

You Throw Like a Girl:

The lingering inequality between males and females in sports

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Introduction

Women's participation in sports and athletics has an enduring history. This history is not only notable by the discrimination against females, but it is also marked with dominant accomplishments and achievements by females (Women, Gender Equality, and Sport, 2007). Even in 2014, there is gender inequality between males and females in sports. The amount of money paid to the athletes, the television time, and the countless stereotypes are the three main problems that exist today in sports (Women, Gender Equality, and Sport, 2007).

Money Paid to Athletes of Different Genders

In NCAA Division I-A, head coaches for a female basketball team receives an average salary of \$850,400 while head coaches for a male basketball team receives an average of \$1,783,100, which is a total difference of \$932,700 (Pay Inequality in Athletics, n.d.). The people who fund college and professional sports remain to grant unequal funding for women. They continue to pay men more for the same sport, which is not only unethical, but also gives women in the sport less motivation to excel. Likewise, it discourages future female athletes from playing the sport (Pay Inequality in Athletics, n.d.).

There are many sports such as basketball, tennis and golf in which both males and females compete in. In golf, the best female competitive golfer will earn less than \$45,000. For men, PGA competitive golfers will make anywhere from 1 million to 10 million (Male vs. Female Salaries in Professional Sports, 2010). This gender pay gap is enormous, and is still occurring in 2014. The Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) highlights the fact that ever since sports became a form of employment for women in the early 1800's, they have received far less funding than men (Men Against Misandry, 2013). This organization argues that paying the male gender

more money for the same sport is unfair and discouraging to females, and it will eventually turn off every woman from participating in sports. (Men Against Misandry, 2013). Though there are numerous examples, the National Basketball Association is another prime illustration of the gender pay-gap in sports. For a WNBA player in the 2005 season, the maximum salary was \$89,000. For NBA players in the 2005 season, the maximum salary was \$15.355 million (Pay Inequality in Athletics, n.d.). This pay gap is colossal and astonishing, and it is still occurring today.

Part of how professional athletes receive their pay roll, is from the fans who pay to attend the particular sporting event (McKenna, 2008). There is evidently a sharp difference between the attendance at male sporting events compared to female sporting events. This is mostly because men's sports are played at a faster pace, and are therefore more enjoyable to watch. Sports played by males are typically played at more of an intense level, but this is partially due to biological differences (McKenna, 2008). Although there are differences in the build of a males body compared to a females body, this should not alter how people pay money to watch the particular sport being played. What should affect the attendance of these sporting events is the components that make sport so enjoyable; the skill, the passion and the rivalries (McKenna, 2008). This diversity between the attendance at male sporting events versus female sporting events must be highlighted, or the financial difference will continue to rise.

Not only is the pay roll unfair, but the actual ability to play on a professional basketball team is a tough task for females. Britney Griner has set numerous records at Baylor University, has won multiple national championships and is undoubtedly one of the best varsity athletes to come out of the NCAA. (Inequality in the Workforce: WNBA vs NBA, 2013). She has been playing in the WNBA for a couple years, and she dominates at this level. She is also one of the

only female basketball players who can dunk, which gives her a great advantage in the sport. (Inequality in the Workforce: WNBA vs NBA, 2013). Mark Cuban, the owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, told reporters that if he was given the opportunity, he would draft Britney in the upcoming NBA Draft (MacMahon, 2013). If she got drafted, she would receive the same amount of money even though she is a female. If a woman was accepted into the NBA, this would be one step in the right direction regarding gender inequality in sports.

There is no question that sports have changed women. Female participation in athletics has proven very positive effects such as: academic achievement, job success, positive self-esteem and a reduced incidence of self-destructive behaviours like smoking and drugs (Grossman & Brake, 2013). All these positive effects from playing sports have been and will be diminished because of the inequalities that happen in today's society. Many females will be too discouraged or insecure to try out for a sport, or to continue their athletic career mainly because they know female athletes aren't given the same amount of attention and money as the male gender (Gender Inequalities, 2012).

