Drivers and Danica, Start Your Engines!

The Case of Danica Patrick in NASCAR

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Chapter I

Introduction

Danica Patrick was introduced in a shower of fireworks, as the pole winner of the 2013 Daytona 500. It was her first year racing as the first and only full-time female driver in the elite Sprint Cup series of National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing (NASCAR). She is also the first and only female driver to qualify fastest at NASCAR’s premiere Daytona 500. Her top speed in qualifying laps was 196.43 mph. She beat out four-time NASCAR champion and racing legend Jeff Gordon by .033 of a second. Crowds cheered Patrick as stepped onto the back of a pick-up truck that drove her around the 2.5 mile oval in her introductory lap. Fans greeted her with hand painted held signs proclaiming, “GIRL POWER.” At the end of that lap, she climbed into her #10 Go Daddy Stewart-Hass Chevrolet, fastened her safety harness, put on her driving gloves, and donned her helmet. Actor James Franco gave the command to start the race: “Drivers, and….Danica! START YOUR ENGINES!”

This scene illustrates the case of Patrick in NASCAR: She is a record breaking racecar driver and simultaneously separated from her fellow competitors. Patrick is marked as a female body in a sport that is often associated with traditional gender norms (Vavrus, 2007). Her entry as a full time driver in NASCAR presents a unique opportunity address gender tensions across sport and female athletes, generally, and specifically as sporting heroines. To this end, I offer this case study of Patrick in NASCAR to illustrate contemporary understandings, meanings, and contestations over gender.

Background, Justifications, and Contributions

I address Patrick and NASCAR from the case study approach to allow me to examine this real-world phenomenon that as guided by and connected to relevant perspectives and previous
examinations, without limiting complexities and nuances (Yin, 2012; 2014). The broad area of socialization is implicated as gender is taught and learned in this process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006). Within that broad umbrella of socialization, I examine sport and gender from the perspectives of hegemonic masculinity, female athletes from the understandings of the body, and sports heroines as role models (Bird, 1996; Butler, 2011; Connell, 1987; Meân & Kassing, 2008).

**Sport and Gender**

Broadly, sport spans and reflects human history (Beck & Bosshart, 2003). Towards the beginning, early humans had to combine physical and mental abilities to survive (Beck & Bosshart, 2003). Then, sport evolved with human society, often illustrating shifting tensions in that society (Beck & Bosshart, 2003). For instance, the contemporary sporting world was formed based on threats to masculinity including financial instability and women’s suffrage at the turn of the twentieth century (Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). More recently, the rise and legitimization of extreme sports shows shifts in generational values: individual aesthetic sporting performances as associated with millennials, are more valued over conformity and teamwork, as associated with previous generations (D. Browne, 2004; Jones, 2013). Consequently, sport is not neutral terrain, rather it is one on which meanings are created, maintained, promoted, and challenged (Messner, 2007).

Young girls and boys are taught what it means to be girls and boys, as well as how to behave according to gender appropriate standards, in the sporting domain (Berg, Migliaccio, & Anzini-Varesio, 2013; Messner, 1992). However, what is feminine is defined in contrast and subservience to masculinity because sport promotes masculine ideals (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). As a result, sport is implicated as an arena of meaning
contestation over gender and how individuals are socialized into their gender(s) (Messner, 1992, 2007; Theberge, 2000).

One of the ways to address the socialization and contestation of gender in sport is from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Trujillo, 1991). Hegemonic masculinity helps to explain how the feminine is subordinated and segregated in sport (Connell, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messner, 1995). As a hegemonic ideology, it naturalizes the domination of certain men over women based on “natural masculine” traits such as greater physical strength, fatherhood, and increased earning abilities. Trujillo (1991) offered five overlapping internal characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, including aggression (force and control) and patriarchal (patriarchy) domination.

In sport, male athletes are encouraged to be aggressive, while women should be protected from that aggression (Messner, 1992, 2002). As a result, sportswomen in aggressive sports or competing aggressively against men may be considered to be deviant (Messner, 2002; Methany, 1965). Patrick is one of the few females completing as a full-time athlete with and against men in a motorsport in which “trading paint,” “bumping and running,” and trackside fights are the norm. Therefore, the entry of Patrick into NASCAR offers a distinctive opportunity to address aggression, as a characteristic, within the perspective of hegemonic masculinity.

Patriarchy originates from the private home and a father is naturalized as having rights to dominate over his family, because he protects and provides for them (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Walby, 1986). To illustrate how the internal characteristics of hegemonic masculinity overlap, one of the ways fathers exert control over their families is based on the threat of violence (Connell, 2002; Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004). From the home, male domination reaches out and is naturalized into broader society (Millet, 1970). A gendered division of labor is
justified as the patriarch provides for the family (Messner & Bozada-Deas, 2009). In other words, he works to provide and she works to care for her provider. This norm is exacerbated when a woman out earns her male partner. She often increases her compliance to gender norms to compensate for the couple’s deviation from those norms (Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson, 2003; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000). This sense of familial patriarchy is important as NASCAR stakeholders express their relationships in terms of family. In it, Patrick cannot be a NASCAR patriarch and she is not married. So, her role in the NASCAR family is that of a daughter. Additionally, Patrick is one of the top ten highest paid drivers in the sport. Accordingly, her case provides a unique insight into aggression, patriarchy, and to the issues of gendered work, within the broader framework of hegemonic masculinity.

Lastly, as a hegemonic force, this form of dominant masculinity is not easily challenged (Gramsci, 1971). Hegemonic masculinity is characterized by internal contradictions that offers ways of shifting and adaptation that reassert masculine domination as well as ways to resist it (Demetriou, 2001, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Patrick is the first and only full time female driver in NASCAR. She is one of the very few athletes who regularly competes with and against men in any major professional sport. Therefore, her entry into NASCAR presents a unique opportunity to examine hegemonic masculinity, in terms of specific internal characteristics and as a broad ideology. As such, my first research question is:

RQ1: In what ways does the case of Danica Patrick address sport and gender, broadly, from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity in terms of salient internal features (aggression and patriarchal domination), reconfiguration and appropriation societal shifts, as well as transformational possibilities.
My examination of this case may extend existing understandings of gender and sport, from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. Next, I narrow my focus from the broad area of sport and gender to address female athletes.

**Female Athletes**

Sportswomen are considered the inferior sex and are often characterized as females who play at sport (Meân & Kassing, 2008; Pfister, 2010). In other words, sportswomen cannot simply be athletes because sport is an important domain in which masculinity is created and promoted (Birrell, 1998). Women are segregated and excluded from sport based on gendered perceptions of feminine weakness and fragility (Roth & Basow, 2004). However, that weakness is not natural but often learned during the socialization process (Roth & Basow, 2004). Hence, female athletes are perceived of as unnatural bodies in sport, and their bodies are sites of meaning contestation (Messner, 1998).

From the perspective of the body, gender norms guide and limit how women may perform as athletes (Butler, 1993, 2011). By performance of gender, I refer to Butler’s (1993, 2011) assertions that gender is not a natural expression that is based on biological sex. Rather, gender norms are constructed via historical and reiterated practices that become material by heterosexual hegemonic power (Butler, 1993). This notion of performing gender is connected to socialization since appropriate and inappropriate gender behaviors taught and learned through that process (Butler, 2011, Connell, 1987). In fact, to “do” gender correctly indicates that individual performances are aligned with social norms (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Butler, 2011). Next, media are interlocked with sports and mediated representations reflect prevalent patterns (Meân & Kassing, 2008; Walton, 2007; Wenner, 1998).
Female athletes are extremely underrepresented across mainstream media coverage of most major sports, and when represented, female athletes are often overtly sexualized (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1996). The underrepresentation marks female athlete’s bodies as invisible and sexualized. Yet, Patrick is extremely popular, but her popularity (and visibility) are built from her extremely and overtly sexualized media images. So, the case of Patrick in NASCAR may offer insight into the gender norms in terms of a female athlete’s body.

Next, as the few visible female athletes are often sexualized across most sports, it is no surprise that one of the challenges sportswomen face is in balancing her athleticism in tension with her feminization (Krane, 2010). On one side, performing athleticism and portraying athletic competency increases respect as well as credibility for both her, as an athlete, and her sport, more broadly, (Kane, LaVoi & Fink., 2013; Krane et al., 2010; Meân & Kassing, 2008). On the other, female athletes must perform according to feminine norms in order to attract sponsors (Carty, 2005; Fink, Kane, & LaVoi, 2014; Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). But, feminine performances are taken less seriously, which decreases her credibility and respect for her sport (Krane, 2001; Kane et al., 2013). So, my examination of Patrick may add to existing bodies of knowledge in that she may signal a shift in invisibility. Her case may address the limitations and resistances to how women may perform as female athletes. For this reason, my second research question is:

RQ2: In what ways does the case of Danica Patrick address female athletes, in terms of the body, via media representations that reflect and inform tensions between intelligible and unintelligible performances?
This case study may contribute to existing research in terms of understandings related to the bodies of female athletes. To further focus my dissertation, I will discuss female athletes who are heroified as sporting heroines.

**Sporting Heroines**

Mythic, semi-divine heroines and heroes were worshipped by the masses for serving and saving communities in extraordinary ways (Antonaccio, 1993; Burkert, 1985). At the same time, worship of heroines illustrated gender tensions (Larson, 1995). In both instances, heroines and heroes were often appropriated to justify rulership (Bremmer, 2006; Cebián, 2006). For instance, the Caesars traced their lineage to the goddess Venus. Contemporary heroes and heroines may have lost their divinity (Hook, 1992; Lunt, 2009, G. Smith, 1973), but some sporting ones have taken their place (Birrell, 1981; Lunt, 2009). In other words, they replaced the roles previously occupied by mythic heroes and heroines in terms of their religious and ritualistic significance.

Similar to mythic ones, sporting heroes and heroines offer transformative possibilities (Crepeau, 1981; Vande Berg, 1998). Sporting heroes and heroines are held in high regard as role models. Sporting heroes and heroines show individuals that they can follow in their footsteps to also gain the great rewards associated with sporting successes (Bandura, 1986; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). Heroified sportswomen are rarer, so, in the cases when they are highly visible, sporting heroines inspire closer emotional attachments and greater affiliations for women, since they are perceived to offer unique insights into femininity (Meàn & Kassing, 2008; North, Bland, & Ellis, 2005; Teitelbaum, 2005). In fact, females may be more likely to seek and adopt visible sportswomen as sports heroines and role models (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Lines, 2001; Meân & Kassing, 2008).
At the same time, and similar to mythic heroes, sporting heroes and heroines are appropriated. Sporting heroes and heroines are commodified because they are extremely useful in promoting their sport and they often earn more from endorsements (Badenhausen, 2015; Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Kane et al., 2013; Lines, 2001). For female athletes, this means that sporting heroines are often sexualized. That is extremely important as the sexualization may reinforce and further promote gender ideals and gendered ordering (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Meân & Kassing, 2008). Patrick is a highly visible and heroified female athlete. Consequently, her case may offer insight into how sporting heroines may provide hopeful social possibilities as well as illustrate tensions between empowerment and objectification. So, my third research question is:

RQ3: In what ways does the case of Danica Patrick address heroines of sport as role models in terms of offering transformational possibilities while also simultaneously illustrating appropriation and commodification?

This examination may contribute to contemporary bodies of knowledge regarding sporting heroines. Overall, I offer this case to address existing tensions in gender across the levels of sport and athletes. With this goal in mind, I will, next, provide a preview of the remaining chapters in this dissertation.

**Preview of Chapters**

In the second chapter, I review of relevant literature regarding the case of Patrick in NASCAR to offer contemporary understandings of: (1) sport and gender, (2) then narrowing down to female athletes, and (3) concluding with sporting heroines. In each of the three sections, I will discuss how perspectives from the broader area of socialization are useful to address understandings, as well as how each of those perspectives are relevant in this communication.
studies based dissertation. In the third chapter, I discuss my methods for collecting and analyzing data. In this chapter, I also offer a broader discussion of how socialization underlies this examination and then connect the three perspectives with it. I include a brief discussion of the case study approach to relate how I collected (participant observation and media reports) and then analyzed data (content analysis). I also discuss my role as a partial insider and outsider. In Chapter IV, I provide a background of the case to situate Patrick’s place in NASCAR. In it, I briefly address NASCAR and female drivers to provide a context to better locate Patrick in the motorsport. Then, in the fifth chapter, I offer my findings, interpretations, and discussions of the case. I combine them to allow for a meaningful multidimensional presentation that connects (1) collected data, to (2) the relevant perspectives that underlie (3) previous research, and to (3) the real-world phenomenon itself. The findings, interpretations, and discussions, in this chapter, revolve around the three research questions to address contemporary issues specifically, as well as, perspectives and research, broadly. Lastly, in the sixth and final chapter, I conclude with a brief summary of chapters, discuss implications to existing perspectives and bodies of knowledge, limitations from data collection, address considerations for future research in terms of media sources and focusing on different elements of the case in the long term, and lastly, offer final thoughts on this case.
Chapter II

Literature Review

Early human survival depended on the ability to hunt, gather, and protect resources (Beck & Bosshart, 2003). The combination of physical and mental prowess was necessary for survival (Beck & Bosshart, 2003). As humans and societies evolved, sports became a “playful self-development, self-actualization, and competitive use of physical and mental skills” (Beck & Bosshart, 2003, p. 3). Today, Boyle and Haynes (2009) argued that sports occupy a central position in the cultural lives of individuals. In other words, sports not only reflect accepted values but also help to illustrate changes and tensions in human society.

While much of sport has been examined from interdisciplinary perspectives, it is also relevant in a dissertation from the communication discipline (Billings, 2011). First, for Billings, Butterworth, and Turman (2012), “communication is central to how we play, watch, interpret, and evaluate sports” (p. 19). They added that sports may be examined from a variety of perspectives including contexts (interpersonal, conflict, family, and organizational communication), applied communication (marketing and sports management), and critical considerations (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality). Moreover, Kassing et al. (2004) noted that sports and communication are linked:

It is through communication that participants (e.g., coaches, athletes, trainers, referees), spectators (i.e., at actual sporting events and via mediated channels), sports organizations (e.g., professional and amateur sports franchises, sports governing bodies, fan clubs, etc.) and sports media combine in complex and intertwined ways to comprise the community of sport. Communication is the
vehicle by which community members participate in the enactment, 
(re)production, consumption, and organizing of sport. (p. 374)

Krizek (2008) added:

the intersection of Communication and Sport is an interesting and important 
locale in which scholars not only engage Communication theory to instruct 
understandings of sport contexts, they also examine Communication and Sport as 
a way to expand and build Communication theory. (p. 105)

For instance, in one of the earliest examinations explicitly linking sport to communication, Real 
(1975) argued that Super Bowl broadcasts show American professional football as “an 
aggressive, strictly regulated team game fought between males who use both violence and 
technology to gain control of property for the economic gain of individuals within a nationalistic 
entertainment context” (p. 42). Additionally, the broadcast helps to strengthen and propagate the 
ideals of the broader American social structure (Real, 1975).

However, these re/circulated ideals are not static. Jhally (1989) noted that the sporting 
domain contributes to build fantasy, it and should be examined as “a site on which to fight for 
definitions of the social world” (p. 71). Trujillo (2012) wrote that sport shape cultural values 
across the globe. Accordingly, sport may be considered as a context for an examination from the 
communication discipline, as well as a domain which interacts with, reflects and transforms the 
social world in which individuals engage and communicate with each other. With this in mind, I 
suggest that the realm of sport is appropriate for an examination rooted in the communication 
discipline.

One of the areas with which sport is connected, is gender (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; 
Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). The sporting realm is important in socializing gender because
in it, boys learn what it means to be boys and girls learn what it means to be girls (Berg et al., 2013; Messner, 1992). This is especially important in my examination of Patrick because she is the first full-time female NASCAR driver, and one of the only women who regularly completes against men in any professional sport. At the same time, Patrick is highly visible and recognized outside of racing. She is represented as a sporting heroine and as a sexy marketing tool. Plus, NASCAR is marked with re/enforcing patriarchal norms (Vavrus, 2007). So, her entry into motorsport presents a unique opportunity to examine the tensions between shifting and static issues surrounding gender and sport. So, in this chapter, I will address three concentric, narrowing, and overlapping areas of relevant literature. First, I will discuss sport and gender as my broadest area, then, continue on to discuss female athletes, and conclude with sporting heroines as the most specific way to examine Patrick. In each, of the sections, I detail a perspective supported by socialization.

**Sport and Gender**

Messner (2007) argued that “sport is a ‘contested terrain’ in which gender is being constructed in complex and often contradictory ways” (p. 4). As such, it is an important context that illustrates tensions and shifts in gender norms and relations (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). Birrell and Theberge (1994) argued sport is a site of struggle over “the construction and meaning of gender relations” (p. 344). Sport reinforces gender ideals and identities, while also delineating the feminine from the masculine (Horne, Tomlinson, & Whannel, 1999). Theberge (2000) added that sport is one of the realms in which experiences and practices produce gender.

Starting from a historical perspective, contemporary sport was created, in part, due to a crisis in what it means to be a man (Messner, 1992). Theberge (2000) traced the foundations of
contemporary sport the to the turn of the 20th century. Social changes, such as greater access to education and financial instabilities, led to challenges to masculinity and a disruption of the accepted gender order. Messner (1992) added by that by “promoting dominance and submission, in equating force and aggression with physical strength, modern sport naturalized the equation of maleness with power, thus legitimizing a challenged and faltering system of masculine domination” (p. 15).

Within sport, Theberge (2000) asserted that “the construction of gender differences was a key feature of the promotion of manly sports in the nineteenth-century” (p. 323). This gendered understanding of sport became extremely naturalized that sport was accepted as an expression of manliness and “the issue of gender and the representation of biological differences between the sexes have long been central to our perceptions of sport in society” (Boyle & Haynes, 2009, p. 122). So, sport and gender are tied together, as sport is a realm within which gender is clearly separated, defined, and ordered.

Connell (1987) added that “images of ideal masculinity are constructed and promoted most systematically through competitive sport” (p. 85). For Trujillo (1991), participating in sport is perceived of as building manly character, developing physical fitness, and promoting social justice. This social programming starts at a very young age and sport helps to train boys into becoming men (Burstyn, 2004; Light & Kirk, 2000). To support this notion, Messner (1992) suggested “through participation in sport, boys and men learn the dominant cultural conceptions of what it means to be male” (p. 19). E. Anderson (2008) added:

Team sports are nearly compulsory for U.S. youth, young boys are indoctrinated into a masculinized, homophobic, and sexist gender regime from early childhood—an institution they cannot easily escape. Even if boys are fortunate
enough to enter a gender-integrated sports team when young, by the time they reach high school, gender segregation is the norm. (p. 274)

Then, these sporting gender ideals are reinforced and socialized through the networks of peers and family (Messner, 1992). Young boys earn their father’s approval by playing well. Later, they earn respect of their peers by winning. These collective practices then help determine what it means to be a man (Connell, 1990). Or as Trujillo (1991) argued, “perhaps no single institution American culture has influenced our sense of masculinity more than sport” (p. 291).

While this sense of masculinity is constructed and reinforced through and within sports, it is also value laden. In other words, sports naturalize the sense that gender is socially arranged in a hierarchical order, and the feminine is constructed in contrast with and inferior to the masculine. With this in mind, I will detail the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a perspective from which to examine the broadest area of sport and gender.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

The concept of hegemonic masculinity originated from social inequality research conducted in Australia and has been applied to areas such as education, media representations, criminology, organizational studies, health, and sport (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It links the notion of masculine norms (toughness, autonomy, and aggression) with Gramsci’s (1971) sense of hegemony (Connell, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Donaldson, 1993).

Hegemony involves specific social groups holding power over others as well as justifying inequalities as it “involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear ‘natural’ ‘ordinary’ ‘normal’” (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645). Mumby (1997) suggested that the concept of hegemony is central to critical communication studies as explorations of the relationships between
communication and power. The perspective allows for “political readings of communication processes [that] have produced analysis as a central constitutive feature of social life” (Mumby 1997, p. 344).

Trujillo (1991) added, “masculinity becomes hegemonic when it is widely accepted in a culture and when that acceptance reinforces the dominant ideology of the culture” (p. 290). Connell (1990) defined hegemonic masculinity as “the culturally idealized form of masculine character” (p. 83). Hegemonic masculinity also naturalizes and reinforces the dominance of heterosexual masculinity (Connell, 1990). In other words, hegemonic masculinity is naturalized and becomes accepted as “what it means to be a man” (Hanke, 1990, p. 232). This means that in addition to women, men who fall outside of the masculine ideals are similarly subordinated.

Then, Connell (1990) asserted that one of the patterns of hegemonic masculinity is ordering gender as it “can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 94). Later, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) noted that hegemonic masculinity embodied “the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (p. 832).

Hence, hegemonic masculinity helps to clearly delineate what is and is not a man, as well as create a hierarchical order of genders. This specific masculinity is hegemonic, so, individuals are motivated to not only support and reinforce it, and position themselves in relation to it (Connell, 1990). Or, “gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradiction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity” (Connell &
Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). As a result, emphasized femininity is conceived of as complying to the women’s norms constructed in subordination to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). Accordingly, sporting women are often caught between these gender norms that frame athleticism as masculine and unfeminine. However, masculinity is not static as Demetriou (2001) argued:

> We are used to seeing masculine power as a closed, coherent, and unified totality that embraces no otherness, no contradiction. This is an illusion that must be done away with because it is precisely through its hybrid and apparently contradictory content that hegemonic masculinity reproduces itself. (p. 355)

In other words, hegemonic masculinity doesn’t simply shift with human society. Instead, hegemonic masculinity becomes hybridized to appropriate changes and is “capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjectures” (Demetriou 2001, p. 355).

Next, it is layered with internal contradictions as all men do not adapt hegemonic masculine norms at all times and, at times, they may deviate from it (Connell, 1990). Hegemonic masculinity is fluid because it is “constructed, unfolds, and changes through time” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 852). In it, the struggles over ideals may be intentional as individuals’ capacities to analyze and change their own perceptions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity could be a positive strategy to democratize gender relations and remove power differentials (Demetriou, 2001, Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Bryson (1987) concluded examining this hegemony is important since “it is only through understanding and confronting these processes that we can hope to break this domination” (p. 349). As an illustration of a potentially positive change, Anderson and McGuire (2010) found that male
college athletes are accepting of homosexual teammates as well as articulations of masculinity that deviate from accepted norms. So, an examination of Patrick as she enters NASCAR may help illustrate the shifts and reconfigurations in hegemonic masculinity as well as offer possibilities for challenges.

It is manifested in communication studies as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) added that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is implicated in how we talk about it. In other words, how we communicate about hegemonic masculinity may transform the concept of hegemonic masculinity, itself. Next, from an application point of view, “hegemonic masculinity was understood as a pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (p. 832). Therefore, it is implicated in interactions. Lastly, communication is central in how we develop ideals and definitions for social world (Mumby, 1997). As a result, the communication discipline is implicated in the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity as well as how it is applied, practiced, and perhaps, transformed.

Hegemonic masculinity is produced, reinforced, changed, and maintained in the sporting realm (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messner, 1995). But, male dominance in sport is used to justify dominance outside of sport (Connell, 1995). How gender is represented illuminate masculine norms and ideals (L. R. Smith, 2014). For instance, as hegemonic masculinity clearly delineates the feminine from the masculine, the resulting binary idealizes practices for the genders which forces conformity to those ideals (Connell, 1995). Roth and Basow (2004) suggested that in terms of sports performing or “doing masculinity builds strength, whereas doing femininity builds weakness” (p. 247). So, the gender ideals are naturalized and expressed
as men should be stronger and women should be weaker. Then, Trujillo (1991) identified five interrelated and overlapping features of hegemonic masculinity:

- **Force and control**: Men hold power, as well as represent strength, speed, domination, control, and force. In contrast, women are perceived as weaker, slower, dominated, controlled, and forced. Expressions of force and control include aggression and violence.

- **Occupational achievement**: Work and achievement appropriateness are defined based on gender. A division of labor is created between acceptable forms of men and women’s work in that some types of work are deemed as more or less masculine than others. For example, men should earn more money whereas women should take care of him and what he provides.

- **Patriarchy**: Since men provide for and protect their families, men should hold dominion over their families. This means that women and children are subordinate to the father. This domination extends outside of the home and into society in a more general manner.

- **Frontiersmanship**: Daring and romanticized frontiersman are credited with taming wildness into the civilized society, in which women and children safely may live. These may be modern day cowboys. In fact, the image of the frontier cowboy is perhaps most associated with an ideal Americanness.

- **Heterosexuality**: Heteronormative ideals are enforced because heterosexuality is accepted as natural and good. For this reason, alternatives are marginalized as not good and unnatural. So, men who do not embody idealized masculine mannerisms are similarly marginalized (alongside women).

I used the terms interrelated and overlapping because these features do not stand alone. Frontiersmanship may be interrelate with force and control as taming wildernes could involve using violence. At the same time, patriarchy is naturalized since the man works outside of the
home to provide for his family. So, occupational achievement overlaps with patriarchy in certain areas involving work.

Lastly, an argument might be made that all five features are present in this case: (1) NASCAR is a very aggressive sport, (2) women are excluded from racing since is considered to be man’s work, (3) women should support their husbands as drivers, (4) drivers are romanticized as bullet dodging cowboys who brave the track to provide for their families, and finally, (5) heterosexuality is assumed and taken for granted so that any other sexuality is rendered invisible (Rybacki & Rybacki, 2002; Sloop, 2008; Vavrus, 2007). In spite of this, I will foreground three as most the prominent features of hegemonic masculinity in this examination of Patrick: (1) force and control, (2) familial patriarchy, which is supported by (3) occupational achievement.

**Force and Control**

As a feature of hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1995) asserted that violence and aggression is a key component in enforcing gender inequality and controlling women. She wrote, that in “a structure of inequality on this scale, involving a massive dispossession of social resources, is hard to imagine without violence. It is, overwhelmingly, the dominant gender who hold and use the means of violence” (p. 83). As an example, she added that “a controlled use of force, or the threat of force, has been widely accepted as part of men’s repertoire in dealing with women” (Connell, 2002, p. 94). In other words, force and control are expressed as violence and aggression.

In sport, the masculine embodiment of force and control translates into the practice because “real” men are supposed to be violent and aggressive (Grindstaff & West, 2011). In fact, Messner (1990) suggested that men may perceive of their bodies as natural and competitive weapons. Accordingly, Messner (1990), argued that aggression in sport “serve to stabilize a
structure of domination and oppression in the gender order” (p. 215). In other words, violence and aggression reinforces hegemonic masculinity and the domination over women.

But, this masculine norm is not natural. Instead, it is constructed. The realm of sport is particularly important in this construction because the rules that govern play help to legitimize violence. Messner (1992) argued:

Despite the fact that few males truly enjoy hitting, being hit, and that one has to be socialized into participating in much of the violence commonplace in sport, males often the view aggression, with in the rule-bound structure of sport as legitimate and “natural.” (p. 67)

The practice has become naturalized that “male athletes tended to feel affirmed by, and comfortable with rule-bound athletic aggression” (Messner, 1992, p. 68).

Aggression in sport is also rewarded. Light and Kirk (2000) found that sport training naturalizes aggression as part of being a good athlete, “traditional training was characterized by heavy, demanding work aimed at building aggression [and], superior physical force” (p. 167). Moreover, that aggression is all encompassing: “players were afforded little other choice than to rise to their coaches’ masculinizing challenge if they were to (a) save face in front of their teammates, (b) avoid individual feminizing and homosexualizing ridicule, (c) keep their place in the team and maintain rewards, and (d) not ‘let the team down’” (Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010, p. 288).

How coaches and players interact illustrates training and reward as aggression is encouraged and legitimized. The lack of aggression is marginalized as having no place in sport. For instance, Adams et al. (2010) found that coaches expect and train athletes to enact violence and aggression. Light and Kirk (2002) added that aggression is normalized by coaches: “you
can’t win games unless you’re aggressive” (p. 171). Adams et al., (2010) interviewed coaches and reported that they told players: “we need a real man out there. Someone who’s not afraid to smash some people around and get hurt” (p. 291). As a result, it is clear that being a man is equated with being aggressive. Athletes internalize that norm because, when it is not upheld, players may be challenged on both their legitimacy as athletes as well as their manliness (Adams et al., 2010). For instance, when a player tried to call foul on a teammate during a scrimmage, that teammate responded, “fuck off, you poof. I hardly touched you. Get on with it and stop being such a shit-house [an English euphemism for sissy or coward]” (Adams et al., 2010, p. 290).

*Women and Aggression*

In contrast, “female athletes tend to fear that aggression-even ‘within the rules’” because it threatens their connection with others and that connection is highly valued in women’s gendered identities (Messner, 1992, p. 68). However, Roth and Basow (2004) insisted that “when women’s bodies are as fully capable of violence as are men’s bodies, they will have to decide whether and to what extent they shall be violent” (p. 262). Accordingly, the ability to be aggressive and violent, as expressions of force and control, crosses gender lines. This is apparent when men and women share and compete on the playing field (Winiarska, Jackson, Mayblin, & Valentine, 2015).

When female players enact aggression, they lose their perceived shortcomings as women and were more accepted in sport as an athlete. “Female players defined these changes of attitude as a shift from being treated like ‘a girl’ to being treated like ‘a boy’” (Winiarska et al., 2015, p. 13). Also, since they behaved like the boys (in terms of aggressiveness), they became more accepted as athletes because they can “play like a man” (Winiarska et al., 2015, p. 9). Over time,
female players “became a natural element of completing a line-up” (Winiarska et al., 2015, p. 12). McDowell and Schaffner (2011) found that women appropriated the way men insulted each other during a mixed match. Meän and Kassing (2008) added that women sporting competitors talk about desiring to be perceived as just athletes, without the gender identification. So, one of the ways to “earn” that naturalized athletic moniker is to embody and enact idealized masculine behaviors.

While the women were more accepted, the male athletes had to negotiate their style of play against the females due to conflicting gender norms: “whether to treat women ‘like girls’ or rather ‘like guys’” (Winiarska et al., 2015, p. 9). They clarified,

On the one hand, those men who treated females in a more delicate manner
were sometimes judged as too indulgent and cautious not to enter into direct
bodily contact. On the other hand, those men who treated female players equally
as themselves were sometimes regarded as too aggressive towards women.
(Winiarska et al., 2005, p. 9)

In this instance, both equal and deferential treatment were considered discriminatory. The researchers added that referees treated women differently by taking the former tact. Their respondent said, “Referees don’t treat girls and boys equally as well. They treat girls better, they turn a blind eye on a situation when a girl touches a ball with her hand and so on” (Winiarska et al., 2015, p. 10). This practice excludes women even though the male and female athletes are sharing the same field of play, because it diminishes the difficulty and seriousness of the mixed gender version of the game. Winiarska et al. (2015) asserted, “The presence of women was perceived to change the ‘nature’ of the game, which in result lost its ‘natural’ masculine characteristics and subsequently became treated less seriously” (p. 10). This illustrates
Demetriou’s (2001) assertion that hegemonic masculinity reconfigures itself to adapt to changes while still asserting the naturalness and superiority of the masculine.

In sum, aggression is an expression of the masculine feature of force and control (Connell, 1995, 2002). Aggression is encouraged and reinforced to such an extent that it is naturalized as an integral part of being a good athlete (Adams et al., 2010; Light & Kirk, 2000). Female athletes are perceived as being naturally less violent. When they do enact violence, they are often more accepted as athletes (Meân & Kassing, 2008; Winiarska et al., 2015). However, men often cannot negotiate how to compete with and against female athletes because aggression violates female gender ideals (Winiarska et al., 2015). Part of resolving that tension is the adaptation of hegemonic masculinity to shifting contexts that ultimately uphold masculine authority. I next turn to address patriarchy, with occupational achievement, as the next salient feature of hegemonic masculinity in this case.

_Patriarchy (with Occupational Achievement)_

The concept of patriarchy orders gender in a hierarchy in which males are naturalized as holding dominion over women. Walby (1989) argued that patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which dominate, oppress, and exploit women” (p. 221). Segal (1989) added patriarchy as “a social system of male domination, as the power of the father in the family, as the universal principle and symbol of male domination (p. 49). Lerner (1986) defined patriarchy as “the manifestation and institutionalizing of male dominance over women” (p. 239).

For Millet (1970) a patriarchy originates from the family. More specifically, Walby (1990) wrote, “private patriarchy is based upon household production, with a patriarch controlling women individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the home (p. 178). In other words, a patriarch is in control of his home, and his home is his private domain.
Accordingly, it is no surprise that one of the ways a father’s right to dominate over his family is through the threat of force and violence (Connell, 2002). Malley-Morrison and Hines (2004) noted that patriarchy, as a social structure, justifies a man’s authority and allows for violence as a tool to maintain authority in his home. In practice, Katz (2015) added that judges tend to overlook domestic abuse since domestic violence is “a man’s private prerogative within his home” (p. 387). This extends to the sporting realm as shown by the changes brought against Minnesota Vikings running back, Adrien Peterson. The court ruled that Peterson had rights to exercise a certain amount of violence over his child, as a form of discipline. He was indicted as he exceeded acceptable amounts of injury to his son (Wright, 2014). In other words, Peterson had the right to hit his child, but not too much. This exemplifies that force is justified as an expression of patriarchy.

That domination crosses the private familial border and into broader society as Lerner (1986) noted that patriarchy is an “extension of male dominance over women in society in general” (p. 239). Walby (1990) added, “public patriarchy is based on structures other than the household, although this may still be a significant patriarchal site. Rather, institutions conventionally regarded as part of the public domain are central in the maintenance of patriarchy” (178). So, patriarchy is a social structure (not natural, but created and reinforced) and a justification of male power (means to exploit and dominate over women), that starts in the home (as the father who provides), and extends to a broader society. Consequently, a man’s domain extends outside of the home. So, women are subordinated, and their subordinated role extends out from the family and into broader society.
One of the justifications for patriarchy is based on the father being the primary provider (or breadwinner) for his family. This means that occupational achievement, is implicated with familial patriarchy. For instance, Burstyn (1999) suggested that sport replaced the presence of working fathers to train sons for the workplace. Carrigan et al. (1985) argued “hegemony closely involves the division of labor, the social definition of tasks as either ‘men’s work’ or ‘women’s work,’ and the definition of some kinds of work as more masculine than others” (p. 594). They added that men’s work involves more physical work (heavy manual laborers) and/or positions of control (managers and executives). In terms of ordering gender, this separation of work is important because what is acceptable for a man to do is clearly separated from and superior to what is acceptable for a woman.

Men work outside of the private family home to provide. In contrast, to providing material the means, women support that provider and take care of his things. In other words, she should help and replenish him as he is exhausted from working to provide for her (Walby, 1986). Moreover, Bowlby, Gregory, and McKie (1997) noted that “the organization of society into those who will legitimately occupy the world of paid work as their primary adult role and those whose main role ‘naturally’ is to care for and socialize children is part of the patriarchal division of necessary tasks between men and women” (p. 345). In other words, the realm of the private home is naturalized as appropriate for women’s work and her role is to care for her husband (provider), their home (that he provided), and their children. She cannot claim ownership over her work, since it belongs to him (Walby, 1989). Messner and Bozada-Deas (2009) wrote, “women are often expected to do the work of caring for others’ emotions and daily needs” (p. 49).
However, women’s work is not valued equally in relation to men’s work. Her work is centered on the needs of patriarch and consequently, subservient to him (Kynaston, 1996). For example, he needs to be fed well to provide, whereas she prepares the food for him. Then, it is no surprise that, he may expect leisure time (after work) while her work does not end. In fact, Whiteside and Hardin (2011) suggested that women have less time to watch sports as they are caring for their families and their homes.

