

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: *#SHEBELIEVES, BUT DOES SHE?
EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE U.S.
WOMEN'S NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM'S
EMPOWERMENT CAMPAIGN ON THE WHITE
WOMAN MILLENNIAL*

Thesis Written by: Julie E. Brice
Kinesiology Department

In 2015, the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) launched the #SheBelieves campaign encouraging young women to continue believing in their goals and dreams ("WNT Launches #SheBelieves Initiative," n.d.). #SheBelieves is thus an exemplar of a promotional discourse which utilizes ideas of female empowerment in a manner that contributes to the constitution of the postfeminine, neoliberal, *millennial* subject identified by numerous scholars (Genz, 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Rottenberg, 2014). However, much of this scholarship ignores the fluid, and oftentimes contradictory, nature of subjectivity, and fails to acknowledge complexity of the 21st century woman's lived experiences (Blackman, 2008; Weedon, 2004). Therefore, this thesis uses semi-structured small group interviews to answer **to what extent, and in what ways have young white women experienced, and been interpellated by, the empowerment rhetoric and idealized postfeminine-neoliberal, *millennial* subjectivity, embedded within U.S. National Women's Soccer #SheBelieves campaign?** The results are mixed: women did exhibit elements of postfeminist and neoliberal sensibilities with regards to their personal engagement with U.S. Women's National Soccer; yet, the women also showed significant resistance, and thereby considerable agency, to aspects of the #SheBelieves discourse.

#SHEBELIEVES, BUT DOES SHE? EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE U.S.
WOMEN'S NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM'S EMPOWERMENT CAMPAIGN ON THE
WHITE WOMAN *MILLENNIAL*

By

Julie Elizabeth Brice

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2017

Advising Committee:

Dr. David L. Andrews
Dr. Adam Beissel
Dr. Shannon Jette

© Copyright by

Julie Elizabeth Brice

2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to finish my thesis without the guidance and support of my advisor, committee members, colleagues, and my family and friends.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my entire committee. First and foremost, I would like to say thank you to my advisor, Dr. David L. Andrews, who although “disappointed yet enchanted” with my thesis topic at first, challenged me throughout the entire process. His high expectations and constant questioning have helped me to develop into a more critical and engaged scholar. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Shannon Jette who selflessly gave me her time and worked diligently with me throughout this thesis and my time at UMD. Finally, a huge thank you to Dr. Adam Beissel who I credit as exposing me to and persuading me to enter into the Physical Cultural Studies Field.

I would also like to thank my colleagues in Physical Cultural Studies for commiserating with me and encouraging me through the most challenging of times. A special thank you to Katie Esmonde who has been the best peer mentor, guiding me throughout my entire graduate career, and advising me on everything from course schedules to editing my thesis.

Finally, the most grandiose thank you to my family and friends who have sat through countless conversations on women’s empowerment and read hundreds of pages of drafts throughout all of my graduate education. They are my mentors, my personal editors, and my cheerleaders, and I could not have finished this thesis or my entire Master’s program without them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Empowerment Discourse, 1990s-2010s	2
1.2 Neoliberal and Postfeminist Culture of Empowerment	5
1.3 <i>Millennialism</i>	7
1.4 Gaps in the Research	9
1.5 Project Overview	11
CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework	13
2.1 PCS-Radical Contextualism	13
2.2 Women's Studies-Post feminist theory	15
2.3 Neoliberalism-Economics and Political Studies	17
CHAPTER 3: Review of Literature	20
3.1 Empowerment in White Feminist Theory	20
3.2 Empowerment in Women of Color Theory	24
3.3 Girl Power and Empowerment Rhetoric in Sport	29
3.4 Neoliberalism in Women's Sports	32
3.5 <i>Millennial Subjectivity</i>	37
3.5.1 Creation of the Millennial Subjectivity	39
3.5.2 Contextualizing the Millennial Discourse: The Embedded Idealized Subjectivities	43
3.6 Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 4: Epistemology, Methodology and Methods	49
4.1 Methodology	49
4.1.1 Social Constructionist Epistemology	49
4.1.2 Feminist Reflexivity	51
4.2 Methods	53
4.2.1 Interviewing Style	53
4.2.2 Recruitment and Demographics	55
4.2.3 Reflexive Practices	57
4.2.4 Ethical Concerns to Participants	58
4.2.5 Analysis of empirical material	59
4.2.6 Research Concerns	62
4.3 Interlude	63
CHAPTER 5: Analysis and Discussion	66
5.1 <i>Millennial Subject</i>	67
5.1.1 What is a millennial?	68
5.1.2 Who is the 21 st century woman?	72
5.1.2a Strength, independence, limitless opportunities	72
5.1.2b White	75
5.1.2c Middle-Class	77
5.1.3 Activism in the 21 st century	78

