arabia because her father expatriated from Saudi Arabia, allowing her to claim dual citizenship. Shahrkhani, represented Saudi Arabia as a natural-born citizen and resident. Based on the gendered cultural assumptions of these locations (the west as a location where women are equal to men and east as a location where women are under strict patriarchal rule), the media rendered these women differently. Stories covering Shahrkhani focused on her as a traditional Saudi woman, and the major story about her involved how she and her father pushed the IOC to allow her to participate in a hijab. With Attar, the media fixated on her proximity to equality in the US. While these two stories offer remarkable examples of women's rights on a global stage, it was Attar's story that captured the media.

Accompanied by the narrative of helping establish women's rights, images of Attar smiling furthered the notion of the 2012 Olympics as "The Woman's Olympics" (Brown, 2012). Coverage along these lines characterized and favored Attar as the relatable Saudi female.

In privileging Attar for her dual Saudi-US identity, the media frames Saudi women's sports participation through ideas of women's rights originating in the west.

The Guardian's coverage of Sarah Attar engages Title IX, the law establishing women's sports as separate-but-equal in the US:

Because she is on a college track team, Attar knows all about this year's 40th anniversary of Title IX, the barrier-breaking law that opened doors in sports for women in the United States.¹ This year, for the first time, women outnumbered men on the US Olympic team. Nobody is dreaming about making that kind of history yet in Saudi Arabia but every grand mission has to start somewhere.

(Associated Press, 2012)

Here the reference to Title IX indexes equality as the standard for female participation in sports. Thus, through this logic, Saudi Arabia should be more like the U.S in terms of women's rights, and by linking Attar to Title IX, Attar further shines as the privileged sponsor for female participation in Saudi Arabia. Because of her proximity to the US, Attar gives the media and the IOC a safe Saudi woman to celebrate through popular notions of equality and feminism coming from the global north. She also possesses the brown skin and Saudi background that easily allow her to play the part of a Saudi female for a transnational audience (i.e., through proper covering) while also communicating US feminist values of equality. Lila Abu-Lughod gives us pause to question static, universal notions of women's rights, like the desire to import Title IX into a Saudi context, especially considering the universalizing of Muslim women's rights. She writes:

As the concept of "Muslim women's rights" circulates across continents—traveling in and out of airport bookstores, classrooms, and government policy offices; UN forums in New York and Geneva, and local women's organizations in

¹ Attar attended Pepperdine University in California and was a member of its track team.

Pakistan and Malaysia; television soap operas in Syria and Egypt; model marriage contracts developed in Morocco and Algeria; and mosque study groups in North America—we are confronted with the question of how to make sense of its travels and its translations across these forms and forums. Muslim women’s rights produce everything from websites and battered women shelters to inheritance disputes in rural villages. (Abu-Lughod 2013, p. 146)

In the context of the 2012 Olympics, which were an Olympics overly concerned with women’s rights, two distinct and different female athletes are produced by the discourse of women’s rights, a traditional Saudi woman and a modernized US-Saudi woman. Following Abu-Lughod’s advice that “anyone seriously interested in Muslim women’s rights must follow them as they move” (2013, p. 171), I look at the concerns for Saudi women’s rights that circulate through documents from the HRW and the IOC both before and during the 2012 Olympics. In this context, women’s rights in the west provide the exigence for producing the first Saudi female Olympians; however, these Saudi female Olympians lead us to question how the discourse of Muslim women’s rights travels through these women’s bodies differently. How do an authentic Saudi woman and a dual-citizen with loose ties to Saudi Arabia remain equal in the eyes of the global media? Why are both celebrated, without question, as the first Saudi female Olympians? I suggest here that despite Shaherkani’s authentic Saudiness, Attar’s material body better hails a western audience, especially one that characterizes traditional Islamic appearance as backwards (Moallem, 2005; Mamhood, 2011; Abu-Lughod, 2002 & 2013). Because the privileging of Attar over Shaherkani in the media falls neatly under the divide between modern Muslim and traditional Muslim women, I further investigate discursive formations and

cultural logics behind the celebration of Attar's barrier breaking performance, questioning how they circulate ideas about Muslim women's rights differently.

This chapter starts with the occasion of the 2012 London Olympics as "The Women's Olympics" and looks both backward and forward to situate this occasion within larger frameworks of the global north's human rights discourse and neoliberalized feminism. Following Rebecca Dingo, I contend that "Ultimately, a transnational feminist rhetorical analytic is necessary to show how...rhetorical acts relate to one another and how they shift and change as they cross national developmental boundaries" (2011, p. 15). The occasion of the 2012 London Olympics illustrates how influences from the global north condition the discourse of women's sports in transnational contexts. I illustrate how reporters, brands, and policymakers located in the global north fail to fully understand the cultural conditions for sport participation in the global south and how they consequently map a neoliberalized feminist idea of women's sports onto the global south. Neoliberalized feminism is described by Angela McRobbie as "faux feminism" a "mild, and media-friendly version of feminism" that undoes feminisms by signaling feminism's political projects as over through portraying women as achieving equality (2008, p. 31). Nancy Fraser characterizes neoliberalized feminim as "the image of feminism having spawned a neoliberal bastard, a strange shadowy version of itself, an uncanny double that it can neither simply embrace nor wholly disavow" (2013, p. 224). Both of these descriptions accurately describe how I characterize the 21st celebration of equity, empowerment, and opportunity in women's sports that suggests feminism's work is complete. In order to disentangle neoliberalized feminist networks operating in representation of Saudi female athletes, I look at how Sarah Attar is branded as a pioneer

in both the 2012 and 2016 Olympics, and how she's called upon to empower women for Oiselle, a US women's running apparel company. As a dual citizen of both the US and Saudi Arabia, Attar becomes what Jaspir Puar (2007) terms "the model multicultural." Puar argues that this type of ethnic tokenism actually works to uphold whiteness:

The ethnic aids the project of whiteness through his or her participation in global economic privileges that then fraction him or her away from racial alliances that would call for cross-class affinities even as the project of multiculturalism might make him or her seem truly and authentically representative of his or her ethnicity. (Puar, 2007, p. 31)

As both a barrier breaker in the 2012 Olympics and a brand sponsor for Oiselle, Attar's image functions as "the good Muslim" (Puar, 2007, p. 31), allowing the global north to measure her accomplishments through their desires. Because representations of her map nicely onto the global north's desires of Saudi females (i.e., to be just like the global north's "equal" women), I question what geographical location her iconic status serves. By linking the human rights agenda to modernize Saudi Arabian women to Attar's media presence and also linking the International Olympic Committee's gender equality mission to neoliberalized feminism, I offer a reading of Attar's image as the first Saudi female Olympian that critically questions how closely her image aligns with the global north's "liberal multiculturalism not only as a consumptive project and as a process of inclusion, incorporation, normalization, and assimilation, but more perniciously as a form of governmentality" (Puar, 2007, p. 180). As one of the first Saudi Arabian female Olympians, she gives voice to the global north's pleas for women's rights in Saudi Arabia, and as a brand sponsor, through Oiselle, she serves as a multicultural

spokesperson for their brand. In both instances, the global north is shown what appears to be a strong, empowered Saudi woman breaking cultural barriers; however, the reality behind this appearance reveals the mapping of a liberal, feminist multiculturalism to forward the neoliberal agenda in westernizing the middle east with particular attention to correcting Saudi Arabia for being one of the worst nations civil liberties and political rights (Freedom House, 2014). In both brandings, we see the desire of the International Olympic Committee, western human rights organizations, and neoliberalized feminism, through Oiselle's branding, operating to forward "safe" multiculturalism and women's rights within the global north's frame; thus, her image and achievements bring very little back to Saudi Arabia and acts only as a vector for the global north's agenda.

Texts and Contexts: Looking at the Transnational in Women's Sports

The study of sport as a discipline includes a feminist inquiry into sport that can be summed up as an exploration of women's impact—growing, future, and unacknowledged—on sport. Feminist sports studies exploded in the 1980s and 1990s, an era characterized by a liberal feminist agenda. Susann Birrell sums up the liberal feminist agenda in sport studies as "work[ing] to remove the barriers to girls' and women's participation in sport through legislation such as Title IX and the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States" (2000, p. 64). Looking at themes of media representation in sport, scholars of the era critique sexist or narrow representations of women (Duncan, 1990; Davis 1997). Another group of scholars note the struggle of sporting equality and document women's challenges and resistances to a male-dominated

area (Fiske, 1989; Sabo, 1992;). Yet, I wish to argue that in the 21st century, these critiques of sport by liberal feminists take on a neoliberal character.

