

GENDER IN SPORT

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Abstract

Sport is a strongly gendered area, so in order to understand how the individual understands, experiences, and relates to sport, the incorporation of gender as a research category is essential. The general aim of the present dissertation was, through the employment of a relational analysis, to investigate how gender acts as an organizing principle in sport. In a relational analysis, gender is not considered as a static characteristic of the individual. Gender is instead regarded as a cultural representation of a socially constructed, historically specific outcome of social interactions among gendered individuals, based on how gender categories are related to each other. The thesis consists of four separate, but interrelated, empirical studies. In *Study I* and *Study II* the objective was to examine how beliefs about gender-appropriateness results in categorizations of sports as feminine or masculine, and how these are related to perceived characteristics and requirements of different sports. In *Study III*, the intent was to investigate media's sports coverage with reference to the beliefs, values, and social structures of sport that are related to gender and perceived gender differences. The aim of *Study IV* was to survey how the gendered nature of sport, and notions regarding gender, affects our motives for sport participation. The general findings reveal that for society as well as for the individual, gender still acts as an organizing principle in the structurization of sport. Sports and sport participation for the individual is partly determined by the construction of divisions along lines of gender. These divisions seem to be perceived as especially meaningful by individuals who more strongly stress stereotypical expectations related to the concepts femininity and masculinity.

Keywords: Gender, gender-typing, sport, sport participation, femininity, masculinity, attitudes, media, motives.