5.2 The Personal is NOT political	80
5.2.1 The Personal: Postfeminism and Neoliberalism Exhibited in Subjectivities	81
5.2.1a Feminism	82
5.2.1b Sexism	85
5.2.1c Sexism Contradictions	86
5.2.2 Political ideologies: A rejection of the idealized subjectivity	87
5.3 Empowerment is Personal	92
5.3.1 Defining and Experiencing Empowerment: Interpellation by the postfeminine and neoliberal subjectivities in U.S. Women’s National Soccer	92
5.3.1a Defining Empowerment	92
5.3.1b Personal experiences of Empowerment	94
5.3.2 Rejecting Neoliberal and Postfeminist Empowerment	98
5.3.2a Collective Empowerment	99
5.3.2b Rejection of Empowerment	100
5.4 Overview of Findings	101
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion	103
6.1 Research Summary	103
6.2 Significance	105
6.2.1 Political and Social Significance	105
6.2.2 Academic Significance	109
6.3 Future Research	111
6.4 Limitations	114
6.5 Concluding Remarks and Reflection	116
APPENDIX A: Interview Questions	118
APPENDIX B: Participant Demographics	121
APPENDIX C: Group Distribution	122
APPENDIX D: Consent Form	123
APPENDIX E: IRB Approval	126
APPENDIX F: Pre-Analysis Questions	127
APPENDIX G: <i>Millennial</i> Characteristics Webs	128
APPENDIX H: Empowerment Characteristics Graphics	130
REFERENCES	132

LIST OF FIGURES/ABBREVIATIONS

Figures

1	Dedoose Code Cloud	60
2a	Concept mapping-Data Analysis	61
2b	Concept mapping-Data Analysis	62
2c	Concept mapping-Data Analysis	62
3	Analysis Visual Representation	66

List of Abbreviations

NWSL: National Women's Soccer League

PCS: Physical Cultural Studies

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

USWNT: United States Women's National Soccer Team

WUSA: Women's United Soccer Association

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

“Listen up, ladies: we believe in you. We believe in your dreams, in your goals, and in your ability to reach them. It might be an uphill battle, and you will get knocked down, but it’s our battle. Own it. Fight it. Never give up on it” (USWNT, 2015)

This quote is from the Letter to Fans written by the U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team (USWNT) as part of the #SheBelieves empowerment campaign launched in the months prior to the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup. As part of the campaign, the USWNT players attended various community development events across the country where they interacted and worked with fans. The campaign also included a social media component encouraging fans to use the #SheBelieves hashtag on social media platforms to share their stories of how they are accomplishing their dreams (“WNT Launches #SheBelieves Initiative,” n.d.). The #SheBelieves empowerment campaign is just one of many women empowerment campaigns that have been prominent in the U.S. since the 1990s when girl power¹ became popularized in mainstream American society (Banet-Weiser, 2015; Gonick, 2006; Riordan, 2001).

Although these empowerment campaigns contain inspiring and motivational messages, embedded within this rhetoric is an idealized subjectivity² wherein individual responsibility and personal choices are emphasized as the tools to achieve success, essentially ignoring structural and personal barriers which many women face in the patriarchal American society (Cooky, 2011). Popular discourse as well as academics

¹ Girl power was first used in 1967 but not made popular until the 1990s. Girl power is a context-specific form of empowerment. For the purposes of this paper, the terms will be used interchangeably.

² Although there are competing theories of subjectivity, for this thesis, subjectivity is defined as “consisting of an individuals’ conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotions and desires...Rational consciousness is only one dimension of subjectivity” (Weedon, 2004, p. 18).