In her critique of neoliberalism, Lisa Duggan claims, “Stripping ‘cultural’ critique or identity politics of their capacity to engage and transform political economy” replaces the more radical critiques (i.e., intersectional, transnational) with “conservative/neoliberal ‘identity politics’” (2012, p. 83). Thus, in the 21st century, dominant conversations about women’s sports champion the category “women” without engaging in conversations about social location, race, nation, ethnicity, ability, or political economy. Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin’s *Built to Win* provides an example this type of limited scholarship. They argue that representations of female athletes in the late 1990s engage in “stealth feminism” (i.e., an underground version of feminism). Sexualized images of women, outward versions of female masculinity, superhero representations of female athletes, and corporatized campaigns with women athletes all represent a feminism in disguise. Stealth feminism, they argues, “draw[s] attention to key feminist issues without provoking the knee-jerk social stigma attached to the word *feminist*, which has been so maligned and discredited in the popular imagination” (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 51). Yet, this analysis fails to consider how “stealth feminism” only works for certain women, namely, white, middle-class women from the global north. For example, runner Caster Semenya’s female masculinity (toughness, male-looking, muscular features) failed to signify to a western public as stealth feminism; rather, this appearance on her brown body situated in the global south only stirred allegations of her masquerading as a woman (but actually being a man) for athletic gain. This is far from stealth feminism.

As women have moved well into the transnational sphere of sporting competition, scholarship is needed that troubles the complex meaning, politics, and representation of these competitions, sporting policies, and athletes. A transnational feminist analytic adds questions of inequalities and relationships of power among local, national, and global actors with particular attention to the dominant influence of the global north (Fernandes, 2013). In studies of sport, adding a transnational lens is important because it uncovers how hierarchies of place are normalized. Questions also need to be raised that centralize race and sex within thoughts on the transnational to develop a radical ethic that challenges global power and hegemonies (Alexander and Mohanty, 2010). Furthermore, understanding the transnationality of sport involves a look at the political economy of sport in transnational contexts, especially as it pertains to women's sports.

While Heywood and Dworkin (2003) argue that the female athlete has become a cultural icon, it's important to understand the dominance of global capitalism within the iconic status. In this claim leads to a deeper questioning of who's allowed to be a cultural icon, what companies and people profit from this iconic status (i.e., Nike), what nations, identities, sexualities, and people are harmed by these formations (i.e., Nike's labor practices directly involve cheap work from women in the global south), and under what conditions female athletes from the global south achieve iconic status (assuming they even do)? Thus, I contend that the following arenas in sport are better analyzed through transnational feminist lens: Olympic competition, transnational athletic competition policies, branding and marketing of athletes, athletic sponsorship, media coverage of athletes, sexuality in sport, development initiatives, governance and administration of

transnational sporting bodies, and how local communities are impacted when hosting transnational sporting competitions.

In the context of Sarah Attar and the 2012 London Olympics, media coming out of the global north had a stake in portraying her accomplishment to a global public. This public celebrated the accomplishment for Attar, Saudi women, and transnational human rights organizations. Information about Attar and her accomplishment did not circulate as heavily in Saudi Arabia and, furthermore, the Saudi public characterized her accomplishment as “prostitution.” A Saudi professor tweeted that Attar did not “represent the chaste Muslim women” (Coleman, 2012). Similar media comments authored by Saudis characterize the Saudi response to the female Olympians as ranging from lukewarm to violently against their participation. Transnational feminism provides a useful analytic framework to understand how texts and contexts, like Attar’s participation in the 2012 London Olympics, operate across nation-states (Hesford, 2011). Far from characterizing these interactions a direct transaction, transnational feminism troubles the flow of information across nation-state borders, questioning how information circulates in transnational contexts (Grewal and Kaplan 2001; Hesford 2011; Fernandes 2013). Understanding how flows of information about Islamic nations originating in the west circulate gendered power inequalities, Jasbir Puar characterizes this transnational process as “gender exceptionalism[,]...a missionary discourse to rescue Muslim women from their oppressive male counterparts” (2007, p. 5). Transnational feminist scholars studying Islamic women critique this discourse by offering more complete local ethnographies of women’s lives in Islamic nations. Saba Mahmood’s study of the Egyptian woman’s piety movement opposes characterizing women’s agency in secular, liberal frameworks,

arguing that the mosque movement offered women a form of agency that transcends western notions of public and private (2011). Furthermore, Minoo Moallem's gendered analysis of the Iranian revolution points out parallels between liberal feminism's global sisterhood mission to rescue Iranian women from domineering patriarchy and Islamic fundamentalism's circumscription of Iranian women's lives to the private sphere, offering that the two discourses converge by homogenizing Iranian women under dominant discursive regimes (2005). Both these scholars show the importance of the local in terms of understanding the relationship between historical and cultural formations.

Grewal and Kaplan caution against separating the local from the global, arguing for a "a mode of study that adopts a more complicated model of transnational relations in which power structures, asymmetries, and inequalities become the conditions of possibility of new subjects" (2001, p. 671). Leila Fernandes, arguing against only seeing the transnational as transcendental, enters an epistemological debate defining knowledge as a set of practices "shaped by particular cultural, historical, and national circumstances" (2013, p. 29). In her project, transnational feminism's distancing from local histories and analyses of state politics misses the fact that some relationships of power cannot be explained solely through transnational processes, but rather rely on notions of power that are "historically reproduced rather than simply continually shifting" (Fernandes, 2013, p. 65). Similarly, Moallem and Mahmood both focus on the historical and contextual specificity of Muslim women's lives—one writing about gender and patriarchy in Iran during the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the post-revolution era and the other discussing the women's mosque movement in Egypt—in order to disentangle these historical and

cultural occasions from western notions of freedom and gender. Mahmood writes, “culture in this sense...does not serve as a barrier to human rights mobilization but as a context that defined relationships and meanings and constructs the possibilities of action” (p. 5, 2005). Thus, for Mahmood, the transnational must resist universalizing in order to be an affective political concept. Along these lines Fernandes critiques what she sees as a positivist trend in transnational feminist scholarship and she counters this trend by reinvigorating the framework of transnational feminism to include how “large-scale events and processes...are perceived, framed, experienced, and negotiated in ways that are shaped by distinctive local and national contexts” (2013, p. 4). This means understanding the connections and disjunctures between local histories, circulation practices, transnational processes, representational regimes, affective labor, and visual representation. Essentially, Fernandes asks transnational feminist scholars to reinterrogate the location of knowledge production to include both historical knowledge from local sites and “how these [academic] paradigms shape the way we produce, consume, and disseminate knowledge about the world within the United States” (2013, p. 4). In a transnational feminist analysis, the local, the global, and the transnational processes are important. Under the recommendations of Fernandes, my analysis of Sarah Attar as a privileged representative of Saudi women looks not just at the cultural dimensions of Islam to explain Saudi women’s exclusion from sport but also explores the deeper history of women’s roles in Saudi Arabia to fully comprehend these as historically produced in a specific location. While my analysis cannot offer a complete local picture of Saudi women, I interrogate the western discourse on Saudi women for focusing on cultural facets of Islam (veiling, guardianship, sex separatism) without historicizing these

practices within Saudi Arabia and contextualizing how US involvement in Saudi Arabia has impacted these gendered cultural formations. To study cultural logics at play in celebrating the first Saudi female athletes, I analyze media surrounding the 2012 and 2016 Olympics as well as Oiselle's social media. I place all of these media in larger transnational contexts between east and west. I start by looking at the background of Saudi gender politics as they pertain to the desires of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Then I move to analyzing media outlets' reporting of the 2012 Olympics. Under these conditions, I reveal the ideologies and cultural logics of positioning a female athlete for Saudi Arabia as well as understanding the media's preference of Attar over Shakerkani. Then, I move from the 2012 Olympics to Sarah Attar's rise as a brand sponsor for Oiselle in the United States. Within this context, media produced by Oiselle positions Attar as a model multicultural (Puar, 2007) through their neoliberalized feminist celebration of women. Connecting Attar's image across contexts (branding by 2012 Olympic and Oiselle) reveals that Sarah Attar's dual citizenship serves the IOC, HRW, and Oiselle. In these instances, her image is used to promote values, affects, and agendas of the global north. Yet, none of these deployments of her image work equally across national borders. In this capacity, Attar functions as an import-export product. Imported conditionally into Saudi Arabia as a human rights subject and immediately exported to the US as an empowering, feminist figure, Attar labors for a western public.