On-Air Television Time

Another important factor in gender inequality is the on-air television time between males and females. Whether it is on-air time for their particular sport or if it is starring in a commercial, males always seem to take the spotlight (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). Men's sports still receive more than 90% of the coverage on sports programs, and they dominate in this area for many reasons (Gender Inequalities, 2012). Clearly, there is a difference in athletic ability shown in statistics and the way males play a sport compared to females. A prime example of this difference is in basketball. Females play basketball mainly by shooting the ball or making lay-ups,

whereas males prefer to score the ball by doing a fancy slam-dunk (Inequality in the Workforce: WNBA vs NBA, 2013). This may partially be why female athletes do not receive proper recognition on television, but this cannot account entirely for the proposition that male sports gets such an abundant preference (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012).

The best-recognized leagues for men's basketball include NCAA, NBA, and the NBA D-League (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). There are also numerous minor leagues such as the International Basketball League, the Premier Basketball League, and the American Basketball Association (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). On the other hand, the only women's basketball leagues are NCAA and WNBA (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). The many leagues for men's basketball adds to the problem, because if there are more leagues to participate in, there is a greater chance of appearing on television. The media realizes this, because they have multiple stations that televise men's basketball, and only a scattered amount of stations that televise women's basketball. The NBA is televised on ESPN, ABC, CBS, NBC, TNT, TBS and NBA TV (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). If they are airing men's basketball on all these stations, we are left to wonder where the women's basketball is aired. The women's basketball is only aired on ESPN and NBA TV, and they will have as few as 5 television appearances per season (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). This unequal distribution of television appearances is a huge factor contributing to gender inequality in sports.

There is also a bigger attraction to the NBA because of the numerous extracurricular activities such as the NBA Slam-Dunk Contest and NBA All Star Game, which is an enormously promoted event each year. There is a WNBA All Star Game, but this is seldom promoted, and will be aired on only a few channels (Gender Inequalities, 2012). Also, highlights for men's

sports are shown every day on sports coverage channels, however women's highlights hardly ever make it on the screen (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). Additionally, we see NBA logos and merchandise everywhere, but hardly ever see WNBA merchandise. There is also more major brands endorsing in NBA players and not WNBA players. As an example, Buick and Kia have endorsed Shaquille O'Neal and Blake Griffin and featured them in car commercials (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). These businesses recognize the NBA players would be more well-known and attract more people to their product compared to WNBA players. There have been no similar commercials starring women's basketball players, and this is simply society shining the spotlight on men's basketball, and leaving women's basketball lurking in the shadows (Gender Inequality in Sports, 2012). The inequality on the television screen is not the fault of Sports Centre or major brand car companies, but it is the fault of the world we live in today. It is evident that females are constantly being valued as less equal than males. This is a major problem, and the more we allow for this to happen, the less recognition women will receive.

The Stereotypes

Female stereotypes are the root of gender inequality in sports. Gender role stereotyping occurs when a person is expected to behave a certain way based upon their sex (Scantlebury, 2009). Some of these stereotypes include: pink is a colour for girls, blue is a colour for boys, girls play with dolls, boys play with trucks, and lastly, males are more athletic than females (Griffin, 2014). These stereotypes define us when we are born, so evidently they are going to define us in professional and college sports. Since these stereotypes have been established, society expects both males and females to fulfill and believe in the gender roles.

If a woman wants to live an active lifestyle, they should do ballet or cheerleading, but if a man wants to be active, they should take up football, basketball or wrestling (Scantlebury, 2009).

These stereotypes have defined us in the past, but today, women are working to break them. The stereotypes emerged because female athletes are defined as being “manly” or “lesbians” (Alexander, 2002). These stereotypes are deceitful and misleading, and they need to disappear if we want our society to grow and develop into what it should be. The first draft pick for the WNBA openly came out about her sexuality in April of 2013 (Griffin, 2014). The media and association shrugged this interview off due to the stereotype “female athletes are lesbians” (Griffin, 2014).

This is a stereotype of female athletes because they are portrayed to be masculine, making everyone presume that they must be lesbians (Griffin, 2014). However, in the same year, Jason Collins (an NBA center) came out to being an openly gay athlete. This received a great deal of attention from the media, magazine publishers and his fellow NBA alumni (Collins & Lidz, 2013).

This is because no one “expects” a male basketball player to be gay, as they expect a female athlete to be.

Conclusion

The inequality between males and females in sports is indisputable. Even in 2014, the money paid to athletes, the on-air television time, and the endless stereotypes are just a few examples of how females get treated unequally compared to males. This is a severe issue, and the fact that it is still evident in 2014 is an even bigger dilemma. If we do not do something about inequality in today’s society, nothing and nobody will ever change.

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