(Harris, 2004a; McRobbie, 2003; Rottenberg, 2014) suggest that due to the over-usage and commodification of empowerment that took place in the 1990s and today, 21st century women incorporate concepts of individuality and egalitarianism into their subjectivity. However, this scholarship ignores the fluid nature of subjectivity and fails to give attention to the lived experiences of the 21st century woman (Blackman, 2008; Weedon, 2004). Therefore, this study uses qualitative, semi-structured small group interviews with women USWNT fans between the ages of 18-25 recruited from a large Middle Atlantic University to gain a better understanding as to how the dominant discourses presented in empowerment campaigns have been consumed, interpellated and lived by the 21st century white woman.

1.1 Empowerment Discourse, 1990s-2010s

This project uses a radical contextualist theoretical framework in which “an event or practice does not exist apart from the focus of the context that constitute it as what it is” highlighting the necessity of studying context (Grossberg, 1997, p. 255). It uses a contextual analysis to study articulations: “the making of a relationship out of a non-relationship, or more often, the making of one relationship out of a different one” (Grossberg, 1997, p. 259). An articulation is a connection between different elements-for this thesis it is (1) the term empowerment and (2) its meaning- that can be forged under certain conditions but can also be disassembled to allow for the creation of a new connection (Hall, 1985). Based upon this approach, it must be understood that #SheBelieves and empowerment campaigns messages have been articulated and re-articulated as a result of an aggregate of multiple forces and relations in society and

history. Specifically, the #SheBelieves Campaign has been created and affected by the history of empowerment rhetoric in the U.S. beginning in the 1990s.

In the early 1990s, there was a shift in both academia and popular culture to reevaluate feminist consciousness to focus more on diversity (Riordan, 2001) as well as the emergence of the “girl in crisis” (Banet-Weiser, 2004; Harris, 2004a) in which American girls were seen as having low self-esteem and confidence and low success in math and science. This “girl in crisis” stimulated a conversation and renewed efforts to encourage girls to enter into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields as well as changes in public policy (Banet-Weiser, 2004). The combination of a more inclusive feminist consciousness coupled with a national conversation about girls’ value and worth in society contributed to the creation of the Riot Grrrls. The Riot Grrrls was a grassroots movement started in the punk rock community where women encouraged other women to produce subversive culture through rock music, zines, internet, poetry, art, and other media (Zeisler, 2016). Although white women’s empowerment initiatives in the U.S. can be traced back to first wave feminism during women’s suffrage in the 1880s (McCammon, Campbell, Granberg, & Mowery, 2001), the Riot Grrrls movement represented one of the first times where women engaged in consumer culture for political change. However, as the movement gained popularity, it attracted the attention of popular media and was soon absorbed into mainstream culture. This was evidenced by the creation of the *Power Puff Girls*, *Xena Warrior Princess*, and increased popularity of the Spice Girls whose motto was “Girl Power!” (Gonick, 2006; Riordan, 2001). Sports were not immune to this empowerment rhetoric, as the 1999 cover of *Newsweek* Magazine featured an image of Brandi Chastain ripping her shirt off after

scoring the winning penalty kick of the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup. Written across this iconic image is the headline, "Girls Rule." The popularity of empowerment has continued throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s as evidenced by the many advertisement campaigns and media headlines which utilize this rhetoric-Nike, Under Armour, Times Magazine-(Lucas, 2000; "The Year of U.S. Women (Again)," n.d.)-as well as into 2015 as seen by the USWNT's #SheBelieves campaign.

However, this mainstream version of empowerment differed significantly from the initial Riot Grrrls articulation of collective activism. It presented itself in a context in which there existed an egalitarian society where the only barrier women faced was lack of personal motivation and strength (Cooky, 2011; Riordan, 2001). As Cooky (2011) writes, "With respect to sport, the alignment of female athletic achievement with Girl Power! sent girls cultural messages that girls and women are empowered, and feminist proscriptions for equality, such as Title IX, are no longer needed or desired" (p. 217). The success of these empowerment campaigns in selling products and the absorption of girl power into society has provided the basis for which #SheBelieves was conceived. #SheBelieves, which emphasizes personal choice and equality, is both a product of and contributor to the creation of the 21st century generation of women that popular culture labeled as *millennials*³ (Strauss & Howe, 2000). According to Strauss & Howe (2000) the *millennials* are the generation born in or after 1982 and have come to adulthood (age 18) in the 2000s. However, as will be discussed following sections, the *millennial* generation is actually a discursive formation; popular culture presents an *idealized* young adult's