Creating Global Desire for a Saudi Female Olympian

The need for an exceptional Saudi female human rights example was created well before Sarah Attar's presence in 2012. The desires of the Human Rights Watch and the International Olympic Committee to perform as exceptional (western) organizations invigorated conversation on Saudi women's rights as an exception, laying the groundwork for these organizations to take "drastic" measures on Saudi Arabia (i.e., disinviting them from the Olympics) if the Saudi government failed to comply. Yet, before looking at the discourses used to argue for Saudi females' participation in the Olympics, I lay the contextual groundwork for analyzing Attar's image by giving an overview of US/Saudi relations, the global oil market, and cleansing Saudi Arabia's image for a global public.

Long standing Saudi-US relations can be described by the following plan: "America would provide security, the Saudis oil" (Anonymous, 2014, p. 47-8). Despite the countries differences in governance, culture, and religion, the relationship continued through the exchange of oil for security. Yet, in the 21st century complications arose that weakened the relationship. The terrorist attacks on 9/11 left the US community deeply questioning Islam in general and Saudi Arabia's insistence on a strict interpretation of Wahhabist tradition, gave the US a reason to distrust Saudi Arabia. Also because of Saudi Arabia's strict interpretation of Islam, they have been accused of (and vehemently denied) secondarily funding terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida, the Taliban and ISIS. Under these conditions, the United States began producing more of its own oil, relying less on Saudi production, further diminishing the relationship. Despite these

strains, Saudis still corners the oil market and the US still leads the world in arms and security. Thus, both countries still place high economic value on this relationship.

In the early 2000s, transnational human rights organizations began detailing human rights abuses committed by the Saudi government including: capital punishment, women's rights abuses, sex slavery, mistreatment of migrant workers, lack of political and religious freedom, failure to recognize LGBT identities, and refusal of medical treatment to HIV/AIDS patients. It is in this context that Saudi-US relations became further strained. While the US needed Saudi Arabia for both oil and counter-terrorism intelligence, publically, the relationship between a "respectable" democratic nation and a violent, abusive authoritarian state appeared non-sensical to both US citizens and transnational human rights organizations. Thus, for the Saudi-US relationship to seem appealing to both US citizens and transnational human rights organizations (and transnational public concerned about human rights), the Saudis would need reverse their reputation as one of the worst perpetrators of human rights. With their reputation under global scrutiny, Saudi historian, Mawdid Al-Rasheed, argues that the Saudi government offered the global community small transformations for women's freedoms and rights to cleanse their image. Al-Rasheed explains, "As a result, Saudi women were turned into icons, exchanged in a complex game between the state and its religious nationalism on the one hand, and the state and the global community on the other, without this being resolved in permanent gains for women" (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 21). Two of these gains included the King giving women seats on the Consultative Council and assuring that women would be allowed to participate in future elections.

It is under these conditions that the Human Rights Watch began pushing for Saudi female participation in transnational sports. Sports have a long history in representing a nation and demonstrating a nation's commitment to human rights. However, sports were not developed with rights in mind. Many sports started in the 19th century for upper class men with leisure time and some of these sports continued to train militia in both western nations and their colonies (Kidd and Donnelly, 2000). "The idea [that sport was a right] began to be adopted widely as a part of the [western] equity movements of the 1960s and 1970s" (Kidd and Donnelly, 2000, p. 136). Also, the Olympic Committee did not fully commit to sport as a human right until well into the 1990s. Representation of the entire races, cultures, genders, and classes of a nation in the Olympics was not required until 2012's inclusion of Saudi female athletes. "Throughout the history of the modern Olympic movement, Olympic teams have indexed the status of women and ethnic minorities in member nations. The exclusion of Jews from competition in Nazi Germany, the exclusion of people of color from South African and Rhodesian teams under those nations' racial segregation laws...have both reflected and reinforced the marginalization of women and ethnic minorities in these national contexts" (Hogan, 2003, p. 101). It wasn't until the International Olympic Committee developed a strong relationship with the United Nations that the International Olympic Committee began developing a human rights agenda in sport. Even so, the International Olympic Committee's agenda meant creating dialogue around human rights issues, instead of issuing decrees. Despite supporting a 1993 U.N. resolution to promote peace in areas of conflict through sport, the International Olympic Committee allowed the US to participate in the 2004 Olympics even though they declared war in Afghanistan. In 2009, the U.N. granted the

International Olympic Committee permanent observer status further placing the International Olympic Committee in the vicinity of human rights discussions and possibly cleansing its reputation for ignoring human rights concerns in allowing Beijing to host the 2008 Olympics. With this history in mind, the Human Rights Watch directed their arguments for Saudi female participation toward the International Olympic Committee and the Saudi government.

In 2011, the Human Rights Watch, a transnational human rights organization with headquarters in New York City, published a document called “Step of the Devil,” arguing for Saudi women’s participation in sport, including a section on adding Saudi women to the 2012 Olympics. Previously, the International Olympic Committee allowed Saudi Arabian male athletes without inclusion of female athletes. “Steps of the Devil” works to shame both the Saudi government and the International Olympic Committee for failing to include women in sports, creating the plea for a Saudi female athlete where there was none before. The document employs discursive regimes of human rights discourse that reify the “binary identity categories of victim and agent” (Hesford, 2011, p. 25). Couched in terms of rights, the document positions Saudi Arabia as evil, women in the country as victims, and the Human Rights Watch as benign saviors. The document accusingly states: “But in terms of policies and practice, the Saudi government continues to flagrantly deny women and girls their right to practice physical education in schools and to practice recreational and competitive sports more generally” (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Missing from this discourse is an understanding of the historical context of women’s lives in Saudi Arabia. For example, the document criticizes “impos[ition of] the system of male guardianship whereby most actions by a woman, including the ability to go out

wherever and whenever she wishes, requires the approval, sometimes in writing, of her male guardian—a father, husband, brother, or other close male relative. The male guardian can be a child, but the system applies to women of all ages” (Human Rights Watch, 2011). While certainly guardianship can be seen as a negative cultural tradition of Saudi’s Islamic traditions, there’s a historical context for guardianship.

Madawi Al-Rasheed places guardianship in a longer historical trend of religious nationalism claiming, “the Saudi state declared women in need of protection, welfare, and paternalistic support under the umbrella of Islam. Protecting women, enforcing their modesty, and guarding their honour were state projects from 1932” (2013, p. 240). Women’s modesty and piety, she argues, are central to upholding national piety. After the booming oil industry created a large expatriate community in Saudi Arabia, the threat of women marrying non-Saudi, non-indigenous men was great and endangered the future of the Saudi state. Furthermore, as Saudi Arabia became a unified state, the ethos of tribalism continued, including a continued definition of women’s roles as subordinate and separate from men’s.

The desire for a Saudi female athlete is created out of the shaming of Saudi Arabia as evil and detailing all the ways in which Saudi Arabia forbids, limits, and denies women’s participation in athletics. These include failing to adopt a physical education curriculum in girls’ schools, closing women’s gyms, ignoring the rising obesity rates among Saudi women, declining to nominate women for Olympic participation, excluding women from leadership roles in the Saudi National Olympic Committee, and requiring women to wear traditional Islamic covering that impedes athletic play (Human Rights Watch, 2011). In this narrative created by the Human Rights Watch, however, there is

only one oppressor, the Saudi government. Nowhere does the Human Rights implicate the US or the global oil market in limiting women's athletic participation. Yet, these factors have also contributed to the radical sex separatism in Saudi Arabia. The oil boom of 1973 created a class of unemployed, educated Saudi women that hired out housework to migrant workers. Without household duties to occupy their time, these women began moving about public spaces. During this time, the practice of guardianship was less strict allowing Saudi women to move about public spaces more freely. As more women appeared in public, these women were subject to verbal and sexual abuses by men not used to the public presence of women. Fearing that these interactions would loosen the piety of Saudi women, "the state and its religious guardians embarked on a campaign to reaffirm tradition in the urban spaces" (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p.105). This campaign included extending guardianship rights of women to the larger male public beyond male family members. The state police (thanks to the increased profits of oil wealth) and religious vigilantes took the charge of monitoring and protecting Saudi women, ultimately radically limiting the public presence of Saudi women. Commenting on how the west is implicated in the development of extreme sex separatism of Saudi women, Mawdi Al-Rasheed notes, "If oil wealth allowed the expansion of education for women and delayed their entry into the labour force, it certainly made possible the imposition of restrictions on them and the expansion of the circle of men in charge of guarding their morality and punishing their transgressions" (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p.106). Thus, in this light, while the Saudi government can be blamed for limiting women's rights, they did not act alone. In the context of oil wealth, western nations profiting off the global oil

market, especially including the U.S, contributed to the oppressive conditions under which Saudi women lived.