These patterns hold true even when she earns an income outside of the home. In order to comply to the expectations, set in a masculine hegemony, women may emphasize their femininity to perform to heteronormative feminine ideals (Connell, 1987). This emphasized femininity works in concert with masculine hegemony because the repetition, acceptance, and “maintenance of emphasized femininity is practice that prevents other models of femininity gaining cultural articulation” (Connell 1987, p. 183). So, by emphasizing femininity, women performing in violation of gender norms may try to rebalance the scale to offset any disobedience. In fact, in the cases that women out earn men, she does not decrease her amount of house work. Instead, she compensates for his and her gender deviance outside of the home by behaving in more gender compliant ways in the home (Bittman et al., 2003; Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000). Bittman et al. (2003) found:

> Between the point where women contribute about half the income and the point where they provide all of it, money is not parlayed into reduced housework for women. On the contrary, in this range, as women provide more the income, their hours of unpaid [house]work go up by five to six hours per week. (p. 202-203)

So, regardless of her actual monetary contribution, the appropriate work for a woman is to care for her family.
In summation, patriarchy naturalizes a gender order that justifies the domination of women (Lerner, 1986; Segal 1989; Walby, 1989). His authority starts in the (private) home and then reaches outside, into (public) society (Millet, 1970). One of the ways a father controls his family is using real or threatened violence (Connell, 2002; Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004). Patriarchal authority is justified since the family father is naturalized as the providers and protectors of his family (Carrigan et al., 1985; Walby, 1986). This naturalizes a division of labor and a woman’s job is to care for her provider and the home he provides (Messner & Bozada-Deas, 2009). Her work centers around him, so, his needs outweigh hers. This conformity to gendered work norms is intensified when a woman earns more than the family patriarch. She increases her compliance in the private home because their public performances deviate from gender norms (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000).

More broadly, hegemonic masculinity naturalizes masculine domination and it is heavily influenced by and influences the sporting realm (Connell, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messner, 1995). Interrelated features of hegemonic masculinity include: (1) force and control, (2) occupational achievement, (3) patriarchy, (4) frontiersmanship, and (5) heterosexuality (Trujillo, 1991). As a hegemonic force, it is fluid and reconfigures itself to adapt and appropriate changes in society (Demetriou, 2001). At the same time, it includes internal contradictions and it may offer possibilities for transformation (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001). As Patrick is the first full time female driver in NASCAR, her entry into the sport provides a unique opportunity to examine hegemonic masculinity. Thus, my first research question is concerned with how she may address sport and gender, in terms of hegemonic masculinity.
Next, one of the ways masculine domination is expressed is in limiting the roles of women in both private (home) and public (work) arenas. In sport, this means that women are excluded from certain areas of participation. For instance, if men are the aggressive breadwinners, then women should be their passive supporters. However, as more women are entering sport, their performances are conflicting with gender ideals. As such, I will narrow my focus from this broader perspective of hegemonic masculinity, to review relevant literature regarding female athletes to discuss women’s marginalization in sport, media representations, and the tensions in how they may embody their roles as sportswomen.

**Female Athletes**

Historically, the ancient Olympics allowed a select few women to attend as spectators but excluded female competitors (International Olympic Committee, n.d.). These select few included unmarried women, and some women in positions of privilege such as priestesses of the major gods and goddesses. In contrast “all free male Greek citizens were entitled to participate in the Olympic games, regardless of their social status” (International Olympic Committee, n. d. para. 2). So, access to participation and spectatorship was segregated in one of our oldest and most revered sporting events. More recently, the first modern Olympics excluded women athletes in 1896. As women gained more human rights in certain societies, the International Olympic Committee (2013) permitted women to participate in some events. For example, during the second modern Olympics, in 1900, women competed in golf, tennis/croquet, equestrian and sailing events. But, over a century later, women are still not allowed to participate in every discipline available to men. Thus, female athletes are marked with a long history of past and current exclusion.
Birrell (1998) wrote, “women’s place in the world of sport has always provided grounds for facilitating and enlightening study” (p. 459). In other words, female competitors in sport are not simply athletes. Instead, Pfister (2010) argued:

the gender of sport in the past was clearly and conspicuously masculine. From the very beginning women in sport were the ‘other sex’; they were outsiders, new- or latecomers who, if they were allowed to at all, could take part in ‘suitable’ forms of exercise and sport. (p. 234)

Women’s roles as athletes are limited in terms of being included, as well as how they are allowed to participate in sport. As masculinity is at the center of understanding sport, the role of female competitors is contested. For Messner (1988) female athletes are sites of meaning contestation:

Women's movement into sport represents a genuine quest by women for equality, control of their own bodies, and self-definition, and as such it represents a challenge to the ideological basis of male domination. Yet it will also be demonstrated that this quest for equality is not without contradictions and ambiguities….In short, the female athlete-and her body-has become a contested ideological terrain. (p. 198)

Therefore, examining female athletes is useful to understand if and how women are permitted to participate in sport as well as shifts and tensions in how women may be considered as competitors. Since their bodies are contested terrains, I next turn to the notion of the body to explore female athletes (Butler, 1993, 2011).

**Body**

Butler (1993) argued that gender is not an expression of biological sex. Instead, gender is constructed in history, naturalized and privileged over the sense of the social,
reiterated/reinforced and then regulated practices, made material by heterosexual hegemonic power. As such, we perform or do our gender in our everyday practices. As related to sports, the construction of gender, as embodied, then influences what a female athlete can be and do (intelligible) as well as cannot be and do (unintelligible).

To put it another way, “these interdependent forces produced an image of women as weak, fragile, timid, and unsuited for sport, and they celebrated her beauty and passive femininity” (Birrell, 1988, p. 462). In other words, the reiteration of practices renders certain ways of performing gender as normal and understandable. This means that ways of performing gender outside of those constraints is naturalized as simply wrong, or not understandable. As an example, Kreszock, Wise, and Freeman (2014) argued that an early female NASCAR driver faced extreme opposition because “the idea of a woman penetrating the publically visible sphere, masculine world of auto racing, stank of impropriety” (p. 108). She violated the understandable tenets of how women should behave, and so, her performance was not intelligible, considered to be unnatural (and wrong), and consequently disciplined. This, then leads to two interrelated topics as relative to the marginalization of female athletes: what are current representations of female athletes, which then influence and reflect the intelligible and unintelligible ways for female athletes to perform those gender norms.

In the U.S., women were excluded from sport for two interconnected reasons: (1) women are gendered as weak and frail, therefore females should be protected from naturalized male aggression in mixed sports and (2) women should be feminine and conform to gender ideals that define what it means to be a woman, so women should not participate in sports that are too aggressive (Messner, 2002). Dowling (2001) illustrated that in 1923, 93% of the female physical education instructors reported that they were against women athletes participating in
intercollegiate competition. These instructors asserted that women should be more interested in play instead of winning competitions. Methany (1965) concurred and suggested that certain sports were considered more appropriate for female participation. Golf and tennis are acceptable as women’s bodies were attractively displayed during performance of the sport, and attired in gender appropriate clothing. In other words, women should not compete against men and women should not behave like men.

Since women were perceived as frail and unfit for most sport, it is not surprising that these ideals translated into practice that reinforced the gender norms. For instance, Roth and Basow (2004) suggested that because the standards for physical fitness are higher for young boys, as compared to girls, “the lower standards for females give the impression that girls are less able by virtue of their sex” (p. 249). Meân and Kassing (2008) added:

There [still] appear to be limited ways to perform female athletic identities, even at the highest level (i.e., professional) within the established and female familiar sport….Our findings indicate that a full three decades after Title IX and female sporting provision, the form of female athleticism that continues to be practiced suggests that actual empowerment of females remains elusive while traditional gendered power status remains intact. (p. 142)

In fact, they argued that female athletes are constructed as “women who play sport rather than as athletes first and foremost” (Meân & Kassing, 2008, p. 127).

But, women are not physically weaker or more frail when compared to men. Instead they are conforming to intelligible performances based on the ideals of femininity (Dowling, 2000; Dworkin, 2001; Roth & Basow, 2004). Dworkin (2001) termed this as “holding off” as sportswomen are forced to struggle between maintaining femininity while also performing as
athletes. As an example, unlike male bodybuilders, females changed their training routines to build endurance, not mass. This shows that women negotiated tensions between “what bodies should do, what bodies actually do” (Dworkin, 2001, p. 345).

Roth and Basow (2004) concurred and added women’s bodies are just as strong, if not stronger then men’s. They argued that an individual’s body mass is more tied to physical strength than the gender/sex of that body. For example, they pointed to two Olympic runners and noted that “when the 7.5-inch height difference between Florence Griffith Joyner and Carl Lewis are factored in to their running speeds, it turns out that she runs at a relative velocity of 0.28 heights per second faster than he does” (Roth & Basow, 2004, p. 254).

While there are several ways to approach the two topics, I will focus on one salient way (each) to approach how they are articulated as related to my case. For the first topic, current expressions of gender norms are reflected in and by popular media representations (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Meân & Kassing, 2008; Walton, 2007). For the second, accepted and unaccepted ways in which female athletes’ bodies are constrained are framed as the conflicting performances of (unintelligible) athleticism in tension with (intelligible) femininity (Kane et al., 2013; Krane et al., 2010; Messner, 1988).

Both media representations and the un/intelligibility of female athlete’s bodies are implicated and rooted in the communication studies discipline because: media create pseudo-environments in which people live and interact (Lippmann, 2007); sport and media are interlocked in a symbiotic relationship and audiences experience sport through media (Wenner, 1998); how media present stories about athletes limits and guides understandings and norms (Birrell & McDonald, 2000); and individual athletes are invited into the home and viewed in that more intimate setting (Brummett, 2006). Kane (2013) added, “we should never underestimate the
significance of sports in preserving male power and privilege as well as the media’s central role in that regard (p. 235). In other words, media, along with sport, build and reinforce masculine superiority while naturalizing the inferiority of women. Media provide the vocabulary to articulate the intelligible. Going forward, in the following sections, I will first discuss relevant literature related to media representations of female athletes and then address athleticism and femininity as two conflicting performances.

**Representations**

For Gerbner and Gross (1976) media enculturate (or socialize) individuals in society. That enculturation is not neutral. Instead, they argued that media do not challenge hegemony. Instead, the “chief cultural function [of media] is to spread and stabilize social patterns, to cultivate not change but resistance to change” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 175). Next, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) argued that media mainstream differences because they “absorb or assimilate groups that otherwise diverge from it” (p. 25). While Gerbner and his colleagues (such as Gross, Morgan, Signorelli, and others) primarily researched television, Morgan and Shanahan (2010) argued that media are powerful as content is no longer limited by a specific medium. Instead, media are “popular storytelling systems and purveyors of widely shared messages” (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010, p. 350). Bussey and Bandura (1999) added idealized gender roles are replicated and prevalent across media. In other words, recurring and stable patterns in content may be just as important or more important than the medium transmitting the messages, in terms of idealized gender roles. As a result, I will discuss two persistent representations: extreme underrepresentation and sexualization.
**Extreme Underrepresentation**

Despite greater participation, female athletes are extremely underrepresented across media (Cooky et al., 2013; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1996; and others). Across high school and college, female athletes have increased their participation to 40% in sports (Cooky et al., 2013). While women’s participation in professional sports may equate to lower percentages of involvement, coverage of female athletes, across all levels, has been and remains severely lacking. For instance, almost 20 years ago, Kane (1996) reviewed early research and found that decades after the passage of Title IX, female athletes were grossly underrepresented in sport coverage. Since then, Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson (2015) reported that coverage has not improved.

More specifically, Cooky et al. (2013) related findings from a longitudinal study starting from 1989. Messner and his colleagues analyzed sports coverage from three network affiliates (ABC, CBS, and NBC, in Los Angeles) and cable (ESPN) broadcasts every five years. They found that coverage has steadily and sharply declined. Network coverage peaked in 1999 as they covered female athletes approximately 8.7% of the time. In 2009, network coverage dropped to 1.6% and cable coverage (which started at about 2.2% in 2009) dropped to 1.3%. Next, male announcers and anchors dominated in both network (99%) and cable (89%) sports broadcasts. Cooky et al. (2015) reported that coverage increased slightly in 2014 for network (3.2%) and cable (2.0%) broadcasts. They concluded, “Twenty-five years is a long time for so little change to have taken place in sports news and highlights shows, especially against the backdrop of massive gender transformations and reforms in other areas of sport and society” (Cooky et al., 2015, p. 282). This trend is more apparent in sporting magazines as Weber and Carini (2012) found that women were featured at 4.9% from 2000 to 2011 on *Sports Illustrated* covers. That is
7.7% fewer when compared to covers between 1954 and 1965. They added that no women were on the cover from January to June of 2011. So, a pattern of women’s exclusion is clear in media sporting coverage.

This persistent pattern crosses the boundary of sport and into other areas of popular media. Daniels (2009b) examined magazines targeted towards teen girls: YM, Teen Vogue, Teen People, Seventeen, and Cosmo Girl. She argued these magazines centered female appearance in that “women’s bodies should be very slender and if girls and women do not match this ideal, they should work to achieve it” (Daniels, 2009b, p. 15). Thus, she suggested that these magazines may include more images of female athletes because, for the most part, their bodies fit appearance norms for women. In spite of her reasoning, she found that images of female athletes appeared in fewer than 3% across the five magazines (Daniels, 2009b). Consequently, female athletes are overwhelmingly underrepresented in media.

This underrepresentation has some important consequences since it is an extremely pervasive media pattern. Gerbner and Gross (1976) argued, “representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation” (p. 182). In other words, that persistent pattern of extreme underrepresentation renders female athletes as invisible, and these women are symbolically annihilated from social existence. So, the few representations of female athletes may be extremely important (Lines, 2001; Daniels, 2009a; Weber & Carini, 2012). More broadly, this assertion is mirrored by media scholars (Brooks & Hébert, 2006; Holtzman, 2000; Harwood & Anderson, 2002) who argued when social groups are extremely underrepresented, the small number of portrayals are particularly relevant.

When covered, the few portrayals of female athletes naturalize the dominance of masculinity in sport and trivialize women’s participation (Cooky et al., 2013; Cooky et al., 2015;
Kane, 1996). In many instances, media focused on women athletes’ femininity broadly (in terms of their family membership as mothers or in relationships such as wives and girlfriends) and emphasized gender ideals more explicitly when women competed in sports that are perceived of as more masculine (L. R. Smith, 2014; Walton, 2005). In other words, women’s roles as mothers, wives, and girlfriends are more salient than their sporting participation:

Female athletes are trivialized when they are portrayed in ways that do not treat them, or their athletic achievements, seriously. This is accomplished by focusing on the off-the-court characteristics and behavior of sportswomen, such as their femininity and personal lives, rather than their hard work, discipline, and contributions as gifted athletes. (Kane, 1996, p. 108)

In essence, these women are just playing on a man’s field (Kane, 1996; Holland, 2006).

Similar to invisibility, this pattern of subordinating women radiates out into popular media (Walton, 2007). Walton (2007) examined portrayals of boy/girl amateur wrestling in three popular television shows from different genres: *King of the Hill* (animated comedy), *Malcolm in the Middle* (situational comedy), and *Boston Public* (primetime drama). In each, she found that while instances of girls wrestling against boys may challenge gender norms, “the media in these cases works to undermine that subversion. In each instance of girl/boy wrestling portrayed in these fictional accounts hegemonic masculinity is supported and maintained” (p. 725-726). This shows suggests that patterns of women’s subordination are not contained in just sports broadcasts on television. Instead, these persistent patterns of representation cross media and genre borders. Therefore, the area of sport is important to consider in broader gender construction. Next, one of the most prevalent ways in which female athletes are portrayed as feminine is overt sexualization.
Overt Sexualization

Kane (1996) defined sexualization of female athletes in two ways: “portraying them as sexual objects, or more covertly, by overemphasizing their physical attractiveness” (p. 108). Sexualization of female athletes was apparent during Olympic coverage (Bissell & Duke, 2007; L. Smith, 2014). During the 2014 Summer Olympic women’s beach volleyball games, Bissell and Duke (2007) found that the cameras were more focused on the women’s buttocks, especially during bikini bottom adjustments and teammate’s congratulatory/supportive “butt slaps.” They concluded that while the commentary was less overtly sexualized, “camera shot, body shot and camera angles used during the games did tend to emphasize the athletes’ sexual difference, sexuality, and feminine characteristics” (p. 49). Then, L. R. Smith (2014) compared coverage of the 2010 Winter Olympic ice hockey men’s and women’s matches. She found that men’s buttocks were shown three times (for 13 goals), whereas women’s bums were featured over 40 times (for 34 goals). Furthermore, the women’s buttocks were replayed more often and in slow motion. She added:

Though a buttock covered in hockey pads may not be as sexual as the bikini-clad bottom of a beach volleyball player, by not only showing a greater amount of buttock shots for the women, but showing more slow-motion shots of the buttock moving back in to the frame of the camera, the notion of sexuality, even if on an implicit level, comes in to play. (p. 14)

So, women’s buttocks were fairly well featured during the Olympic games.

Kim and her colleagues examined *Sports Illustrated* and found that female athletes are sexualized in the swimsuit issues (Kim, Sagas, & Walker, 2011; Kim & Sagas, 2014). In 2011, they reported results from their examination of 141 male and female athletes’ images in swimsuit
issues from 1997 to 2007. They found that female athletes were photographed more often in swimsuits, whereas men were more often posed in their athletic environments and in their uniforms or casual suits (Kim et al., 2011). They argued that the most apparent sexualization was in the choice of which athletes to feature in the special annual issue. Before 2006, men were chosen for their athletic accomplishment, then male athletes disappeared altogether. In contrast:

The most physically attractive [female] athletes tended to be the ones most frequently chosen as subjects for photograph models in swimsuit issues. Most female athletes portrayed in swimsuit issues did not necessarily have distinguished athletic achievements but were more often than not famous for their physical beauty. For example, one famous female tennis player, Maria Sharapova, was portrayed as a glamorous fashion model on the beach, detached from her athletic persona.

Meanwhile, male athletes were typically associated with their sport. (Kim et al., 2011, p. 159)

In 2014, they argued that the trend of including female athletes, as special guests, in the swimsuit issue has continued (Kim & Sagas, 2014). Female athletes are included in the swimsuit issue because their bodies have “an athletic physique that typical fashion models do not have” (Kim & Sagas, 2014, p. 138). Their appeal is different from that of fashion models and they were shown in more athletic, and somewhat less sexy, poses. Despite this, Kim and Sagas (2014) added:

In particular, no different portrayals between fashion models and athletes were found in terms of hand display such as suggestively revealing clothing, and covering breasts by hands. (p. 137)
They concluded that despite some more active and less sexy poses, “they were obviously spotlighted as fashion models, not as athletes” (Kim & Sagas, 2014, p. 137).

Crammer, Brann, and Bowman (2014) examined images in *ESPN: The Magazine’s Body Issue*. They found that despite the magazine’s claims to equal portrayals of men and women athletes, the images:

- reinforce more traditional gender and sex ideologies, which can erase the small steps society has taken toward equity in the coverage of female athletes in the media and aid in the continuance of patterns of ambivalence for the foreseeable future. (Crammer et al., 2014, p. 162)

So, female athletes’ bodies are being portrayed in ways that highlight their physical appeal across different magazines.

In broadcast and online news coverage, Cooky and her colleagues found that the sexualization of female athletes was less overt. In previous iterations of their examinations, they found that when featured, women were portrayed in terms of sexualized comic relief (Cooky et al., 2013; Cooky et al., 2015). In 1989 the longest story featuring a woman was about “‘Morgana, the Kissing Bandit, a woman with enormous breasts who had made a name for herself by running out onto baseball fields and kissing players’” (Cooky et al., 2013, p. 280). However, that reduced sexualization seems to be at the price of even more decreased coverage. Also, that sexualization appears to be shifting from a focus on a female athlete’s attractiveness to her importance as a mother, wife, or girlfriend.

Female athletes, when represented, are portrayed in terms of their physical attractiveness and overt sexualization is a persistent and repeated pattern. In some areas, that pattern has partially hybridized by shifting from overt sexuality to positioning women in heteronormative
family roles first and athletes second. Thus, Kian, Mondello, and Vincent (2009) suggests that this shift from sexualization may indicate shifts in how female athletes are portrayed. This may also suggest that the hybridization is an illustration of how a masculine hegemony reformulates itself to reemphasize the centrality of men in sport (Cooky et al., 2013; Cooky et al., 2015; Demetriou, 2001).

In summation, despite increased sports participation, female athletes are extremely underrepresented in media (Cooky et al., 2013; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1996). This invisibility is a persistent pattern across time and types of media (Cooky et al., 2013; Cooky et al., 2015; Daniels, 2009b). This pattern of rendering female athletes as nonexistent signals a symbolic annihilation of them from social existence and legitimacy (Gerber & Gross, 1976; Greendorfer, 1977). Consequently, the few portrayals of female athletes may be more impactful (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Weber & Carini, 2012). In the limited representations, female athletes are portrayed in ways that support a masculine hegemony (Cooky et al., 2014; Cooky et al., 2015; Kane, 1996). One of the most prevalent patterns in those gendered representations is overt sexualization (Bissell & Duke, 2007; Kim et al., 2011; Kim & Sagas, 2014; L. R. Smith, 2014). This sexualization is a pattern that is re/produced over, and over again, crossing media boundaries. So, invisibility and overt sexualization are two current and prevalent representation patterns. These patterns inform intelligible and unintelligible ways in which female athletes may perform. From here, I will address athleticism and femininity as two types of performances.

**Athleticism and Femininity**

Women, as athletes, illustrate conflicting gender norms that illustrate how they may and may not perform (Kane et al., 2013; Krane et al., 2010; Messner, 1988). Sport is constructed as the natural domain of men (Connell, 1987). For Messner (1988), this means that female athletes
are “contested terrain.” Kane et al. (2013) elaborated that these women often must negotiate their dual identities: as powerful and successful athletes against being accepted as feminine. In other words, this tension represents a “femininity balancing act” (Krane, 2001, p. 122). She elaborated:

Sportswomen must balance some traits essential for athletic success with presentation of an acceptable appearance conforming to the heterosexist norms of society. They must be physically and mentally strong yet also portray an image of vulnerability to be perceived as feminine. (Krane, 2010, p. 122)

Accordingly, women competitors are often caught between these between intelligible, unintelligible and conflicting performances of gender (Butler, 1993).

Almost a decade later, this balancing act still exists as Krane et al. (2010) found that while some women are proud of their athleticism, they also recognized that the way they looked “contradicted socially sanctioned femininity” (p. 177). Fink et al. (2014) added, “most athletes were sensitive to how their sports participation conflicted with conventional norms and expectations to ‘perform femininity’ as a way to establish their bona fides as a ‘real’ woman” (p. 214). This tension is exacerbated when a woman is competing in a sport not accepted as feminine. Fink et al. (2014) noted, “the more a female is associated with a ‘masculine’ sport, the more she may wish to be seen as ‘normal’, that is, traditionally feminine [heterosexual]” (p. 215).

Sportswomen are reported as recognizing that their athleticism represents a deviation from acceptable gender norms. On one hand, female athletes reported that performing and portraying athletic competence was important to earn respect for themselves and their sport (Kane et al., 2013; Krane et al., 2010; Meân & Kassing, 2008). In fact, Kane et al. (2013) found
that a majority of female athletes preferred to portray themselves as athletically competent. In turn, Fink et al. (2004) reported that audiences were more attracted by a female endorser’s athletic expertise, instead of her attractiveness. Kane and Maxwell (2011) detailed:

    Athletic prowess received the highest levels of fan interest, while sportswomen as “sexy babes” received the lowest. In sum, these findings offer empirical evidence which underscores scholars’ long-held assertions that sexualizing athletic females trivializes their efforts, and as a result, suppresses interest among potential consumers. (p. 214)

Antil, Burton, & Robinson (2012) confirmed that female athletes portrayed as sex objects (physical appearance as most salient) was viewed negatively by audiences. Daniels and Wartina (2011) added that adolescent “boys appeared to objectify sexualized athletes more than sexualized models” (p. 576). Kane and Maxwell (2011) concluded that sexualized representations of women did not attract men to sporting events and may further alienate women:

    We say this because sexualizing athletic females offended and alienated the core fan base of women’s sports—women and older men. As a result, the deeply ingrained method of promoting women’s sports was actually counter-productive. Even when younger males, a prime target audience for sport managers, acknowledged how ‘hot’ and ‘seductive’ they thought the sexually provocative images were, they also made it clear that such images did not substantially increase their interest in women’s sports, especially as it pertained to attending sporting events. (p. 214)
In other words, while sex does sell, in some contexts, it does not sell women’s sport. In contrast, women’s athleticism and sport competency increased audience interest and builds respect for the female athlete and her sport.

In spite of this, performances are complicated by financial concerns because most female athletes cannot rely on athletic competence to translate into monetary success (Carty, 2005; Fink et al., 2014; Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). Instead, as Carty (2005) suggested, “to acquire sponsors, female athletes are pressured to present an image not only of health, vitality, and physical attractiveness but also of feminine beauty and obedience to traditionally feminine standards of behavior” (p. 135). As an example:

Anna Kournikova was, until very recently, the highest-earning player in women’s tennis. She is worth over ten million dollars in endorsements, though she has never won a major tournament. And, she aggressively accentuates her sex appeal over her athletic ability…. Kournikova’s ability to profit from her sensuality and eroticism highlights the importance of marketability and how corporate interests have a hand in promoting certain gendered representations. (Carty, 2005, pps. 138-139)

Kournikova illustrates how the intelligible performance is rewarded.

A decade later, according to Forbes.com, Maria Sharapova’s endorsements double those of Kournikova’s (Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). In fact, she is the highest paid female athlete, eleven years in a row (Badenhausen, 2015). In 2014, she earned almost $30 million, with $23 million from endorsements. In contrast, Serena Williams has been the top ranked women’s single’s tennis player for the past three years (Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). Despite dominating tennis, with four times the number of Sharapova’s grand slam wins, Serena Williams
is a distant second in endorsements with $13 million in 2014 (Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). Williams’ winnings in 2014 were $11.3 million. She made over $10 million less (in endorsements and $5 million less in total) despite being the top ranked tennis player and beating Sharapova, soundly, (6/1, 6/0) in the women’s singles tennis finals at the 2012 Summer Olympics. In other words, for female athletes, conforming to beauty norms pays better being the top ranked professional sportswoman in her sport.

Fabos (1999) terms this type of rewarding performances of conformity as “beauty capital” in that “women’s rags-to-riches stories rely on culturally approved and endorsed images of beauty to explain their class advancement” (p. 135). As a type of commodity, “beauty capital, in American culture, is a legitimate and necessary qualification for a woman’s rise in wealth, power, and class status…. [and] that all women need is beauty to achieve stability and wealth” (Fabos, 1999, p. 135). In other words, Sharapova (white, blond, slender) better conforms to these approved and endorsed standards of beauty when compared to Williams (not white, not blond, not slender). As a consequence, for female athlete, competency does not pay. Instead, conforming to beauty norms justifies their social upward mobility.

Van Riper and Badenhausen (2015) added that all but two of the top ten earning female athletes are tennis players (Caroline Wozniacki, Ana Ivanovic, Petra Kvitova, Simona Halep, and Agnieszka Radwanska), or golfers (Stacy Lewis). Female tennis and golf players earned almost $104 million of the $124 million earned, in total, by the top ten athletes (Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). So, sportswomen who compete in sports that conform to feminine ideals vastly out earn those who do not. Next, on average, the top ten women athletes made 149% more from endorsements when compared to their winnings and salaries. Sharapova and Ivanovic topped that chart, as both women’s endorsement deals were about 350% more than their
winnings/salaries (Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). This illustrates that female athletes, for the most part, cannot depend on their athletic successes to translate to financial successes. Instead, the financial viability of female athletes is reliant on how well she performs conformity to accepted beauty standards and how well her sport conforms to feminine ideals.

It is not surprising then that female athletes reflect this norm as they reported that sexualization helps women in sport build fan bases and attract sponsor interest (Fink et al., 2014). In those terms, her athletic performance is not as important, Fink et al. (2014) concluded, “female athletes themselves also believe the most effective way for them to receive corporate sponsorship is to highlight their femininity and sexuality along with (or instead of) their athletic competence” (p. 216). Fink et al. (2014) elaborated that some female athletes embraced that sexualization while others (who did not want to be portrayed in a sexual manner) understood sexualization as reality of corporate sponsorship. In practical terms, female athletes may realize that their athleticism can only be part of her financial success, the remaining lion’s share depends on how well she performs sexualized feminine ideals of beauty for potential sponsors.

While a female athlete must embody feminine norms to be accepted as a woman and she must be sexualized in order to gain sponsors (Carty, 2005; Fink et al., 2014), her femininity and sexualization undermines her own creditability and respectability as an athlete (Krane, 2001; Kane et al., 2013). To put it more succinctly, “feminine sportswomen are not taken seriously” (Krane, 2001, p. 122). Krane (2001) illustrates this impossible juggling act:

Therefore, female athletes must be athletic yet also portray grace and beauty to be perceived as feminine. Females must present an acceptable body and appearance, conforming to the heterosexist norms of society. So while physical beauty and a
Female athletes are caught in a double bind. By capitalizing on their beauty and sexuality, female athletes may lose their credibility and respect in sport. At the same time, if female athletes do not capitalize on their sexuality, then they cannot attract sponsors. In other words, certain women’s performances are not only rendered unintelligible and also materially disciplined (Butler, 1993).

In some cases, not all female athletes fall into the two disparate categories (Gilenstam, Karp, & Henriksson-Larsén, 2008; Walton, 2005). Walton (2005) addressed amateur wrestlers and suggested that when female athletes are portrayed as both athletic and feminine, the women may be “granted an honorary male status” (p. 65). Gilenstam et al. (2008) concurred and added that in women’s ice hockey, they found that the female athletes shared traditional gender perspectives, and differentiated themselves from other women. They added that this is another common strategy to balance gender and it may “reduce the challenge to the male norm in sports, even in such a male sport as ice hockey” (Gilenstam et al., 2008, p. 248). By differentiating themselves from other women and male players (Gilenstam, et al., 2008) and by being considered as “honorary men,” (Walton, 2005), the female athletes do not challenge the right of men to dominate sport. Instead, the female athletes become the “exceptions that prove the rule” of masculinity superiority (Walton, 2005, p. 65). Therefore, when female athletes are portrayed as both athletic and sexy, especially in sports typically not associated with femininity, the sportswomen are segregated from other women. The performance is unintelligible in that one cannot coexist with the other in that a body that is marked as female. That differentiation reinforces female athletes’ specialness which means that “normal” women cannot be athletes.
From the media side, the lack of coverage and overt sexualization are oftentimes justified by media producers as meeting market demands: “they are constrained by a combination of market forces, and by their desire to give viewers ‘what they want to see.’” (Cooky et al., 2013, p. 221). This argument becomes problematic for several reasons. First, audiences view female athletes’ athleticism as more important when compared to attractiveness (Fink et al., 2004; Kane and Maxwell (2011). Next, sports and media coexist in a symbiotic relationship: As media audiences see more coverage, they may become more interested in specific sports, and then, media producers may increase coverage to attract more audiences (McChesney, 1989; Wenner, 1988). For instance, the cable sports network, ESPN created the X Games to showcase the then new area of extreme sports (Frager, 1993). By doing so, ESPN, as a (Disney owned) media power, legitimized extreme sports. That strategy was successful, the once fringe extreme sports became part of the Winter Olympic Games (D. Browne, 2004). The coverage led to endorsements and greater public interest which propelled some long haired, lanky extreme athletes, such as Shaun White, from the fringes of extreme sports, into the mainstream (Jones, 2013). Therefore, media, if they choose, may help create markets for sports and athletes.

In summation, women sport participants are not simply athletes (Birrell, 1998). Instead, women are the inferior sex in sport (Pfister, 2010) or portrayed as playing at sport (Meân & Kassing, 2008). Exclusion of women dates back thousands of years and it is only recently that women had access to compete more broadly. This exclusion was justified as Berg et al. (2014) noted that “historically, women have been denied access to sport, being seen as weak and limited in their ability, especially in more aggressive, physical sports” (p. 176). However, women are not weak nor frail, but physically as strong, if not stronger than men (Roth & Basow, 2004). Instead, what and how women may (and may not) do is constrained by powers made material by history
and reiterated social practices (Butler, 1993). This sense of the body then renders certain performances of gender as acceptable (intelligible) and not acceptable (intelligible). Media are interlocked with sport, and how media represents female athletes influence the separation of rewarded and disciplined performances (Kane, 2013; Wenner, 1998). Extreme underrepresentation and overt sexualization are the two prevalent and persistent patterns in media portrayals of female athletes (Cooky et al., 2013; Cooky et al., 2015; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1996).

The patterns of representation translate into the tensions that underlie the intelligibility of performances of female athletes. As a body on which gender ideals are being contested (Messner, 1998) one of most salient patterns is the performance of athleticism in tension with the performance of femininity (Kane et al., 2013; Krane et al., 2010). Krane et al. (2010) termed this tension a balancing act. On one side, female athletes want to be portrayed as athletically competent (Kane et al., 2013; Krane et al., 2010; Meân & Kassing, 2008). This type of portrayal builds respect for the athlete and her sport, increases credibility as an endorser, and attracts audiences (Fink et al., 2004; Kane & Maxwell, 2011). Nevertheless, top female athletes tend to make more money from sponsorships, and in order to attract those sponsors, they must portray themselves as feminine (Carty, 2005; Fink et al., 2014; Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015), but feminine athletes are not taken seriously, and they lose respect credibility for their sport (Krane, 2001; Kane et al., 2013). So, female athletes are caught in a double-bind (Krane, 2001). Here, it is noteworthy to point out that individual athletes drive coverage for entire sports, even team sports (Brown, 2006; Godoy-Pressland & Griggs 2014). So, the limited portrayals of female athletes are particularly important because they are grossly underrepresented (Weber & Carini, 2012). So, the case of Patrick, as an extremely popular and visible woman competitor, offers an
opportunity to examine the performances and tensions surrounding female athletes. My second research question addresses female athletes in terms of their bodies.

Next, sport produced some of the earliest heroes in western society (Burkert, 1985; Cebián, 2006). Funeral games were also held and laments were part of heroic burial rituals (Cebián, 2006). Then, Burkert (1985) argued, “from the seventh century onwards, the [funeral] games came to be centered on the hero cults…the funeral games gave way to the Panhellenic games” (p. 193). Both men and women were worshipped in cults and they shifted with societal tensions. With this in mind, let next address heroes and heroines, broadly, to set the context for the heroines of sport.