³ Strauss and Howe coined the term "*millennial*" postfeminism refer to the generation of people born in 1982 or onwards. Although I will be using the term, at times, to describe the generation of people who fit within this age category, in no way am I attempting to reify this notion of a static, definable category of a *millennial* or *millennial* subjectivity.

subjectivity rather than describing the generation. Scholars have argued that through the girl power/empowerment rhetoric of the 1990s, and 2000s, there has been a conflation of postfeminist (Genz, 2009; McRobbie, 2009) and neoliberal (Rottenberg, 2014) discourses that have been consumed by and have contributed to the constitution of the 21st century *millennial* subjectivity⁴.

1.2 Neoliberal and Postfeminist Culture of Empowerment

The 2015 #SheBelieves campaign and the re-articulation of empowerment in the 1990s has been described as contributing to the creation of a postfeminist (McRobbie, 2009), neoliberal (Rottenberg, 2014) subjectivity; accomplished through the emphasis on individuality, equality and an ignorance of political and structural barriers. Although there is debate about the validity and prominent tenets of postfeminism within feminist studies, Genz (2009) has described one interpretation of postfeminism as an ideology that many young women adopt which “supports an individualistic and liberal agenda that relies on a mantra of choice and assumes that the political demands of first and second wave feminism have now been met” (p. 20). A postfeminist ideology enables young women to reject previous waves of feminism, using neoliberal ideology as justification for believing equality has already been achieved (McRobbie, 2009; Negra, 2009). Rottenberg (2014) describes this neoliberalism ideology as “a dominant political rationality that moves to and from the management of the state to the inner workings of the subject, normatively constructing and interpellating individuals as entrepreneurial actors” (p. 420). Responsibility for one’s success or failures is placed solely on him or

⁴ A majority of the research conducted on postfeminism and neoliberalism used in this paper are discussing the white, middle class woman’s subjectivity. Therefore, please note that this thesis is centered on the white woman’s experiences and subjectivity.

herself, ignoring structural, political or social barriers. Empowerment campaigns capitalize upon this neoliberal, postfeminist ideology presenting “an idealized form of the self-determining individual” which contributes to “a process of individualization that...directs attention from structural explanations for inequality towards explanations of personal circumstances and personality traits” (Gonick, 2006, p. 2).

Through its promotional materials, #SheBelieves has created an idealized postfeminist, neoliberal female *millennial* subjectivity. This can be seen in the Letter to Fans (quoted above) that focuses on an individual believing and working hard to reach her goals. They also have promotional videos where the USWNT players interview women in other professions who have reached the top of their field (U.S. Soccer, 2017a). In these videos, the players have interviewed the Navy Lieutenant Commander, the NASA Deputy Director, various doctors, film makers, chefs and more (U.S. Soccer, 2017a). Although recognizing women in STEM fields provides role models for young women, these interviews promote the importance of individual achievements and fail to mention the intense structural barriers and systems of oppression that many women face in achieving success (Cooky, 2009). The only barrier mentioned in the promotional materials from 2015 was in a video released alongside the Letter to Fans where Shannon Box says “Don’t let anyone tell you, you can’t be the best” (USWNT, 2015, p. 1). This implies a society in which equality for women has been achieved and the only barrier women will face is a lack of self-confidence. Instead of inspiring fans, many posts by U.S. Women’s National Soccer and the USWNT’s players, used the hashtag to encourage fans to purchase tickets and merchandise. In this regard, the hashtag is then used not as a tool of the empowerment campaign but for capitalistic purposes of U.S. Women’s National

Soccer. The focus on individualism, equality and consumer practices, promotes a postfeminist, neoliberal discourse.