Looking into how Saudi Arabia complies with the Human Rights Watch's wishes for a Saudi female Olympian reveals the global north's stake in Saudi Arabia's reputation. This benefits not only Saudi Arabia, but countries that have economic ties to Saudi Arabia, including the US. In this context, the US can safely continue its relationship with Saudi Arabia without global scrutiny. Furthermore, the US can position itself as a paternalistic example, providing the blueprint for Saudi Arabia to give rights to women and offering examples of legislation like Title IX as primers of women's rights.

Sarah Attar, Veiled Human Rights Subject

Through the desires of the International Olympic Committee and the Human Rights Watch, the idea of the Saudi female athlete became a reality. As an exceptional human rights subject, the Saudi female athlete would need to hail a western audience to evidence the "progress" of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia did not hold trials or tryouts for female athlete like most other countries do, so the selection process for these female athletes is unknown. We do know that the invitations were sent out right before the 2012 Olympics, leaving both athletes scrambling to make travel and wardrobe arrangements (Knickmeyer and Dawoud, 2012). Two female athletes represented Saudi Arabia in London, Juno wrestler, Wojdan Shaherkani and track runner, Sarah Attar, but only one woman would prevail as the exceptional human rights subject and model minority. While Shaherkani's more authentic Saudi voice and appearance would show the global public a

“real” Saudi women participating in athletics, Sarah Attar’s safe femininity and loose connections to Islam solidified her position as the preferred Saudi female athlete.

Wojdan Shaherkani, a teenager from Mecca, lived her entire life in Saudi Arabia and was only practicing Judo for two years before her debut at the 2012 Olympics. Both her and Attar were allowed into the Olympics based on an equity clause which, “allows athletes who didn't meet qualifying times to compete when their participation is deemed important for reasons of equality” (Knickmeyer and Dawoud, 2012). Shaherkani began participating in Judo because of her father’s support and guardianship. Under the strict guardianship practices of Saudi Arabia, Shaherkani could not go anywhere or participate in sports without her father’s presence. Thus, it was because of his permission and support that Wojdan could practice Judo recreationally. Because her story positions her as adhering to Saudi traditions, Shaherkani’s background and experiences position her as an authentic Saudi woman.

Unlike Shaherkani, Sarah Attar grew up in the US. She lived her entire life in California and is a US citizen. However, because her father was a Saudi citizen, Attar could also claim citizenship in Saudi Arabia. As a dual-citizen of the US and Saudi Arabia, Attar’s background looked very different than Shaherkani’s. Growing up and moving through space uninhibited, Attar’s track career began in junior high through traditional US education. Because so little is known or discussed about Attar’s actual ties to Saudi Arabia, we are left to question her connection to Saudi Arabia and her father (who’s the reason she’s able to compete for Saudi Arabia). Without much evidence to the contrary, it seems as though Attar’s national affiliation was to the US, but when approached with the opportunity to make history for Saudi Arabia, she utilized her dual

citizenship status to seize the opportunity. While it's interesting to question how Attar identifies herself (i.e., as an American, as a Saudi, or a Saudi American), the focus here isn't how she self-identifies; rather, it's about how she's positioned in the transnational sporting community. In the context of the 2012 London Olympics, the global community identified her as a dual-citizen that spent "little time in Saudi Arabia" (Associated Press, 2012). Despite this hint at the global community questioning her links to Saudi Arabia, they quickly glossed over it to celebrate her status as one of the first Saudi Arabian female Olympians. In comparison to Shaherkani's factual, authentic "Saudiness," Attar's was created through a global public's obsession with reporting on a gender equality milestone for Saudi Arabia.

Under these conditions, Attar got a pass by the global community, while Shaherkani still had to authenticate her story by locating her origin in Saudi Arabia and committing to Saudi cultural traditions. Attar's slender, feminine body directly contrasts Shaherkani's larger, masculine features. Shaherkani's slight facial hair above her lip further masculinizes her. Furthermore, Shaherkani's insistence on wearing traditional Islamic headwear, despite Judo's governing body declaring it unsafe, positions Shaherkani as an agent choosing traditional Islamic gender norms. While Attar also appears wearing a hijab during the Olympics, the lack of attention or conversation around Attar's head covering suggests that she wore it as a sign of convention not choice, further distancing her from "backwards" Saudi traditions.² The women's different choices in

² Without knowing how much the Saudi identity informed her life before the Olympics the only way I measure her adoption of head-covering is by looking at picture from her everyday life before the 2012 Olympics. None of these pictures show her wearing any head covering.

sports, Shaherkani's Judo and Attar's short-distance running, further splits along traditional gender lines, Shaherkani's being masculine and Attar's feminine. Racial identities and social location materialize power differentials on their bodies, producing Attar's dual-citizen subjectivity as feminine and privileged and Shaherkani's as Saudi and "traditional" and backwards. In this capacity, Shaherkani's authentic Saudiness and her masculine appearance actually indexes her as cloistered Saudi woman, while Attar's femininity, despite her loose ties to Saudi Arabia, position her as a "liberated" Saudi woman.

Attar's marketability to a western audience positions Attar as privileged based on a 21st century revision of the ideal human rights subject. Wendy Hesford and Wendy Kozol's discussion of the Afghan woman on the 1985 cover of *National Geographic* characterizes her as "the girl...in need of rescue, an exoticized "Other" onto whom discourse of international human rights has been placed" (2005, p. 1). The victim narrative that Hesford and Kozol cite has undergone a bit of a revision. Michele Murphy asserts that the new focus of human right organizations is "'The Girl' as a figure of transnational rescue and investment" (2013). The Nike foundation's plea "invest in a girl and she will do the rest" perfectly encapsulates the collision of neoliberalized feminism with human rights discourse. Neoliberalism as a cultural formation applies "market forces to...the most intimate realms of privacy by creating responsible subjectivities" (Prugl, 2014, p. 4). Thus, a neoliberalized feminism privileges responsible, self-reliable human rights subjects, and "The Girl," once invested in, is empowered to succeed on her own. Attar's story indexes ideas of equity and empowerment that speaks to a neoliberalized feminism. As young, college-attending girl empowered by participating in sport, Attar's

matches a neoliberalized feminism's human rights subject where no intervention is needed to help her succeed and become the first Saudi female Olympian. Through this line of analysis, the question of advantage surfaces. Between Shaherkani and Attar, which subject provides the best return on investment? Attar, an already empowered, western subject would need very little intervention, while Shaherkani, in the eyes of neoliberal feminists, would need to be "saved" from her father and "backwards" Saudi traditions. Furthermore, Attar actually links up better with Saudi "state-sponsored feminism" through western markers of empowerment including education and sports participation (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 294). Cleansing the Saudi image takes more than just representing actual Saudi women. A Saudi woman that appeared more approachable to a western public would better speak to a western human rights organizations call for women's rights.

The cosmopolitan wom[a]n...became the new face of Saudi Arabia after the public sphere was saturated with images of bearded Saudi Jihadis, polishing their rifles in hiding-places in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, quoting verses from the Quran and hadith calling upon Muslims to perform jihad, and celebrating their own contribution to suicide bombs and war against infidels. The soft face of the cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and articulate woman was the best weapon the state could summon in its war not only against terrorism but also against its demonisation in the international community. (Al-Rasheed, Madawi, 2013, p. 154)

Thus, Attar's marketability as a "can do" girl both positions her as the ideal human rights subject and a cosmopolitan Saudi woman.

During the 2012 London Olympics both Shaherkani and Attar were celebrated as remarkable for their barrier breaking performances (even though both women placed last in their events). Yet, the difference in how their images circulate offers the final word on which woman becomes the privileged Saudi female athlete. As I've shown above, Shaherkani's authentic Saudiness fails to hail a western neoliberal public because she's too traditionally Muslim, while Attar's cosmopolitan dual-citizenship and feminine forms of empowerment speak directly to the desires of a western public's ideal Saudi female human rights subject. The privileging of Attar's image, however, negatively affects futurity for Saudi women. Scholars focusing on the future argue that the least privileged subjectivities be highlighted in the implementation of social justice (Spade 2009; Butler, 2004; Kafer, 2013). In a transnational imaginary created through Attar as the ideal Saudi female athlete, her image indexes a middle-class, westernized femininity. Transferring her empowerment and representational power to Saudi women's lives proves impossible. While the Saudi government was happy to mildly support Attar for helping them cleanse their image, Saudi traditionalism still relies on an image of Saudi women as pious, submissive women.