**Heroines of Sport**

The concept of heroes (ἡρώς) was a unique feature of Greek mythology and religion (Burkert, 1985; Ekroth, 2002). Heroes were described as a long gone race who were more just than humans or gods (Hesiod, 1983), demigod (hemitheos) offspring of divine and mortal parings (Burkert, 1985; Ekroth, 2002), and the protectors (servus) and saviors (salvus) of entire communities (Cebián, 2006). In practice, heroes were originally worshipped because they served their societies in selfless manners that earned them honor beyond those of the ordinary dead (Antonaccio, 1993; Burkert, 1985). Hero worship became ritualized in cults, and then these heroic cults became so pervasive that:

The myth of the hero as the savior of the tribe of nation is older than written history. Until about two hundred years ago, the hero functioned not merely as a myth or cult, but as a principle of historical explanation…. [He] was the key to the rise and fall of countries and even cultures. (Hook, 1992, p. 193)
Politically powerful families started heroifying real or imagined ancestors to legitimize their rule (Bremmer, 2006; Cebián, 2006).

Cebián (2006) wrote “in a world already populated by a more or less organized pantheon [of gods], the ancestors did not acquire status as full gods, but they became equated to the demi-gods and the human ancestry was solely erased at the mythical level” (p. 36). Bremmer (2006) added, “the cult of the epic heroes was followed by the practice of Greek poleis to invent a heroic ancestor for themselves or their parts (Athenian phylae, for example)” (p. 17). Thus, “the claim of a family to descent from certain heroes social and economic inequality was legitimized” (Cebián, 2006, p. 39). By the time of the Caesars, and the creation of the Roman imperial cult, Brent (1999) wrote that “the Augustinian revolution was as much religious as it was political….the cult carried associations with the legendary kings of Rome that left its mark on the Republican constitution” (p. 17). This theocracy (*theokrati*) extends into contemporary society as German *Kaisers* and Russia *Czars* trace their etymology to “Caesar” and the justification of rule by divine right.

While heroine cults were widespread, the worship of female heroes differed from male ones (Larson, 1995). In most cases, heroines were worshipped in concert with male figures and their heroification was based on being married to male heroes (Larson, 1995). Or, virgin heroines were heroified because they were sacrificed or sacrificed themselves, before marriage, to avoid rape (Daphne) as well as for the good of the society and appease the divine (Iphigenia) (Larson, 1995). These heroines supported the importance of patriarchs in the family, so, it is no surprise that females were often excluded from the heroic narratives and limited to portrayals as the goal for the hero’s quest, his helper, or his hinderer (Campbell, 1949). However, in some instances, a few early heroines challenged that patriarchy.
Larson (1995) argued that mother and daughter relationships were a threat to Greek patriarchy. To remove this threat, girls were removed from their mothers’ influence by marrying them young. In contrast, the Amazons were portrayed as rejecting marriage and so, daughters never left their mothers’ homes. In addition, Amazons were the matriarchs of their families and homes. Consequently, they were often portrayed as enemies of mainstream Greek society, failed foreign invaders, or helping to defend Troy against the morally justified Greek invasion. But, outside of mainstream Greek worship, Amazons were heroified independently as founders of communities. Larson (1995) concluded that as warriors mythologized as descended from Ares, Amazons reversed gender roles and challenged Greek patriarchal norms.

At the same time, Ares was reviled by the other Olympians as personifying savage violence and destruction in war. He and his children (Fear, Terror, Discord, Desire, and Lust) often fought without discernable cause and solely for the sake of fighting. So, while the heroification of Amazons challenged masculine Greek norms, their separation from mainstream Greek society, and as destructive warrior women, rendered their existence as both unnatural and dangerous to that same society.

Therefore, two themes and functions emerge with regard to mythic heroes and heroines: (1) heroes are created by the masses for serving communities and then appropriated to justify inequalities in ruling the masses and (2) heroines are usually worshipped in relationship with heroes, but they also illustrate gender tensions as by challenging and threatening hegemony. These two trends/functions continue into contemporary heroes and heroines.

For Hook (1992) heroes exist in that “great men and great women have played and may still play a significant determining role at crucial moments in human affairs” (p. 174). In other words, they still serve their communities. At the same time, he quoted Abigail Adams as he
reiterated that “history is not a web woven with innocent hands” (Hook, 1992, p. 176). He added, “history is rewritten so as to leave no doubt that it was either the work of heroes, predecessors of the leader or work of the villains, prototypes of the leaders’ enemies.” (p. 5). Contemporary heroes reflect the duality of that history (Hook, 1992; G. Smith, 1973). Additionally, unlike mythic heroines and heroes, contemporary ones are mortal, accordingly, their roles are somewhat diminished because they are no longer divine (J. Brown, 2011; Cebián, 2006).

Heroines have a different trajectory from heroes in that women cannot inhabit the same roles as men (J. Brown, 2011; Early & Kennedy, 2003; Hills 1999). P. Browne (1987) described heroines:

Through the centuries men have treated women heroes as invisible. They have kept women stored away, like explosives in a warehouse, priding themselves on the treasures they possess, yet afraid to unleash that power least It tend to overpower the possessor. (p. 1)

She added that since the power of heroes has diminished from the divine to mortal and that heroes are no longer worshipped, women are allowed to take on the heroic mantle.

Following the warrior woman tradition, Mainon and Ursini (2006) suggested that many modern heroines are essentially women in men’s bodies. Modern incarnations include Xena, Katniss Everdeen, and Trix Prior. At the same time, other writers (J. Brown, 2011; Early & Kennedy, 2003; Hills 1999) have asserted, that heroines are more than manly women. Hills (1999) clarified these “female characters are masculine or ‘figuratively male,’ but from my perspective it is much more productive to conceptualize them as transformative, transgressive and alternative women” (p. 49). Early and Kennedy (2003) concurred and argued that instead of simply being female versions of male heroes, strong heroines “enable fans to reimagine and
reclaim heroic narratives for young women” (pp. 4-5). Instead of a simple conception of feminine strength as purely physical power, J. Brown (2011) suggested that powerful heroines are portrayed in a “double bind constructs emerging roles for women as both heroic subject and sexual object” (p. 7). He pointed out that the heroines should be examined beyond those binds (heroic subject vs. sexual object) as well as dialectically and simultaneously interconnected to “force a new understanding of cultural norms” (J. Brown, 2011, p. 10). Thus, female heroes help to illustrate the struggles of women, and offer possibilities for transformation (J. Brown, 2011; Early & Kennedy, 2003; Hills 1999).

In sum, mythic heroes illustrated how hegemony may appropriate and exploit those that served their communities (Bremmer, 2006; Cebián, 2006). Mythic heroines addressed tensions in gender relations (Larson, 1995). Contemporary heroes and heroines are no longer divine, but are still held in high regard (Hook, 1995, P. Browne, 1987). Similar to their mythic counterparts, heroines illustrate transformational possibilities and were trivialized as figurative males or sexual objects (J. Brown, 2011; Early & Kennedy, 2003; Hills 1999). While we no longer worship them with prayers at their tombs and games held in their honor, heroes and heroines are exalted above others as venerated role models (North et al., 2005; Sullivan & Venter, 2003, 2010).

**Role Models**

Role models help us learn to navigate in our daily lives (Bandura, 1986). From the social cognitive perspective, social learning involves observing others to gauge the consequences of their behaviors and then reproducing it if the behavior is successful or rewarded. “Modelling has always been acknowledged to be one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes and patterns of thought and behavior” (Bandura, 1986, p. 47). Therefore, an examination of role models is appropriate in a study rooted in communication studies because
individuals learn from role models. Children tend to choose role models based on greater shared commonalities, and if they perceive that they can attain and accomplish what role model has attained and accomplished (Bandura, 1986). So, young boys and girls may pay more attention to same-sex role models (Tuchman, 1979). These children learn gender conformity or deviation responses based on that model’s performance.

One of the earliest connections between heroes and learning was theorized by Freud (1933) in that children initially learn by modeling their parent’s as hero-figures. In other words, hero-figures may direct how and what children learn. Rollin (1983) added, “a result of their transactions with hero-figures then it is possible for the young to seek to develop new skills, rearrange their priorities, or even refashion their identities” (p. 40). As children grow, their way of learning from hero-figures change:

Adults on the other hand, though some may seek to modify their personal styles or their life-styles as a result of incorporating hero-figures into their psychic economy, are more likely to use heroes, real or fictional, as materials for the generation of wish-fulfillment fantasies. The hero as text for day dreams. (Rollin, 1983, p. 40)

In practice, this means that individuals may be more emotionally involved and desire greater affiliation with those they identify as heroines and heroes (North et al., 2005; Teitelbaum, 2005).

Moreover, heroines and heroes become role models on which individuals develop their own behaviors and character (Sullivan & Venter, 2003). For instance, Sullivan and Venter (2010) found that out of 305 student interviewees, about a third identified heroes as “serving as a role model for individuals’ own actions” and another third defined heroes as “serving as idealized self-images for individuals focused not on actions but on character” (p. 475).
Individuals may feel a greater tendency to emulate them as role models because the behaviors of heroines and heroes are often greatly rewarded. They concluded, “exploring the prevalence of specific heroes within a population may reveal more about one’s society and how self-views are affected by their cultures (Sullivan & Venter, 2010, p. 110). Thus, heroes and heroines are important role-models for children and adults (North et al., 2005; Sullivan & Venter, 2003, 2010).

Then, Gerbner and Gross (1976) argued that individuals interact based on the symbolic world:

The environment that sustains the most distinctive aspects of human existence is the environment of symbols. We learn, share, and act upon meanings derived from that environment. The first and longest lasting organization of the symbolic world was what we now call religion. (p. 173)

So, who and how individuals worship is fundamental in learning and role modeling. Birrell (1981) addressed this concept by connecting sporting heroes and heroines to mythical ones:

Character display has a more generalizable, public, and ceremonial significance. Thus the so-called “hero-worship” of athletes should not be regarded disparagingly as evidence of modern man’s replacement of religious ideals with secular or even heathen images. The shift does not mark a fundamental change in social values but merely a substitution of the vessel in which they are contained. (p. 374)

So, heroes and heroines form the sporting realm are especially important because they take the place of mythic heroes and heroines in terms of their religious and ritualistic significance.
Whannel (2002) argued that the perspective of role models is drawn from badly conceived experiments involving children and bobo dolls. In spite of this, the sense of socialization based on hero-models precede those experiments (Freud, 1933; Rollin, 1983). A more contemporary expression may be in how some Christian youth wore WWJD (What would Jesus do?) wristbands to remind themselves to let Jesus guide their behaviors.

Lunt (2009) argued the sporting “heroes of myth had been humans themselves who had managed to secure commemoration and cult, as well as continued influence on earth” (p. 388). For this reason, heroes and heroines have lost their divinity. This also means that individuals, as mere mortals, can attain heroic rewards for themselves. Martinez (2008) added that sporting heroes and heroines are elevated above other types of contemporary heroes and heroines because “professional sport heroes rely on their bodies” (p. 238). Therefore, individuals may be able to model their behaviors to earn similar successes. This creates a commonality between sporting heroes and individuals who may consider them as role models (Bandura, 1986; J. Brown, 2011; Sullivan & Venter, 2003). Similar to how mythic heroes were heroified by the masses, Teitelbaum (2005) asserted that sporting heroes and heroines are often created by fandom. As such, sporting heroes and heroines occupy a preeminent space as role models.

Then, Crepeau (1981) asserted “the values and attributes displayed by the Heroes of Sport still tell us what the society finds of highest value” (p. 30). Vande Berg (1998) added “sports heroes embody, articulate, and interrogate abstract ideas and cultural values, they highlight social problems, they prove hopeful solutions” (p. 152). Following their mythical ancestors, sporting heroines occupy a more contested space.

Heroines differ from men because male sports heroes “function to represent heroic images of men and masculinity” (Lines, 2001, p. 289). The invisibility of women in sports and
heroification is reflected in children’s learning as Greendorfer (1977) reported that both boys and girls often chose male athletes as role models. In fact, female athletes were less often picked as role models (Biskup & Pfister, 1999; Estrada, Garcia-Ael, & Martorell, 2015; Greendorfer, 1977). Heywood and Dworkin (2003) added that most children have difficulty recalling the names of female athletes. Lines (2000) agreed and added that since sportswomen are underrepresented, girls and women may be more active in seeking them. Thus, the few female athletes who are both visible and heroified become key role models for young girls and women (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Meân & Kassing, 2008).

In sum, individuals choose role models based on shared similarities and perceptions of attainment (Bandura, 1986). Hero-figures are important role models as individuals may feel greater connection with them (Freud, 1933; Rollin, 1983). Individuals may learn more from the hero-figures as role models (Bandura, 1986). Like their mythic ancestors, sporting heroes are created by the masses and celebrated for their feats (Teitelbaum, 2005). At the same time, heroes are no longer divine (Hook, 1995, P. Browne, 1987), instead, sporting heroes have taken the lofty place of mythic heroes (Birrell, 1981). Similar to their mythic ancestors, sporting heroines do not illustrate canon but rather contestations and tensions over gender. As such, sporting heroines and heroes are particularly important role models (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Meân & Kassing, 2008). So, I next address how sports heroes, as role models, offer transformational possibilities and are commodified for consumption.

**Transformational**

Bandura (2009) argued, “models not only exemplify and legitimate new practices, they also serve as advocates for them” (p. 112). Vande Berg (1998) argued that heroified athletes are especially important in helping to offer creative solutions to social problems. In other words,
Sporting heroes, as role models, offer transformational possibilities. For instance, Olympian Jesse Owens (Dreyson, 2008a, 2008b) and basketball star Earvin “Magic” Johnson (Pollock, 1994) were lauded for their sporting performance and for serving their communities. Owens won four gold medals in track and field. His record-breaking, winning performances may have affected Nazi ideology regarding Aryan supremacy on a global stage, yet he did not change attitudes locally in the U.S. (Dreyson, 2008b). In Germany, Owens, and his fellow black athletes were permitted to stay in the same hotels as their white counterparts. In contrast, Owens had to use the freight elevator between his street-side ticker tape parade and his party on the upper floors of the Waldorf Astoria (Dreyson, 2008a, 2008b). Despite domestic setbacks, Owen’s victories, influenced racial issues and he was exalted as a sports hero for his athletic performance in a time when Jim Crow segregationist policies were still legal in the U.S. (Dreyson, 2008a, 2008b).

More recently, a second case involved basketball player Johnson and AIDS epidemic in 1991. Instead of hiding his condition, like many others before him (such as actor, Rock Hudson, and Olympic diving medalist, Greg Louganis), Johnson sought to visibly promote AIDS awareness. This is especially important because he did so during a time when paranoia, about the condition, was rampant in the U.S. (Pollack, 1994). Instead, of hiding, Johnson decided to publically announce that he had AIDS: “I just want to say that I’m going to miss playing, and I will now become a spokesman for the HIV virus” (announcement E. Johnson, 1991, November 7). Ten years later, Farrey (2001) reported that Johnson looked back and remarked:

What I try to do is help educate all people about what this is about. That you can hug and kiss someone, high-five them, treat them the way you treated them before, don’t discriminate against people who have HIV and AIDS. Now, we talk openly about it. (para. 9)
Pollock (1994) also argued that the athlete changed AIDS discourse, and it no longer stigmatized as, what some called, “God’s curse on homosexuality.” More importantly, with that shift in how AIDS was talked about, those afflicted with the condition had greater access to medical help and support. The role that Johnson played in redefining AIDS is the basketball player’s most important legacy (Pollock, 1994).

In contrast, Meier (2015) argued that female sporting role models illustrate gender differences:

While a sportsman can easily combine his athletic and private life with socially expected masculinity, sportswomen need to find compromises. Potential inconsistencies between heteronormativity, femininity, moral values, and sport necessitate adaptations to meet marketing criteria, and to obtain media coverage or public attention. (p. 971)

In other words, sporting heroines must adapt to inconsistent tensions. Meier (2015) suggested that sporting heroines, as role models, may challenge gender stereotypes if participating in traditionally masculine sports if they perform competency while competing. Meier (2015) added that female sporting heroines may reach outside of the sporting realm that as sources of inspiration. She concluded that successful female athletes are often delegitimized (overtly sexualized) or otherwise held as examples of supporting masculine domination (Meier, 2015). She urged sporting and scholarly engagement with these women to reframe them, demonstrate their athleticism to provide additional ways to address gender.

Heywood and Dworkin (2003) offered that, as role models, sporting heroines “loosen and untie traditional gender stereotypes by showing a fixed, determined purpose” (p. 179). Therefore, the continued struggle is important and shows that female athletes have endured and their resolve
to keep fighting in sport “gives us one story of bodies that fought back. This is one story of what let her [female athletes] survive, about how women’s athletics can reconfigure lives (p. 69).

Next, by drawing on the metaphor sporting heroines, Hargreaves (2000) sought to make visible female athletes that are women excluded based on perspectives tied to “cultural imperialism, Eurocentric discourses, and universalized accounts of ‘women in sport’” (p. 7). By describing the athletes as heroines of sport, Hargreaves (2000) shifts them from passive victims to “active agents negotiating specific social barriers and discriminatory discourses” (p. 9).

As role models, sporting heroes offer transformational possibilities to existing social issues (Vande Berg, 1998). Owens and Johnson helped to shift how those in the extreme margins were addressed (Dreyson, 2008a, 2008b; Pollock, 1994). Sporting heroines illustrate struggles and offer contradictory ways to transcend limitations (Meân and Kassing, 2008; Meier, 2015). Sporting heroes and heroines are also often appropriated to reinforce existing social structures (G. Smith, 1973). In the next section, I will address how heroes of sport are appropriated and commodified, and then discuss issues related to sporting heroines.

**Appropriated and Commodified**

Real (1998) theorized sports changed from recreational participation to a business due to media delivery technologies. Sports programming is considered to be extremely valuable because the broadcasts regularly attract larger live audiences (Ourand, 2011). Martinez (2008) added that individual athletes, as sporting heroes draw audiences for and drive individual and team sports commercially. So, contemporary athletes are characterized by commodification and appropriation (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Dixon & Flynn, 2008). In a survey of the top ten earning male athletes, the top two (boxers, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao) earned more from winnings than endorsements. For the remaining eight athletes, their endorsements
paid more than their winnings and salaries. In 2014 Tiger Woods earned $600,000 from winnings and $50 million in endorsements. Accordingly, male athletes may be heroified for their athleticism, then appropriated and commodified to sell their sport and products.

Cashmore and Parker (2003), argued that David Beckham subverts masculine ideals by being supportive of his wife and children. They noted Beckham’s fluid representations were created “to mobilize desires for commodities in ways typical representative of twenty-first century consumer society” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 215). Simultaneously, he may also represent the adaptability of masculine hegemony because he can be father, sportsman, and husband, while his wife (Victoria) is primarily known for her appearance. Lastly, he supports the notion that sportsmen are commodities for consumption.

For Yoseloff (1999), the acceptance of Joe DiMaggio as an American sporting hero meant that he was no longer marked with racist stereotypes (lazy, fascist) surrounding Italian Americans at that time. DiMaggio’s mainstream heroification erased that ethnic heritage, which reinforced the notions of a colorblind the American Dream. This erasure made him safe to commodify. Similarly, Mocarski and Billings (2013) argued that by representing LeBron James in terms of a messiah, he is distanced from his Black masculinity and is portrayed “in a safe, homogenized format for all to enjoy” (p. 20). Lastly, Tiger Woods leveraged his “Blasian” multiracial identity to “sell everything from golf to Nike products to management consultants” (Washington, 2015, p. 523). In other words, their differences are erased to make them “safe” to market and consume.

In contrast, for sportswomen, that appropriation and commodification is different. Lines (2001) illustrated:
Sports women are likely to receive recognition when they are perceived to be sex goddesses, reflecting traditional heterosexual feminine stereotypes. Sporting ‘heroine’ is constructed for the male gaze, with men positioned as the dominant audience of mediated sport. (p. 291)

Kane et al. (2013) found female athletes preferred to be less sexualized, but they are aware that they must portray more femininity to attract sponsors. In other words, for sportswomen, appropriation and commodification are marked by sexualization. The sexualized images have detrimental effects as female athletes are also important role models (Meân & Kassing, 2008; C. Smith, 2015; Weber & Carini, 2012). More specifically, Weber and Carini (2012) added, “these images serve as role models for millions of females, who receive the message that athleticism and skill are not enough, but should be supplemented or even replaced by beauty and sexiness” (p. 6). In other words, since female athletes are important role models that help girls and women understand how to be a woman, and their sexualization reinforces gender ordering and stereotypes.

This sexualization has ramifications that span outside of sport as well (Daniels, 2012; Daniels & Wartina, 2011; Vescio, Wilde, & Crosswhite, 2005). Kane (1996) cautioned, that by “portraying females in ways that systematically highlight their sexual difference from males, the media contribute to the limiting of women's full potential as athletes” (p. 123). These conclusions are collaborated in examinations of adolescent girls as well as high school and college aged women (Daniels, 2012; Vescio et al., 2005). First, Vescio et al. (2005) found that adolescent girls chose athletic role models (male and female) based on feminine characteristics of kindness, modesty, fairness, and being caring. Next, Daniels (2012) examined high school and college aged females. He found that they tended to reflect and internalize sexualization norms.
She concluded, “in short, sexualized athlete images prompted objectified evaluations of the women in the photographs as well as the self in female viewers” (Daniels, 2012, p. 87). This shows that athleticism was a secondary concern. This is especially important because the women are athletes and foregrounding femininity may further trivialize their presence in sport.

More broadly, the role of sporting heroines is contested. Creedon (1998) illustrated, “heroes make money, but heroines are tarnished by money” (p. 96). She added sportswomen are criticized when they capitalize on their athletic achievements (for example, Cash and Kerri). This issue is exacerbated since female athletes are severely underrepresented, and the few visible ones may often be overtly sexualized. Meân and Kassing (2008) asserted “women athletes are not only positioned as significant role models for young girls and women, but as having privileged insight into femininity” (p. 142). In this position, Hargreaves (2000) argued that sporting heroines are selfish, are only concerned with themselves, conform to gender expectations, and successful female athletes help to mask that sport is still a masculine dominated domain. From her perceptive, female heroines may not be suitable role models.

In contrast, Heywood and Dworkin (2003) offered a different perspective on female athletic heroes: “rather than marking the negation of such efforts, iconic female athletes can contribute to such efforts in unique ways. Many forms of engagement are valuable – it needn’t be one pole or the other” (p. 40). They added that while:

Iconic female athletes, through “following men” in that heroic tradition, offer more than individualistic concerns and a way to mask and devalue collective struggles for justice. They also offer a sense of possibility and belonging to a world where women aren’t always on the sidelines…where they are active agents in the world and people are cheering them. (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, p. 40)
Heywood and Dworkin (2003) asserted that emphasizing gender differences in terms of conformity versus deviation may reproduce naturalized gender hierarchies. Instead, they urge for a broader spectrum of perspectives that allow for more contradictory ways of understanding (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). For these reasons, female athletes, as sporting heroines, offer unique insight into tensions of gender and our expectations of heroines.

In sum, mythic and contemporary heroes are heroified by the masses for extraordinary service, and are also often appropriated to justify inequalities (Bremmer, 2006; Cebián, 2006; Hook, 1995). In contemporary society, sporting heroines and heroes have taken the place of mythic ones with respect to their ritualistic and religious importance (Birrell, 1981). In that position, heroes and heroines of sport occupy an exalted space as role models because they show how mere mortals may attain great rewards for themselves (Bandura, 1986; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). At the same time, mythic, contemporary, and sporting heroines illustrate the tensions of gender struggles (Larson, 1995; P. Browne, 1987).

As role models, sporting heroes and heroines may illustrate transformative possibilities. However, both male and female athletes are appropriated (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Dixon & Flynn, 2008; Kane et al., 2013; Lines, 2001). Their annual earnings from endorsements outpace their winnings (Badenhausen, 2015; Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). The commodification of extremely famous male athletes may illustrate how hegemonies reconfigure and reassert themselves. This means that their differences [from hegemonic norms in terms of gender and race] are often erased to make them safe to consume (Mocarski & Billings, 2013). For female athletes, appropriation and commodification is expressed in terms of sexualization (Kane et al., 2013; Lines, 2001). That sexualization reaches outside of sport as young girls may learn gender roles from their sporting heroines/role models, which reinforces gender ideals and gendered
ordering. Further exacerbating the situation, girls and women may be more active in seeking visible female athletes, then heroifying them as hero-figures and important role models because sportswomen are extremely underrepresented (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Lines, 2001; Meân & Kassing, 2008).

Patrick is a highly visible female athlete and she has been heroified by some as a heroine of sport. Saporito (2013) reported that the legendary team owner Roger Penske sent a note to Patrick, “you are now our new American hero” (Saporito, 2013, para 1). Penske added that his wife and daughter hold Patrick in high regard (Saporito, 2013). Penske’s remark is especially important. His own driver, Brad Keslowski, was defending his 2012 championship title against her team at that time. So, the case of Patrick in NASCAR provides an opportunity to explore heroines of sport and my third research question is concerned with heroines of sport as role models.

To summarize this literature review, the realm of sport has historically been naturalized as a masculine domain (Birrell, 1981; Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Messner, 1992). The framework of hegemonic masculinity is useful to describe the justifications underlying how and why women are suppressed (Connell, 1990; Trujillo, 1991). Features of hegemonic masculinity salient to the case include force and control, and patriarchy with occupational achievement (Trujillo, 1991). As a hegemony, it reconfigures itself to reassert masculinity, and it includes internal contractions that may allow for transformational possibilities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001).

Next, as the second class sex, female athletes are contested bodies; they illustrate gender tensions in a masculine domain (Messner, 2002). Women were excluded from sport because they are naturalized as weak and frail (Berg et al., 2014). The framework of the body is useful to
explore contestations of women’s intelligible and unintelligible performances as female athletes (Butler, 1993). Media representations are implicated as persistent and prevalent pattern of portrayals show audiences what is intelligible and separate from the absence of representations which illustrate the unintelligible (Gerbner & Gross, 1978; Kane, 2013; Wenner, 1998). The two patterns underlying the portrayals of female athletes are severe underrepresentation and overt sexualization (Cooky et al., 2013; Cooky et al., 2015; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1996).

Third, heroes and heroines were once worshipped as semi-divine saviors of societies (Bremmer, 2006; Cebián, 2006; Hook, 1995). In contemporary society, heroes and heroines are no longer divine (J. Brown, 2011; Lunt, 2009), and sporting heroes have taken the place of mythical heroes (Birrell, 1991). The heroes and heroines of sport are venerated as role model (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Lines, 2001; Meân & Kassing, 2008). So, sporting heroines are sought by girls and women, marked as having special insight into femininity, and simultaneously illustrate transformative possibilities as well as gendered appropriation and commodification (Bandura, 1986; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Lines, 2001).

In conclusion, I am interested in examining the case of Patrick in terms of gender and sport, tensions surrounding female athletes’ bodies, and sporting heroines as role models. In the next chapter, I will detail my methods in collecting data and analyzing this case. I also address the socialization as the underlying perspective in my case study as it supports hegemonic masculinity, bodies, and role models.
Chapter III

Methods

While I am examining the specific case of Danica Patrick in NASCAR, I realize that I am also working within broad considerations sport, gender, and heroes. These areas of study have been examined from a variety of perspectives and using diverse methods. Consequently, I will attempt to draw some borders to bind this dissertation. First, I will discuss the usefulness of case studies as it allows me to examine a real-world issue guided by previous research and relevant theoretical perspectives. Then, I will review the underlying perspectives and theoretical viewpoints of my examination. Third, I discuss data collection (participant observation and news reports) and analysis (content analysis). I will conclude with a brief researcher statement to address issues of reflexivity and how I place myself in this examination. To start, I will discuss case studies as a broad research strategy.

Case Studies

Case study is not a data collection or analysis method (Edwards & Skinner, 2009; Yin, 2012, 2014). Instead, it is a strategy that helps researchers to address and offer in-depth insight into a contemporary real-world phenomenon that shares fuzzy borders with the complex social context within which it is embedded (Yin, 2012; 2014). These complex real-world phenomena are often untidy, so, the case study strategy guides research instead of limiting it. For example, Stake (1978) noted that case studies are most useful to “adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding” (p. 7). From this perspective, this strategy is useful for addressing Patrick’s entry into a NASCAR.

The approach lets the researcher draw borders (theoretically, contextually, methodologically) to offer a clearer understanding of the phenomenon (Stake, 1978; Yin, 2012;
Yin (2012; 2014) suggested case studies may be descriptive (what) or explanatory (why). The second allows for comparisons of rival or overlapping explanations (Ying, 2012). Birrell and McDonald (2000) offer a third option: a critical approach of ‘reading sport’ to “advance our understanding of complex and interrelated and fluid character of power relations [including gender]” (p. 4). Therefore, I offer a critical analysis and I will present findings with interpretations and discussion in the fifth chapter to present a multidimensional case.

Yin (2014) offered two axis of research design to determine the unit of analysis: (1) single or multiple and (2) embedded or holistic. Since I am examining a unique and unusual phenomenon of Patrick competing with and against athletes in a major sport, the single case design applies. Next, a holistic case is suitable for a broader range examination with no easily discernable subunits whereas an embedded case is more focused. I examine Patrick to address gender in three concentrically narrowing areas: sport as the broad domain; individual competitors in that domain as athletes; and then certain athletes who are heroified as revered role models. Accordingly, my study design is an embedded single case. Patrick is my unit of analysis and NASCAR is the context from which I address gender in the three areas.

Sporting researchers (Busanich, McGannon, & Schinke, 2014; Ryba, Ronkainen, & Selänne, 2015) have used this strategy to examine meanings surrounding individual elite athletes. From sport communication, Brown and O’Rourke (2003) offered an anthology with a “wide array of communication-based studies that attempt to reveal just part of the impact sport might have on society at large” (p. ix). In the anthology, the editors deployed case study as a strategy to allow authors to address gender (Billings, 2003; Vande Berg & Projansky, 2003), policy and regulation (Brown, 2003; O’Rourke III, 2003; Vaughn, 2003), as well as ritual and mythology (Gaines, 2003). Within the anthology, McDorman’s (2003) discussion regarding Pete Rose is
especially relevant as he used multiple sources of media reports to examine how the baseball player engaged in apologia.

From the case study approach, theory should help to bind the case and allow of a more specific focus without artificially constraining it. Yin (2012) argued that existing literature and research should provide the theoretical guidance for case studies. Theories should not constrict the case in terms of data collection and analysis. Instead they may be deployed as lenses to encourage a more robust understanding of the phenomenon. In fact, Yin (2014) suggested that multiple perspectives and theories should be deployed to better inform the case study. For these reasons, I used the broad perspective of socialization, which supports more specific the lenses of hegemonic masculinity to examine sport, the body to review female athletes, and role-models to discuss sporting heroines. In the next section, I will map out how the perspectives fit in relation to each other.

**Theoretical Underpinnings and Perspectives**

Socialization is a process by which individuals learn societal norms and values, as well as how to behave appropriately to conform to them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006). Berger and Luckmann (1966) added that an individual “is not born a member of society….he becomes a member of society” and this process of becoming a member of society (rather than simply being one) is called socialization (p. 129). In fact, to become successfully socialized, individuals should show a high degree of symmetry with the common behaviors, values, and other taken for granted practices in their society. It is a broad perspective and draws on areas from individual drives in psychoanalysis (Freud, 1933), social processes in developmental psychology (Piaget, 1950), and the sense of expectations from interaction and play (Mead, 1934).
Socialization is an ongoing process that starts young and continues across the life span (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2006; Eder & Nenga, 2006; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006). Primary socialization starts in the home and it takes place in the family as parents teach and serve as role models for their children (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bowlby, et al. 1998; Corsaro & Fingerson, 2006). A parent “creates in the child’s consciousness a progressive abstraction from the roles and attitudes of specific others to roles and attitudes in general” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 132). Lutfey and Mortimer (2006) added that “parents exert a robust influence on children, extending through adolescence and into adulthood” (p. 187). So, parents are the primary influence on their children during the process of socialization. For instance, individuals often point to their parents as the reason behind their own NASCAR fandom (Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008b). Some of the connections between communication and socialization is apparent in how parents and children communicate with each other, as well as how children learn from parents (Epstein & Ward, 2011; Miller, 1986; Schwartz, 1976). Miller (1986) articulated teasing as a form of complex verbal play in which parents are instilling a sense of pride, strength, and independence, while also teaching children how to verbally defend themselves when necessary.

Next, socialization (secondary) spans outward from the family as children apply the lessons and models to generalized others (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2006). In addition to the family, schools, peers, media, religion, governments, and other institutions are sources of socialization (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2006; Eder & Nenga, 2006; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006). With regard to sports, athletes often learn norms and values from the expectations of their coaches (Adams et al., 2010, p. 288).

One of the first areas children learn is about gender. Epstein and Ward (2011) argued that “adolescents receive – and likely internalize – a variety of gender socialization messages, some
of which are more and some are less traditional” (p. 118). Thus, gender is not natural, but are patterns of transmitted and reiterated norms (Epstein & Ward, 2011). Sport is one of the most relevant in socializing gender because in it, girls learn what it means to be a girl, and boys learn what it means to be a boy (Berg et al., 2013; Messner, 1992). In this instance, Messner (1992) argued that while male athletes may not enjoy being hit or hitting, they are socialized into that aggression norm by a system of rules, as well of the structure of sport and coaches. So, male athletes are socialized into a culture that emphasizes physical toughness as normal and desired. In contrast, women should be protected from male aggression and segregated in sport. This also means that men are naturalized as being bodily superior to women (Messner, 1992).

As the processes continue through the life span, individuals may be re-socialized based on shifting norms, roles, and values. As a result, the process of socialization is important in considerations of how social order and culture is reproduced and supported, as well as how it may be challenged and changed (Eder & Nenga, 2006; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006). From this perspective, socialization is a form of cultural (as enculturation) communication because it is not just tied to biology. Instead lived experiences and interactions are foregrounded to teach individuals which patterns are permissible, and which ones are not. Messner (2000) saw this when observed 4-5 year-old boys and girls playing organized soccer. He reported, “we saw how a girls’ team appropriated a large Barbie around which to construct a pleasurable and empowering sense of group identity” (p. 781). From his observations, he concluded that the girls re/appropriated the symbol of Barbie, as their team name, and used it to perform against gender ideals and norms.

From this broad perspective, socialization undergirds a variety of theories from which to examine how and why individuals learn, internalize, enact, and change patterns. Mosher and
Tomkins (1988) deployed script theory to examine macho socialization. Corsaro and Molinari (2000) studied how children transitioned between schools from the viewpoint of systems theory. In this case, I use hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) to examine the broadest area of sport and gender, the body (Butler, 1993, 2011) to address female athletes, and role models (Bandura, 1986) to investigate sporting heroines in accordance with previous examinations.

First, Bird (1996) linked socialization and hegemonic masculinity: “socialization provides the terms of the social interaction but does not determine how individuals incorporate interactional meanings into their own conceptualizations of gender” (p. 122). She argued that these hegemonic masculine ideas are internalized and reproduced. Demetriou (2001) added that gender ideals are not static so, deviance is not an indication of flawed socialization. Instead, other masculinities exist simultaneously, but expressions of those are made divergent by the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity (Bird, 1996; Demetriou, 2001; Connell, 1990). Sport is one of the most influential contexts in which gender is socialized (Connell, 1990; Trujillo, 1991; Messner, 1992). Accordingly, I deployed hegemonic masculinity, as a perspective by notions of socialization, to examine the broad area of sport and gender.