1.3 *Millennialism*

One of the interesting aspects of this thesis is that it focuses on 21st century women who have matured in the United States witnessing and experiencing the intense pro-girl, empowerment discourse from the 1990s and 2000s. For USWNT soccer fans, they have never known a time when U.S. Women's National Soccer did not dominate women's international soccer. The U.S. victories at the 1999 and 2015 FIFA World Cups have been considered two of the most influential events in the history of U.S. soccer, garnering the highest viewership ratings in U.S. for men's or women's soccer (Markovits & Hellerman, 2006; Olmstead, 2015). The 1999 victory of the USWNT was a seminal event in the history of women's sports as Cooky (2011) describes:

The mainstream media framed the World Cup not just in terms of the accomplishment for the members of the U.S. team; the event was also evidence of a cultural shift in the landscape of girls' and women's sports. The women of the 1999 U.S. soccer team presented to this generation of girls an image of what they could aspire to become; it was an emotionally riveting spectacle of girls' and women's empowerment in sports (p. 211).

As this quote describes, young women grew up seeing images of empowered women and hearing about the vast amount of opportunities they now have in sport and other facets of society (Rottenberg, 2014).

Empowerment rhetoric in popular media echoed this cultural shift Cooky (2011) describes and was soon commodified into products to be sold and consumed (Riordan, 2001). This is evident in the #SheBelieves campaign which evolved from an empowerment campaign in 2015 to a tournament in 2016 and 2017. The #SheBelieves cup is a small four team tournament played in two to three cities in the United States

(“2017 SheBelieves Cup,” n.d.). Throughout the tournament fans are not only encouraged to attend the games but merchandise is sold at every venue using this empowerment rhetoric of #SheBelieves. The hashtag is no longer about empowerment campaigns but rather selling the empowerment language to fans. According to scholars, the success of the tournament and the USWNT and other empowerment campaigns is achieved through the postfeminine, neoliberal subjectivity this generation possesses. Scholars have argued the commodification of empowerment rhetoric and its over-usage has led to the manufacturing of the 21st century woman as a postfeminist, neoliberal subject (Genz, 2009; Harris, 2004a; McRobbie, 2009). Cole (1993) has described the abundance of empowerment and pro-girl rhetoric which creates an image of an egalitarian society as a “normalizing process” in which postfeminist and neoliberal tenets become normalized for the 21st century woman. This 21st century woman who embodies these postfeminist and neoliberal discourse are part of what has been deemed a *millennial* (Strauss & Howe, 2000). There are varying accounts as to what person qualifies as a *millennial* and what it means to be a *millennial*. Popular discourse describes a *millennial* as a self-absorbed, college-educated, technology-driven professional (Bucic, Harris, & Arli, 2012; Csorba, 2016; Gross, 2012) while academic literature tends to demarcate *millennials* by age rather than characteristics (Strauss & Howe, 2000). The *millennial* discourse becomes contentious not because of the differing accounts of their characteristics but rather in its presentation of the *millennial* as a static, definable, concrete generation with a particular subjectivity; information about this generation is theorized and presented as a universal truth. This fixed representation becomes problematic when utilizing a post-structuralist approach. A post-structuralist framework suggests that when a presentation of an idea “is

said to be fixed or meanings are assumed to be unambiguous and stable, this should be understood as less a disclosure of truth than as an act of power” (Seidman, 1994, p. 202). A post-structuralist approach to subjectivities suggests it is impossible for a subject to completely know themselves because subjectivity is in a constant state of production (Helstein, 2007; Weedon, 1997). Therefore, the literature and popular media’s presentation of the 21st century female *millennial* as a young woman who embodies post feminist and neoliberal tendencies, is limiting as it does not take into consideration the dynamic and productive nature of subjectivity. This project, instead, proposes that the 21st century female *millennial* is a discursive formation, and the discourse is presenting an *idealized* postfeminist, neoliberal subjectivity.