Attar's image as the transnational "can do" (Harris, 2004) girl cannot offer Saudi women or the Saudi government a way to "imagine otherwise," (Butler, 2004, p.205) and thus, her image, while useful in allowing Saudi Arabia and the US to engage in reputation cleansing, hinders social justice opportunities to Saudi women. Thus, her transnationalness was an imaginary construct. While the 2012 Olympics became a bright hope for Saudi women, the contrasting images of Shaherkhani and Attar represent the poles of Saudi women—traditional and cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan image does not

offer a futurity for Saudi women. Thus, it would have been in furthering the image of Shaheerani that the global community would recognize complexity of Saudi women and in providing a complex image of Saudi women the potential for the global community to “imagine otherwise” with respect to Saudi Arabia was greater. However, because Attar became the privileged Saudi female athlete and because her choice was to return to the US and celebrate her accomplishment with her US public, further discussion of Saudi women’s rights was foreclosed. As she travels back to the US, Attar’s barrier-breaking performance loses its connection to Saudi Arabia and in the context of the US and neoliberalized feminism Attar does work for empowered, neoliberalized feminism.

Sarah Attar, “Global” Corporate Sponsor Under Oiselle

After the 2012 Olympics, Attar becomes relevant again, but this time her empowering image works in service of US women’s running apparel company, Oiselle. In April 2015, Oiselle signed Attar to its professional racing team, despite her unequivocal race performances. As a brand sponsor for Oiselle, her former Saudi connections function as a symbol of her status as global female icon, but without a deep connection to Saudi Arabia. Looking at Attar’s branding by Oiselle reveals how a neoliberalized feminism, deployed through discursive regimes of empowerment, equality, and opportunity, circulates through affect to privilege western, middle-class norms for women. I turn to analyze how affective branding strategies of Oiselle operates through the framework neoliberalized feminism in order to set up the conditions under which

Sarah Attar becomes a “model multicultural” brand sponsor for Oiselle, filling their need for diversity and performing cultural labor to position Oiselle’s feminism as “inclusive.”

Neoliberalized Feminism: Oiselle’s Affective Branding Strategies

Established in 2007, Sally Bergersen founded Oiselle with the goal of changing women’s running apparel. The company started by redesigning women’s running shorts to be more fashionable but quickly grew to offer a full line of women’s apparel. Today, Oiselle is best known for its feminist support of women’s running including representing pregnant athletes, providing sponsorship opportunities to struggling female athletes,³ and designing advertisements with the goal of empowering women to excel in athletics through the hashtags #womanup and #feminismfierce. The dualistic nature of Oiselle’s brand strategy can be seen in their charge that they cater to “the whole complicated enchilada that is women’s lives—jobs, pregnancy, kids, family, dreams, and reality—and how running fit into it rather than just selling cute clothes” (Barker, 2015). This statement shows two things: their targeted consumer audience and their use of authentic experiences for selling products. Attempting to provide a different experience between company and consumer, Bergersen, Oiselle’s founder and CEO believes “a brand can help you feel something about yourself” (Tumblr, 2014). Bergersen’s personal story of how running found her and how this affair with running led her to create a “new” kind of women’s running apparel company, evokes the type of emotional response she envisions

³ I use the term struggling here, but that’s not quite accurate. These are athletes who, through the support of Oiselle, are able to continue on with their athletic goals, instead of either giving them up or entering the workforce.

consumers having with a brand. The contours of Oiselle's marketing follows this affective structure. Oiselle's use of inspiring images and narratives from their sponsored female runners connects their product to feelings, making the advertisement experience more seamless. Their purposefully organic affective branding follows the logic of neoliberalized feminism. In looking at the branding campaign and how Sarah Attar fits in, I show how Oiselle's use of affect to promote a lifestyle for women according to white, middle-class social norms.

Through the use of storied marketing campaigns where consumers are taken through an athlete's journey on social media—the highs, the lows, the personal moments—Oiselle's brand strategy employs the centering of pathos. This affective branding strategy places Oiselle in the realm of selling products through a normative idea of women. The rise of neoliberalism in the 21st century makes it imperative that we question how affect works. Jennifer Wingard argues, “capitalist structures have infiltrated our most intimate understandings of the world but not by making us rational actors. Instead it is by making us *reactive*, in the sense that we make economic decisions based on ideological and economic cues” (p. 11, 2013). When combined with the celebration of women's lives through the branding of clothes, Oiselle's alignment with neoliberalized feminism becomes clear. Thus, through affective economies (i.e., narratives, branding, and empowerment initiatives) neoliberalized feminism offers women images that fit with the discursive regimes of equality, empowerment, and opportunity to forward the ideological agenda of women's rights. In this light, the decision to purchase a pair of running shorts is entangled with the consumer's feelings about the empowered images and stories of Oiselle's female athletes. Yet, instead of being wholly inclusionary, these

affective economies can act policing mechanisms. Sarah Ahmed argues, “emotions create the very surfaces and boundaries that allow all kinds of objects to be delineated” (2004, p. 10) as well as “how we become invested in social norms” (2004, p.12).

Returning to branding, it is under neoliberalism that we witness the expansion of brand language and logic to our personal selves, where individuals often feel obliged to not only construct, but to understand themselves as brands (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Within this system of self-branding, affect structures the stories of our brands while also producing social norms. Neoliberalized feminism privileges social norms of white, middle class, heterosexual women through affective economies that circulate the discursive regimes of equality, empowerment, and opportunity.

Oiselle’s celebration of women aligns with neoliberalized feminism, for it assumes a norm of women as white, middle-class, and heterosexual. Discussing race in women’s magazines, Angela McRobbie calls this celebration a “re-colonizing mechanism” in which “popular culture re-instates racial hierarchies within the field of femininity by invoking, across the visual field, a norm of nostalgic whiteness” (2008, p. 43). While Oiselle sponsors a few other non-white women as well as Sarah Attar, on the whole their sponsored athletes present, in the visual field, as white. Furthermore, Oiselle’s three most celebrated runners, Lauren Fleshman, Kara Goucher, and Kate Grace, all adhere to the norm of whiteness within sports and are championed as barrier breakers for being extraordinary women. Oiselle’s adoption of Lauren Fleshman, a charismatic figure in women’s running, provides an example how social norms of whiteness condition Oiselle’s feminism. Fleshman was the first “big” name to join Oiselle in 2013 in what Oiselle called a “Partnership Aimed at Creating New Products,

Opportunities & Messages for Female Athletes” (Oiselle, 2013). Fleshman was also pregnant at the time when she signed with Oiselle, something unprecedented in the professional sponsorship of athletes worldwide. After the birth of her son in 2013, Fleshman made headlines by walking the runway during New York fashion week for Oiselle. Photos appeared showing her extremely trim body just three months after having a baby. Many reacted in awe of her body’s ability to bounce back after having a baby but Fleshman, in a blog post titled “Keeping It Real,” posted pictures taken immediately before and after her runway walk showing her saggy stomach and cellulite thighs. Fleshman further articulates how unrealistic images of women are “pretty crap for the overall self-confidence of everyone who looks at them” (2013). Fleshman’s leadership and outspoken voice on the subject of women’s bodies and women’s body image represents what McRobbie calls “mild, and media-friendly version of feminism” in which safer political discussions like those of body image cover up more complex ones about race, privilege, sexuality, and nationality. Thus, Fleshman’s whiteness is never questioned as a problem; rather, she’s celebrated and in turn sold through Oiselle’s brand strategy as a feminist. Thus, this feminism links to neoliberalized feminism by corporatizing feminist issues (like body image) and selling them through safe, white figures. It is within this context that Sarah Attar joins Oiselle to diversify its lineup, as a safe, global, feminist figure.

Model Multicultural, Sarah Attar

Under the above neoliberalized feminist affective formations, Oiselle presents to a US female audience an empowered, unveiled Sarah Attar much different than the Sarah

Attar of the 2012 London Olympics. By joining Oiselle, Attar stands along women's running icons Lauren Fleshman and Kara Goucher as a "sister." A closer look into the way Oiselle celebrates Attar in comparison to their white athletes reveals that Attar labors for Oiselle as the model multicultural. Jaspir Puar defines the model multicultural in the following way:

The ethnic aids the project of whiteness through his or her participation in global economic privileges that then fraction him or her away from racial alliances that would call for cross-class affinities even as the project of multiculturalism might make him or her seem truly and authentically representative of his or her ethnicity. (2007, p. 31)

The work that the model multicultural does, as Puar notes, appears to be for diversity, but on closer inspection, the image of the model multicultural works to uphold whiteness in so far as this image discloses the model multicultural from alliances with his/her own culture by representing whiteness as diverse and accepting. Leela Fernandes articulates a similar idea through her notion of the traveling subaltern. In this capacity, Attar functions as a "traveling subaltern engage[ing] in forms of affective and ideological labor—producing value for the affective economy—in the various nations to which he or she migrates" (Fernandes, 2013, p.67). During the 2012 Olympics, Attar hailed a western public to show them an empowered Saudi woman, but as her image travels back to the US under the sponsorship of Oiselle, her Saudi image is discarded.