Secondly, Connell (1987) urged that we consider “gender as a verb (I gender, you gender, she gender…) [because] it would be better for our understanding” (p. 140). I link it to the perspective of the body, as Butler (2001) theorized that “gender is not a noun,” instead, it is produced in performance, which means that individuals do gender (p. 25). The reiterated and reinforced patterns differentiate performances of what are intelligible from those that are not (Butler, 1993, 2011). In other words, individuals not only to do gender, but are socialized to do gender the right way. From this viewpoint, gender is not naturally determined by biological sex, instead it made salient and material by the processes of socialization. The body of the female
athlete is one of the material sites on which gender is being contested (Butler, 1993; Messner, 1988). As such, I address my examination of female athletes from the perspective of the body.

Third, one of the ways individuals learn is from modeling after role models (Bandura, 1986). When present, female athletes are considered important role models since they provide unique insights into femininity (Meân & Kassing, 2008). Sporting heroines are elevated as they may inspire closer emotional attachments and greater affiliation (North et al., 2005; Teitelbaum, 2005). But, as contested bodies themselves (Hargreaves, 2000; Heywood & Dworkin 2003), sporting heroines are important role models that illustrate the social learning (Bandura, 1986) process because they articulate the tensions between accepted and unaccepted performances of being a woman (Butler, 1993, 2011). So, I discuss sporting heroines from the perspective of role models.

Next, Edwards and Skinner (2009) suggested that when case studies are helpful as a research strategy when balancing multiple perspectives, diverse data, and a complex phenomenon. Muller, Hardy, and Sutton (2014) added “if theory is the skeleton that gives structure to thinking, then case studies put meat on the bones” (p. xv). So, I will address data collection, in the following section.

**Data Collection**

Yin (2014) argued that case studies are different from other types of specific methodologies as the broad research strategy is characterized by collecting data from multiple sources. This allows for a more naturalistic examination of the phenomenon. Next, Lindlof and Taylor (2002) defined data as “textual, aural, and/or visual records of the object and process of research activity” (p. 209). Data can then be separated into two general and overlapping categories (Richards & Morse, 2013): primary data is based on interviews and participant
observation (including field notes), and secondary data includes media accounts, photographs, audio/visual recordings, and other written sources. But, the amount and types of data surrounding a phenomenon might be messy. In these instances, Yin (2012, 2014) advised that data collection should be guided by precedence. Therefore, I engaged in participant observation (J. Newman, 2007, 2010; J. Newman & Giardina, 2008, 2011) and collected media reports from a variety of sources (Pflugfelder, 2009; Sloop, 2005; Vavrus, 2007) in accordance with existing research on NASCAR. Then, Yin (2012) argued that case studies may often be opportunistic to address emerging phenomenon as they occur. Then, unique opportunities drove the timing of data collection.

**Timing**

On November 4, 2011, Patrick and Tony Stewart announced that she had signed with his team, Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR), to become the first full time female driver in the elite Spring Cup series, starting in 2013. The announcement was given at a press conference. So, I started a collection of media sources on November 4, 2011 to capture some of the initial commentary regarding Patrick. In 2012, she competed in ten races elite Sprint Cup level and a full season one at the lower tier Nationwide level. The next year, was Patrick’s rookie season as a full time competitor in the Sprint Cup Series. As a rookie, she raced with two yellow stripes on her rear bumper and was given additional time to test on tracks. So, her 2014 racing season was Patrick’s first year as a full-fledged NASCAR Sprint Cup driver. Following her timeline, my data collection was timed as follows:

- **Primary:** Three races in 2014 (July 24, August 3, September 6)
- **Secondary:** Media reports from November 4, 2011 to December 31, 2014.
Participant Observation at NASCAR Races

Participant observation, as ethnographic fieldwork, is “a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2001, p. 2). Malinowski (1961) emphasized listening to and observing interactions. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) added, “the validity of participation observation derives from researchers’ having been there” (p. 135). One of the challenges that Lindlof and Taylor (2002) noted for participant observation is (1) gaining access and (2) fitting in to socially engage with the members of the group being studied. Like other race attendees, I bought tickets for the three races to gain access. I feel that my background in the motorsport (as a fan since 2000) as well as having produced media content regarding racing, was helpful for me to blend in as an insider. In other words, I am familiar with and speak the languages of NASCAR culture so I fit in with social interactions as a participant. Wolcott (2008) added that “being an insider has obvious advantages” because “the ethnographer wants to convey how things appear to those ‘inside’” (p. 144). Or as Geertz (1983) put it, “the trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to. In a sense, no one knows this better than they do themselves” (p. 58).

Attending Three NASCAR Races

I attended three NASCAR Sprint Cup races in the summer of 2014. I chose these three races as the tracks had different histories, characteristics, and geographical locations. These differences may allow for greater a variety of experiences. First, the races were held in three different geographic regions (Midwest, South, and Northeast) such as specified by the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.). NASCAR runs races on a variety of tracks: between 2.66 (Talladega Superspeedway) and 0.526 miles (Martinsville Speedway). Since I previously attended several
NASCAR Cup races at 1.50-mile quad (Texas Motor Speedway, in the Southwest) and 2-mile D-shaped ovals (Auto Club Speedway in California, in the West) tracks, I chose to collect data from venues with different characteristics and in different regions. I listed track characteristics in Appendix A.

About the Races and Tracks

I attended the John Wayne Walding 400 at the Brickyard and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Gobowling.com 400 at the Pocono Raceway, and Federated Auto Parts 400 at the Richmond International Raceway.

- **John Wayne Walding 400 at the Brickyard and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway**

  (Indianapolis): The first race I attended was the John Wayne Walding 400 at the Brickyard, held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (Indianapolis) in Indiana. Indianapolis is one of the oldest tracks in the U.S. and is situated in the Midwest. It is the home track of the IndyCar Series. Starting in 1911, the Indianapolis 500 is one of the oldest IndyCar races held annually in the U.S. The track is nicknamed “the Brickyard” because after some initial and disastrous racing results, the racing surface was repaved in ten-pound bricks. Between 1937 and 1961, the brick surface was gradually paved over with asphalt. A single yard-wide strip of the original bricks was left exposed at the finish line. Since 1996, winners (with teams and families) of NASCAR and IndyCar races have kissed the Yard of Bricks to celebrate wins. Within the 2.5-mile oval, the track houses the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum displaying approximately 75 vehicles and the Borg-Warner Trophy, which is awarded to the winner of the Indianapolis 500. The 10-story Pagoda at Indianapolis overlooks the yard of bricks and is used to control the race. The capacity at Indianapolis is the largest of any NASCAR locations with over 250,000 seats all around the track.
• **Gobowling.com 400 at the Pocono Raceway (Pocono):** The second race I attended was also on a 2.5-mile track and is located in the northeast region of the U.S. in Pennsylvania. It differs from Indianapolis in that the track is shaped in a triangle, or tri-oval. Instead of four turns, Pocono only has three and is nicknamed “The Tricky Triangle.” Pocono is a much newer track, but it does not have the prestige nor history of Indianapolis. It felt more like a small town local track instead of a larger corporate one. Therefore, the track premises felt less impressive with grandstand bleachers and many family picnic tables. Most of the buildings at Pocono were temporary in contrast to the museum and infrastructure at Indianapolis. Instead of concrete buildings, many of the roofless structures had metal sidings. Lastly, despite its large track size, seating capacity at Pocono is roughly 75,000 with grandstands along the longest straightaway.

• **Federated Auto Parts 400 at the Richmond International Raceway (Richmond):** Built in 1946, Richmond International Raceway, is one of the shortest tracks in NASCAR Sprint Cup racing. It is easy to see the entire track from any seat. Richmond is in Virginia and considered to be in the Southern region of the U.S. In fact, during the most of the U.S. Civil War, the capital of the Confederacy was in Richmond. At Richmond, grandstands surround the three quarter of a mile track and the seating capacity is approximately 71,000. Unlike Indianapolis and Pocono, the seating at Richmond wrapped all around the track. Since the track is smaller, NASCAR races are held in the evenings and “under the lights.” Races are typically held Saturday nights instead of Sunday afternoons. Like Pocono, the structures at Richmond also looked to be temporary when compared to Indianapolis.
**Similarities and differences**

In addition to the look and feel of the tracks, the parking fees seemed to reflect the amount of development at each track. Richmond and Pocono did not charge parking fees while Indianapolis charged $20.00 for parking. Indianapolis is the most developed (with full-time staff) while Richmond and Pocono were much less developed. Indianapolis and Richmond are situated in the middle of cities. Traffic patterns were tightly control by local law enforcement before and after the race. Some residential streets were closed to race attendee traffic and traffic directions were reversed to allow faster arrivals (before) and exits (after the race). At Pocono, all of the grandstands were located along the longest front stretch. So, the track had fewer but larger restrooms, with an attendee in each. I saw two different types of security uniformed guards at Indianapolis. Instead, Richmond and Pocono utilized local police.

As noted above, specific track shape and size influence seating capacities. They also determine how fast the cars race. In NASCAR superspeedways are tracks that are a mile or longer in size and short tracks are less than a mile. Both Pocono and Indianapolis are superspeedways, whereas Richmond is a short track. During races, speeds range average 120 mph (Richmond) to 180 miles per hour (Indianapolis and Pocono).

All three of the races were set at 400 mile lengths. In total, the three races ran 8 hours and 40 minutes. Jeff Gordon won the John Wayne Walding 400 at the Brickyard, Dale Earnhardt, Jr. took the checkered flag at the Gobowling.com 400, and Brad Keslowski finished in the lead at the Federated Auto Parts 400. Earnhardt, Jr. was eliminated during the second round of the Chase (NASCAR version of playoffs), while 180 both Gordon and Keslowski held on until third round. Kevin Harvick, Patrick’s teammate at SHR, won the championship for 2014.
Permission and Entry

Fetterman (1989) noted that there are several ways of gaining entry into the field. Several months before each race, I called each track to gain permission to conduct participant observation. I asked for and gained permission from communications, public relations, and ticket operations staff to observe the race and speak with fellow race attendees. As a means of gaining entry, I purchased a ticket. But I have had some experience with NASCAR races, and I knew I could buy less expensive tickets based on source and timing. I choose to purchase my tickets from online ticket marketplaces such as StubHub and TravelZoo. The prices are usually lower when compared to the tickets available from the track itself, and the seating selection is usually better. With regard to timing, I purchased the tickets approximately 10 days before each race because. Based on my experience, that is usually when ticket sellers reduce prices.

I spent $60.00 for tickets that should have cost $95.00 at Indianapolis. The seats were in the in-field (inside of the track), next to the Pagoda. In general, Indianapolis NASCAR ticket prices ranged from $30.00 (general admission, no seats) and up to $250 for better seats and access to some hospitality areas. I chose this seat because they are under an overhang and the forecast predicted rain for the day. For Pocono, I found tickets that included access to a hospitality area that provided unlimited food and drinks prior to the race. As part of corporate package, the seating was part of the Terrace club with shaded/covered seating. Again, rain was likely in the forecast. In general Pocono tickets range from $22.50 for grandstand and up to $500 for box seating. For Richmond, I found $60.00 tickets near the start/finish line that included a headset and scanner to listen to communication between the drivers and teams in addition to the official broadcast. I had access to an after party on the track itself. That was the last race before
the Chase. The results of that race determined which 12 drivers were still eligible to win the championship. Tickets for the Pocono race start at $25 and ranged up to $250.

As part of my participant observation, I dressed to fit in with the field (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Wolcott, 2008). Based on my experience in NASCAR, I chose to wear the same clothes to each race: dark green cargo shorts (with many pockets), black leather work boots, black denim short sleeved top over a tan tank top. To maintain a more neutral appearance, I did not wear any logos to indicate driver, team, or other NASCAR preferences. I also wore light jewelry (watch + bracelets + pendant, small earrings that had to be removed when wearing the scanner headset). In some instances, women may wear HUGE statement pieces to the races, but I did not want to distract fellow participants.

Since I have attended several NASCAR races in the past decade, preparation to enter the field was easier as I have some knowledge of that field. As a race attendee, I usually brought a small soft sided cooler, a disposable raincoat, and foam earplugs. To collect data, I made 25 copies of information sheets for each track and had them ready to hand out. I carried about eight copies in my pockets at a time and replenished them out of my backpack when needed. I included a copy of the information sheet in Appendix B. I used a mechanical pencil (in case I had to write upside down/sideways) and had two backups in the backpack. I also made an abbreviated version of my interview guide and taped it to the inside back cover of the 5.5” x 3.5” ruled notebook (200 sheets each). This allowed me to refer to them if necessary. I brought three notebooks for each race. I carried one in my pocket and the other two stayed in my backpack.

Since I was seeking different experiences, I choose to take three different types of road trips to each of the tracks. In total, I logged a little under twenty-two hours at the tracks including races and observation before the race. At Richmond, I included the hours at the on track after
party. I did not include driving time in the hours above. Preparation for driving to and from races included printing and preparing maps, as well as preparing a cooler for both the road trip and to take into the tracks. I charted hours and details in Appendix C.

Field Notes

Before the race, I took initial notes as I contacted tracks and purchased tickets. During the drive to and from the tracks, I listened to radio broadcasts covering that race. As we got close to the track, I took notes on traffic patterns and special event law enforcement. I observed areas and people surrounding the tracks. After parking, I would stop every so often to note tailgating, parking, and other parts of the scene information as we walked to our seats. In total, I spent 39.5 hours driving to and from tracks. Normally, track gates are usually open 4-8 hours before the race starts. This allows attendees to see pre-race inspections and visit midways (vendors and games).

Before the races started, I walked around the track to pre-inspection (if publically accessible), and to the midways (vendors and other performances). I jotted notes as I walked. I observed Patrick’s merchandise trailer to watch and speak with attendees. In the midway, I spoke to the personnel selling merchandise in Patrick’s as well as other vendors such as “Race Girls.” I observed customer lines at trailers as well as large vendor displays including ones from Toyota and the U.S. National Guard. I looked at other merchandise trailers and people in the midway. For example, I noticed that one of the other drivers (Harvick) who races with Patrick at SHR shared a merchandise trailer with team co-owner/driver Stewart. Patrick had her own merchandise trailer (and Stewart had a second one). So, ironically, the 2014 NASCAR champion did not warrant his own merchandise trailer before he won his championship. Also, even though Dale Earnhardt Sr. passed away in 2001, I observed that, on average, 20 customers waited in line
at his merchandise trailer. His trailer was always parked next to one of two Dale Earnhardt Jr. merchandise haulers. I did not set up formal interviews, instead I observed interactions and spoke to people, opportunistically. I spoke with 50 people race attendees individually or in family groups. All but three of the attendees (African American) I spoke with, were Caucasian.

To help organize my findings, and anonymize attendees, I assigned random names starting with the letter of the name of the specific track. For example, attendees from I spoke to at Indianapolis are assigned name such as Ian, Irene, etc. Attendees from Pocono were assigned names including Peter, Paul, and Paige. At Richmond, I assigned names such as Rachel and Rick. For those who asked for more confidentiality, I used their jobs to generate names. For example, Mike and Mace are in the military and Tucker is a teacher. I detailed the list of interviewees in Appendix D. In each instance, I asked for and gained verbal consent. Most attendees did not review or take a copy of the information sheet.

Prior to the start of the race, I walked back to my seat to observe pre-race rituals as well as get to know the attendees sitting around me. During the race, noise levels can exceed 140 decibels (Bernstein, 2007), that is equivalent to a jet engine from 100 feet away, or about 10 decibels shy of rupturing eardrums. So, I did not interview many attendees during the race. Instead, I observed attendee behavior and wrote jot additional notes. When the drivers slowed down, during race cautions, I could speak to people sitting around me. I walked around concession stands to speak to attendees. In the car, after races, I wrote more jot notes about the overall race experience including observations of fans and people. In total, I had 165 (Indy) + 140 (Pocono) + 198 (Richmond) = 503 pages of jot notes in the 5.5” x 3.5” notebooks. In these notes, I detailed dates and times of observation, location details as they related to my research,
what attendees said, questions and particular NASCAR details such as drivers and teams as depicted clothing and flags.

After jotting down notes in the field, scholars (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) have suggested that these initial notes should be expanded into completed field notes. This expansion includes completing (as much as possible) the record of observations including key details (in my case clothing and logos) and specific language as well as adding the researcher’s impressions, concerns, expressions, explanations, and interpretations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2001). They added that field notes are “virtually the only way for the researcher to record the observation of day-to-day events and behavior, overhead conversation, and informal interviews, which are the primary materials of participant observation” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2001, p. 141). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) added that field notes should include contextually based information that is situated within the interaction. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) added that field notes “should be written immediately after each fieldwork session” (p. 161). So, I translated my jot notes as soon as I could reach my computer, and in total, I had 195 pages of double spaced typed field notes.

Overall, attendees were extremely receptive to speaking with me about their NASCAR fandom and experiences. Attendees were open to sharing their opinions regarding drivers, teams, as well as events on (car crashes and feuds) and off (news and controversies) the track. While the events at each track (pre-race, race, post-race) were similar, the climate of each track differed. The tracks at Pocono and Richmond included fewer attendee seating. Also, the attendees at the two smaller tracks were more friendly. With regard to data collection, I felt that the attendees at Richmond were friendliest, willing to be part of my research. For example, a fellow attendee recruited other interviewees to help me “get an A on my school report.” In contrast, at
Indianapolis, the interviews were more formal, in feel, perhaps due to the physical differences between the tracks.

**Selection of media sources**

I selected *New York Times, USA TODAY* and *Associated Press* (based on previous research) as well as ESPN.com (including ESPNW.com), NASCAR.com, and FOXSports.com (based on attendees’ preferences). I included attendee’s preferred news sources since some “mainstream” media (such as *New York Times, Associated Press*, and especially CNN and NBC) regularly misreport relevant factual details regarding NASCAR events. For example, in 2013, an axle (with brake assembly) broke off Kyle Larson’s #31 racecar, flew over the catch fence, into the seating areas, and injured attendees and track workers. When I watched the coverage, CNN repeatedly misreported the race name (misidentified it as the Sprint Cup Daytona 500 race instead of the Nationwide level DRIVE4COPD 300), some of the drivers involved in the crash, and blamed then the accident on a driver who was not involved.

As web-based media sources often update and correct their online reports, I was unable to find an example of this type of error until this recently. During the 2015 ALERT TODAY FLORIDA 300 at Daytona Speedway, Kyle Busch broke his leg and foot after hitting a track wall head-on. The *Associated Press* (2015) via *The New York Times*, reported:

> Busch's No. 54 Toyota shot straight through the front stretch and slammed head-first into an interior wall. He could not get out of the car and pointed to his right leg. He was on the ground for several minutes and was in visible pain as he grabbed his leg. (para. 2)

But, I was watching the event live and I saw him climb out of this race car window. Fox Sports commentator Adam Alexander (2015) confirmed, “the big one [crashes involving five or more
race cars] Part 2 at Daytona. A horrific crash for Kyle Busch who slid thorough the infield grass and went head on into the inside wall…and he is climbing from his car” (emphasis added). From FOXSports.com, Pennell (2015) added:

Busch's No. 54 Toyota shot down the track at full speed and hit the inside wall head-on. Busch was able to climb out of the car, but was immediately attended to by medical workers. The Sprint Cup Series regular was loaded onto a stretcher, with the focus on his right leg. (para. 3, emphasis added)

This type of mis-reporting is frequent and the attendees I spoke to at the tracks commented on it as well. For this reason, I felt that it would be useful to include news sources that the attendees pointed towards for their own NASCAR information. This is consistent with previous research conducted by Kian et al. (2009) because the authors included websites that offered news and information regarding their sporting context as well as the popularity of that site with audiences.

**Collection of secondary data**

To collect secondary data, I used two different online sources.

- **FACTIVA**: I used “Danica Patrick” as the search term and collected reports from *The New York Times, USA TODAY* and *Associated Press* starting on November 4, 2011 to December 31, 2014.
- **Own websites**: I used the term “Danica Patrick” to search for stories from the online archives of ESPN.com, NASCAR.com, and FOXSports.com. I use the term “Own websites” to refer to the media producer’s proprietary websites.

To keep data manageable, I discarded articles if they were centered on another driver and mentioned Patrick peripherally (Patrick finished 14th), or if the reports mainly simply listed rankings such as race results, qualifying order, or seasonal driver rankings. Out of 3,582 reports,
I discarded 2520, and retained 1062. I summarized the details of secondary data, by source, in Appendix E.

Since I am combining observation, informal interviews, and media reports, my data analysis tools must be flexible to allow multiple texts as well as help me connect language, narratives, society, and practices. Yin (2015) suggested that analysis within the case study strategy must be flexible to fit the case. Also, analysis should be systematic, iterative and cyclical, relating data to theory and to the contextual elements from the phenomenon itself at their differing levels. As such, I used content analysis, to utilize a systematic way to address the multiple texts and analyze my data (Altheide, 1987; Krippendorff, 2004).

**Data Analysis**

Krippendorff (2004) asserted that content analysis is helpful to “yield inferences from all kinds of verbal, pictorial, symbolic, and communication data” (p. 17). It evolved from a quantitative method of coding and counting occurrences of certain themes found in text. Within content analysis, Krippendorff (2004) noted that several qualitative approaches under the content analysis umbrella, including: discourse analysis, social constractive analysis, rhetorical analysis, conversation analysis, and ethnographic content analysis. Altheide (1987) defined ethnographic content analysis as a way to:

- document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis. (p. 68)

In addition to analyzing data collected via ethnographic methods, Altheide (1987) demonstrated how media reports may also be examined using this approach within content analysis. So, this
approach to content analysis is helpful to combine my primary and secondary data. For instance, Altheide (1996) tagged natural breaks in the data instead of using predetermined rigid units of analysis that must fit into codes to be counted. This tagging as coding allows for a more naturalistic type of analysis that befits the case study strategy.

Both Yin (2014) and Altheide (1987, 1996) drew on constant comparative format from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to find broad patterns and themes, and then reduce them to build connections between interpretations to theory and the phenomenon itself. The cyclical processes of tagging, comparisons across levels of perspectives and phenomenon, reducing themes, and building connections guided my analysis.

First, I combined the media reports from different source and created one large PDF file. After choosing which articles to keep in the dataset, I reviewed parts of the media reports to determine which excerpts pertained to Patrick. Let me provide an example from USA Today. Swartz (2011) reported on the top searches on Yahoo, I discarded all but the last paragraph.

Para 1: An object, not a person or event, was the top searched topic on Yahoo this year.

Para 2: The iPhone led all search queries, besting a reality TV star's abbreviated marriage and the notorious defendant in a made for tabloid TV trial.

Para 3: Yahoo announced the findings as part of its 10th annual Year in Review (yearinreview.yahoo.com), which identifies the top stories and trends of the year based on nearly 700 million monthly unique visitors on its network and their billions of online searches.
Para 4: The iPhone's status marks the first time a product landed in the top spot since Kazaa in 2003. Last year, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was the most searched.

Para 5: Fittingly, many of the mobile searches on Yahoo this year were from iPhones and about iPhones. Powerball was second, followed by Major League Baseball, a popular app on the iPhone.

Para 6: The death of Apple cofounder Steve Jobs was not among the top 10 searches this year.

Para 7: In other results, Danica Patrick finished ahead of Tiger Woods as the most searched athlete; Sarah Palin outpolled President Obama in the category for politicians; and Charlie Sheen was the top “obsession.”

Then, I copied the first half of the last paragraph into a spreadsheet detailing the source (USAT), page number in the file (9), author, and date. I added a note to the excerpt to provide context: “Yahoo top searches.”

The dates helped me to sort data chronologically within tags and codes to allow me to see patterns and shifts across time. Then, I created columns for tags. My first impressions of the text guided initial tagging. Then, I developed codes by connecting themes in the data to the theoretical perspectives, my experiences in NASCAR, as well as prior research. I kept initial tags and mid-level codes in separate columns to sort and search as well. In the example above, I used the term “excerpt” instead of unit analysis for two reasons. First, from the case study approach, Patrick is the unit of analysis and I did want to confuse the two. Secondly, the excerpts are not consistent in length. The example above is short with 15 words. In contrast, others may be quite long and include
several paragraphs (as I will show in my findings). Accordingly, I cannot offer any counts because I am not using consistent units of analysis for logical quantification.

In this example, I initially tagged the excerpt as “top searched athlete.” Once I added more excerpts and tags, I refined it to “popular,” “more popular than others,” to “extremely popular.” Then, during the analysis process, I related this to her Q Score was as part of this code. Initially, I tagged those excerpts as “Q Score.” Then, I connected them because the Q Score measured her popularity, in terms of recognition and marketability. So, I coded Q Score with “extremely popular.” When sorted together, I found her Q Score was initially high, but then dropped. Thus, I added a code under “extremely popular” to note that her Q Score indicated a “recognition shift.” Then, I looked at the chronological timing of her Q Score shifts. It was highest in 2011 and dropped to one half of that in 2014. At the same time, the attendees I talked with discussed her overtly sexualized image in terms of it being part of her past, signaling a shift in (and perhaps new limitations to) her portrayals. I found it interesting that no one addressed her as a sexualized marketing tool to draw attention to NASCAR. So, the lack of certain expected themes, although not in terms of consistent themes, also informed my analysis. This further supports my not offering counts since the lack of a theme means that it cannot be counted.

Next, I made a connection to the theories, perspectives, and previous findings that guide this dissertation to suggest that her attractiveness to sponsors is tied to her performances of femininity (Krane, 2001; Kane et al., 2013). So, I added lower tier codes of “recognition shift” and “female athlete body.” I suggest that NASCAR is implicated in
the recognition shift because of how it as a context, may have limits on her allowable performances as a female athlete that made her less marketable (Butler, 1993).

Data may be messy with unclear boundaries (Yin, 2014). This means that excerpts may illustrate multiple themes. To illustrate this, I have a few excerpts with the range of broader codes noted in bold from a longer ESPN article. In it, James (2012a) interviewed Shelina Moreda, a professional AMA (American Motorcycle Association) racer:

Para 2: “I wanna be Danica Patrick on two wheels,” the 27-year-old said. “And I'm making my way there!” [role model for female athletes]

Para 13: Moreda’s model good looks and friendly, easygoing nature have helped her score sponsors like GoPro cameras and Brammo bikes. A former District 3 Dairy Princess, Moreda said she welcomes comparisons with Patrick, the most famous beauty in racing. [female athlete] [feminine performance] [attractive to sponsors]

Para 14: “I think Danica Patrick rocks,” she said. “I like that she's a tough girl. She's out there doing what the boys do regardless of what anybody says. Everyone's got their opinions, positive or negative, and she deals with them really well.” [role model for female athletes] [female athlete] [athletic performance] [hegemonic masculinity]

Paras. 15 - 17: Like Patrick, Moreda understands the power of marketability. “I think that with either one of us, we're working with what we have. What we have to offer outside of our finishing is that we're marketable. As an athlete, racer or otherwise, what you need to realize is that you're out there to promote your sponsors, to market for your sponsors. That doesn't come from finishes alone,
they wanna see you connecting with the public and getting their name out there.”

“It's part of my job. Fortunately for me, I love that end of it.” [role model for female athletes] [female athlete] [attractive to sponsors] [commodified]

The excerpts are from an interview with Shelina Moreda and she is a pro AMA (American Motorcycle Association) racer.

In this series of excerpts, a few relevant and interconnected themes emerge: (1) Patrick is a role model for this female athlete, (2) awareness that female athletes should use their beauty capital (in terms of a feminine performance) to attract sponsors, (3) an athletic performance for a female athlete includes a sense of toughness and conforming to masculine norms, and (4) commodification of athletes. To manage the data, I separated these themes into separate columns, which allowed me to see how themes interrelate with each other. The interrelationships let me offer more nuanced findings, interpretations, and discussions. In this instance, the excerpts are from an interview with a female athlete that positioned Patrick as a role model. Female athletes may embody both athletic and feminine performances. But, only the athletic performance earns respect and since athletes are commodified, only the feminine performance is attractive to sponsors. This lines up with previous research regarding the bodies of female athletes (Kane et al., 2013; Krane et al., 2010). Also, the most compelling text illustrates how Moreda pointed to Patrick as a role model. That is bolded and then quoted in the next chapter. The rest offers support to other findings, but were not included as direct quotations. I copied the coding from this section in Appendix F. The data may illustrate multiple themes simultaneously. Next, Altheide (1987, 1996), Krippendorff (2004), and Yin (2014) have asserted that researcher is embedded as part of the examination. With this in mind, I will conclude this methodology chapter with my role in the following researcher statement.
Researcher Statement

In this section, I will address my role in this examination as a female, heterosexual, married, Taiwan-born Chinese/Asian/American member of the NASCAR family (self-identified and confirmed by other members). As a female Asian/American fan, I might be a fan, but I am also, in a sense, marked as “forever foreign” (Nakayama, 1997, p. 26). I find this to be true in both academia and during fieldwork. For instance, some group me with international students while others insist that I’m American and group me with domestic ones.

In her critical ethnography of Japanese family businesses, Kondo (1990) noted that because she is a Japanese American, she “created a conceptual dilemma” and “was a living oxymoron” as she was perceived as simultaneously being and not being Japanese. In the U.S., this may mark me as “foreign” and never fully American (Kawai, 2005; Nakayama, 1997). To illustrate, Lee (1999) wrote that Asian Americans are considered alien “no matter how long they may have resided in the United States nor how assimilated they are” (p. 4). As such, I am a partial insider/native, which puts me in a unique position to be “constantly forced to move between worlds and identities” (Sherif, 2001, p. 446). Due to this partial position, Sherif (2001) added “fieldwork conducted in a reflexive mode by ‘partially native’ ethnographers can help generate new perspectives on the state of the human condition that are insightful and may aid in overcoming generalizations” (p. 446).

Additionally, I may be marked as forever foreign and living in the U.S., since my daily life is conducted from the stance of a partial insider and partial outsider. With that perspective in mind, Sherif argued that “by being forced to balance an insider/outsider perspective on a daily basis, I ultimately became more sensitive to my informants’ voices and experiences” (p. 446). Kondo (1999) added that she “looked to see ‘selves’ as potential sites for the play of multiple
discourses and shifting, multiple subject-positions” (p. 44). So, my partial insider status is helpful during fieldwork because I may have a different perspective on some elements that may be taken-for-granted by other researchers in the field.

As one of the few (if not only) East Asians at the races, I did attract some attention because I look very different. At the same time, I spoke in a dialect that identified me as a member of the NASCAR family. This shift is part of how I negotiate my identities and worlds in everyday experiences. In other words, I can choose from a broad repertoire of languages and dialects (within languages) in order to communicate with different individuals, for different purposes.

DeWalt and DeWalt (2001) added that “being male and female can affect access to, and the recording of, information from field research” (p. 83). In other words, how I perform my gender cannot be separated from my sexuality and, to a certain extent marital status, since I base that performance on existing conventions and patterns in social practices (Butler, 1993). Therefore, as a female alone, may not be impactful, but being a married heterosexual female (with male spouse in attendance at races) may make a difference in how other race attendees interacted with me. In other words, this may “naturalize” my presence in the field despite my “foreignness.”

Next, Yin (2014) argued that the researcher’s prior experiences in the field of inquiry is extremely helpful to provide insight to the inquiry. Edwards and Skinner (2009) concurred that in sporting examinations, researchers’ experience and expertise are advantages when engaged in case studies. In other words, the researcher’s knowledge and experience of the real-world phenomenon the context within which it is embedded is important to the final case. Therefore, I draw on my 16 years of experience attending NASCAR races and other motorsport events
(including in active pit stalls), in addition to my engagement with other members of the NASCAR family (as part of conducting my everyday life). However, Yin (2014) added argued that the very same experience that is helpful in the case study may also bias the examination.

Researcher bias may easily exist across all types of research including data collection, measures, analysis, overall methodology, and even in the topic of study (Yin, 2014). He added that awareness of and attuning to that bias are helpful to reduce that threat. One of the ways to address bias is to turn the examination inward. Reflexivity is “where researchers turn a critical gaze towards themselves” (Finlay, 2003, p. 3). For me, this means taking into account my history and experiences as they are related to my interpretations and understandings during research. Finlay (2002) offered a typology of five overlapping variants of reflexivity: introspection (self-dialogue and discovery), intersubjective reflection (mutual meanings in the research relationship), mutual collaboration (participants are co-researchers and researcher is also a participant), social critique (managing power imbalances in research relationship), and discursive deconstruction (ambiguity and multiple meanings). A year later, Finlay (2003) shifted the fifth variant from discursive deconstruction to ironic deconstruction and then added that researchers should challenge single voices of authority and enable multiple voices to be heard. Findlay (2002) concluded:

The functions of reflexivity shift from employing it to offer an account of the research to situating the researcher and voicing difference; from using reflexivity to interpret and understand in terms of data analysis to attending to broader political dimensions when presenting material. (p. 224)
Yin (2014) echoed this as he suggested that researchers should attend to broader levels of abstraction in terms of perspectives and existing literature. Let me next offer an example of this type of inward gaze.

While in the field as a participant observer, stepping back from my participant role was extremely helpful in that it allowed me to gain some distance to analyze what I was participating in and seeing. For instance, ex-driver Richard Petty has a history of making sexist and exclusionary comments against female NASCAR drivers. As a result, I do not value his opinions and pay little attention to him during broadcasts. But, after the race at Indianapolis, he was riding in a golf cart and drove right within an arm’s length of where I was walking. I saw his signature black felt cowboy hat, with brown feathers, a silver buckle, and white trim. In that moment, I found myself becoming a fan girl because I was less than two feet away from the legendary and most accomplished (in terms of the most race wins and championships) driver in NASCAR. In other words, I was in awe, wanted to reach out and touch the man and the hat (lay hands), and thought about chasing him for an autograph. Instead, I stopped walking and sat down to write as I thought, reflexively, about that experience of being that physically close to a revered sporting hero. It was then I realized that voices like his, no matter how outdated and sexist, are still extremely prevalent in NASCAR. so This extends out to the motorsport, more generally, because his voice in NASCAR is strengthened by the mythos surrounding the motorsport and masculinity norms surrounding sport, in general. In other words, I did not see him as a rail thin +77-year-old man with leathery skin, sporting badly dyed and permed hair. Instead, even though he is not my sporting hero, I saw NASCAR’s “winningest driver,” or as he is nicknamed in NASCAR, “The King”).
In summation, I use the case strategy as a broad approach to collect and analyze my data since it lets me address real-world the case of Patrick in NASCAR without constraining the nuances and complexities of the case (Yin, 2012; 2014). The strategy helps me to rely on previous research regarding gender and sport to guide my data collection and analysis. It also allows me to interweave viewpoints by extending them from the broad area of socialization, to discuss: gender and sport from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1990; Trujillo, 1991), the female athlete from the notion of the body (Butler, 1993), and sporting heroines from the understanding of role models (Bandura, 1986). Then, I reviewed my data collection as well as data analysis. I provided examples of how I analyzed data using the tools from content analysis. Then, I conclude with my role as a researcher. Next, I will provide a background of the case to help contextualize the findings.
Chapter IV

About the Case

Today, NASCAR sanctions multiple regional and national races. The national series races compete across the U.S., during the weekends from mid-February to the end November. At the highest national level is the Sprint Cup series. In this series, NASCAR stages 36 races in which 43 full time (and 5-7 part-time) teams compete. The undercard is the Xfinity series, and they only run 33 races per year. Xfinity stared their sponsorship of the undercard series in 2015. At the time of my data collection, it was sponsored by Nationwide, so I will use Nationwide series to refer to the undercard racing series. During the years I collected data, the rights to broadcast races were split between Fox, TNT (up to 6 races a year), and ESPN/ABC. Fox and NBC secured broadcast rights for $8.2 billion for broadcast from 2015 through 2024 (Cain, 2013a). NASCAR broadcast rights cost much less when compared to other major sports, so, sponsorships and other sources of income are extremely important in the motorsport.

