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Sports, Media, and Society
Reading Assignment - Gender

Are stereotypical and traditional masculine values like physical toughness, aggressiveness and violence the kind of values that media should start assigning to women's sports? In other words, do you feel media coverage of sports would be more true to women athletes, and would make progress, if it broke with traditional stereotypes of femininity as passive and sexual and nurturing and fit women instead into the traditional masculine world of aggression and toughness?

I believe that if the media stopped with the stereotypes of femininity then the view of female athletes would change. However, I do not think that the words that need to be used to describe ALL women or ALL men are aggressive, violent, and tough. Getting rid of stereotypes does not just go for female athletes but male athletes as well.

As far as female athletes being covered, the media needs to stop sexualizing and objectifying women. Female athletes can be just as strong as, or even stronger than, male athletes. Just like male athletes are covered, female athletes should be talked about for their accomplishments rather than what they are wearing or what they look like. There is a stigma that women should be pretty and gentle, and if they are not, they are deemed as animals, savages, manly, overaggressive, "butch," or unattractive. Female athletes do not necessarily need to be viewed as aggressive, tough, or violent, but they should be acknowledged for what they do. If they happen to be aggressive, okay, but they should not just be called aggressive to compare them to men; not all men are aggressive.

The stigma attached to masculinity is a male athlete being strong, competent, in control, competitive, assertive, or aggressive. There are so many sports that do not necessarily need all of these traits, but the ones society deems as "masculine" require most of these traits. "Female sports" are considered expressive, but "male sports" are less graceful; they are contact sports where players are aggressive and have a lot of strength and power. Attractiveness and beauty are linked to "female sports," so boys or men involved in these sports are deemed as not masculine. Men who participate in sports such as ice skating, cheerleading, dance, or gymnastics are viewed as effeminate. In American culture, masculine sports are ones like football, basketball, boxing, or wrestling.

Sports get labeled as "female or male appropriate." This can influence what sports young boys and girls are interested in. From a young age society teaches us what it means to be masculine and what it means to be feminine.

There should not be traditional masculine words, nor should there be traditional feminine words. The media/society needs to stop categorizing and labelling everyone and instead look at individual athletes for what they are.