Attar writes a blog for Oiselle to introduce herself as the newest Haute Volee and in it, she downplays the athleticism of her 2012 Olympic performance. She calls her performance "an unexpected beautiful journey" alongside reminding the audience that

she didn't really qualify for the Olympics (Attar, 2012). Here, Attar sets herself up to be seen as more of an inspiring figure than an athlete. She further narrates a recent trip to Saudi Arabia where she spoke to a group of girls about the importance of sport. What's striking about her reporting of that trip is that she narrates a story in which she and her sister went for a run. Attar writes, "There weren't many others out running, and definitely no other females running. When you are passionate about something you will find a way to make it work" (Attar, 2012). The context of her running in public in Saudi Arabia is much more serious than just making it work. In a country where complex gender hierarchies forbid women to go out in public without men, Attar de-links her running from this and instead connects to a more neoliberalized feminist "bootstraps" idea of hard work despite the situation. Furthermore, this story is accompanied by two images, one shows herself and her sister running in a full hijab near the coast while the other shows Attar in running tights and a jacket running trails near the coast. While it's unclear if the latter image is from her trip to Saudi Arabia, the fact that it accompanies her story of running in Saudi Arabia despite the odds conveys a very safe image to a US public of Saudi Arabia. On one hand, the images in the article where she's dressed in a hijab show that she can conform to Saudi female standards, but on the other hand, the images in the article where she's unveiled—dressed in Oiselle gear including running tights and short sleeved shirts—provide Oiselle's audience (their consumers) with an image of a safe Muslim woman, one that only wears a hijab when necessary and gets in her run no matter what. Apart from her brown skin, Attar appears similar to other Oiselle brand sponsors, wearing their "cute clothing," smiling, and sporting an athletic pony tail. This recalls Puar's notion of the model multicultural minority, where non-white individuals are

incentivized to adhere to social norms of whiteness in order to gain some power in the western world. “This requires gender and sexual normativity and the reproduction of the hybrid multicultural body politic in exchange for lucrative possibilities within the global economy” (Puar, 2007, p.27). Attar, thus, is incentivized to shed any Saudi traditionalism in order to gain power in the US running world.

Alongside shedding a Saudi appearance, Attar also discards her Saudi roots. In interviews since her Olympic debut, she doesn't mention how she's connected to Saudi Arabia, just that she has dual-citizenship status. Furthermore, some articles even disconnect her Olympic performance from Saudi Arabia. A Competitor magazine article from this summer starts off with: “Three years ago, Sarah Attar, now 22, competed in the 800 meters at the London Olympics” (Polachek, 2015). While the article eventually gets to and briefly discusses her participation *for* Saudi Arabia, the article directly contrasts transnational media leading up to and directly following the Olympics that celebrated her participation as a win for human rights in Saudi Arabia. Finally, Attar's Olympic performance gets re-narrated as “nothing” into comparison to her more “important” career in marathon and ultramarathon running. It is no accident that these two areas of women's running are new and growing areas rife with empowered female consumer with disposable income. Furthermore, Oiselle, as a brand that relies on the “love” of US fans/consumers, welcomes Attar by allowing her to tell her story, which follows the narration of her Saudi accomplishment into her current love of marathon and ultramarathon running. Along these lines, the Saudi experience is told as a “stage” of her life that is over and thus, US fans/consumers of Oiselle, can safely support a more western, consumer friendly version of Attar, one of Attar without the hijab. Attar adds a

“diversity” to Oiselle’s mostly white, middle-class, heterosexual, lineup of brand sponsors, and her diversity indexes the “safe” model multicultural minority. Thus, through her image and stories, she provides cultural labor for Oiselle, offering them an easy minority subject that can be loved by brands/fans and setting up their celebration of Attar.

Attar’s diversity comes at a cost, for Oiselle’s love for her, as evidenced by their celebration of her on social media, does not nearly equate to the love they give other athletes on the Haute Volee team. In fact, by comparison to her other teammates, Attar’s presence on the Haute Volee team raises more suspicion than affirmation, for her race times do not compare to her teammates. Attar has Marathon time of 3:11.27, thirty minutes slower than her teammates and an 800m run of 2:44.95, forty seconds slower than her teammates. Both times label her as a recreational runner at best, yet, because of her Olympic performance, Attar found herself a sponsored athlete. On a team where 31 of the 36 runners are white, Attar’s race and her sub-par athletic performance label her as the model multicultural, for her addition to the team shows diversity instead of extraordinary athletic performance. Furthermore, Oiselle does not celebrate Attar on their social media as much as they do her other teammates. An analysis of Oiselle’s Twitter shows that Oiselle mentioned Sarah Attar a total of thirty-two times since her joining the team in 2015. For comparison, I found an athlete who joined the Haute Volee around the same time, Andrea Duke, and noted they she was mentioned sixty-eight times by Oiselle on Twitter. Similarly, I looked at the two runners as they both appear on Oiselle’s blog. Attar is mentioned three times and Duke is mentioned seventeen. This quantitative data,

coupled with Oiselle's neoliberalized feminism and my qualitative analysis of their unveling of Attar shows how Oiselle uses Attar's story to position its brand as diverse.

2016 Olympics: Comparing Oiselle's Girls, Kate Grace and Sarah Attar

Oiselle's positioning of Attar as the model multicultural is further articulated during the 2016 Olympics where Kate Grace, Oiselle's favorite Olympian, is heavily celebrated, while Sarah Attar, once again running for Saudi Arabia, plays only a marginal role in Oiselle's social media. Before I analyze the difference here, I must note that Rule 40 applies during the Olympics. What this means is that companies that are not title sponsors of the games undergo a sponsorship blackout period from July 27 to August 24, limiting the use of an athlete's image and name in promotions. Thus, Oiselle could not officially celebrate either Olympians, but it is my contention that Oiselle used creative methods to get around Rule 40 to celebrate Grace, but did not do the same for Attar.

Kate Grace, 800m runner, represents the safe American image—young, white, heterosexual, middle class. She has become a favorite Oiselle's athlete, for they use her in advertisements, clothing, and social media quite frequently. The day before the blackout period, Oiselle sent out a tweet wishing luck to their Olympians Kate Grace, Maria Michta-Coffey, and Marai Elena Calle, notably missing from this celebration is their other Olympian, Sarah Attar. During the blackout period, Oiselle developed sneaky tactics to mention Grace, including tweets that rhyme with her first name (Kate), calling her "the Finalist," and retweeting things others said. In total, Oiselle mentioned Grace fourteen times during the blackout period. These mentions indirectly pointed out only

Grace. Furthermore, after Grace's final race, placing 10/10 in the 800m final, the homepage of Oiselle's website feature the following statement:

Four years ago, a woman started her journey for the USA on the biggest sport stage in the world. Now her dream is real. With Grace and speed. Now she runs for her country, and she runs for us all. So much love. (Oiselle, 2016)

This statement represents support by Oiselle for Grace. This support goes beyond the pride of a sponsor, capitalizing on affect of the audience/consumers. The pride of the sponsor is transferred to the pride of the consumer, inspiring Oiselle's female audience and furthering the love for Grace.

Notably absent from Oiselle's social media during the blackout period is any mention of Sarah Attar. During the Blackout, Oiselle's Twitter mentioned Attar three times and only one time directly. The one direct mention links to an article in which Sally Bergersen, CEO, is interviewed by the Washington Post on the creation of Attar's costume for the marathon. Once again it's not about Attar or her running. Instead, the article places her running into a cultural perspective. Oiselle's CEO is not asking her public to celebrate Attar with her, rather, she's asking the public to witness this model multicultural moment—the most contested Muslim female act—the covering (Abu-Lughod, 2002). Oiselle is able to position itself as a company that is accepting and diverse by outfitting a Saudi woman for the marathon. Thus, instead of celebrating Attar's run as an athletic achievement (i.e., giving her a “good job”), Oiselle uses her run to forward their company as diverse. Yet, this diversity lacks depth, for simply supporting one dual-citizenship-holding Saudi athlete merely represents the façade of diversity and,

additionally, using a model multicultural to exhibit diversity shows the company's lack of commitment to real social justice for Saudi women.