Despite some mainstream and popular culture recognition, NASCAR has been (and may still be) perceived as a sport for uneducated, racist, Southern “rednecks.” For example, South Park satirized NASCAR, in the episode, “Poor and Stupid” (2010). In that episode, one of the four main characters lamented that he was too smart (as a fifth grader) and too rich (as a child of a lower-middle class single mother) to pursue his dream of growing up to be a NASCAR driver. Based on its historical roots in the rural South, the motorsport is also perceived to be tied to some “American,” values including hard work, patriotism, Christianity, loyalty, and family (Haridakis & Hugenberg, 2009; Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008a). At the same time, the motorsport is marked by patriarchy and commodifying that sense of Americanness (J. Newman and Giardina, 2011; Vavrus, 2007). But, NASCAR is one of the only major mixed sports that includes a female
athlete who competes with and against men, on a full time basis. So, Patrick’s entry into NASCAR offers a unique opportunity to examine some issues of gender within the sporting framework. In following sections, I offer a brief of background of the case to contextualize my findings, interpretations, and discussion in the next chapter. In other words, I will introduce Danica Patrick and her entry into NASCAR for those unfamiliar with her and the motorsport. I start with a brief background of the sport. Next, I review issues regarding gender in NASCAR. Lastly, I provide more details about Patrick, including a timeline of her racing career. In each of the sections, I include some of the few scholarly examinations regarding NASCAR.

**Background**

Unlike Formula 1 and other Grand Prix automobile racing, stock car racing is marked by an Americanness connected to ignorance, Christianity, loyalty, manual laborers (Haridakis & Hugenberg, 2009; J. Newman and Giardina, 2011; Vavrus, 2007). Part of those perceptions are rooted in the conditions surrounding the motorsport’s origins. Others are based on how that past has been mythologized to market the motorsport today.

At the turn of the 20th century, cars were custom built with hand-made parts, difficult to maintain, and with few serviceable roads, these horseless carriages were extremely expensive toys for elite, upper class, and exceptionally wealthy gentlemen (Batchelor, 2002; Martin & Saal, 2004). Car manufacturers entered races as a useful way to promote the durability and speed of their automobiles. Wealthy gentlemen competed in them to flaunt their cars. That changed when Henry Ford beat racing legend Alexander Winton, soundly, at Grosse Pointe, Michigan in 1901 (Ford & Crowther, 1922). Ford turned over racing to Barna Eli “Barney” Oldfield and began to engineer faster, more reliable, and more affordable cars.
Oldfield became a racing legend because he competed and won, regularly, against these gentlemen drivers. In the edited *Life* (n.d.) picture book on *American Speed*, Oldfield was represented as “born to a hardscrabble Ohio family….began working at an early age, as a laborer, bellboy, elevator operator” (p. 20). Oldfield became the first professional racecar driver, and his humble roots made him extremely popular with fans. He created the mold that future NASCAR drivers would follow.

In 1908, Ford’s Model T became the first mass production-line built vehicle. With it, Ford significantly reduced automobile ownership prices. In a time when his competitor’s cars base models were priced at an average of $2,500, the Model T was available, fully loaded, for $935. Ford boasted, “It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one” (Brinkley, 2003, p. 113). By the 1920s, Model T’s cost $290 and Ford dominated the automotive industry and winning more than 60% of the market share by: (1) driving down car prices to allow most American families could afford an automobile, thus creating a separation from them and individually made luxury and stock cars; (2) changing how cars were manufactured because he made “stock cars” using standardized parts, which were put together on an assembly line and were much more cost effective; and (3) increasing reliability as well as decreasing maintenance, repair, and modification costs. He also paid his workers $5 dollars a day when average wages were around $2.25 a day (Worstall, 2012). By doing so, Ford ensured that his turnover rates were reduced, which kept his prices low, and allowing his employees to become a major buying segment for the cars they made.

Around the same time that Model T prices dropped to below $300, the U.S. was involved in the temperance movement. The government enacted regulations which turned the country “dry” by banning the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol with the passage of the
18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. A year after, the Volstead Act followed and provided punishments that included incarceration and heavy fines for violators. Despite that, many Americans still wanted alcohol and by the end of the 1920s, as many as 100,000 illegal speakeasies were established in New York City alone (National Archives, n.d.).

To meet these demands, bootleggers smuggled illegally manufactured and imported alcohol. They needed to drive fast (and somewhat recklessly) to outrun law enforcement. The racing successes of the Model T quickly caught the attention of these bootleggers (Thompson, 2006). The cars became the favorites to transport illegally manufactured and imported alcohol because: (1) the cars were inexpensive to purchase and maintain, (2) easily modified with cheap and readily available parts, and (3) easily blended in with other cars on the road as over 60% of them were also black Ford Model T’s. These bootleggers modified their cars to be faster than the ones driven by the officials chasing them. From this, the popular Model T automobiles earned the nickname as the bootleggers’ Ford V-8 whiskey cars (Thompson, 2006).

Prohibition was repealed in 1933, when the 21st Amendment was ratified, but the demand for cheaper, tax-free alcohol remained. In some cases, entire families depended on moonshining and bootlegging profits to survive (Thompson, 2006). The revenue collectors (that chased and tried to arrest bootlegger drivers) also started improving their cars. So, in order to support their families and avoid steep fines and incarceration, these moonshine smugglers had to become even faster and better drivers. They starting racing against each other, and stock car racing were born from “a bunch of motherless, dirt-poor southern teens driving with the devil in jacked-up Fords full of corn whiskey” (Thompson, 2006, p. 10).

These bootleggers became Southern working class folk heroes since they supported their families and communities through the U.S. Great Depression (Thompson, 2006). Additionally,
they were marked for reclaiming pride for the South after the loss of the U.S. Civil War (Thompson, 2006). In fact, some of these notorious bootleggers became the first heroes/drivers of stock car racing (Thompson, 2006; Wolfe, 1965). For that reason, stock car drivers indicate a bifurcation from grand prix racing in that (1) the racers are from “humble” origins; (2) the cars are cheap to buy, maintain, and modify; and (3) and they are romanticized as defiant/rebellious heroes providing for their families. This became the mythology around which contemporary NASCAR is built.

As some of the drivers were involved in the illicit smuggling of alcohol, it follows that many of the early stock car races were disorganized, perhaps, to avoid legal detection and enforcement. Racers were often cheated out of promised earnings and race attendees were often unsafe at the events (Girdler, 1988). On December 12, 1947, “Big” Bill France gathered drivers, car owners, and mechanics to form NASCAR. Unlike many of the associations, as sanctioning bodies, NASCAR was set up and operated as a business. Today, NASCAR is still wholly owned and operated by the France family. Because of this structure, the France family retains immense control over NASCAR, including standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior based on traditional Christian and family morals (Howell, 1997). The centering of NASCAR on family values attracted sponsors. Sponsorship was especially important since many of the poor drivers had difficulties paying for their own cars, parts, mechanics, and teams (Yost, 2007).

Initially, the automotive industry provided much of the early racing sponsorship (Yost, 2007). By the early 1970s, they had financial issues of their own. In 1971, the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act was passed. With it, tobacco advertising from broadcast television was banned. Suddenly, cigarette companies, such as Phillip Morris and R. J. Reynolds (RJR), had tens of millions of dollars in advertising budgets that could no longer be spent on television
Junior Johnson capitalized on this and approached RJR. The tobacco giant initially offered to sponsor his team, but he convinced them to sponsor the entire racing series (Yost, 2007). Ironically, a motorsport built on one vice (alcohol) was saved by another (tobacco). RJR also brought marketing partners to the track which resulted in multiple levels of sponsorships that characterizes the sport today (Yost, 2007). Pruitt, Cornwell, and Clark (2004) added that NASCAR fans are extremely loyal in buying sponsors’ products and services because they connect the viability of motorsport and their drivers to the sponsors. In other words, LeBron James can still compete in basketball without Nike sponsorship, but Patrick cannot race without GoDaddy sponsoring her. In fact, NASCAR fans are much more likely to buy and pay more for sponsors’ products and services (Hagstrom, 1998) and sponsors are included with drivers, fans, and military troops serving overseas during the prerace invocation.

**NASCAR Norms**

From the motorsport’s need to attract sponsors, NASCAR is marked with so-called safe and marketable “perceived American cultural values” such as religiousness, patriotism, and traditional familial norms (Haridakis & Hugenberg, 2009; Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008a, 2008b; J. Newman & Giardina, 2008, J. Newman, 2010; Vavrus, 2007). The themes of God, country, and family are prevalent across NASCAR scholarship.


There is uniformity and unanimity in spectators’ reaction to practices of prayer. A seemingly taken-for-granted – as if written law in some informal guide to NASCAR fandom – response among all fans at every race (or at least those races which became part of this study) is to stand, bow, offer a collective ‘amen’,
and cheer in communal sequence as directed by the pre-race faith merchants. (p. 300)

While religion in sport is not new, J. Newman and Giardina (2011) added that the motorsport differs from others as these religious expressions are overt and unapologetic.

Next, after 9/11 NASCAR became more closely aligned with perceived American white values (Haridakis & Hugenberg, 2009; Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008a). For example, Hugenberg and Hugenberg (2008a) wrote that NASCAR has “historically aligned themselves with some very traditional American values: patriotism, hard work, religion, the triumph of good over evil, and competition….in fact, one might argue that NASCAR’s alignment with American patriotism has grown since the tragic events of 9/11” (p. 655). They added, “NASCAR has draped itself even more in the American flag since the tragedies of 9/11 and the outbreak of war in Iraq in March 2003” (Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008a, p. 648). Vavrus (2007) concurred and noted that NASCAR dads are framed as average American fathers. However, this “average Americanness” conceals masculinity and nationalistic norms, because it naturalizes “masculine attributes of heroism, bravery, aggression, and so-called ‘family values’” (Vavrus, 2007, p. 259).

The motorsport is conceived of as not only being a family sport, but the greater NASCAR community is imagined as a family. The NASCAR family includes fans (NASCAR Nation), drivers, crews, employees, and sponsors. In this family, women’s roles in NASCAR are predominately in the margins as supportive wives, girlfriends, and serving as Miss Sprint Cups (trophy girls, cheerleaders, and spokesmodels). One of the few books regarding females in the motorsport is comprised of 13 chapters that featured NASCAR women as wives who were supportive extensions of their husbands (Wood, 2003). The author added that the women’s daily lives were “directly affected by how things are going at the racetrack. Wining is truly everything” (Wood, 2003, p. 12).
Female Drivers in NASCAR

Since its inception, NASCAR has included women in racing. They were not serious competitors but attractions to draw in audiences. In early races, NASCAR recruited the wives and girlfriends of drivers to compete in women’s-only featured races (Kreszock et al., 2014). The wives of Ralph Earnhardt (Earnhardt Jr.’s grandfather) and Ned Jarrett (Dale Jarrett’s father) competed (Kreszock et al., 2014). France realized that a specific female driver, Louise Smith, drew fans and he paid her appearance fees to compete against the men in regular races. Since she received appearance fees, some male drivers felt that women, like L. Smith, competed for publicity. So, they were perceived as underqualified competitors and posed a danger to the “qualified” male drivers. She recalled that male drivers “would yell things at me, and they tried to wreck [intentional or intentional crashing into and/or destroying racecar] me” to get her off the track (Golenbock, 2004, p. 17). She concluded that “for a long time, all the drivers gave me trouble…they did not want a woman driver out there. They still don’t. Back then, I was low-rated because I was a woman and I went about it in a man’s world” (Golenbock, 2004, p. 17).

This exclusion translated into long term practice and informal regulation as female drivers from the earliest days of NASCAR: (1) could not find adequate sponsorship and equipment, (2) were often denied access to the tracks before races, (3) suffered through multiple and often unwarranted vehicle inspections, and (4) were targeted on the tracks (Aumann, 2011; Golenbock, 2004; Guthrie, 2005). For instance, prior to becoming a racecar driver, Janet Guthrie was an aerospace engineer, flight instructor, and pilot. In 1976 she became was the first female driver to compete an elite Winston [now Sprint] Cup race (Aumann, 2011). At various tracks, “only Guthrie saw her car repeatedly, inexplicably, held aside so that it would be last in NASCAR’s technical inspection line, often causing her to miss huge chunks of valuable practice
time” (McGee, 2013, para. 13). She recalled, “I kept on seeking sponsorship through the beginning of 1983, then I realized that if I kept it up, I was likely to jump out of a high window” (Guthrie, 2005, p. 382). Despite the awful treatment that Guthrie received, her experiences paled in comparison to what Deborah Renshaw faced 20 years later.

Renshaw started competing in the regional NASCAR Dodge Weekly Series in 2001. She was a rising star: “positioned as a marketable female, combining driving skills with ‘ladylike’ attractiveness” (Sloop, 2005, p. 192). Like other female drivers before her, she faced significant resistance from her fellow racers. The rules allowed extra inspections if requested by drivers that finishing behind the racecar in question. So, several male drivers took up a collection to enter a car into the race for the sole purpose of finishing behind Renshaw, in order to demand an extra inspection of her car. The inspectors found a one-centimeter discrepancy in a cylinder and the both Renshaw and her car were disqualified from her sixth place finish.

A year later, during a practice session, Eric Martin’s car stopped on the Lowes Motor Speedway in Concord, North Carolina. As the drivers cannot see the entire track and race at speeds in excess of 150 miles per hour, they depend on spotters to relay track conditions to them. Renshaw’s spotter might not have seen Martin’s car, because they were “not required to climb onto the grandstand roof during practice to help a driver navigate the track. Instead, the spotters watch the race from the top of the haulers inside the infield, giving them several blind spots” (Fryer, 2002, para. 14).

Renshaw raced around the corner and broadsided the race car while Martin was still in it. Martin died on impact. Fryer (2002) also quoted another veteran driver, Ron Hornaday as saying, “I don’t know if she didn’t see him or not, but I came through the turn and saw his car sitting there and had to make a quick decision to avoid him” (para. 11). Hornaday was in his practice
run, as well. He was driving ahead of Renshaw, but avoided Martin, thus implicating Renshaw as a less capable driver. Sloop (2005) concurred and added that Renshaw was ultimately blamed despite the multiple conditions that could have caused Martin’s death:

While Renshaw underwent surgery for multiple fractures in her left foot and ankle, drivers and sports reporters began to question her skills, her level of responsibility for Martin’s death….Renshaw lost her sponsorship deal with Goodwin and was implicitly and explicitly blamed for Martin’s death. (p. 193)

Renshaw was described as gaining entry into NASCAR because she is an attractive female who could gain the attention of media and sponsors. So, she was portrayed as underqualified to compete in stock car racing, and her incompetence resulted in another driver’s death. In contrast, to her predecessors, Patrick was welcome to NASCAR. At the tracks, I did not see anyone “boo-ing” her during driver introductions or as she drove by during races. In fact, she received loud cheers. Accordingly, her case provides an important opportunity to examine gender in sport.

**Danica Patrick**

Danica Sue Patrick was born on March 25, 1982, in Wisconsin. Like many other professional drivers, Danica started racing before she could legally drive on the streets. She started racing at the age of 10 and was winning regional World Karting titles by 12 (Ingram & Webb, 2005). Patrick started racing in England by 16. She and her family felt that the European motorsports can be more receptive to women racers. In 2002, Indy car team owner, Bobby Rahal, encouraged her to pose in *FHM*. After her spread in *FHM* went viral, he brought her back to the U.S. to compete in the lower division Toyota Atlantic Series (Hinton, 2005). Three years later, he signed her to compete on his IndyCar team and entered her in the 2005 Indianapolis 500. She was featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* that year.
Patrick was trivialized in press reports despite the fact that she is the only female driver to win in any major motorsport event, in the world. Immediately after her 2008 win in Japan, some journalists started chipping away at the enormity of that accomplishment. Pflugfelder (2009) analyzed media reports and suggested that a columnist tries to “take agency from Patrick, whom he [columnist] mentions would likely not be able to win a ‘real’ race, and reward it to both the second place driver and other race engineers” (p. 424). Pflugfelder (2009) argued that Patrick is important to examine “because she became the first woman to win a top-tier national or international competition that involves multiple vehicles competing for the same space, at the same time, in a fixed location” (p. 242).

2010 and 2011: Split IndyCar and NASCAR Racing Seasons

In the 2010 and 2011 seasons, Patrick raced, part-time, for Dale Earnhardt Jr’s team, JR Motorsport (JRM), in the Nationwide Series (Newton, 2009). In addition, during two years, Patrick competed in full annual schedules of 17 races in her IndyCar for Andretti Motorsport. In other words, she competed in two different types of racecars in two different racing series during the 2010 and 2011 annual seasons.

Earnhardt Jr’s sister and JRM co-owner, Kelley Earnhardt Miller, was instrumental in bringing Patrick into stock car racing (Newton, 2010). Patrick’s first stock car race was on February 6, 2010 in the Lucas Oil Slick Mist 200, held at Daytona International Speedway, in Florida, and finished in sixth place. The race was sanctioned by the American Racing Club of America (ARCA) series and it is a professional minor league that is considered to be a feeder for NASCAR racing. A week later, her Nationwide Series debut was also at Daytona, in the #7 GoDaddy Chevrolet, in the DRIVE4COPD 300. Overall, for the 2010 Nationwide season, she competed in a total of 13 races in tracks from California to New Hampshire. Her best qualifying
starting position was fifth place in her final race in 2010 at the Ford 300 race in Homestead-Miami Speedway, in Florida. Her best finish was at Homestead-Miami, as well, in 19th place. Overall, she finished the 2010 season ranked in 43rd place. Outside of racing, she appeared on primetime television episodes in *CSI: NY* ("The Formula"), voiced herself on *The Simpsons* ("How Munched is that Birdie in the Window?"), and she was parodied alongside fellow drivers Earnhardt Jr., Jimmy Johnson, Jeff Gordon, Stewart, and Matt Kenseth in an episode of *South Park* ("Poor and Stupid"). Patrick appeared as a guest on talk and entertainment shows such as *Chelsea Lately* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live*.

Patrick started 2011 by appearing with fitness celebrity, Jillian Michaels, in two Super Bowl ads for GoDaddy. In one of the ads, the two women appeared, reluctantly based on their verbal exchanges, to be naked and hiding under the GoDaddy logo. For the 2011 Nationwide season, she competed in 12 races starting in Daytona and ending at Homestead- Miami. Her best qualifying was at Daytona in fourth on the starting grid, and her race best finish was in fourth place at the Sam’s Town 300 at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway, in Nevada. She led 13 laps in Daytona and finished the 2011 season ranked in 26th place, overall. Towards the end of 2011, Patrick signed with SHR and together with Stewart, she unveiled her new #10 GoDaddy Chevrolet. Patrick remarked, “ten is my favorite number. It’s the number I used when I was racing go karts as a kid, but this is the first time I’ve gotten to pick my number as a professional. There’s a lot of emotion in it for me” (Gossage, 2011, para. 12).

SHR is a top level NASCAR team, co-owner and driver Stewart is a three-time champion. Teammate Ryan Newman has 17 wins. SHR is partnered with Hendrick Motorsports for equipment, and Hendrick drivers have won 11 out of the last 20 Sprint Cup Championships (C. Smith, 2015).
**2012 to present: Full-time NASCAR racer**

In 2012, Patrick starred in another set of Super Bowl commercials with Michaels. Instead of being naked themselves, the two women painted a female model’s naked body with GoDaddy.com slogans. On the track, she transitioned fully into stock car racing and left IndyCar. She competed in the JRM #7 GoDaddy Chevrolet for the full 33-race season at the Nationwide level. Patrick won the pole position (fastest qualifying and starting in first place) at Daytona and finished in 38th place after teammate, Cole Whitt, pushed her into a wall. Her best finish was eighth place at the O'Reilly Auto Parts 300 held at the Texas Motor Speedway, in Fort Worth. After the finish of the Aaron’s 312, at Talladega Superspeedway (in Alabama), Patrick intentionally wrecked Sam Hornish Jr. during the cool down lap, because he nearly wrecked her during the final lap of the race. She was on track to finish in fifth at the Sargento 200 race at Road America (in Wisconsin), but was spun out by Canadian, Jacques Villeneuve. Overall, she earned the 10th place in driver’s points for 2012 and led 41 laps across tracks such as Daytona, Talladega, Michigan International Speedway, Circuit Gilles Villeneuve (in Montreal, Canada), and Homestead-Miami.

She competed in ten Sprint cup races for SHR at the Daytona 500 at Daytona, Bojangles Southern 500 at Darlington Raceway (in South Carolina), Bank of American 500 at Charlotte Motor Speedway (in North Carolina), Irwin Tools Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway (in Tennessee), AdvoCare 500 at Atlanta Motor Speedway (in Georgia), GEICO 400 at Chicagoland Speedway (in Illinois), AAA 400 at Dover International Speedway (in Delaware), Hollywood Casino 400 at Kansas Speedway, AAA Texas 500 at Texas, and AdvoCare 500 at Phoenix International Speedway (in Arizona). Stewart chose these ten races and tracks for her as they are considered the toughest for NASCAR racers.
Stewart worked out a point trade to guarantee a spot for Patrick in the opening race of the season, the Daytona 500. Her best qualifying position on the starting grid was 23rd place in Atlanta and her best finish was 17th in Phoenix. At Kansas, she tried to nudge Landon Cassill but wrecked her own car instead. At Bristol, Regan Smith wrecked her. Unlike her team owner, Stewart, who threw a helmet at Matt Kenseth for a similar offense, she reacted by approaching the track on foot, and then wagging her finger at R. Smith as he drove by. Overall, her finishing rank for the 2012 season was in the 62nd place and she won the NASCAR Nationwide Most Popular Driver Award.

Patrick faced some technical challenges as a driver transitioning to stock car racing from open wheel racing. The main difference is that without fenders, open wheel racecars rarely make contact without causing significant and race-ending damage. Instead, in NASCAR, “rubbin’ is racin.” In fact, this transition has been difficult, if not impossible, for many accomplished drivers including A. J. Allmendinger, Patrick Carpentier, Dario Franchitti, Robby Gordon, Hornish, Jr., Juan Pablo Montoya, Kimi Raikkonen, and Jacques Villeneuve. Eury Jr. complimented Patrick’s performance in adjusting to stock car racing:

She’s definitely had a challenge because everything that the IndyCar does, in this world it’s the complete opposite, for driving lines to the way you brake, the way you race, so she’s had a lot of issues that she’s had to get over and overcome…. She’s done really well. (Kekis, 2012, para. 19)

Outside of racing, Patrick also had significant events in her personal life. She ended the 2012 season by announcing her divorce her from husband of seven years, Paul Hospenthal. She would confirm her relationship with fellow NASCAR driver, Ricky Stenhouse Jr. a few months later. She signed as on to be part of the Coca-Cola Racing Family promotions, specifically
representing the Coke Zero brand (Coca-Cola, 2012). Elsewhere, in popular culture, Patrick’s digitized image was included as part of Sega’s Sonic & All Star Racing Transformed video game. She won the Kid’s Choice Award in the Favorite Female Athlete category. Patrick also appeared in Miranda Lambert’s music video for the song, “Fastest Girl in Town.” In that video, Patrick helps Lambert steal a 1969 Chevrolet Camaro. Patrick outruns the vehicle’s rightful owner and police. She and Earnhardt Jr. had filmed Nationwide Insurance ads together. They previously appeared together in a 2009 Jay-Z music video for his song, “Show Me What You Got.” In that video, they raced exotic supercars (she in a Pagani Zonda against Earnhardt Jr. in a Ferrari F430 Spider) on the curvy streets of Monaco. Singer Jay-Z was a passenger in the Ferrari. She had guest appearances on *Katie, Larry King Now, The Chew*, and *The Jeff Probst Show*.

At the beginning of 2013, Patrick relinquished her role as a sexy GoDaddy girl and in the annual Super Bowl television ad. Model Bar Rafaeli took over that position. The 2013 stock car season was Patrick’s rookie (first official) year in Sprint Cup. She ran the full 36-race season for SHR at the elite level. She started the year at by qualifying as the first female driver to win pole position for the Daytona 500. She broke a second record as the first female driver to lead a green flag (full speed) lap at this race. Patrick finished in 8th place, which is another record as the best placed female in NASCAR’s season opening race.

Unfortunately, that was her best and only top ten finish of the season, as she was plagued by technical issues and on-track crashes. Commentator Kyle Petty criticized her on track performance, “she’s not a racecar driver. There’s a difference….Danica has been the perfect example of somebody who can qualify better than what she runs.” (Graves, 2013, para. 8). She and Stenhouse Jr., crashed into each other in races at the Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte and the Camping World RV Sales 301 at New Hampshire Motor Speedway. She finished the season
ranked in 27th place overall and was voted in fifth place in the NASCAR’s Most Popular Driver Award. Boyfriend, Stenhouse Jr., won Rookie of the Year honors and Patrick came second in voting.

As part of NASCAR-related marketing, she was recruited to join the Coca-Cola Racing Family in 2013 and filmed a series of Family Road Trip commercials with Greg Biffle, Denny Hamlin, Joey Logano, Ryan Newman, and Stewart. Outside of NASCAR, she repeated her win as the Favorite Female Athlete in the Kid’s Choice Awards. She also co-hosted the American Country Awards with, Trace Adkins, and won a celebrity edition of Food Network’s *Chopped*. Patrick appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leon*, *The Colbert Report*, *Fox and Friends*, and *Kelly Clarkson’s Cautionary Christmas Music Tale*.

She started 2014 with a new GoDaddy ad for the Super Bowl. In it, Patrick wears a muscle suit and runs with a pack of muscled men in search of a tanning salon. Before the season started, NASCAR Hall of Famer and most accomplished driver, Richard Petty, said that Patrick could win a race “if everybody else stayed home” (Cain, 2014). SHR changed their driver lineup, they lost sponsorship for R. Newman. Kevin Harvick was signed to replace R. Newman and was primarily sponsored by Budweiser. In 2014, GoDaddy launched The Big Leap promotion. Five entrepreneurs pitched their business ideas to Patrick as she drove three laps, at speed, around the track at Charlotte. The winner, professional competitive eater, Jamie “Bear” McDonald, received six months’ salary to pursue his dream of opening his restaurant, Bear’s Smokehouse, in Hartford, Connecticut, partially, because as *New York Times* dining reviewer, Cooper (2014) wrote, “the back story of Bear’s is as American as barbecue itself” (para. 2). She became only NASCAR driver with over 1 million Twitter followers (*Associated Press*, 2014). As of the end
of February 2014, NASCAR’s most popular driver, Earnhardt Jr., has over 882,000 Twitter followers while Patrick has approximately 1,150,000.

On August 9, 2014, SHR team co-owner Stewart struck and killed 20-year old Kevin Ward Jr. during a dirt-track race New York (Jensen, 2014; Livingstone 2014). Ward Jr. left his car during the race after the track issued a yellow caution flag to slow the cars down. Ward Jr. died from his injuries after Stewart collided into and then drove over the young racer. The grand jury did not indict Stewart, partially, because, during the autopsy, the corner found enough marijuana in Ward Jr. to impair the young driver’s judgment.

Patrick’s teammate, Kurt Busch, was accused of domestic abuse by his ex-girlfriend Patricia Driscoll. She alleged that Kurt slammed her head, repeatedly, against his interior motor coach wall (Pockrass, 2015). The Kent County Family court commissioner issued a protective order against Kurt Busch and based on that order, NASCAR suspended the driver, indefinitely (Albert, 2015). Two weeks later, the Delaware Attorney General’s office declined to file charges against Kurt Busch and then NASCAR changed the suspension to an indefinite probation (Gluck 2015; Offredo, Gluck, & James, 2015).

In 2014, Patrick’s best starting position was at Charlotte and she had three top ten finishes in Kansas (7), Daytona (8), and Atlanta (6). She finished her first full-fledged season ranked in the 28th position while SHR teammate Harvick won the Sprint Cup Championship. She wrecked Stenhouse, Jr. at Chicagoland. Outside of NASCAR, her television appearances included Squawk Box, Bethany, and Wicked Bites. She was featured, alongside actors Jamie Lee Curtis, Kevin Spacey, and Jared Leto, as well as athletes Tom Brady and Wayne Gretzky in a television documentary, Bystander Revolution: Take the Power out of Bullying.
In 2015, Patrick starts her final full time contracted year with SHR, with new crew chief Daniel Knost. Off the track, she was named the honorary president of the new NASCAR Hall of Fame Kids Club. During that launch, Patrick held a question and answer session as well as signed autographs for 100 children. Her 14th annual GoDaddy Super Bowl ad was pulled from broadcast due to protests from animal rights activists against puppy mills. GoDaddy parodied Budweiser’s puppy based advertisements, but with a twist ending: The puppy was sold online. Patrick was in the last shot as the puppy delivery van driver. It was the first time since 2007 that Patrick had not appeared in a GoDaddy advertisement broadcasted during Super Bowl. With a total of 13 (or 14, counting the pulled 2015 “Puppy” ad), Patrick holds the record as the celebrity with the most number of appearances in Super Bowl ads. In NASCAR, Patrick holds other impressive records as well.

**Patrick’s Records in NASCAR**

Generally, across IndyCar and NASCAR, Patrick is considered one of the most accomplished female drivers in motorsports. She holds the following stock car records (as of the end of the 2014 season):

- Best finish (4th) by any female driver across any NASCAR racing series (Sam's Town 300, Las Vegas Motor Speedway, 2011).
- Only woman to win the Most Popular Driver award in any NASCAR series (Nationwide, 2012).
- Top female in final point standings (10) in the Nationwide series (2012).
- Only woman to lead green flag laps in the Daytona 500 (five laps in 2013).
- Only woman to qualify on pole position in any Sprint Cup race (Daytona 500, 2013).
- Best finish (8th) by a woman in the Daytona 500 (2013).
- Only woman to race in the Sprint Cup series at Kentucky Speedway, Martinsville Speedway, New Hampshire Motor Speedway, Phoenix International Raceway, and the road course at Sonoma Raceway (2013).

- The most starts for a woman in races at the Sprint Cup level (82 as of the end of the 2014 season).

- Only woman to lead a Sprint Cup race at Talladega (6 laps at the Aaron’s 499, 2014).

To summarize, I include a timeline, below, to review Patrick and racing in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event and Relevance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Patrick is born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>She starts racing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Patrick wins her the World Karting Association championship in the Yamaha Sportsman class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>She moves to England to race in the Formula Vauxhall Winter Series.</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Bobby Rahal convinces Patrick to pose in <em>FHM</em>. The images became viral when the magazine was published in 2003.</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Rahal brings Patrick back to the U.S. to race in the Toyota Atlantic Series. Her popularity may have convinced Rahal to sign her for the U.S. undercard open wheel racing series. This may illustrate issues surrounding female athletes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>She is promoted to start racing in the IndyCar Racing League. Patrick was also featured on the cover of <em>Sports Illustrated</em>. The last IndyCar driver on the cover of <em>Sports Illustrated</em> was A. J. Foyt in 1981.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Patrick wins her first IndyCar race in Montegi, Japan. She is the only female driver to win any major motorsport event, in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>She starts her transition into NASCAR. Patrick competes in a part-time schedule of 13 for JRM in the NASCAR Nationwide series while also racing a full season in IndyCar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Tony Stewart signs Patrick for a part-time schedule to start in 2012 for SHR at the NASCAR Sprint Cup series. She is also racing part-time in the Nationwide series and full-time in IndyCar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Patrick is competing full time in NASCAR with a 33 race season for JRM in the Nationwide series. She is competing in ten races for SHR in the Sprint Cup series. During this racing season she was involved in intentionally crashing into other competitors’ cars. The trend continued in following seasons and may illustrate issues of hegemonic masculinity in sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Her rookie season in the Sprint Cup Series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Patrick’s first year as a full-fledged NASCAR driver.</td>
</tr>
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*Figure 1. Timeline of Patrick and Racing*
As of the end of her first full-fledged season (2014), out of all the women who have competed in stock car racing since NASCAR’s inception in 1949, Patrick is the only female to compete as a full time driver in the elite Sprint Cup series. The sport is marked with a historically based mythos that justifies masculine familial domination and the exclusion of women (Vavrus, 2007). Therefore, she offers a unique opportunity to address women in sports. With this in mind I will next offer my findings to address how Patrick informs issues of gender and sport broadly, female athletes, and sporting heroines.
Chapter V

Findings, Interpretations, and Discussion

The sporting realm is useful to illustrate shifts and tensions in human society (Beck & Bosshart, 2003; Boyle & Haynes, 2009). The two are interconnected: (1) sport and society mutually reflect and influence each other and (2) social values are contested in the sporting realm (Jhally, 1989; Kassing et al., 2004; Trujillo, 2012). One of areas that sport is particularly relevant in the understandings of what it means to be a man (Connell, 1987; Trujillo, 1991). So, an examination of the sporting realm is helpful to address gender and gender tensions.

In this chapter, I will review my findings, offer my interpretations and discussions regarding Patrick as the first full time female driver in NASCAR and as an extremely visible female athlete. I organize findings, interpretations, and discussions around each of my research questions. First, I consider how the case of Danica Patrick addresses issues of sport and gender, broadly from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. Then, I discuss how her case illustrates issues surrounding the bodies of female athletes. Lastly, I review how Patrick addresses issues surrounding sports heroines as role models.

Sport and Gender

The sporting realm is characterized by struggles over the shifting meanings of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman (Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). In fact, the contemporary sporting world was created in response to a masculine identity crisis (financial instabilities, war, suffrage) at the turn of the 20th century (Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). Therefore, the modern sporting realm was created to separate and then order genders to restore masculine authority over women (Boyle & Haynes, 2009; Theberge, 2000). Over time, gender is naturalized in a way that men are perceived as stronger
and better, so they should naturally dominate women (Connell, 1987; Trujillo, 1991). From there, the perspective of hegemonic masculinity is a broad set of practices embedded within society that legitimize the domination by certain men (Connell, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This perspective is useful explore the gender contestations in sport.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

Hegemonic masculinity is, in a large part, created, maintained, and changed in the sporting realm (Connell, 1990; 2005; Messner, 1995; Trujillo, 1991) and it reconfigures itself to appropriate shifts in society (Demetriou, 2001). At the same time, it may offer possibilities for transformation (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001). In this case, Patrick’s entry into NASCAR, as the first full time female driver, is a unique opportunity to examine hegemonic masculinity. So, my first research question (RQ1) is: In what ways does the case of Danica Patrick address sport and gender, broadly, from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity in terms of salient internal features (aggression and patriarchal domination), reconfiguration and appropriation societal shifts, as well as transformational possibilities.