Conclusion

Linking the rhetorical occasions of Saudi Arabia as one of the worst offenders of human rights, the HRW and the IOCs desires for female empowerment, the first Saudi female athletes at 2012 Olympics, and Oiselle's branding of Sarah Attar reveals the work that the image of a multicultural female athlete does. Referencing the recovery work of women's rhetoric, Rebecca Dingo argues "women, and their rhetorical acts, can no longer serve as the only central objects of study; rather, women (and discourses about woman) must be recognized as part of a network of relationships that affect how women's identities are represented in various situations" (2012, p. 17). It is not enough to pay attention to the purposeful presentation of women's rhetoric and rhetorical acts: we must also understand how women are framed through multiple rhetorical occasions. It is my contention that looking at figures and formations like Attar who function as vectors of power for the west expose the transmission of western cultural logics through model multicultural citizens. Thus, while it is important for transnational feminist scholars to look at how movement of ideas, people, and information operates across borders, I believe it is also important to look at how movement can also hide sedimented identities and ideologies. Here, Attar's image shifts slightly when travelling from Saudi Arabia (via the London Olympics) to the US; however, the function stays the same, for she works in service of circulating western feminist cultural logics both within western and non-western contexts. My case study of how hegemony travels with Attar in multiple contexts

provides transnational feminist scholars with exigency for analyzing benign and exceptional subjects closer in order to uncover how they circulate dominant cultural logics across national borders.

A skeptic might ask, what's the harm in Attar being positioned by these different organizations and companies? Isn't her representation doing positive work for Saudi women? Rebecca Dingo offers this: "feminist rhetorical analysis must account for how power operates through, and then is sometimes masked by, arguments, persuasion, and circulation" (2012, p. 146). Attar's embodiment as the ideal Saudi woman, limits the futurity for Saudi women. Attar appears as a model multicultural subject that mirrors western norms of female embodiment ("pretty," slender, long-haired). Both the Olympic Committee and Oiselle's privileging of Attar and her "less oriental" and ultra-feminine body and her empowered attitude limits the chances of imaging a future for Saudi women in sports. The celebration of Attar's victory signals to the west that Saudi women can be equal; yet, the material reality of Saudi women's lives aren't changed. Under Saudi traditions women still aren't allowed to enter co-ed gyms. Female only gyms are expensive and obesity is almost at epidemic levels for Saudi women. Celebrating the first Saudi female athlete as a major victory for gender equality only ignores the material realities of life for Saudi women take place in the larger context of traditional gender roles, religious customs, and transnational politics.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

While Title IX continues to expand opportunities in sports for privileged US women and girls, it simultaneously forecloses opportunities to marginalized women and girls from the global north and global south. Looking at the way Title IX operates in transnational contexts underscores a paradox of participation that surfaces through the transnational and intersectional analyses presented in my case studies. A “paradox expands the scope of probability by introducing a potential truth expressed in apparent contradiction” (Moore, 1998, p. 16). While it seems contradictory to think about Title IX, a law that has expanded the number of women participating in sports, as hindering participation for non-privileged women or as an apparatus of disciplinary power, Title IX networks ideas of equity, opportunity, empowerment to privileged female identities, and thus regulates participation in sports for nonprivileged women. Accordingly, the discourse of Title IX in transnational contexts does more to hold up neoliberalized feminism of the global north than it does to actually increase equity, empowerment, and opportunity for female athletes in the global south. Branding campaigns, policies, and SDP projects that celebrate sport participation for women through universalist assumptions (i.e., that all women are the same) create unacknowledged privileges in women’s sports. Welch Suggs (2005) and Jessica Gavora (2003) argue that inequalities along the lines of race and sexuality are created when gender is the only consideration in legislating US sport participation. As my case studies show, these inequalities also persist at the global level and I argue that the traveling discourse of Title IX produces negative effects for female athletes in the global south.

Take for example the girl effect logic illustrated by the phrase “invest in a girl.” This logic operates in SDP projects like *Women Win*, offering that through participation in sports, girls and women can become empowered leaders with the capacity for change. However, this logic breaks down when considering how the IOC attempted to restrict Caster Semenya’s participation in women’s sports. Through linking the arguments of Title IX with The Girl Effect, we see how the cultural logics and ideological underpinnings of the global north place barriers on female athletes from the global south. Based on The Girl Effect logic, Caster Semenya makes an excellent girl to invest in and her story of how running helped her out of poverty in South Africa would probably find a home in *Women Win*’s digital storytelling project. However, this same idea of equity is challenged because instead of becoming an empowered leader, she’s banned from participation in and ridiculed by women’s sports because of hyperandrogenism, despite living her whole life as a woman. Placing Semenya and the girls of *Women Win* side by side exposes a paradox of participation that highlights the contradictory nature of equity as it travels from the global north. Networking *Women Win*’s selling of equity through Girl Effect logics with the policies that prohibited Caster Semenya from participating in women’s sports ascertains the centrality of the global north’s ideas of equity and participation in transnational sporting contexts. Under Title IX, participation makes women equal within the US, yet because Title IX inspires the policies and protocols that legislate equity in sports, the equity of these policies and protocols are placed under scrutiny when analyzed through a transnational feminist lens.

Looking at the way the ideal image of the female athlete does work in transnational contexts furthers the notion that Title IX creates a paradox of participation

as it travels globally. Because Title IX evidences increased participation for women in sports, it should also aid in expanding the image of the female athlete. However, as a regulatory system that operates across nation state borders, Title IX limits the image of the female. In understanding the racial and colonial implications of neoliberal representations, Angela McRobbie terms these to be “re-colonizing mechanism[s]...[that] re-instate racial hierarchies within the field of femininity by invoking, across the visual field, a norm of nostalgic whiteness” (2008, p. 43). I would add to her characterization the norms of, binary gender, heterosexuality, and nationality. In her genealogy of the concept of the girl in neoliberal times, Anita Harris argues that “this new interest in looking at and hearing from girls is not just celebratory, but is, in part, regulatory as well” (2003, p. 1). In the 21st century, the celebration and sisterhood narratives of Title IX network neoliberalized feminism and act as regulatory systems ensuring the racial, gendered, national, and sexuality norms of the female athlete. Thus, when Title IX travels, the ideal image of the female athlete follows and operates as a regulatory system, allowing non-privileged athletes participation only insofar as they conform to normative identities. In transnational sporting contexts, this image operates paradoxically as both an empowerment tool and as a barrier to women in the global south. The “can do girl,” Sarah Attar, becomes a cultural figure representing the global north’s desires for Saudi Arabia to expand women’s rights (Harris, 2003). However, Attar’s representation is limited to the ways in which she links up to the global north’s cultural logics, for she’s actually a US dwelling citizen and she practices US traditions, only wearing traditional Saudi female attire during the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. This image does more work for the global north than it does for women in the global south and as such Wojdan

Shaherkani, an actual Saudi-dwelling woman who also competed in the 2012 Olympics for Saudi Arabia, fails to have the same impact as Attar. Similarly, Attar is utilized by the IOC and Oiselle—imported into Saudi Arabia and exported back to the US—as a model multicultural (Puar, 2007), offering a transnational organization and a brand hoping to shed its homogeneous (i.e., white, heterosexual, and middle-class) image a diverse portfolio.

Considering Caster Semenya and Sarah Attar alongside each other complicates the paradox of participation along racial, gendered, and national lines. Both Semenya and Attar are female athletes representing the global south. Yet, the two differ in quality of athletic performance—Semenya as exceptional, Attar as ordinary. Attar’s ordinary performances are championed by the media through neoliberal values of hard work and women’s rights. The media celebrates Attar making history as one the first Saudi Arabian female Olympians alongside characterizations of her trainings as “widening, deepening and toughening her athleticism” (Culpepper, 2016). Along these lines, Attar is revered despite her ordinary performances, finishing last in the 800m in the 2012 Olympics and finishing second-to-last in the Marathon in the 2016 Olympics. Conversely, Semenya’s exceptional performance, a gold medal and a national record in the 800m in the 2016 Olympics, draws heavy scrutiny from the media. Paula Radcliffe, a representative of Britain and the current female world record holder in the marathon, spoke out against Semenya’s participation in the 2016 Olympic arguing:

We know that there are certain communities where we know the condition of intersex/hyperandrogenism is more prevalent. We don’t want to get to the situation where people are actively going to those communities to seek out girls

who look like they are going to be able to perform and run fast...It becomes a manipulated situation where the...ethics of fair sport are being manipulated.

(Radcliffe, 2016)

Radcliffe's statement captures the media's scrutiny of Semenya and transfers it to all exceptional women from the global south. Her statement further complicates the paradoxical nature of participation elicited through Title IX's cultural logics. Radcliffe's own exceptional performances call on women to participate and excel, but in this statement, she is questioning exceptional athletic achievements by women of the global south. Thus, when we network the arguments surrounding Attar's and Semenya's athletic performances, it becomes apparent that participation by an athlete representing the global south can only be celebrated if it is ordinary and links to the values of neoliberalized feminism. The notion that all women should be celebrated as athletes despite the quality of performance gets flipped on its head when race, nation, and binary gender enter the equation.

An image of Caster Semenya standing beside two white athletes embracing at the 2016 Olympics provides visual evidence contradicting Title IX's values of equity, opportunity, and empowerment as it travels across nation-state borders. Directly after Caster Semenya's win in the 800m, fellow competitors Melissa Bishop of Canada and Lynsey Sharp of Great Britain embrace while an unacknowledged Caster Semenya extends her arm to the two white women. Lynsey Sharp had been an outspoken critic against Semenya competing without supplementation for her hyperandrogenism. After the race, Sharp went on record saying "how much we rely on people at the top sorting it out. The public can see how difficult it is with the change of rule but all we can do is give

it our best” (*Guardian Sport*, 2016). The “we” that Sharp refers to does not include Semenya; rather, it other white athletes like the one she embraces. Furthermore, Poland’s Joanna Jozwik, who finished fifth in the 800m between Bishop and Sharp, was caught saying: “I’m glad I’m the first European, the second white” (Karkazis, 2016). This remark, alongside the image of white athletes holding Semenya at arm’s length, depicts how the discourse of Title IX negatively impacts women from the global south. These white athletes, so upset that their hard work didn’t pay off, got a pass from the media for acting like entitled sore losers. Yet, Caster Semenya, although legally allowed to participate in the 2016 Olympics, was subject to hostile discourse from fans and participants. Semenya won gold and set a national record that evening, but her barrier-breaking performance wasn’t championed; rather, it was questioned by white athletes from the global north. These white athletes, armed with their hard work helped shape the discourse against Semenya, exclaiming that Semenya’s victory was the result of heightened testosterone not the same dedication and hard work. Hard-working white athletes become victims in this story and Semenya, with her naturally-occurring high testosterone levels, becomes the culprit.¹

By drawing connections across my case studies, it is apparent that there are winners and losers. *Women Win* wins because they can easily repackage their mission through the stories of the girls, but the girls lose control of their own stories along with the potential to use these stories to help their community. Oiselle, the Saudi Government, and the IOC win (with the help of Sarah Attar) while Saudi women like Wojdan

¹ Hard work is another pillar of neoliberalized feminism and a celebrated trait in the discourse of Title IX.

Shaherkani lose. Although she won gold and set a national record at the 2016 Olympics, Caster Semenya loses to public opinion. Undoubtedly, her white competitors garner sympathy through their work ethic and, despite the fact that these athletes failed to medal, they win and will mostly likely help sway the IAAF to quickly gather enough scientific evidence to prohibit Semenya from participating without alterations.

In effect, this dissertation argues that Title IX negatively impacts sports in transnational contexts. By looking at how a piece of legislation works in the realm of ideology through the circulation dominant cultural logics, this study pushes the scholarship on ground-breaking legislation like *Roe v. Wade* and the Civil Rights Act. Like Title IX, both pieces of legislation have impacted underprivileged populations at their time of inception. Yet today, these laws also carry with them the dangerous cultural logics of “post-” movements like post-feminism and post-racism which provide cultural signposts signaling to the world that women and minorities are equal. While the daily reality of life for women and minorities decidedly acts as evidence contrary to claim of equality, the specter of the Civil Rights Act and *Roe v. Wade* sways public opinion to counter this evidence. My study of Title IX provides scholars an exigence for looking at how laws carry with them and distill ideological messages.

Limitations

Jean Grow’s (2006) case study of Nike women’s sub-brand argues that women’s stories changed the fabric of Nike’s male-dominated advertising team to create “If you Let Me Play” (1995), an ad that uses women and girl’s participation as the basis of selling product. She describes these women’s stories as “antenarratives that resisted

hegemonic masculine notions of femininity” (Grow, 2008, p. 338). Yet, her institutional ethnography stops at this moment, claiming victory for feminists in the boardroom. This dissertation asks feminists in the boardroom to think more ethically, offering how the selling of Title IX through neoliberalized feminism, celebrated by Grow, has marginalized women. In looking through transnational feminist and intersectional lenses at the selling of Title IX transnational sporting contexts, this dissertation contributes to the social justice project of rhetorical studies, women and gender studies, and sports feminism by centralizing the question “who counts as the human, and the related question of whose lives count as lives” (Butler, 2004, p. 18). Without a critical transnational feminist lens, the celebrations of Title IX are lost as significant texts to interrogate. Looking at Title IX through a critical transnational feminist lens exposes it as a branded discourse used to articulate neoliberalized feminism and regulate transnational sporting occasions through the norms of race, gender, nation, and sexuality. Thus, understanding how these policies map neoliberalized feminist lives unto transnational sporting practices allows scholars and policymakers to better articulate positions that “center the experiences of the most vulnerable people first” (Spade, 2009). Furthermore, by moving marginal experiences in sport to the center, a richer, transnational experience in sport allows for arguments that promote access to sport in the terms of a local understanding of cultures without dismissing them as backwards or undeserving. Finally, if we believe, as many SDP initiatives claim, that sport really is a catalyst for change women’s lives, a transnational understanding of women’s lives and sports unhinged from neoliberalized feminism allows a space to really listen to women from the global south to understand how they foresee and employ sport outside of narrow NGO employment. Women’s

sports must be analyzed from a transnational feminist lens to better understand how the people, organizations, and products at the center arbitrate the conditions of participation for women and girls at the margins.

Even as this dissertation adds to understandings of Title IX and women's sports in transnational contexts that are often overlooked, it is unavoidably limited. As a researcher I chose three rhetorical occasions with the most depth that also represent typical problems in transnational women's sports. However, transnational women's sports—from the women's world cup to Wimbledon—provide endless occasions for critical transnational feminist rhetorical analysis. Furthermore, this dissertation focuses on news and social media as sites of analysis. A trained ethnographer with the means to travel to transnational sporting sites and occasions would be able to capture another layer by interviewing fans, athletes, and corporate actors to help further articulate how Title IX travels. This dissertation is one contribution in studying Title IX's operation in transnational contexts. My hope is that scholars in women's studies, feminist legal studies, sports studies, and rhetoric and composition will add to my findings and enrich the analysis of Title IX as it operates globally.

Future Projects

By exploring Title IX as a transnational phenomenon, this dissertation inspires future research in both local and transnational spaces. While much of the dissertation traces Title IX as it transmits neoliberalized feminist ideas of equity, empowerment, and opportunity across nation-state borders, work is still need to understand how neoliberalized feminism networked to 21st century celebrations of Title IX does work in

the US. Specifically looking at how marginalized female athletes are positioned differently through Title IX's discursive regime would offer a more complete picture of Title IX's reach. Welch Suggs (2005) and Jessica Gavora (2003) look at how legal enactments of Title IX give uneven privileges to white women, but their data mostly comes from legal cases. A further study of how Title IX circulates neoliberalized feminism in the US and how that impacts marginalized female athletes and non-profits like *Girls on the Run* is needed to better understand and how marginalized female athletes in the global north compare to marginalized athletes from the global south. Also, another complicated transnational site of inquiry involves athletes from the global south that live and train in the US. Some of these athletes are recruited by the US and represent the US, while others are offered visas to train and live here but they compete for the country of birth. In terms of sponsorship and policies, these complex situations leaves me to wonder how cultural logics and ideological underpinnings travel back and forth. Finally, this dissertation overlooks how men and boys are also transnational sporting subjects that circulate dominant ideas of masculinity. The masculine counter to Title IX's participation is performance and in the search for the greatest athlete, transnational transactions can offer insight into the neoliberal politics of performance in men's sports.

Because studying the circulating discourses of neoliberalized feminism in transnational women's sports is such new and rich terrain for scholars, my research merely touches the surface of how Title IX travels and operates in transnational contexts. It is important for the future of women's sports for research to continue to interrogate how the cultural logics and ideological underpinning of the global north impact sports in transnational contexts.

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