Trujillo (1991) identified five overlapping and interrelated features of hegemonic masculinity: (1) force and control, (2) occupational achievement, (3) patriarchy, (4) frontiersmanship, and (5) heterosexuality. NASCAR is framed as not only reflective of hegemonic masculinity but also extremely proud of these masculine values (J. Newman and Giardina, 2011; Rybacki and Rybacki (2002); Vavrus, 2007). For instance, in her examination of NASCAR dads, Vavrus (2007) concluded that men dominate the sport, and women are relatively powerless. Furthermore, Howell (1997) described, “stock car drivers, like the horsemen of the American west, occupy a special place within American culture. Just as frontier scouts and
cowboys have become romanticized part of our national history” (p. 109). Howell (1997) added that:

[The] stock car driver is considered fearless, intuitive, physically adroit, and emotionally cool. Like the scouts who tempt death along the Great Plains, NASCAR drivers tempt death on the high-banked ovals at speeds of better than 200 miles per hour. There is little difference between dodging bullets along a trail in Wyoming and dodging concrete walls along a straightaway at Daytona; both have the power to top a man quickly and permanently. (p. 110)

Thus, NASCAR drivers may be described as reflecting characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. All five features may be found in this NASCAR, but, I will focus on the three most salient: (1) force and control, (2) familial patriarchy, as supported by (3) occupational achievement.

**Force and Control**

Force and control is expressed as aggression and violence (Connell, 1995, 2002). Aggressiveness is encouraged and it becomes naturalized as being part of sport (Adams et al., 2010; Light & Kirk, 2000). Miller (2012) illustrated this phenomenon in NASCAR: “Pushed around? It's not acceptable but certainly widespread: Seniors belittle freshmen and veteran athletes put down rookies” (para. 12-13). In sporting environments, women are presumed to be naturally less aggressive and fearful of aggression (Messner, 1992). However, Roth and Basow (2004) suggested that women are capable of being as aggressive as men. In the case of Patrick, she is being encouraged to exert more aggression as exemplified in the weekly ESPN.com (2012b) Roundtable discussion titled Burning Questions. Hinton said, “I still say she needs to get more aggressive, and she won't do that until she learns to slide the car around when necessary.”
Miller (2012) also showed how aggression is naturalized as gender neutral way to compete in the motorsport:

Danica Patrick’s crew chief, Tony Eury Jr., said recently that he felt many male drivers were trying to intimidate and push around Patrick on the track. “It’s a matter of not backing down,” Dale Earnhardt said. Some guys don’t respect anybody, no matter what their gender,” he said. “Every (driver) has to stand up for themselves at some point and set the tone that they won’t put up with it from anybody. When I first started hanging out with her and got to know her even before I raced with her, I knew she wasn’t the kind of person you run around pushing buttons with. Some guys don’t see it that way I guess and push her around on the race track. She will just have to settle that however she wants. There’s a way to do it.” Jimmie Johnson was pushed around as a first year NASCAR driver, but learned to counter punch. “You have to take three or four lumps before you pass one out. That was my philosophy,” he said. “Rookies get used up. It doesn’t matter if it’s our sport or baseball or football; it’s just how it is. It gets better with time and that stuff goes away.” (para. 16-19)

In response Patrick said, “It’s feeling each other out, knowing how far you can push each other and find the limits. I feel like that’s all it is. It’s nothing I haven’t dealt with” (Miller, 2012, para 20). In other words, force and control, expressed as aggressive driving, is naturalized as simply being part of competing in NASCAR. Another way to conform to that aggression norm, in NASCAR, is retaliation.

In another Burning Questions discussion, Keselowski was quoted as questioning the retaliation norm, “We’ve got a bunch of drivers that feel like they have to retaliate or they’re
being challenged as a man, and that’s ridiculous” (DeCola, 2013, para. 1). However, during the same discussion, M. Smith addressed how deviation from the aggression norm is rejected by fellow drivers: “No. It's not out of control. It's self-policing like it's always been. It's really aggressive, yes…. Gotta stand your ground. Can't back down. Back down once, you're a doormat forever” (DeCola, 2013, para. 5). So, in addition to competing aggressively, a NASCAR driver must retaliate against others. Consistent with previous research, if a driver does not conform to that norm, she or he is no longer a legitimate competitor, but someone who deserves to be mistreated (Adams et al., 2010).

In an interview with Newton (2012c) Patrick’s crew chief, Eury, Jr., described his advice to Patrick after Brad Sweet spun her out, she made contact with a wall, and did not finish a Nationwide race:

He [Eury] told her she needs to pay attention to what drivers are doing to her so “when she gets as good as them, she can repay the favor.” He told Patrick she needed to fight back if she wants to earn respect and drive in this sport for a long time. “He [Sweet] was driving underneath people and getting them loose,” Eury said. “It's a little trick he likes to do. Eventually, he'll be racing with guys who are going to do it to him a lot. He's not going to go up in the Cup Series and start running up underneath them guys back bumper, because they will teach him a lesson and do it right back.”…. “I want her to remember how certain people race her, remember how certain guys race you, so when she gets to his level, she can race them back like that," Eury said. “That's it.” (Newton, 2012c, para. 4-10)
Eury’s interview shows how he is advising Patrick, as her coach, to not only train to be a better racer and to remember to retaliate against other drivers at a later time. Yet, not all acts of retaliation were delayed. For example, Miller (2012) reported:

Patrick said a few years back at Phoenix other drivers were taking advantage of her and she got clearance from Eury to respond. She rolled down the back stretch and plowed into a driver who had been muscling her around the track. “I don't really think anybody messed with me for a little while after that,” she said. (para 20-22)

This demonstrates how Patrick is being coached to be more aggressive and retaliate against other drivers in order to maintain her legitimacy as a racer. The aggressiveness is naturalized because other drivers are portrayed as testing her legitimacy. They stopped harassing her after she responded appropriately by retaliating.

In addition, aggression becomes naturalized as simply a naturalized quality of what it means to be a good athlete. In an interview, Patrick exemplifies how she naturalized aggression as confidence and respect. In fact, that natural aggression was always part of her as a driver. M. Smith (2012) asked, “So you'd consider yourself more aggressive than what we saw from you in IndyCar?” (para. 3). Patrick replied:

When I was a kid, I was one of the most aggressive drivers out there. I'd go from 30th to winning a heat race in eight laps because I'd come up behind someone and bump him entering the corner. You don't have to make contact to be aggressive, but when you make a move, you stick it. You take the car to the limit. It's about confidence but respect at the same time. I race everyone fair. If they're not fair back to me, well, then I know where it's going. (para. 4)
Accordingly, she internalized that masculine norm of toughness as part of being a natural athlete. When Ceegan (2012) asked her if she has to show more toughness than a man, Patrick replied,

No, I just think that it comes from within. I think it comes from my parents. My dad is pretty tough, and I know that’s where I get it. With people, what you see is their personality, you know? It’s hard to hide it or change it or be somebody totally different when you’re put on the spot and you’re in an adrenaline moment where you’re just working off reflexes and instincts. There’s not a lot of time to think about how you should act, even though sometimes I should. (para. 19)

This shows that aggression is encouraged, reinforced, and internalized to the extent that it becomes naturalized as a sporting ideal. In fact, Patrick describes her aggression as natural, a part of herself, and how she was socialized by her family.

Additionally, her successes on the track are attributed to her increased conformity to that aggression norm, as James (2012d) reported:

Danica Patrick got her best and most aggressive finish of the season, eighth, charging up from 13th on fresh tires on the last restart, even when she had to race out of the middle of a three-wide situation. “All in all, it's nice to have a good finish,” said an encouraged Patrick. “We've kind of had tough going at the start of this year, so that was fun.” (paras. 9-10)

In the above media report, we can see that increased aggression is characterized as “her best” and “fun.”

Fellow drivers affirmed her aggression and described Patrick as becoming a better driver. Blount (2011) reported:
Cup points leader Carl Edwards, who finished third Saturday, agrees with Hamlin's assessment of Patrick. “I lapped her at one point in the race and it took me a long time to get by her,” Edwards said. “When I finally got to her, she gave me just the right amount of room. She's definitely come a long way, but I knew that at Montreal [in August] when I bumped her out of the way and she up and bumped me right back. She's a good racer.” (para. 9-10)

That vote of confidence was echoed by other drivers as James (2012e) reported, “Within the first 110 laps, Jeff Gordon, when told by his spotter he was about to overtake Patrick, responded, ‘There's the 10. I can see all four lanes of her’” (para. 9). In other words, by taking up the width of the track, Patrick is driving very aggressively and preventing Gordon from passing her.

Also, since Patrick is conforming to these masculine norms, she is naturalized as a better driver (Meân & Kassing, 2008; Winiarska et al., 2015). To illustrate, Newton (2012b) titled his article: Woman driver? Danica is just a good driver. In it, he wrote:

It may be time to stop referring to Danica Patrick as a female driver. Pole winning driver will suffice. Period….. And until Patrick or another woman makes winning a pole and races seem like an everyday occurrence, a big deal will be made of it. “I really don't think about it from a girl perspective,” Patrick told reporters after her historic run. “I've been taught from a young age to want to be the best driver. My dad's in here [media center], and he can attest to that. (Newton, 2012b, para. 2, 4-5)

By being portrayed as a gender-neutral driver, she is fulfilling gendered expectations of women in a masculine sport (Winiarska et al., 2015). This ideal is reflected by two women racers who have retired from the sport. James (2013a) quoted Lyn St. James, “All women in racing,
particularly the young ones but really all of us, just want to be race car drivers as opposed to women race car drivers” (para. 3). Her masculinity is naturalized off the tracks as Reitman (2012) wrote:

Danica Patrick shakes hands like a man. It is a wince-inducing, finger-crushing, are-you-seriously-not-a-Marine kind of shake. “Hi [crunch], I'm Danica.”

Coming from someone who is 5-foot-2, 109 pounds and looks like a brunette Barbie doll, it's kind of like shaking hands with a lightning bolt. It makes you (okay, me) jump back a bit and go, “Ow! F--!,” which is the point. There should be no surprise here. The woman drives racecars for a living; of course she has grip. (para 1)

This exemplifies that Patrick is recognized as female driver, and her compliance with masculine norms offsets her limitation as a woman in sport.

Despite her acceptance as a competitor, tensions are clear in how other drivers competed with and against her. She is not complying with gender norms. For example, after the finish of a race, Patrick intentionally wrecked Sam Hornish Jr. during the cool down lap, as he drove too close to her during the final lap of the race. A month later, Hornish wrecked Patrick. Gelston (2012) reported, that the wreck “seemed more a factor of bad timing than retaliation. ‘It was just a matter of three cars trying to fit into a really tight spot,’ Hornish said. ‘I felt like she could have given me more room. I think she gave me some, not enough’” (para. 25). When questioned further, Hornish told SBNation.com that Patrick’s position on the track forced him to lose control of his race car. He added, “I don't want to be here talking to you guys about having a problem with her. I know that if that happens with Michael Annett or T.J. Bell, that we don't stand here and have this conversation. … I don't want to have any problems with her” (para. 7-8). Hornish’s
reaction illustrates that even though Patrick is accepted as a driver, how he races against her differs from how he competes against men, and how media respond to her is also different.

The case of Patrick illustrates features of hegemonic masculinity in terms of expressions as related to control in NASCAR. For instance, she tried to nudge Landon Cassill after he ran into her. She lost control of her car and did not finish the race. Cassill did. Hawkins (2012) wrote,

Danica Patrick has only one regret about purposely bumping Landon Cassill in her last race. “I still think it was important for me to stand up for myself, and I wouldn't change it.” …. Patrick offered no apology and said there have been no conversations with Cassill since Kansas “I left it,” she said. “If he wants to talk to me, fine. I don't really have much to say. I think the actions speak louder than the words, to be honest.” While she hopes she “won't have to do much of that anymore,” Patrick believes it was an important step in earning respect and moving forward. (para. 1-2, 7-8)

Cassill later taunted, “Rule No. 1 in stock car racing is learn how to wreck someone without wrecking yourself” (para. 5).

This incident was addressed as part of the Burning Questions weekly discussion (ESPN.com, 2012a). During the discussion, Blount argued, “She should have let it go on the track and talked to Cassill after the race to tell him payback was coming. She destroyed a strong car that the team planned to use in Texas” (para. 1). Hinton, countered,

Oh, what the heck? What was she going to do? Back off and get a mediocre finish that would have gotten her the usual business from detractors anyway? All along, it seems to be the young drivers who are messing with her, James Buescher in
Nationwide, now Cassill and she's right to go ahead and deal with it. She stood her ground and was honest about it afterward. As for Cassill's “first law” being not to wreck yourself, well, I remember how a guy named Dale Earnhardt managed to wreck himself a time or two during payback. Danica has been a hit back type since her karting days, and she can't change now. (para. 2)

In summation, these passages show how aggression is encouraged, reinforced, and perpetuated by Patrick. She was encouraged to be more aggressive, accepted and praised for that aggression, and continues to retaliate against other drivers in order to maintain her legitimacy in the sport (Adams et al., 2010; Light & Kirk, 2000; Meân & Kassing, 2008). At the same time, she complicates the perspective of a gender-neutral good driver. Some praise her aggression as appropriate. Others criticize her for it, and suggest a less aggressive, and gender appropriate response. Let me next address how Patrick illustrates other features of hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, as supported by occupational achievement.

**Patriarchy (with Occupational Achievement)**

Patriarchy is a social system that justifies male authority over women (Lerner, 1986; Segal 1989; Walby, 1989). That masculine authority originates in the private home and then extends into the public or broader society (Millet, 1970). The sense of family is especially important in NASCAR because it is a privately owned family business and is perceived as a family sport (Hagstrom, 1998). Rybacki and Rybacki (2002) noted that NASCAR drivers are imbued with a strict code of honor that values fatherhood, care for the family, Christianity, and working hard to put food on table. In other words, the notion of fatherhood is important to NASCAR heroes. For example, J. Newman and Giardina (2011) elaborated, that men in NASCAR are patriarchs who are “firm disciplinarians, caretakers of ‘family values,’ god-fearing
Christians, monogamous conquests of their ‘trophy-wives,’ and watchdogs over their accumulating estates” (p. 133).

In NASCAR, racing teams are talked about in terms of family. After Jimmie Johnson won his sixth championship, he thanked his team owner, Rick Hendrick, by saying, “Rick and (wife) Linda, you've created the winningest racing organization in NASCAR history by caring for the people you employ and treating us all like family” (Cain, 2013c, para. 19). When Austin Dillon won pole at the 2014 Daytona 500, he said “You never know the next time you'll be standing in this position again. so it's awesome; just want to thank our family back home at RCR [Richard Childress Racing, his team]” (Spencer, 2014, para. 11). Before starting a mid-season race in Michigan, Edwards said over his car radio, “Alright, guys, have some fun today. I appreciate everyone here from Roush, my family” (NASCAR.com, 2014).

The concept of family is particularly import with Patrick’s car team at SHR because co-owner Stewart is neither married or a father. To fill that “void,” Ryan (2011) wrote: Single and without children, Stewart also owns two open wheel teams and three racetracks. “I don't have to delegate my time to a family, (so) these race teams and racetracks and everything we are doing kind of is that family,” Stewart said. “I like staying busy in that capacity. I wouldn't know what else to do.” (para. 32-33)

Three years later, ESPN analyst Ricky Craven added, “Tony doesn't have a wife, doesn't have kids, but he does have family…..His family is NASCAR, and his family are the people that make up his team at Stewart-Haas Racing” (Ryan, 2014, para. 24). In other words, Stewart is the patriarch of his SHR team.
An example, of how Stewart expresses his fatherhood over SHR, is when Patrick started dating fellow driver Stenhouse Jr. Stewart played a practical joke on the younger driver. Stenhouse Jr. elaborated on their relationship:

“When I was racing for him [in another series] he started calling me his son,”

Stenhouse told USA TODAY Sports. “So every time he texted me, it's, ‘Hey, Son.’ If he won, it's, ‘Hey Dad, good job.’ so when (Patrick) told him (about the relationship) and I wasn't the one to tell him, he got a little mad like, ‘I can't believe my son wouldn't contact me about this.’” (Ryan, 2013b, para. 5)

For these reasons, it is clear that NASCAR teams are described in terms of family and Stewart’s position is the patriarch at SHR.

As discussed in the previous section, hegemonic masculinity naturalizes violence as a means to exert force and control (Connell, 1990; Trujillo, 1991). It follows that patriarchs control their over families include the use of real or threatened violence (Connell, 2002; Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004). Gluck (2013b) wrote, “Tony Stewart says he loves rookie Ricky Stenhouse Jr. like he's family but is fed up with how Stenhouse and other young drivers are racing.” (para. 1). Gluck (2013b) added that Stewart said in a Sirius XM Radio interview, “Ricky Stenhouse, I'd choke him right now if I could get to him.” (para. 2). In response to this:

Patrick laughed at the idea that Tony Stewart (her boss) wanted to choke Ricky Stenhouse Jr. (her boyfriend) for blocking in last week's race at Charlotte. In fact, she might have helped Stewart put his hands around Stenhouse's neck. Patrick had her race spoiled when she was wrecked by Stenhouse in their first on track accident since they announced they were dating. If Patrick felt caught in the middle of the boss boyfriend squabble, she didn't show it Friday at Dover
International Speedway. “Don't you want to choke your kids every now and then?” she asked. “I mean, everybody wants to choke their kids, or their dad, or son, or significant other at times. So, I think that is a comment out of love, no doubt.” Stewart has said he loves Stenhouse like family, so this was more like dishing out some tough love rather than the start of a feud. Patrick said she took the comment as a sign that Stewart actually wants to help Stenhouse, a Sprint Cup rookie. “If there is anyone out there that he says something about, it's only because he knows they are going to be around and he wants them to learn how to play the game the way that he's learned how to play the game,” she said. “It's actually a good thing that he wants to help.” (Gelston, 2013a, para. 1-5)

In other words, patriarchal violence is naturalized as a way of helping someone learn. Stenhouse affirmed his acceptance of Stewart’s position afterwards and said, “We're like family, we always have been….Things are good’ (para. 7). Therefore, the conceptualization of SHR as a family justifies the threat of team violence as a natural expression of fatherly love. At the track, Padma remarked, “SHR is a family and Tony is the dad. The children get stupid and he has to fix them.” This reflects the power of patriarchy in that fathers are not only justified in acting violently but should exert violence to control and guide his family.

Fathers are naturalized as family protectors and providers (Carrigan et al., 1985; Walby, 1986). In contrast, women’s work is supposed to be centered on supporting him by caring for the patriarch and the home he provides (Messner &Bozada-Deas, 2009). This justifies a division of labor in that women should take care of their men. At the tracks this was expressed as many women brought food to share. I participated in similar experiences at every track. For example, I
sat next to Rebecca. Every time she reached into her cooler to give her family snacks and drinks, she also offered me what she gave them, even after I declined every previous offer. When I asked Rebecca about this, she first asked, “oh, did you want something?” then answered, “this is like one of my family picnics, I always bring plenty to share.” Rebecca’s husband sat next to her and he was focused on the race. During the race, he drank and ate what Rebecca offered. He did not offer anyone snacks (including his children). This illustrates how a man’s work ends at his public job, but a woman’s work is to caring for him (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011)

Women are more compliant to this gendered work ideal in the home in the case that her public labor earns more than his (Bittman et al. 2003). Because out earning her patriarch is a gender deviant performance, publically; she counteracts that deviance by increasing her conformity and emphasizing her femininity in their private home (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Connell, 1987; Greenstein 2000). This extreme compliance is demonstrated by Patrick in her relationship with boyfriend Stenhouse, Jr.

Patrick is one of the top ten paid drivers in NASCAR. According to Badenhausen (2014) she earned over $13.5 million in 2013, across endorsements, salary, and race winnings. Stenhouse cannot generate the kind of endorsement money that Patrick earns. In fact, out of all of the drivers in NASCAR, only Earnhardt Jr. and Johnson have endorsement earnings that surpass Patrick’s. While, Stenhouse’s earnings are not published, I extrapolated that he was paid roughly $1.4 million in 2013 (based on conversations with team owners and other NASCAR insiders,) drivers usually keep about 40% of their race winnings). This means that Stenhouse earned about 10.6% of Patrick’s income, which equates to a difference of over $12 million. Despite this vast difference in income, Ryan (2013d) reported:
Patrick, 31, spends much of her free time with Stenhouse in the Lake Norman area about 20 miles north of Charlotte at a house where her boyfriend rents a bedroom from his accountant, Ehren Hull. She keeps her belongings on the floor of a spare room that holds Stenhouse's racing simulator….She doesn't seem to be bothered that Stenhouse….shares a residence with a family of four. (para. 26-28)

Instead of living at her condo in Chicago, she shares a room in a house with Stenhouse. In other words, although she can more than adequately provide for herself and Stenhouse, many times over, they are living within his means.

Stenhouse is mainly addressed as Patrick’s boyfriend despite the fact that he has won the Nationwide series twice. Newberry (2013) wrote, “he's best known as the boyfriend of fellow Cup rookie Danica Patrick” (para. 8). Gelston (2014) also noted that “Ricky Stenhouse Jr., last year's top rookie, is known as much for dating Danica Patrick” (para. 18). To confirm, I used FACTIVA to collect New York Times, USA TODAY, and Associated Press reports that mentioned “Ricky Stenhouse Jr,” for all of 2014. He was not mentioned in the New York Times. In 72 Associated Press articles, Patrick was mentioned 78 times, but only 4 times as his girlfriend. In contrast, he was mentioned as her boyfriend 19 times. In USA TODAY, Stenhouse was mentioned in 17 articles. Patrick was noted on nine and Stenhouse Jr. was addressed as her boyfriend in seven. In comparison, she is not mentioned as his girlfriend. These are the same three FACTIVA media sources I used for my data collection, but I did not limit myself to articles that mentioned also Patrick.

As a negative example, Stenhouse was surprised when he was the subject of an interview that did not focus on Patrick as Newton (2013a) conveyed:
When they said we were going to do [the interview] I thought it was going to be all about that [Danica Patrick],” Stenhouse said of his relationship with Patrick. "But shockingly, it wasn't. They actually asked a lot of racing questions. What goes on? What's a crew chief do up here? So, I was kind of surprised. It turned out to be a great interview.” (para. 5)

Thus, it is not surprising that Patrick compensates for both Stenhouse’s and her gender deviance. She is clearly the more popular driver and makes a lot more money than he does.

Figure 2. “@Stenhouse Jr asked for desert…”

We see further evidence of Patrick’s conformity, and emphasized femininity, in her own words. After meeting his parents, Patrick commented that they liked her because, “they realize I’m sweet and I take care of you” (Ryan, 2013c, para. 45). Associated Press (2013a) added that Stenhouse’s attraction to Patrick, was partially based on her ability to cook, “Stenhouse was equally as open, saying ‘she's hot!’ when asked what attracted him to Patrick before adding “she loves to cook, and I love to eat”’ (para. 8). In the ESPN online article series, Shake and Bake, Pennell (2013) included tweets and pictures about Patrick’s cooking. He wrote, “Race car driver, supermodel, girlfriend…chef? Apparently Danica Patrick is a whiz in the kitchen, just ask Ricky
Stenhouse Jr.” (para. 20). Pennell (2013) added the text and picture (Figure 2) from Patricks’ tweet “@Stenhouse Jr asked for desert…”

In that tweeted picture, the dessert is not premade/out of the box. Instead, it looks like a lot of time want into its preparation. Next, Parnell (2013) also included the picture (Figure 5.2) and text from Stenhouse’s tweet: “This is as close as I get to cookin. Good thing @DanicaPatrick loves to cook.” In Figure 5.2, Patrick is cooking multiple items while wearing an apron printed with a picture of a half-naked Stenhouse, holding a wooden spoon, and the words “master chef.” The apron illustrates an interesting contradiction in this feature of hegemonic masculinity, as the male is the master chef despite the fact that she is doing the actual work of cooking. This reflects exploitation in patriarchy because women cannot not own their labor, instead their labor belongs to the patriarch (Walby, 1989).

Figure 3. Good thing @DanicaPatrick loves to cook
Her support extends outside of the home, as Albert (2014) described after Stenhouse Jr. failed to qualify for a race:

Ricky Stenhouse Jr. watched last weekend's race at Talladega Superspeedway from his motor coach, one day after failing to make the starting field for the first time in his NASCAR Sprint Cup Series career. It was a sour pill to swallow, but the 27-year-old driver was quick to note that he's bounced back from adversity in the past. He also learned that his girlfriend, fellow driver Danica Patrick, was quick to go to bat for him, pleading his case and railing against tweaks to the qualifying procedure that made him a Sunday spectator….. Stenhouse ran an extra lap after flashing under the black and red flags, just in case there was an error in timing and scoring. But as he inched back toward pit road, it became more and more evident among the No. 17 camp that the team would be left out. That prompted Patrick to action, as she marched up to NASCAR officials to speak her mind -- not just on her boyfriend's behalf, but as a general protest to the unconventional qualifying system. “I was really pissed off after qualifying,” Patrick said. “I went to the NASCAR hauler and said ‘what the … is this? Is that what we were trying to accomplish?’ Part of it was because it was Ricky and part of it was, that could've just as easily been me, and I know how important those races are to me and my team, but then also my sponsors and the people who invest into those events, especially the speedways, the big ones, all of them. These are all very big races, all four of those, in particular the Daytona 500. And so I was fighting for not having someone who wasn't deserving in that situation.”

(para. 1-2, 10-13)
The incident was reported as Shake and Bake (2014) headlined, “Standing by her man: Danica has boyfriend Ricky’s back on Twitter,” when she followed up her trackside protests with a Tweet, “good cars going home that shouldn’t.”

In contrast, Stenhouse does not support Patrick publically. He did not rebut Jay Mohr when the comedian roasted Patrick at the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Awards Ceremony at the end of the 2013 season. Mohr pointed to Patrick’s [and Stenhouse Jr.] table and said, “I know you aren’t used to being this close to the front” (Cain, 2013d, para. 8). Additionally, Stenhouse is more concerned with his career and performance than Patrick’s well-being, as Hawkins (2013) reported:

Stenhouse Jr. saw sheet metal and other parts of the No. 10 Chevrolet strewn across the track and knew Danica Patrick had taken a hard hit in Phoenix.

Stenhouse never asked his crew about the status of the fellow NASCAR Sprint Cup rookie driver he's dating. “I felt like they would have told me if she would have been hurt,” Stenhouse said Monday…. “Like I've been telling people from the start of this, when we're on the racetrack, we're focused on what we're doing. And that was no different (Sunday),” Stenhouse said. “I was focused on my racecar, I was focused on under that caution talking to my crew chief about making our racecar better. Like the media has been asking, how is it going to affect your on track performance? It's not going to, her side or my side.” (p. 1-2, 5-6)

Thus, occupational achievement undergirds patriarchy as a feature of hegemonic masculinity. She provides care for him in the private sphere of home and is supportive of him in the public
sphere of NASCAR racing. In contrast, Stenhouse is attracted to Patrick’s looks and cooking, but ultimately he cares more for his own career in NASCAR.

At the same time, Patrick is being portrayed as happier, but the reasons behind her happiness has broader consequences. Fryer (2013c) illustrated, “this is the new Danica Patrick, who for most of her career has been viewed as guarded, even cold” (para. 6). Former IndyCar boss, Michael Andretti added that her ex-husband, Hospenthal, was the reason for Patrick’s distance and coldness an athlete (Fryer, 2013c). In contrast, Cain (2013b) reported, “her relationship with Stenhouse has been easy contentment. At the track, Patrick said he is a big source of moral support not to mention a racing resource” (paras. 34-35). Fryer (2013a) quoted Patrick:

“People tell me I’ve changed. Maybe. I'm happy,” she said. “You get kind of giddy about it, almost. Ricky and I like talking about each other. But life is just simpler now. I feel like I don't have to think as much. There was always an element of me that felt like I had to do the right thing all the time. Now I feel like I want to be me. I want to be relaxed, less calculated. My return on investment was not right, and I am done overthinking things.” (para. 12)

In this instance, Patrick is portrayed as a happier woman due to her relationship with Stenhouse.

However, her happiness is not just from being in a “better” relationship. Instead, her happiness is attributed to her conforming to gendered norms as part of that relationship. For example, instead of cooking at home, she and Hospenthal were reported as spending more time “eating in fancy restaurants and drinking expensive wine” (Newton, 2013b, para. 4). Hospenthal was also her business counsel and they took cooking classes together (James, 2013b; Ryan,
In contrast, with Stenhouse, Patrick is “light and playful” and no longer the “onetime diva in designer heels” (Fryer, 2013c, para. 6, 9). This sentiment is reflected at the track. At Richmond, Raine expressed that since she has been with Stenhouse, Patrick has been acting more “right.” Raine clarified that acting more right includes being less “uppity and snobby.” In other words, Patrick is happier as she is no longer deviating from feminine ideals (diva, uppity). Instead of eating at restaurants and sharing cooking responsibility with the patriarch, she now takes care of him at home and at the tracks. In other words, her happiness and easier relationship are possible because she is conforming to feminine work ideals in the home. This illustrates how enactments of this division of labor reproduces and reinforces patriarchy (Bowlby et al., 1988).

The sense of patriarchy is especially relevant in NASCAR. J. Newman and Giardina (2011) concluded that adherence to biblical doctrine anoints fathers as family rulers. This sense of family is also illustrated in NASCAR dynasties (Petty, Earnhardt, and Andretti) as driver fathers raise driver sons (and grandsons). As an example, Vavrus (2007) suggested that NASCAR’s winner of the popular driver award Dale Earnhardt, Jr. has won that honor (every year consecutively from 2003 to 2014) because he has taken the mantle of his superstar father. Dale Earnhardt Sr. died in a final-lap wreck during the 2001 Daytona 500. In fact, in NASCAR culture, he is simply known as “Junior” and his Nationwide level racing team is named JR Motorsports (JRM). The right to race under the name of “Dale” was handed down as a title from father to son. Both of Earnhardt Sr.’s sons have the middle name of Dale: Kerry Dale (1969) and Ralph Dale Jr. (1974). Despite being the younger of the two and sons, Ralph Dale was selected by his father to race under the diminutive version of his name. In other words, Dale Earnhardt Sr. named Dale Earnhardt Jr. as his successor. Petry (2012) elaborated on this father to son lineage:
NASCAR is particularly rooted in family. An affection for stock car racing is rarely stumbled upon. Rather, it is inherited. Dale Jr. followed in the footsteps of his father [who followed in his father, Ralph’s steps]; Lee, Richard, Kyle and Adam gave NASCAR four generations of Petty’s; and the Busch brothers rub metal on the track every weekend. Even the broadcast box feels the family ties -- Ned Jarrett called his son Dale to the checkered flag at the Daytona 500 in 1993.

(para. 26)

So, that in NASCAR power is inherited from father to son.

This patrilineal family renders women invisible. Then, by connecting the public realm of NASCAR racing to the private realm of the home, the shared of identity of NASCAR family may allow for a stronger expressions and re/circulation of patriarchal ideals. Patriarchal power is rooted and naturalized in the private family sphere. Instead of simply extending patriarchal power into a broader public sphere, the metaphor of the NASCAR family fortifies it more strongly, and reflects the added strength of NASCAR patriarchy.

In summation, this case illustrates how patriarchal power is evident in this case. Patrick’s team owner is portrayed as the father of her team and as patriarch, he has the right to threaten violence in order to control his family (Connell, 2002; Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004). Similarly, Patrick has emphasized her femininity (Connell, 1987) as extreme conformity to gendered work norms in the home, as she and Stenhouse both deviate from them in professional racing (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000). In fact, she is portrayed as happier because she is conforming to gender expectations. The concept of the greater NASCAR community, as a family, interacts with patriarchy by strengthening and celebrating this characteristic of masculinity as well as reflecting that as a fortification of masculine power. Thus,
the case of Patrick addresses characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Next, I will discuss hegemonic masculinity, more broadly.

In NASCAR, hegemonic masculinity is reinforced and oftentimes, celebrated (J. Newman & Giardina, 2011; Vavrus, 2007). Hegemonic masculinity is fluid and includes internal inconsistencies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001). So, the case of Patrick may also illustrate possibilities for change. To illustrate this potential shift, Gelston (2013c) wrote:

Danica Patrick has found more than the success that eluded Janet Guthrie in her brief NASCAR stint. Patrick also has the acceptance in the garage that Guthrie never did. Guthrie struggled in an era when women were still viewed in stock car racing as unwanted outsiders. Guthrie, the first woman to race in NASCAR’s Coca Cola 600 in 1976, received an icy reception from the sport's biggest drivers as she tried to build her career. It was in stark contrast to the scene on pit road moments after Patrick clinched her Daytona 500 pole with a hug from Tony Stewart and a handshake from Jeff Gordon. Guthrie congratulated Patrick on Sunday for becoming the first woman to win the top spot for any race in NASCAR's top circuit. But Guthrie was more proud of the way NASCAR's attitude toward women has evolved over the last 30 years. Guthrie was heartened at seeing a women succeed in a man's world. “It took time for that attitude to change, but it did change,” Guthrie told The Associated Press by phone Sunday. “That was one of my biggest pleasures was seeing that attitude change.” Guthrie was the previous best female qualifier in a Cup race. She started ninth at Bristol and Talladega in 1977. (paras. 1-7)

Additionally, we see changes over time in one NASCAR family as Boyer (2010) reported:
Bobby Unser, one of the legendary drivers of that era, was probably voicing common opinion when he said, “I could take a hitchhiker, give him a Corvette from the showroom, and teach him to drive faster than Janet Guthrie.” Danica Patrick, in contrast, was twenty-three when she made her spectacular Indy début, and she partly credits her third-place finish last year to Al Unser, Jr., Bobby’s nephew, had gone out of his way to advise her before the race. (Boyer, 2010, para. 38)

Therefore, Patrick illustrates a shift in NASCAR because she is welcomed into the sport as well as accepted as a good and natural athlete.

However, hegemonic masculinity is adaptive and reasserts male superiority in hybrid ways (Demetriou, 2001). McGee (2013) wrote that while “Patrick does have to endure the occasional inappropriate catcall or public criticism from a rival,” comparing Guthrie’s time in NASCAR to Patrick’s “would be to compare to Lewis and Clark's westward journey to a road trip down Route 66” (McGee, 2013, para. 9-10). In his report, McGee invokes the image of the tough frontiersman. Guthrie could not succeed in NASCAR because she was not strong enough to be that frontiersman. In contrast, Patrick has a better chance in NASCAR since the male frontiersmen have tamed that wilderness and paved the road on which she may safely travel. Therefore, while she is naturalized as a good athlete, this sets her apart as a weaker class of driver by virtue of being a woman. This illustrates the adaptiveness of hegemonic masculinity in that it appropriates societal changes and reasserts masculine superiority (Demetriou, 2001; Winiarska et al., 2015).

In conclusion, Patrick illustrates issues of gender and sport from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. Specifically, she addresses features of hegemonic masculinity such as
force and control as well as patriarchy (supported by occupational achievement). Her case also shows how the fluidity of hegemonic masculinity simultaneously allows for change while also appropriating those shifts to reaffirm the power and authority of men. Next, I narrow my examination by focusing on female athletes.

**Female Athletes**

Sportswomen are not just simply athletes (Birrell, 1998). Instead, women are the inferior sex in sport (Meân & Kassing, 2008; Pfister, 2010). As such, the bodies of female athletes are sites of meaning contestation over gender (Messner, 1998). Also, how sporting women may perform (intelligible and unintelligible) their roles as female athletes are limited by reiterated patterns and accepted practices (Butler, 1993, 2011).

Even with increased participation, female athletes and women’s sports are extremely under covered in media (Billings & Young, 2015; Cooky et al., 2015; Kane, 2013). When represented, women are portrayed in overt and subtle ways that conform to feminine ideals. These media representations are important as the lack of them represent a symbolic annihilation of women in sport (Gerber & Gross, 1976) and the few representations may be more impactful on the perceptions of women and women’s perceptions of themselves (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Weber & Carini, 2012). Also, individual athletes drive coverage for team and individual sports (Brown, 2006; Godoy-Pressland & Griggs 2014). Therefore, the case of Patrick, as an extremely popular and visible female athlete, offers an opportunity to examine women competitors in sport. So, my second research question (RQ2) is: In what ways does the case of Danica Patrick address female athletes, in terms of the body, via media representations that reflect and inform tensions between intelligible and unintelligible performances?
Even though women are more involved in sport, female athletes are still extremely marginalized in sport (Berg, et al., 2014; Meân and Kassing, 2008). This marginalization is justified because men are considered natural athletes and as such, women should compete against them (Birrell, 1998; Messner, 1992). In other words, this means that women do not have an intelligible place in sport. In NASCAR, this type of marginalization is apparent. Since the opening of the NASCAR Hall of Fame (n.d.) in 2010, all of the inductees have been male. In fact, only one female, Anne B. (or Mrs. Big Bill) France was nominated. Even though she was not inducted, her nomination illustrates that NASCAR honors women only if they conform to gender ideals by staying off of the track and providing support for their men. Petty reflected this NASCAR norm, in the 1970s, as female driver, Janet Guthrie (2005) recalled that he was extremely cold towards her and, “later, he would be quoted as saying of me: ‘She’s no lady. If she were, she’d be at home. There’s a lot of differences in being a lady and being a woman” (p. 199). This attitude was reflected in how Guthrie was treated by many working in and for NASCAR. Before events, gate attendants often did not let her on to the track (Guthrie, 2005; McGee, 2013). Then, in 1976, fans chanted “NO TITS IN THE PITS!” at Guthrie as she entered the track (Guthrie, 2005; McGee, 2013). So, the separation between what roles a woman should and should not perform is clearly separated in NASCAR.

The justification to exclude women from racing stems from the myth of fragility. Guthrie (2009) wrote that women had to “present, each day of an event, a certificate signed by a doctor on that same date that they are not pregnant” (p. 381). Additionally, women are considered to be weak and their presence on the track was portrayed as dangerous for other drivers. Because of that perception, one of the first female racers recalled that male drivers often tried to wreck her. Almost 50 years later, in 2001, Renshaw was blamed for the accidental death of a fellow driver,
Martin, during a practice session (Fryer, 2002; Sloop, 2005). Her spotter was not properly positioned to see Martin’s stalled car in a blind turn.

A decade later, Patrick faces a somewhat different reception. However, despite her acceptance on the track, her gender deviant performance as a female athlete in a masculine sport is disciplined in subtler ways. Newton (2012a) suggested that Patrick’s wrecks overshadow her victories: “Even her winning the Nationwide Series pole seems lost amid the crumpled sheet metal….People won't remember that the wrecks were for the most part unavoidable. They'll just remember she wrecked” (para. 8). Her perceived weakness is further illustrated in a wreck at Daytona. Fryer (2012a) reported:

As her car hurtled out of control toward the inside retaining wall at Daytona International Speedway, Danica Patrick did a split-second survey of her situation. With no chance of avoiding a head-on collision at nearly 190 mph, Patrick prepared for the impact. She took her hands off her steering wheel and pulled them close to her body. In her mind, she had clenched her arms tight near her shoulder harnesses. In reality, the in-car camera showed her hands were much higher, almost at her face. And just like that the talk shifted from her otherwise clean run in Thursday's qualifying race to a discussion about the pretty girl who covered her eyes right before a big scary accident. It didn't matter that it wasn't true. “In IndyCars, you learn to take your hands off the wheel,” Patrick explained Friday. “I was trained when there is no saving it and no hope, you let go. That's what I did. No, I wasn't covering my eyes. But, yes, I did close them as I got to the wall. I didn't want my eyes to pop out of my head.” Everything Patrick does this season, her first full year in NASCAR, will be scrutinized. She's one of the
most popular athletes on the planet, but her spotty racing resume makes her an easy target for hardcore racing fans who consider her an overhyped driver unworthy of the attention she receives (para. 1-7).

In other words, Patrick may be accepted as a racer, but how she performs on the track is framed in terms of her gender.

In these passages, Patrick’s perceived weakness, as a female, is foregrounded. Wrecks are a normal part of racing, however, since Patrick is in the wreck, it is big and scary. Patrick has to justify her legitimacy by pointing to her training despite the fact that several male drivers have reacted to similar wrecks in similar ways. Most importantly, this one incident puts into question her legitimacy as a driver, across all levels despite the fact that after her rookie year in IndyCar, Patrick has never been out of the top ten in season rankings. This means that she consistently beat out 23 other (mostly male) drivers every year for six years before transitioning to NASCAR. So, this case of Patrick is helpful to illuminate challenges to and shifts the un/intelligible performances of female athletes. I will start with media representations, then continue on to address Patrick in terms of the tensions between performing athleticism and femininity.

**Body**

Media create the social frameworks within which we interact and conduct our daily lives (Lippmann, 2007). For Gerbner and his colleagues, the media are complicit in supporting a masculine hegemony:

What we see in the media is less a reflection of, than a counterattack on, the women's movement as a social force for structural change. Instead of mediating even the actual social change that is taking place, the media appear to be cultivating resistance and preparing for a last-ditch defense. And the gap between
actual social reality and what is portrayed in the media is widening. (Gerbner, 1978, p. 50)

Female athletes are subordinated in sport, and their portrayals are important in this examination of women sporting competitors. I will address two prominent and persistent patterns of portrayals: extreme underrepresentation and overt sexualization. These patterns inform intelligible and unintelligible performances that female athletes may enact and embody.

**Extreme Underrepresentation**

Female athletes are underrepresented across media despite increasing participation (Cooky et al., 2013; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1996). By not covering women in sport and women’s sports, the media annihilate this group from social legitimacy (Gerber & Gross, 1976; Greendorfer, 1977). In contrast, Patrick may not be characterized as underrepresented. At a total of 13, she has been in more Super Bowl ads than any other celebrity. Even though she did not win her debut Indy 500 race, *Sports Illustrated* put her on their June 6, 2005 cover (Figure 5.3).

![Figure 4. Patrick on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, 2005](image)
This is important because the previous IndyCar driver on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* was A. J. Foyt in 1981.

When she transitioned to NASCAR, she continued to attract media attention. Blount (2012) reported:

One driver in one corner of the ballroom, one driver in another corner at the same time. An observation on that little tidbit tells you all you need to know. In the first interview session of the 2012 NASCAR media tour, the driver who never has raced in a Sprint Cup event had more reporters around her than the driver who is coming off his third Cup championship (para. 1-2).

In other words, Patrick garnered more media attention than the three male drivers at that event. But, more press attention may not translate to coverage.

To confirm, I returned to FACTIVA to compare the number of articles in which Patrick was mentioned in the three news sources (*The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Associated Press*) against the numbers of the top four paid drivers in NASCAR: “Dale Earnhardt,” “Jimmie Johnson,” “Jeff Gordon,” and “Tony Stewart” in the same data collection period (November 4, 2011 to December 31, 2014). Based on the simple numbers alone, Patrick is not underrepresented in comparison to her male counterparts (Figure 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Source</th>
<th>Earnhardt</th>
<th>Johnson</th>
<th>Gordon</th>
<th>Stewart</th>
<th>Patrick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>New York Times</em></td>
<td>317</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>USA Today</em></td>
<td>468</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Associated Press</em></td>
<td>4056</td>
<td>2267</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>1748</td>
<td>1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4841</strong></td>
<td><strong>2663</strong></td>
<td><strong>2210</strong></td>
<td><strong>2007</strong></td>
<td><strong>2302</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Press mentions of Patrick and other drivers.*

In fact, the number of articles in which Patrick is mentioned is on par with three of them and she is mentioned more often than her team owner, Stewart. This does not include the quality of her coverage nor am I making any broad claims based on this limited count. But, since she is racing
in NASCAR and not a women’s separate division, Patrick may receive more coverage because of the nature of her sport. Despite these limitations, the simple numbers may show that she is not severely underrepresented, when compared to her male counterparts.

However, in order to gain that increased media attention, Patrick exploited her sexuality in magazine spreads and GoDaddy ads. Reitman (2012) illustrated:

“A lot of people knew her as the GoDaddy girl before they realized she was a racecar driver,” says Eric Wright, president and executive director of research at Joyce Julius & Associates, a company that measures the value of corporate sponsorships. Today, 70 percent of U.S. consumers know who Danica Patrick is, including a hefty number who have never watched auto racing in their lives and may not even know she's a racecar driver. (para. 12)

Therefore, Patrick’s sexualization is evident across media.

**Overt Sexualization**

Sexualization means to primarily focus on a woman’s physical appearance (Kane, 1998).

Prior to Patrick entering into NASCAR, female drivers have faced similar sexualization. For example, in 1977, “Jane Pauley flew in from New York to conduct an interview for the Today show. Among the questions [she asked Guthrie was]: ‘Will you put on makeup for the race?’” (McGee, 2013, para. 17)

In her first year of competing NASCAR, Patrick’s Super Bowl GoDaddy ad (Figure 6) was just as revealing as they were in the past (such as her spread in *FHM*, Figure 7). Reitman (2012) illustrated this sexualization:

No doubt she is the hot chick in motorsports, which she has been since bursting onto the scene in 2003 with an *FHM* spread titled “The Hottest Thing on Wheels
Since Roller Girl.” Since then, she has appeared in a Jay-Z video, made it onto numerous “hot” lists, including the *Maxim* Hot 100 (in 2010 she was No. 25), and has been featured in the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue -- twice. Then there's GoDaddy, her primary sponsor, whose off-color ads have featured Danica showering with another woman and applying body paint to a scantily clad model.

In the most memorable commercial, along with fitness guru Jillian Michaels, Danica wore a large, strategically placed GoDaddy sign and a pair of six-inch heels. Nothing else. (para. 10)
Two years later, she hosted the Country Music Awards with singer Trace Adkins. During the broadcast, Patrick joined the Jubilee Showgirls, in costume, for their dance routine. After the routine, she made fun of her breast size, “The good thing about me is that there's no chance of a wardrobe malfunction (Figure 8). There's not much to malfunction! I hope that little bit didn't fall flat.” So, while Patrick may not be underrepresented, she has gained that popularity because she has exploited her own sexuality. As an extremely visible female athlete, her portrayals are important to inform the tensions between clashing performances.

Figure 8. Patrick at the 2013 Country Music Awards

**Athleticism and Femininity**

Two conflicting ways in which women perform as female athletes is athleticism in tension with femininity. Female athletes prefer to be portrayed as athletically competent and that athleticism builds respect and credibility (Fink et al., 2004; Meân & Kassing, 2008; Kane & Maxwell, 2011). In the previous section, I addressed how Patrick performed her athleticism (in terms of aggression) and earned some respect for herself. For Guthrie, Patrick earned the type of respect she wanted to have in the 1970s. In an interview, Guthrie said: “that's what all of us that have competed at the top level of the sport really wanted, to be regarded as just another driver” (James, 2013a, para. 7).
Outside of the U.S., some reporters in the U.K. were also writing about Patrick. In the (UK) *Times*, Easton (2013) wrote that Patrick is America’s fastest lady and “the world's best female driver” (para. 3). Addley (2013) of the *Guardian* lamented that the U.K. was backward because they lagged behind U.S. in women sports. McGrath (2013) noted that European racing did not “have the balls” to hire female drivers. Instead, he framed the American South as more progressive than England:

As an 18-year-old, Patrick actually tried to get started in England but found the motorsport culture over here too misogynistic. It is instructive - and alarming - that she should ultimately find a more congenial sanctuary in stock car racing, despite its highly conservative heritage in the bootlegging South. (McGrath, 2013, para. 8)

In these instances, performing athleticism has helped to build credibility and respect for both Patrick as an athlete and NASCAR as a sport.

However, the financial realities surrounding sport and female athletes do not reward athleticism (Carty, 2005; Fink et al., 2014). We see this tension in her appearances the 2008 issues of *Sports Illustrated* (Figure 9). McManus (2012) reported how Patrick’s case reflects this financial reality:

Before Patrick was a household name -- but after she'd trained as a driver for years -- she posed for a men's magazine draped over a yellow car. Since I don't know anything about cars, I can only imagine that it was something fast and expensive. The pictures were standard fare for the genre and went straight to her audience, young males who were potential auto-racing fans. She had worked her way up legitimately, but the magazine spread got her noticed by fans and
advertisers. It was a smart business move. Women don't have the advantage of the old boys' network. (para. 3-4)

Figure 9. Patrick in *Sports Illustrated*, 2008

In other words, credibility and respect do not always translate into paychecks for female athletes. Instead sportswomen must perform femininity to gain popularity and attract sponsors (Carty, 2005; Fink et al., 2014).

Patrick addressed how she traded on her own beauty capital (Fabos, 1999). She addressed her *FHM* spread from 2003:

“It helped me get the ride. The bottom line is, it takes money to go racing. If there’s money there, and it puts me in a really good car, then I can go show what I can do.” Regarding the objectification of women, she says, “I think people say that it takes away from what I do, it takes away from the driving, because people see that side of things, and it kind of overpowers what I’m doing. So, yeah. I do catch flak. And I totally don’t care.” (Boyer, 2010, para. 21)
Rahal confirmed that her appearance in *FHM* helped her gain recognition that saved her racing career:

“Her career was pretty much over,” he recalls. Soon after Patrick joined the team, in 2002, Rahal told her that he had been approached by a magazine that wanted to feature Patrick in a photographic essay. The publication was *FHM*, a prominent example of the British lad-mag invasion, which was then at its peak. The editor, Scott Gramling, had decided to feature women from professions outside show business. Patrick’s photograph, culled from the Internet, surfaced at a staff meeting, and she was judged attractive enough, in a wholesome, all-American sort of way, to be asked to pose. Most women refused, so Gramling was surprised when Rahal seemed receptive to his overture. Rahal was a devout believer in the power of publicity to attract sponsors, whose money is the oxygen of racing. Now he urged Patrick to do the photo shoot…..The feature (“The hottest thing on wheels since Roller Girl”), published in April of 2003, went viral, and Rahal selected Patrick to race in the Atlantic Championship series, the level just below the big-league open-wheel circuit. She did well there, though without a victory, for two seasons. He moved her up to the IndyCar circuit in 2005. (Boyer, 2010, para. 11-12, 15)

Guthrie also talked about this tension:

[People] look me square in the eye and say, ‘OK, she does the GoDaddy stuff” -- and some of them don't even know about all the racing stuff -- and they ask, ‘Is she really the real deal?’ And I say that she is the real deal, and she is a racer. (James, 2013b, para. 13)
Additionally, Patrick recognized that her sexualization was an important part of promoting her future in racing. In 2013 she turned down an offer from *ESPN: The Magazine* to be included in their annual Body Issue, as Gelston (2013c) reported: “When I speak to them and they ask me, each time I say, ‘Don’t stop asking,’ she said. ‘I don’t know. I might change my mind one year. And it might be something that parallels something else I’m doing’” (para. 11). In other words, sexualization is an essential part of her racing success because Patrick’s performance of femininity and sexuality were more recognized in her racing career than her actual athleticism and achievements.

This sexualization is also reflected by media talk about Patrick. *Associated Press* (2013b) described Patrick as “the former IndyCar star, known more for alluring photos and Super Bowl commercials than on track success” (para. 5). In *the New York Times*, Zinser (2013a) wrote: “By now everyone has gotten so used to Patrick as a photogenic sporting celebrity, with her every happening in her career and life trumpeted as a reason we should be paying attention. Is she switching racing circuits, teams, romantic partners, brands of lip gloss” (para. 2). A San Diego sports reporter responded on air after Patrick complained that news media seemed to refer to all female athletes as sexy:

[Ross] Shimabuku starts by calling Patrick a “pretty girl” who makes a lot of “money in sponsorships because of it. But what's not attractive is that she's sexy and she knows it.” The station cut to a video clip of Patrick at a NASCAR interview session complaining that the news media always describe female athletes such as herself as sexy. “Is there any other word that you can use to describe me?” she asks. Shimabuku retorted from the set, “Oh, I've got a few words. Starts with a B, and it's not beautiful.” (McCarthy, 2012, para. 7-8)
Therefore, her sexualization has consequences for Patrick’s credibility as a female athlete (Krane, 2001; Kane et al., 2013). Cain (2013b) illustrated:

[Kyle Petty] took equally large swipes at Patrick’s ability and credibility. He questioned whether her success is judged on marketing appeal instead of racing results and, has steadfastly stood by his remarks even as he received pushback and criticism over them. “Danica has been the perfect example of somebody who can qualify better than what she runs, she can go fast, but she can't race,” Petty said in June. “I think she's come a long way, but she's still not a racecar driver. And I don't think she's ever going to be a racecar driver. Because I think it's too late to learn.” (para. 21-24)

A year later, Kyle’s father, also chimed in about Patrick:

Richard Petty, who holds the record with 200 career Cup wins, told website Wheels.ca that Patrick was only capable of winning if no other cars were on the track. “(Only) if everybody else stayed home,” Petty told the site during an appearance at the Canadian Motorsports Expo in Toronto. (Gluck, 2014, para. 6)

In other words, she is represented in terms of sexuality even when she accomplishes something no other woman has (qualify on pole position in any Sprint Cup race) as Zinser (2013a) wrote, “The starlet Danica Patrick had won the pole position” (para. 1). Therefore, Patrick’s sexualization further delegitimizes her as an athlete. She is sexy female first, and driver second.

That loss of credibility and respect does not stop at Patrick as an athlete (Krane, 2001; Kane et al., 2013). Gluck (2014) added:

But Richard Petty told Wheels.ca he thought Patrick was good for NASCAR despite her lack of ability, because NASCAR has evolved into “showtime” since
the days when he raced. “If she'd have been a male, nobody would ever know if
she'd showed up at a racetrack,” said Petty, a seven-time NASCAR champion.

“This is a female deal that's driving her. There's nothing wrong with that, because
that's good Pocono for me. More fans come out; people are more interested in it.
She has helped to draw attention to the sport, which helps everybody in the sport”
(para. 6)

In other words, despite the fact that Petty benefits from her participation, NASCAR is no longer
a legitimate sport due to Patrick’s presence in it. By using the term “showtime,” Petty may be
indicating that NASCAR has become more entertainment than a sport. NASCAR is further
delegitimized as an athletic sport as Jacob (2012) reported:

Women shattering glass ceilings is one of the most compelling elements of sports.
Danica has certainly done that through IndyCar and now NASCAR. But the
Danica Patrick Story doesn't inspire the same awe factor for me as other
trailblazing moments such as Annika Sorenstam playing the Bank of America
PGA Tour event or Katie Hnida scoring as a place-kicker for the University of
New Mexico football team. Don't hate me, NASCAR fans, but I have simply
never appreciated the athleticism of your sport. If a female kicker has the leg
strength to kick for a Division I team, or a female professional golfer has the
stamina and skills to hold her own against a male counterpart,
that is tangible athleticism. (para. 3-4)

This notion is mirrored, as Bernstein (2013) wrote, “Danica Patrick arrival as a fulltime driver in
Nascar’s Sprint Cup series has gone from sideshow to spectacle even before the first green flag
of the season” (para. 1). Therefore, her presence in NASCAR decreases credibility for her as an athlete and for NASCAR as a sport.

Additionally, how she may perform as a female athlete is further nuanced by NASCAR because (1) the sport is heavily dependent on sponsors (Hagstrom, 1998; Yost, 2007) and (2) it is marked with extremely traditional gender ideals (J. Newman and Giardina, 2011; Vavrus, 2007).

In the first place, Patrick attracts audiences. In her first Indy 500 race, she attracted more viewers then had watched the race in almost a decade. When she left the IndyCar, and joined NASCAR, the broadcast of the season opening race at Daytona broke television rating records. Hoppes (2013) added, “Patrick has brought to NASCAR: more interest, more media attention and more fans” (para. 4). Dosh (2012) elaborated on her recognition:

According to the Q Score Company, 76 percent of people in its annual poll were familiar with Patrick, much higher than the 48 percent average for all active and retired race car drivers. The figure is also a solid increase from the 69 percent of people who were familiar with her in last year’s poll. (para. 5)

This popularity and recognition translates to real financial rewards. Patrick is one of only two in the list of top ten paid female athletes in 2014 not competing in golf or tennis (Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015). Patrick is fourth on the list. Fighter Ronda Rousey is on that list in eighth place with earnings from the *Fast and the Furious 7*.

As a result of her extreme popularity, Patrick brings broader audiences to NASCAR (Rykoff, 2012). She also brings her own sponsorship money. This was especially important because, her teammates at SHR, Stewart and Ryan Newman lost their primary sponsors and needed to find new ones for the 2013 season. So, only Patrick had primary guaranteed sponsorship. Co-team owner, Gene Haas, personally sponsored Kurt Busch as the fourth driver
for SHR. In 2013, GoDaddy announced that they were not going to continue their sponsorship of
Patrick’s replacement in IndyCar despite the fact that James Hinchcliffe won three races that
season (Fryer, 2013b). So, Patrick’s extreme popularity allowed her access to NASCAR. She
benefits the sport with attention and sponsorship dollars.

But, that popularity was built from her extremely sexualized images and that overt
sexuality cannot fit in a sport that is marked by conservative Christianity (J. Newman, 2010; J.
Newman & Giardina, 2011; Vavrus, 2007) which covers their “cheerleaders” in full length fire
suits. This tension was reflected at the races, as attendees seemed to separate Patrick into two
distinct periods: (1) Pre-NASCAR and as part of the (2) NASCAR family. In the Pre-NASCAR
period, attendees expressed that the men in open-wheel racing used Patrick promote themselves
and the sport. For example, Ives said:

You know Bobby Rahal put her up to it, [FHM photoshoot] right? She was just 20
years old. Who does that to a 20-year-old? Then, [Michael] Andretti does the
same thing then complains about her when he’s taking her money [as part of her
GoDaddy sponsorship]. These open-wheel guys are terrible…They threw her out
there, naked.

Tucker had a similar reaction: “Let’s look at the timing of her career, Rahal didn’t move her up
until she did the FHM pictures. If you’re a pretty girl, and you don’t have other options, you take
the pictures.” When I asked if he thought Patrick was coerced, he replied, “who knows, I’m sure
she thought she was making the best decision at that time, but look at timing and how young she
was.” When I asked about her driving for Andretti, Tucker added, “Andretti did the same thing.
He wanted her for her GoDaddy money.”
One of the first examples attendees pointed to was in her GoDaddy ads. Rae said, “before she left Indy, she was naked. Now, she’s with us, she’s not naked anymore.” By us, Rae meant, “NASCAR, well, not just NASCAR, but us the family.” Raine added, “She’s covered up now, we don’t need to see her boobs, they did.” “They,” Raine clarified are, “you know, those snobby Indy people.” I then asked if any of the marketing teams at SHR might suggest such a spread, Rae replied, “Oh no, she’s like Tony’s baby sister, there’s no way he would push her to do that.” When I asked why, she added, “we take care of our family, protect our family. Even if she did it before, it’s ok, that part of her life is over. She’s with people that will care for her.” Ida and her sister also expressed similar opinions about Patrick. Ida said, “she did what they told her to do. Tony won’t do that.” Her sister Iris added, “look at the way Smoke [Stewart’s nickname] treats her, he’s a papa bear…Tony won’t let her get used like that.” Thus, they illustrate that Patrick’s sexuality cannot fit in with NASCAR conservative norms.

Figure 10. Patrick in the GoDaddy Super Bowl television ad, 2013

This shift is similarly in her GoDaddy Super Bowl ads, starting in 2013 (Figure 10). While Patrick is not completely de-sexualized, she is fully covered while Rafaeli plays the role of sexy model. Then, in 2014 she was dressed as a man (Figure 11). While that de-sexualization
may help her legitimacy as an athlete, her popularity and marketability have been severely affected.

Figure 11. Patrick in the GoDaddy Super Bowl television ad, 2014

Horovitz (2014) illustrated:

Patrick’s popularity with the general public, however, has been fading to about half of what it was just three years ago in a Q Score poll, notes Henry Schafer, executive vice president of The Q Scores Company, which measures celebrity appeal. At the same time, he notes, her popularity has held up very well with fans of sports and extreme sports. (p. 480)

So, Patrick’s extreme popularity permitted her access not only race in NASCAR, but into one of motorsport’s top rated teams with the best equipment on the track.

At the same time, Patrick is not getting respect on the track because she is female. Crew Chief Eury insisted that some male drivers targeted Patrick since she was not only a rookie driver but also female one that could outrace men:
Tony Eury Jr. radioed to his driver, “They hate that you're running this good. I've heard comments made, ‘Well, why is the 7 running so good? The girl is getting better and better,’ ” Eury said after the former IndyCar star finished 18th in a race she was in the top 10 most of the day. “It's to the point where she's running with the competitive guys. We all have egos. We don't want the girl to outrun us. It's a fact of she's getting put in some situations where she doesn't need put into because they're taking advantage. If she's loose, they'll get up under her right rear or whatever.” (Newton, 2012b, para. 1-5)

In other words, her presence and competency is a threat to their masculinity (Roth and Basow, 2004). Her popularity compounds the issue as James (2012b) added:

But Eury maintains that jealousy and insecurity in the garage area have made her treatment different from a typical rookie. “Let's be real,” he said. “With as much exposure as Danica has, her being a girl, those kind of things right there, people are like, ‘Why is she outrunning me?’ First of all, any short track in America, you get beat by a girl and you're going to get ragged by your peers. That's common knowledge. If LeBron James gets dunked by a damned girl off the women's NBA, he's going to get ragged on. I don't care who you are. It's a mentality. It's not a bad thing. It's just part of life.” (para. 6)

This illustrates that performances of femininity and athletic competency cannot exist in the same body, especially in a sport that is traditionally considered to be unfeminine. As such, gender norms in and outside of NASCAR may not allow her to continue that performance of sexiness simultaneously with her athleticism. Instead, the motorsport context is rendering her performance of sexuality unintelligible. This means that
NASCAR is disciplining her sexuality and it is also saving her from having to exploit it. This goes beyond simply trivializing her for being a feminine athlete. Instead, it is rendering impossible the very performance that (1) the motorsport benefited from in terms of attracting audiences and much needed sponsorship monies, and (2) got her privileged access into the motorsport. More importantly, NASCAR may be diminishing her earning potential in terms of sponsorships. Between 2013 and 2014, Patrick’s endorsements decreased by $500,000 (Badenhausen, 2014; Van Riper & Badenhausen, 2015).

In summation, Patrick addresses the limitations in how women may perform as female athletes. She signals a shift against the underrepresentation of female athletes, but she is overtly sexualized. She is not invisible and receives more media attention than many male NASCAR drivers. While she gained that attention by sexualizing herself, that sexualization is no longer possible in the NASCAR context. Therefore, she may be gaining legitimacy as an athlete (Fink et al., 2004; Kane & Maxwell, 2011). However, accompanying that shift is an illustration of how her performance as a successful and feminine female athlete is also not intelligible. Consequently, that performance is disciplined and changed in a way to make her conform to NASCAR gendered norms (Butler, 1993). Next, I narrow my analysis by focusing on specific female athletes as heroines of sport.

**Heroines of Sport**

Heroes and heroines were honored above the ordinary dead and worshipped as demigods for extraordinary service to their communities (Bremmer, 2006; Cebián, 2006). As their worship became more ritualized and mainstream, heroes and heroines were appropriated to justify inequalities (Cebián, 2006). Heroines were different from heroes in that their worship illustrated
gender relations in ancient Greece (Larson, 1995). Contemporary heroes and heroines are no longer divine (Hook, 1995, P. Browne, 1987), and heroines illustrate the trivialization of women and offer transformational possibilities (J. Brown, 2011; Early & Kennedy, 2003; Hills 1999). Ancient Greek sports created some of the earliest Western heroes (Burkert, 1985) and today sporting heroes and heroines have taken the place of mythic ones in terms of their ritualistic importance (Birrell, 1981).

In terms of sport replacing religion and ritual, Hagstrom (1998) asserted “NASCAR Winston [now Sprint] Cup is such a cultural ritual. It addresses the nature of American society – a society occupied with automobiles, technology, consumption of material goods, and competition” (p. 110). As such, it is no surprise that NASCAR fans are especially likely to heroify NASCAR drivers (J. Newman and Giardina, 2011; Hagstrom 1998; Vavrus, 2007). Howell (1997) illustrated:

These brave men become the subject of our conversations as we dream of their talents and tell stories about their accomplishments. Admirers of such men elevate these individuals to a folk hero status. They become symbols for our society and our lives’ they set the standards we wish we could follow. (p. 111)

In other words, NASCAR drivers are important heroes for fans in terms of their ritualistic and religious importance.

Even though we longer worship sporting heroines and heroes in traditional ways, they are especially exalted as role models (North et al., 2005; Sullivan & Venter, 2003, 2010). Vavrus (2007) asserted that NASCAR dads are hero worshippers and that they aspire to be “a man’s man” because they model drivers such as Earnhardt Jr. Yet, NASCAR has not had any full time female drivers until Patrick. Then, Heywood and Dworkin (2003), added that female athletes
have become more prominent as heroines for younger girls. They added that rise of sportswomen as heroines signals a growing empowerment of women. Therefore, my third research question (RQ3) is: In what ways does the case of Danica Patrick address heroines of sport as role models in terms of offering transformational possibilities while also simultaneously illustrating appropriation and commodification?

**Role Models**

Hero-figures are especially important role models, and individuals navigate their social worlds by modeling them (Bandura, 1986; Freud, 1965; Rollin, 1983). Individuals choose role models based on shared commonalities and the likelihood that they can attain the same rewards (Bandura, 1986). Female athletes are especially important role models for women and young girls (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Meier, 2015). In fact, sportswomen are exceedingly under covered, so, females may actively seek to find, heroify, and model the few that are extremely visible (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Lines, 2001; Meân & Kassing, 2008).

In the case of Patrick, prominent drivers’ daughters are drawn to her and they are her fans:

The big boys brought their little girls to see NASCAR's shining star. Jeff Gordon, Carl Edwards and Jimmie Johnson all took their daughters to meet Danica Patrick this week at Daytona International Speedway. It was the ultimate backstage pass. Patrick dropped to one knee, wrapped her right arm around Ella Gordon's waist and posed for pictures as the 5-year-old flashed an endless grin in Victory Lane last week….Annie Edwards wore GoDaddy green shoes for the special occasion. Evie Johnson recognizes only two cars, her Dad said his and the green one…..[Danica said.] “Then after qualifying, Jimmie Johnson brought his little girl over.
That's three pretty big drivers who have little girls that wanted to meet me.”

(James, 2013a, para. 1-4)

The drivers’ daughters recognize Patrick and are seeking her out. This is important because their fathers are all extremely prominent in NASCAR. Two of them (Gordon and Johnson) have won championships multiple times.

Adult female NASCAR fans are similarly recognizing Patrick as a role model. When I asked why Ida was Patrick’s fan, she responded, “Gender! As a woman we share the same gender.” Rae said, “it’s the gender thing, of course, I’m a woman she’s a woman, we should stick together.” She added, “Danica is better than Janet [Guthrie] and Patty [Moise], Danica is good. She can be like Junior and his dad before him. My dad’s hero was Dale Sr., my brother likes, Junior. Danica is my hero. We are both women.” This shows that girls and women are recognizing Patrick as a female role model. She reaches outside of sport as Blount (2013c) illustrated:

Patrick also said she was working out at a gym recently when a man asked her to watch a short video. “It was his two daughters,” she said. “They were young, maybe 2 and 4. Their dad showed them a magazine cover with me on it. He asked them, ‘Who is that?’ They both said my name. The guy told me, ‘I have no idea how they know who you are.’ Something about this is impacting kids.” (para. 7)

Outside of NASCAR, other female racers recognize Patrick as a role model. IndyCar driver Simona di Silvestro “credits her IndyCar predecessor for inspiring her career path” (James, 2013d, para. 5). Pro American Motorcycle Association SuperSport circuit racer, Shelina Moreda pointed to Patrick as role model. “I wanna be Danica Patrick on two wheels…and I'm making my way there!” (James, 2012a, para. 5). As a result, Patrick is
recognized in NASCAR, in racing, and outside of the sport as a role model. Next, let me address how Patrick addresses transformational possibilities as well as appropriation and commodification.

**Transformational**

Sporting heroes and heroines, as role models, offer possible solutions for social issues (Vande Berg, 1998). For sporting heroines, their continued struggles in the sporting realm offer contradictory ways to transcend constraints imposed on women (Hargreaves, 2000; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Meier, 2015). This transformational possibility is illustrated by Patrick as a sporting heroine. Earnhardt Jr’s sister, and JRM co-owner, Miller was described as having more stock car racing talent and as a better driver than her brothers and male cousins (Newton, 2010). But, due to the social conditions at the time, she did not pursue a NASCAR career because “the sport in the mid-1990s, it wasn't welcoming to women” (Newton, 2010, para. 16). Earnhardt Jr. added, “she could have had a lot of opportunities had it been a different environment and a different culture and a different climate” (Newton, 2010, para. 14). A generation later, Miller’s daughter, Karsyn Elledge is racing. So, it is no surprise that:

Earnhardt is grateful to Patrick for showing his niece that her dreams, albeit 11-year-old ones, are plausible. “I appreciate what she has done just because of how I've seen it affect my nieces, and I think what she brings to the sport, I see it firsthand and I appreciate her position and who she is as a role model,” he said. “I get excited about Karsyn and I know she's really young and I know its super early to have any kind of expectations, but I get excited about the prospect of her one day doing what Danica does.” (James, 2012c) para. 33-34)
While Elledge may be more likely to race due to her family’s background, her mother had the same name recognition, but excluded herself. Elledge does not have to make that same decision, in part, because of the presence of Patrick in NASCAR.

Additionally, more young girls are becoming more involved racing as James (2014) reported:

“I don't think there's any question about it,” a South Carolina short track owner/operator said via telephone this week. “I can't give you hard numbers, but I know what I see. The eyeball test and the entry lists for our weekend shows proves it.”....“I've been doing this a long time and I've never seen women and girls like I've seen now,” NASCAR Nationwide Series champion-turned-short track safety advocate Randy LaJoie said earlier this year. As part of his Safer Racer program, he visits dozens of lower-level tracks and divisions throughout the year. “And we get calls from parents wanting to purchase our Joie of Seating youth racing seats that are asking questions about not just their sons, but their daughters, too.” (para. 12, 16)

Therefore, Patrick may be illustrating changes to the exclusion of female drivers in NASCAR.

At the races, fellow attendees addressed how Patrick offered transformational possibilities for them. When I asked why Ida switched drivers, because she used to support Earnhardt Jr. along with her father and sister Isabelle, she said, “she’s my hero, she’s showing us that women have a chance at success.”

Fathers are also supporting Patrick. Randy said, “as a father, I want my daughter to have good female role models. I don’t want her to always to look up to men, even drivers, Danica is our hero.” At another same race, Ignatius added, “Danica is showing my daughter that she can
become anything she wants to. I support that so I’m supporting Danica.” So, Patrick is offering a possibility for some fans. Outside of NASCAR, James (2013c) reported:

Agren was sitting in front of a computer at her family’s home outside Oslo in 2003 when she realized the potential in this hobby of hers. Then 9 years old and a rapidly improving go-karter after just two seasons, Agren was beginning to aspire. The Indianapolis 500 was beginning to become “that big, big dream on a pink cloud. All of a sudden a girl in a driving suit pops up, and I'm like, ‘Hmm, what's this?’ ” Agren told ESPNW, “And then when I saw she was driving [open wheel], I was like, ‘Whoa, that's a big deal.’ so when she [led the Indianapolis 500 in 2005], it was, like, an even bigger deal. so it was like, ‘Wow, she can actually do it. so why couldn't other female drivers?’ so that was, like, a big motivation not to give up. That was very, very good.” (para. 21-24)

This demonstrates how, a current IndyCar racer Agren also recognized Patrick as showing her a transformational possibility. In fact, James (2014) suggested:

There will be female crew chiefs and engineers…..That day won't fall in 2014, but it's coming. Paige Decker, Ayla Agren and maybe even Karsyn Elledge will see to that. For now, there is more to do to advance women in racing, from Danica Patrick becoming a more formidable part of the Sprint Cup Series to several other talented women finding proper jobs. (para. 2)

Blount (2013c) added that Patrick “inspires young girls to reach for the stars and do something most people see only men doing” (para. 5). As an inspiration, she illustrates a broader shift as in illustrating a possibility of the greater inclusion of women across NASCAR.
At the same time, sporting heroes may serve to justify inequality as Gluck (2013a) illustrated:

Somewhere, a little girl watching the coverage of Patrick's pole-winning lap at Daytona turned to her parents and said, "Can I be a race car driver when I grow up?" And somewhere else, people who would have never considered watching a NASCAR race will be tempted to tune in for Sunday's Daytona 500 to see how Patrick fares. They might even get hooked on racing. It's not a stretch, then, to imagine that, 20 years from now, fans in the stands and drivers on the track might point to this day as the reason they became interested in NASCAR. Who else but Patrick could pull that off? Not even Dale Earnhardt Jr. had he won the pole on his day. (para. 2-5)

So, as a heroine of sport, she is simultaneously offering previously unimagined possibilities to transcend some existing limitations while serving the broader interest of growing NASCAR audiences.

**Appropriated and Commodified**

NASCAR was not immune to the shifts in the delivery of sport content (Real, 1998). Mainstream sponsorship and live coverage of NASCAR races have changed drivers to being just competitors to walking and talking billboards that race in billboards on wheels (Hagstrom, 1998; Howell, 1997; Yost, 2007). Jones (2014) illustrated:

After hundreds of grueling miles (fueled by Sunoco) of banked left turns, Dale Earnhardt Jr. smoked his (Goodyear) tires, doing doughnuts (across a vast Michigan International Speedway logo), and then works his way into the (Gatorade) Victory Lane….In the post-race press conference, Junior sang the praises of his team and the performance of the
As heroes of sport, NASCAR drivers exemplify commodification as Vavrus (2007) argued:

Numerous news stories commented on the driver-as-hero aspect of NASCAR, adding that it has led to lucrative endorsement deals. When NASCAR fans form a bond with drivers, and even ascribe heroic properties to them, the NASCAR brand benefits from the hero-drivers’ halo effect. Hero-drivers build and maintain brand loyalty while they publicize NASCAR’s politics by acting as spokesmen.

NASCAR drivers, as sporting heroes, may have closer connections to fans. As such, the drivers-as-heroes are packaged and sold to: (1) maintain and attract audiences to NASCAR, (2) attract sponsors across the sport such as for races, teams, and drivers, and (3) sell licensed goods to their fans.

In the case of Patrick, she attracts broader audiences and is the reason why people “tune in” (James, 2011, para. 23). In fact, when she migrated to the new racing series, viewership and ratings sagged for IndyCar races and she broke ratings records at NASCAR (Hoppes, 2013). Also, “she helped deliver a massive television ratings bump for the Daytona 500 -- up 24 percent from last year” (Fryer, 2012b, para. 15). Rykoff (2012) added:

Patrick is one of the most-recognized names in auto racing, regardless of her performance on the track. Though NASCAR did rebound from a ratings and attendance swoon in 2010 with stronger 2011 numbers, having Patrick on board full-time brings buzz. Buzz brings attention and continued infusion of dollars from television partners and sponsors. (para 5)
Or, as Blount (2013c) summarized, “she brings people to auto racing who wouldn't have an interest without her presence” (para. 6). As a result, she attracts more coverage, as James (2011) illustrated, “there's already a bump in media coverage whenever Patrick races” (para. 22). Since she attracts new audiences to NASCAR, she benefits the motorsport in terms of broader and new viewership, sponsorships opportunities, and increased coverage.

In terms of sales, at each of the three races, I observed the midways where vendors, in drivers’ merchandise trailers, sold licensed goods, including hats, shirts, jackets, stickers, die case miniatures cars, cups, etc. I counted the number of people in lines at some merchandise trailers. At Patrick’s trailer, I saw that in the four lines that had between five to seven individuals waiting in each. The number of shoppers waiting for Patrick’s gear was comparable to those of Earnhardt Jr., Earnhardt Sr., Stewart, and Gordon. In fact, her popularity was so immense that in contrast, teammate Harvick, shared his souvenir trailer with SHR co-owner, Stewart. At Richmond, one of the personnel in Patrick’s souvenir hauler reported that they consistently ranked among the top five to seven in terms of sales at every race. In an ESPN.com report, Joe Balash, director of the Nationwide Series confirmed, “when I go to the tower for a race and I'm able to look down at the souvenir trailers, there are some long lines at the GoDaddy trailer for people looking for Danica merchandise. I think merchandise-wise, she's moving the needle” (James, 2011, para. 24). This does not include the Patrick themed items from other vendors such as “Race Girls.” When I asked them about sales of Patrick themed items, they responded that their sales have dramatically increased, starting in 2013, because men, women, girls, and boys “are buying a lot of Danica gear.” Online, “Patrick is the top-selling NASCAR driver…on Fanatics.com, one of the largest online retailers of officially licensed sports merchandise”
(Hoppes, 2013, para. 11). In other words, her popularity is being commodified into sales of her licensed merchandise.

One of the main audiences Patrick is attracting is young girls, as Blount (2013c) demonstrated:

“I have handed out more lug nuts to little girls this week than anyone else,” said Tony Gibson, Patrick's crew chief on the No. 10 Chevy. “It's great to see all the little girls in GoDaddy hats and shirts.” The Daytona Cup garage has windows where fans can see the cars and crews. The windows also have a slot where fans can pass a piece of paper and pen to drivers for autographs. And the crews can pass things back, such as lug nuts. “I take a Sharpie and write '10' on the lug nuts I give to them,” Gibson said. “Kids are writing on our window. Seeing all this is really cool for our sport.” (para. 8-10)

At the races, I saw several girls running up to Patrick’s merchandise hauler in the midways screaming “MOMMY! MOMMY MOMMY! I WANT A PICTURE WITH DANICA!!!” Several little girls took pictures with Patrick’s image on the side of that trailer. Parents waiting in line told me that their daughters had saved allowances for several months to buy Patrick’s licensed goods. Their daughters often chimed in that Patrick was their hero and they want to be just like her. Consequently, the question of Patrick’s overt sexualization becomes more salient because she is a role model for young girls (Daniels, 2012; Kane, 1996; Vescio et al., 2005).

At the tracks, I asked if attendees were concerned about Patrick’s overt sexuality sexualization across media. Instead of expressing concern, attendees were quick to point out that Patrick’s sexy images across media have changed since she joined NASCAR. Ives elaborated: “look at her GoDaddy ads after 2011, she wasn’t the sexy naked girl anymore.” They
additionally credited NASCAR’s Christian morals in helping Patrick become less exploited for her sexuality as Raine added: “She is racing for Tony, and using Rick and Linda’s [Hendricks] cars. We’re all good Christians. We won’t make her take off her clothes [Andretti and Rahal] did.” In fact, some attendees are fans due to that change in her image. Ida added, “I wouldn’t be her fan if she did that anymore.” This sentiment was echoed by parents of young female Patrick fans. When I asked Ignatius, he responded, “she [his daughter] can’t be a Danica fan if she stayed naked. I wouldn’t let her buy any Danica shirts.” Randy added, “she’s changed, she’s good people now, she wore more than the other showgirls at the CMA.” So, the context of NASCAR adds a layer of complication to the overt sexualization of female athletes. The Christian morals marking NASCAR do not permit that sexualization despite the fact that same sexualization made her extremely popular and attractive to NASCAR. Also, NASCAR fans are differentiating themselves as more moral than IndyCar. This overt, taken-for-granted, and unapologetic Christianity (J. Newman, 2010; J. Newman & Giardina, 2011; Vavrus, 2007) is making Patrick’s portrayals less sexualized while normalizing Christian values as superior to others. Next, I continue to a broader discussion over the contestations of sports heroines.

For Real (1998), the commodification of sport, in general, leads to sporting “heroes that can so quickly become violent, exploitive, greedy, and narcissistic” (p. 26). Additionally, heroes are supposed to be selfless saviors of communities (Antonaccio, 1993; Burkert, 1985; Cebián, 2006). Successful and popular female athletes are more often criticized for capitalizing on their successes (Creedon, 1998). Therefore, it is no surprise that the notion of sporting heroines is being contested. On one side, Hargreaves (2000) argued that sporting heroines are selfish and exploitative, and they mask (and reinforce) the masculine domination in sport. This position is illustrated by Fryer (2013c) in an interview with Patrick: “Carl [Edwards] was saying it's good
that she sees me in real life and in person because ‘To her, you are like some mythical creature that doesn't exist,’ Patrick said” (para. 4). In other words, Patrick does not belong in NASCAR. She is a mythical and non-existent creature in that context. Her presence is exceptional and “not representatives of the potential of females, but rather exceptions to the rule of male superiority” (Walton, 2005, p. 60). On the other side, Heywood and Dworkin (2006) suggested a different approach:

In the world of media culture, the female athlete can stand as a positive alternative, and her emergence as an icon, a cultural hero, is a tangible sign that some social justice struggles have, in some limited and contradictory ways, been achieved. To attempt to live up to an ideal is to be marked by stereotypes and culture dreams, but it matters which dreams. (p. 163)

Former racer and racing advocate Lyn St. James, illustrated this second position “[Patrick] is making statements for all women in all areas, not just women in racing….This is about equality and opportunity and preparation and everything coming together’” (James, 2013b, para. 5). Ross, Ridinger, & Cuneen (2009) agreed and argued that for female racers:

Highlighting attractiveness without diminishing a woman athlete’s expertise may not constitute exploitation. In fact, an expert woman athlete who takes advantage of her attractiveness may be thought of as a savvy businesswoman capitalising on her own endorsement potential while increasing efficacy for her sponsors. (p. 212)

So, while Patrick is overtly commodified, she is simultaneously inspiring change. The two positions are framed in a dichotomy as Jenkins (2012) exemplified:
It’s a lonely position she’s staked out. She’s disrespected from two sides at once. The ogling guys act like she’s another Anna Kournikova, more image than substance — despite the fact that she has 63 top-10 finishes in IndyCar racing over seven seasons, including a third in the Indianapolis 500. The hard-shell feminists claim she panders to misogyny by posing in a swimsuit. Too many men and women alike aren’t comfortable with the idea that she can be attractive and highly competent in an all-male profession. It’s like they want her to choose: Is she a swimsuit model or a butchy driver? Can’t be both. (para. 7)

As a result, Patrick illustrates the shifting ways in which sporting heroes and heroines, as role models, may simultaneously empower and offer new possibilities for transformation while also support existing limiting practices (Bandura, 1986; Kane et al., 2013; Lines, 2001). She signals a new inclusiveness in NASCAR, but is also marked by appropriation by NASCAR interests and commodification. She is somewhat less overtly sexualized, which may lead to greater respect for her and the sport. At the same time, that respect is marked by reification of traditional Christian values and the higher moral ground staked out by NASCAR. Lastly, as a heroine of sport, she demonstrates how women as heroes may empower and disempower, simultaneously (J. Brown, 2011).

In conclusion, the case of Patrick in NASCAR addresses the issues of gender and sport broadly from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. She illustrates that as a hegemonic power, masculinity appropriates change and reasserts male domination. From the perspective of bodies, Patrick addresses intelligible and unintelligible performances of female athletes. She shows that her performance of sexualization allowed for her welcome in to the elite ranks of NASCAR. Then, the conservative environment of
NASCAR is also making her performance as a sexualized female athlete unintelligible. Lastly, she illustrates how as role models, sporting heroines and heroines offer transformational possibilities while simultaneously signaling commodification and appropriation. Her presence in NASCAR is showing some that they may not be limited by gender ideals while supporting the commercial considerations of the motorsport. Her legitimization as a female athlete may boost notions of a superior Christian morality. Lastly, she shows the contestation over the meaning of sporting heroines as both sexualized and heroic. Next, I will continue on to the final chapter to offer my conclusions.
Chapter VI

Conclusions

Patrick received a warmer welcome than female drivers in the past and she is, to date, the only full time female competitor in NASCAR. Her entry into NASCAR may signal subtle and overt shifts in the meanings of and struggles over gender from perspectives supported by the broad understandings of socialization. In this concluding section, I will first provide a brief review of the preceding chapters, discuss implications, address limitations, and offer closing observations.

Summary of Chapters

In the first chapter, I provided an introduction and overview, including a rationale for this examination. In the second chapter, I offered a review of literature regarding the case of Patrick in NASCAR. In it, I addressed how sport is an important area in which masculinity is learned, reinforced, and maintained (Birrell, 1981; Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Messner, 1992). From this realm, hegemonic masculinity is useful to describe patterns and practices that justify masculine domination (Connell, 1990; Trujillo, 1991). Then, I narrowed my discussion to female athletes as sites of meaning contestation over gender (Messner, 2007). Since sportswomen’s bodies are the sites of struggle over understandings and meanings (Messner, 2002), I deployed the notion of the body to frame how certain women’s performances as female athletes are made intelligible or unintelligible by reiterated social practices (Butler, 1993). Next, I focused on specific female athletes, as sporting heroines and role models. In this final section, I reviewed the importance of sporting heroines as revered role models from the social learning perspective (Bandura, 1986). Each of these areas are undergirded by socialization and extend the broad perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006).
In the third chapter, I discussed my methods for collecting and analyzing data. The broad case study strategy helped me to bind this examination of Patrick in NASCAR without sacrificing the complexity and nuances of this real world phenomenon. Previous research and relevant perspectives guided data collection (participant observation and media reports) and analysis (content analysis) strategies. I also provided an example of how I analyzed data, using tools from content analysis, to connect data to theoretical perspectives, previous research, and my experiences in motorsports. Since I am embedded in this examination, I concluded with my role as a researcher.

In chapter four, I provided background regarding the case. I started with the history behind the motorsport, and how that history is expressed in current NASCAR norms. Then, I discussed the exclusion of female drivers in the motorsport. Next, I offered details regarding Patrick as well as her entry in to NASCAR, including a list of the records she holds.

In the fifth chapter, I offered findings, interpretations, and discussions. I did not separate findings from interpretations and discussions because the case study strategy encourages connections to allow for complex and nuanced ways to present the case (Yin, 2012; 2014). By combining them, I offered an alternative way to consider Patrick in NASCAR. In this chapter, I suggested: (1) Patrick illustrates how hegemonic masculinity may shift and accommodate change, but reassert itself in terms of justifying male domination, (2) she addresses the limitations and tensions with regard to performances of female athletes in terms of intelligibility and unintelligibility, and (3) she demonstrates how sporting heroes, as important role models, simultaneously challenge and uphold gender ideals. I will continue this concluding chapter to discuss implications.
**Implications**

Previous examinations and theoretical perspectives guide research from the case studies approach and I will first review the implications to the specific approaches (hegemonic masculinity, body, and role models) before continuing on to a broader discussion regarding socialization.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

Hegemonic masculinity is expressed as sets of embedded societal practices that naturalize male domination (Connell, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Trujillo (1991) characterized five types and I focused on the three prominent ones in this case: Patrick was portrayed as adopting more aggression (force and control), and being subsumed as a daughter and girlfriend (patriarchy) by conforming to gender norms (occupational achievement). While she was being naturalized as a NASCAR driver, her subordination in the patriarchy illustrates the adaptiveness of hegemonic masculinity to adjust to changes and reassert gender hierarchy (Demetriou, 2001; Winiarska et al., 2015).

While hegemonic masculinity is adaptive and any single phenomenon cannot completely disrupt powers built on a long history of practices, I agree with Winiarska et al. (2015) that small meaningful challenges should be taken into account. In other words, the case of Patrick in NASCAR should not and cannot effectively challenge a masculinity that spans across history and has become hegemonic. But, her case is worth examining as she is welcomed into NASCAR whereas female drivers before her could not sustain full time careers in the motorsport. So, my examination of NASCAR (as a sport) and Patrick (as a driver) offers insight into the reconfirmations to hegemonic masculinity as well as challenges to it. Because she is female,
Patrick’s physical body sets her apart from the other drivers, biologically, and in terms of tensions over gender. So, I next discuss implications regarding the body.

**Body**

Sportswomen offer insight into gender tensions as they are sites on which the gender is being contested (Messner, 2007). Butler (1993) argued that gender is embodied and performed and those performances are separated into what female athlete can be and do (intelligible) as well as cannot be and do (unintelligible). Intelligible and unintelligible performances are based on patterns of practice and regulation over time (Butler, 1993). Therefore, current representations are important in illustrating what is and is not accepted, and the two most prominent patterns are underrepresentation and overt sexualization (Fink et al., 2004; Kane, 1998). When sportswomen are overtly sexualized, they lose respect for their sport and themselves (Fink et al., 2004; Kane & Maxwell, 2011), but they need to portray femininity to attract sponsors (Carty, 2005; Fink et al., 2014). Additionally, female athletes are marked by the tensions of athleticism versus femininity. Adding to the issue is that some sports are considered to be more masculine than others. When women compete in them and represent themselves as feminine, they become segregated from other women (Gilenstam et al., 2008; Walton, 2005).

Patrick illustrates these tensions because while she is well represented, her popularity is based on her overt sexualization. Her popularity gained her access to race with one of the best teams in NASCAR. She is also competing in a sport marked by celebrated masculinity and conservative Christianity (Vavrus, 2007; J. Newman & Giardina, 2011). So, her overt sexualization is not an acceptable performance in NASCAR. So, NASCAR is simultaneously exploiting her sexuality and curbing it (with her marketability). This demonstrates that her performance as a female driver is marked by these conflicting tensions.
In addition, Butler (2011) warned that the male domination is legitimized based on women reflecting the gender limitations and this reflection materializes hegemonic masculinity. Intelligible and unintelligible performances are manifested based on reiterations over time. From this perspective, Butler (2011) argued that gender transformation may be possible by exposing and parodying the norms and limitations by using repetitions of counter-performances that denaturalizes gender ideals. In other words, resistance is expressed as challenging performances and creating environments that render those performances as intelligible.

Consider Roth and Basow’s (2004) argument that resistance lies in the woman’s body. How she inhabits, perceives, and interacts in her world is, at least in part related to her physical body. From this position, they advocated a physical feminism because by “teaching women how to use their bodies, even in violent ways, feminists will have at least some say in how the discourse changes” (Roth & Basow, 2004, p. 262). From there, DeWelde (2012) argued that from this type of “kick ass” physical feminism, women may embrace their bodies in terms of strength and confidence. It is not always violent, but a way to empower the woman through her body, instead of disciplining it. While this physical feminism may support characteristics of masculine domination, I submit that the threat of violence and real violence, are tools that subjugate women. So, the sense of a physical feminism might neutralize that threat. Also, I wonder how might re/articulations of difference serve to reinforce the subjugation of those differences? As such, I ask if athleticism and physicality are unintelligible female performances because we keep telling ourselves, and each other, that they should not co-exist in a woman’s body?
Role Models

From the perspective of social learning, role models help individuals learn and navigate in their daily interactions (Bandura, 1986). While much of the learning starts in the home, many choose their role models based on shared similarities and emotional connections (Bandura, 1986, Sullivan & Venter, 2003). Hero-figures are especially important role models (Freud, 1965) and sporting heroes are elevated above ordinary role models based on their ritualistic and religious importance (Birrell, 1981; Lunt, 2009; Vande Berg, 1998). Since sportswomen are extremely underrepresented (Cooky et al., 2013; Daniels, 2009b; Kane, 1998), the few who are visible and heroified as sports heroines are extremely important role models (Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Meân & Kassing, 2008). It is their role as hero-models that I wish to address (Freud, 1965).

Patrick illustrates her relevance as a role model because other female athletes point to her as their inspiration to try and be part of racing. As such, she may offer transformational possibilities. However, as a sporting heroine, she also demonstrates that female athletes are commodified in terms of her sexuality. Thus, Patrick informs the tensions of sporting heroines. On one side, sporting heroines are selfish because they exploit their own sexuality (Hargreaves, 2000). On the other, they offer possibilities in a way that fragments the gender conformity/deviance binary (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). From a broader perspective regarding heroines, the case of Patrick is consistent with discussions as they are marked by sexualization and empowerment (J. Brown, 2011; Early & Kennedy, 2003; Hills 1999).

Then, D’Enbeau and Buzzanell (2014) offered the perspective of an erotic heroine. Instead of “critiquing women’s actions through the eyes of men,” they suggested that the erotic heroine transcends binary readings in which women are conforming to gender ideals or disciplined for deviating from them (p. 12). In other words, erotic heroines use sexuality to fulfill
their own goals and purposes (D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2014). So, instead of forcing women into constraining categories, the erotic heroine shifts the understandings of her performance as “taking advantage of the contexts in which she is embedded, how she strategically pursues a life that will offer her the most transformative possibilities” (D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2014, p. 13). D’Enbeau and Buzzanell (2014) also draw on the Amazon archetype as a powerful heroine.

From these perspectives, I ask if attractiveness and feminine sexualization always signal exploitation? Or is it a type of female power that is trivialized by a heterosexual male-dominated society, because men do not and cannot have it? Is sexualization considered objectionable because of persistent holdover patterns based on puritanical values? In other words, and circling back to Patrick, I ask if femininity and sexualization are disrespected performances for female athletes because we continue to insist that they should be denigrated.

In sum, this case informs the broad area of socialization in terms of how gender is learned (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lutfey & Mortimer, 2006). The perspectives of hegemonic masculinity, the body, and role models extend socialization to address how individuals are socialized and how ideals are constructed, reproduced, performed, and challenged in that process (Bird, 1996; Butler, 2011; Connell, 1987; Meän & Kassing, 2008). Most importantly, I ponder how women’s challenging performances, in terms of a physical feminism (DeWelde, 2012; Roth and Basow, 2004) and as erotic heroines (D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2014) may help shift the ways individuals are socialized into their gender(s).

**Limitations**

The implications I draw from this examination are limited by methodology. Consequently, I offer two key methodological limitations that bound this dissertation. The first relates to real-world limitations of the Institutional Review Board as well as shifting
understandings of what constitutes unethical research. The second relates to my methods in collecting and analyzing data.

**Institutional Review Board**

Originally, I had contacts in place to interview key NASCAR and Patrick insiders such as her sporting agent at WME | IMG, staff in NASCAR marketing, small team owners and their marketing agents, pit crews, track marketing, as well as nationally published and smaller-scale motorsport reporters. But, many of these individuals could be easily identified and I could not guarantee their confidentiality. For example, Patrick has one sporting agent at WME | IMG and the motorsport only has a few nationally published reporters. Since my Institutional Review Board determined that their identification constituted an unethical risk to these insiders, I could not interview any of these NASCAR insiders, even though most were willing be interviewed “on the record.” This limitation disallowed some key insights including:

- How Patrick negotiated access into NASCAR
- Shifts as to how she was being branded/marketed in NASCAR as compared to her marketing/brand in IndyCar
- How some insiders perceive Patrick within NASCAR
- What determines how Patrick is covered in press reports

In spite of this limitation, I focused more deeply on Patrick as a case, based on media reports and race attendee interviews.

With regard to future research, it may be helpful to create processes to explore what constitutes unacceptable risks to elite insiders beyond the consent process. Many of these insiders are marketing and “spin” professionals. For that reason, they may have greater understanding of how to protect themselves in interviews in comparison to others in protected or
general populations. Next, the methods by which I collected and analyzed data constitute another limitation.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

From the case studies strategy, previous research and real world considerations should guide my data collection (Yin, 2014). I followed precedence and combined participant observation (J. Newman, 2007, 2010; J. Newman & Giardina, 2008, 2011) with mainstream media reports (Sloop, 2005; Vavrus, 2007). In terms of participant observation, DeWalt and DeWalt (2001) asserted that the gender of the researcher may influence fieldwork. I was initially surprised that some of the negative comments I saw about Patrick in social media were not reflected at the races. Instead, I submit that my gender may have influenced how interviewees discussed Patrick with me. Also, I only attended three races from the entire season. So, I cannot claim that my observations, nor the informal interviews I conducted, are representative of NASCAR race attendees as a whole. This leads to my next limitation in terms of data analysis.

The Institutional Review Board did not allow me to include NASCAR contacts nor reach out to interviewees to confirm findings and interpretations. Therefore, I leveraged my experience and used reports from diverse media sources to connect data to the phenomenon as well as consider areas in which the lack of participant observation data should be more closely examined.

I added to the media reports by asking attendees for their preferred media sources. But, the three sources (ESPN.com, NASCAR.com, and FOXSports.com) are not archived by academic databases, and only ESPN.com archived news as far back as November 4, 2011. Since I am researching in a real-world environment, I could not start collecting the attendee directed sources until after I returned from the third race on September 6, 2014. In other words, I could
not archive them in advance. So, I have included reports for all of the 2014 racing season for all three sites, but NASCAR.com reports start on September 25, 2013 and FOXSports.com reports start on January 23, 2013. In spite of this, I added to sources (Associated Press, The New York Times, and USA Today) used in previous research. So, this limitation does not indicate that my data collection is incomplete. Instead, I suggest that researchers consider new types of data in terms of media reports, especially given new technologies have offered audiences many new and fragmented options.

Considerations for Future Research

In this section I will offer suggestions for future research in terms of media sources, Patrick, and NASCAR. First, it may be interesting to add new and different sources of media instead of relying on ones traditionally archived by academic databases.

Media Sources

As new technologies allow for more online storage, I hope more sources may be archived for study. Instead of relying on academic databases that may replicate previous patterns, I suggest that researchers consider adding sources based on respondents’ preferences or otherwise connected to the real-world phenomena.

Next, comparing media coverage across time and sources may also be interesting. Since NASCAR broadcast rights have changed from one cable network to another, it would be interesting to chart changes in coverage because their news coverage works in concert with the financial considerations associated with race coverage (Kian et al., 2009). NASCAR drivers were featured on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon on NBC towards the end of 2015. Since NBC will start to broadcast NASCAR races in 2016, I wonder if other shows in the NBC network will follow a similar pattern and what that coverage might look like.
Longer term investigation of Patrick in NASCAR

As this dissertation is a snapshot of her first years in NASCAR, I suggest that continuing to follow her career and examining portrayals surrounding Patrick may be useful in understanding the roles and limitations of women in major sports. In other words, a more engaged long term study of Patrick will be useful in how women might perform in their roles as sport heroines and female athletes, as well as how they might enter into male dominated realms using the tools of that domain.

Furthermore, Patrick lost her primary sponsor, GoDaddy despite the fact that she had her most successful season. At the end of the 2015 racing season, the web hosting and domain registrar will no longer sponsor Patrick. Nature’s Bakery, a healthy baked foods company, will take over her sponsorship in 2016. As part of that sponsorship, Patrick’s mediated representations may shift from that of a sexy GoDaddy girl to one that is more authentic (Pockrass, 2015). The longer term investigation may provide insight into what that authenticity means in light of the commodification of athletes.

Lastly, I am curious as to how her sponsorship dollars will fluctuate based her on-track performance and off-track lack of sexuality. Will she pose for ESPN: The Magazine’s Body Issue? Even though she is no longer featured in “sexy” ads and magazine spreads, her Twitter feed is becoming more overtly sexual, in more casual ways, as she regularly posts shots of herself doing yoga in a string bikini. So, a longer term investigation of Patrick in NASCAR may help to reveal how female athletes struggle with embodying the athleticism and sexualization.

Recently NASCAR drivers are retiring in their mid-40s. For example, Jeff Gordon returned at the end of 2015 at the age of 44, and Tony Stewart will retire at the end of this upcoming season at age 45. Patrick will be 34 years old during this NASCAR season. The longer
term investigation may be useful to address aging female athletes in intersection with the tensions of athletic and sexualized representations.

**Women and the NASCAR Drive for Diversity Program**

The Mission Statement on the NASCAR diversity home page is: “To engage women and people of diverse, ethnic and racial backgrounds in all facets of the NASCAR industry.” While, NASCAR’s Drive for Diversity program has helped some male drivers (such as Kyle Larson), I feel that women have taken a back seat to some men in racing. Patrick herself has noted that she did not receive any support from this diversity program. Consequently, I am curious as to the inner workings of this program and how they might help to support and promote women in NASCAR racing. For example, Johanna Long is racing part-time in the Nationwide series. Similar to sponsorship issues that some of her predecessors faced, she and her team often cannot find adequate sponsorship for her to race full time.

**Final Closing Thoughts**

In summation, the case of Danica Patrick in NASCAR illustrates contradictions across sport and gender, female athlete’s bodies, and sporting heroines. James Franco’s command to start the 2013 Daytona provides a great metaphor for her as a site of gender struggle: “Drivers, and…Danica! START YOUR ENGINES!” In other words, even though she started from the pole of the Daytona 500, she is NASCAR driver, a female driver, and Danica at the same time, Patrick she is still not just a driver in that her place in sport is segregated and challenged.

Lastly, instead of reiterating exclusive binaries, the contradictions surrounding Patrick may also allow for alternative ways understandings that could more positively address gender tensions. For me, the archetype of the heroine offers us a great starting point because her performance as a sports heroine is unintelligible by masculine standards. Therefore, how she
performs it should not be limited by and perceived from the filter of the hero. In other words, instead judging what she does and how she does it by male standards, why not permit her performances to stand on new definitions?
## Appendix A: Three Tracks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Race Name</th>
<th>Track Name</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Seating Capacity</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Track Opened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>July 27, 2014</td>
<td>John Wayne Walding 400 at the Brickyard</td>
<td>Indianapolis Motor Speedway “The Brickyard”</td>
<td>2.5 mile oval</td>
<td>250,000 + all around track</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>1909</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:21pm to 4:01pm</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 3, 2014</td>
<td>Gobowling.com 400</td>
<td>Pocono Raceway “The Tricky Triangle”</td>
<td>2.5 mile triangle or tri-oval</td>
<td>75,000 + by main straightaway</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:09pm to 4:17pm</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>September 6, 2014</td>
<td>Federated Auto Parts 400</td>
<td>Richmond International Raceway</td>
<td>0.75 mile oval</td>
<td>70,000 + all around track</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>1946</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:48pm to 10:40pm</td>
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Appendix B: Information Sheet

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: The Case of Danica Patrick in NASCAR
Principal Investigator: Dr. Federico Subervi
Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. George Cheney
Co-Investigator: Norma Jones

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This information sheet will provide you with information on this research study, including what you will need to do, as well as the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this sheet carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Participation in this research is for NASCAR attendees aged 18 and over.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to better understand how Danica Patrick may be influencing NASCAR and the culture surrounding the motorsport.

Procedures: Participation involves engaging in a brief interview with me during which, I will ask you for your opinions regarding Danica Patrick and NASCAR. This brief interview should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Benefits: This research will not benefit you directly. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand how Danica Patrick influences NASCAR culture.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life and while at NASCAR races.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Dr. Federico Subervi at (330) 672-2575 (fsubervi@kent.edu) or Dr. George Cheney at (330) 474-3556 (george.cheney@utah.edu) for any questions or, if you feel that you have been harmed. This study has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at (330)672-2704.

Privacy and Confidentiality
Participation is confidential because your personally identifying information will not be requested or noted. Your anonymity is further protected by not asking you to sign and return an informed consent form.

Voluntary Participation
Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose to not answer any of my questions or stop this conversation altogether. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation at any time.

By continuing in this brief interview with me, you are consenting to participate in this study.
### Appendix C: Hours in the Field

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<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Round Trip Distance (Miles)</th>
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<td>2.67</td>
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<td>Drove to and from track on the same day</td>
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# Appendix D: Interviewees

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<th>Additional Details</th>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associated Press</td>
<td>1844</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESPN.com</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>205</td>
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<td>FOXSports.com</td>
<td>366</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>32.79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASCAR.com</td>
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<td>203</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>44.08%</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA TODAY</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>31.54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>33.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>3582</strong></td>
<td><strong>2520</strong></td>
<td><strong>1062</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.65%</strong></td>
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Appendix F: Coding Sample

<table>
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<th>role model for female athletes</th>
<th>female athlete</th>
<th>feminine performance</th>
<th>attractive to sponsors</th>
<th>athletic performance</th>
<th>hegemonic masculinity</th>
<th>commodified</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Excerpt

“I wanna be Danica Patrick on two wheels,” the 27-year-old said. “And I'm making my way there!”

Moreda's model good looks and friendly, easygoing nature have helped her score sponsors like GoPro cameras and Brammo bikes. A former District 3 Dairy Princess, Moreda said she welcomes comparisons with Patrick, the most famous beauty in racing.

“I think Danica Patrick rocks,” she said. “I like that she's a tough girl. She's out there doing what the boys do regardless of what anybody says. Everyone's got their opinions, positive or negative, and she deals with them really well.”

Like Patrick, Moreda understands the power of marketability. “I think that with either one of us, we're working with what we have. What we have to offer outside of our finishing is that we're marketable. As an athlete, racer or otherwise, what you need to realize is that you're out there to promote your sponsors, to market for your sponsors. That doesn't come from finishes alone, they wanna see you connecting with the public and getting their name out there.” “It's part of my job. Fortunately for me, I love that end of it.”
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