1.4 Gaps in the Research

The research on the 21st century female as incorporating postfeminist and neoliberal discourses into their subjectivities tends to present women as a static, unified group who lack agency and resistance. This scholarship and discourse has described how the empowerment rhetoric of the 1990s and 2000s has been influential in the creation of this uniform generation. However, this representation of young women fails to give voice to the women who have been impacted by the empowerment campaigns; 21st century women soccer fans. In cultural media studies, Stuart Hall has discussed the multi-stage process of encoding and decoding to describe the media’s model of communication. Within this model, encoding is completed by the producers of media who embed certain meanings in the program uses verbal and non-verbal symbols which they believe the receiver will understand (Hall, 1993). The receiver undergoes a process of decoding

which Hall emphasizes as necessary if meanings are to be translated into action in society:

Before this message can have an ‘effect’, satisfy a ‘need’ or be put to a ‘use,’ it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and meaningfully decoded. It is this set of decoded meanings which ‘have an effect,’ influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioral consequences” (Hall, 1993, p. 119).

Part of decoding phase is the receiver connecting with certain pieces of information in the media, a construct deemed “interpellation” by Althusser (Weedon, 2004). According to (Nguyen, n.d.), “Interpellation is the constitutive process where individuals acknowledge and respond to ideologies, thereby recognizing themselves as subjects” (p.1). People recognize certain aspects of encoded messages and incorporate these into their subjectivities (Weedon, 2004).

Thus far, the academic discourse has presented their interpretation of the encoded messages within empowerment campaigns (Gonick, 2006; Riordan, 2001). However, decoding has yet to be studied. These are the interpretations and lived experiences of the women who have been the receivers of these empowerment campaigns and discourse on the *millennial*. Therefore, this thesis seeks to understand how women classified as postfeminist and neoliberal *millennials*, have consumed, interpreted and experienced the empowerment rhetoric and its principles using the #SheBelieves campaign as an empirical site. The current research project is framed around the question: **To what extent, and in what ways, have young white women experienced and been interpellated by the empowerment rhetoric and idealized postfeminine-neoliberal, millennial subjectivity embedded within U.S. National Women’s Soccer’s empowerment campaign?**

1.5 Project Overview

In line with the interdisciplinary nature of Physical Cultural Studies (PCS), this project utilized theories, epistemologies, and methodologies from various academic fields (Andrews & Silk, 2011). The primary theories used were radical contextualism-PCS (Grossberg, 1997), postfeminism-Women's Studies (McRobbie, 2009), and neoliberalism-Economics⁵ (Martinez & Garcia, 1998). As the study involved understanding women's interpretation of empowerment, it used a social constructionist and feminist studies epistemology that focuses heavily on the creation of meaning and the experience of women as sources of knowledge. It also required great self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher. This study used a qualitative approach conducting five semi-structured small group interviews of three to five white women between the ages 18-25. After data collection, a thematic analysis was used to identify prominent themes and findings.

The thesis outlined is as follows. Chapter Two provides an in-depth description of the theories which guided this research. This lends itself to a literature review in Chapter Three. The literature review presents academic scholarship on white women's empowerment, women of color empowerment, girl power and neoliberalism in women's sports and finally academic research on the *millennial* subjectivity. Chapter Four provides a detailed outline of the methodology including epistemological considerations and methods. Chapter Five reports on the findings from the study as well as a detailed analysis as to how the women were interpellated by the embedded subjectivities and how

⁵ Although neoliberalism is in principle an economics policy, as will be discussed later, it has developed into a much more dynamic and powerful policy affecting many different socio-cultural realms and principles of American life (Andrews & Silk, 2017)

the rhetoric has affected their lived experiences. The final chapter of the thesis is the conclusion which provides an overview of the entire project, its significance, future directions and limitations.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

In line with the interdisciplinary approach used within Physical Cultural Studies field, this thesis draws upon theories from a variety of fields to better understand how young women interpret and have experienced the prominent empowerment narrative discourse within women's national soccer. This section will review radical contextualism centered in cultural studies, postfeminism within women's studies and neoliberalism from economic studies.

2.1 PCS-Radical Contextualism

One of the tenets of PCS is its emphasis not only on self-reflexivity and context but the notion of radical contextualism. Although circuitous and abstract, Grossberg (1997) describes radical contextualism in terms of the importance of context: "In fact, I would argue that context is everything and everything is context for cultural studies; cultural studies is perhaps best seen as a contextual theory of contexts as the lived milieu of power" (p. 7-8). Radical contextualism encompasses the notion that nothing can be studied in isolation and articulations are a product and producer of culture birthed from a conjuncture. In cultural studies, the researcher realizes "the object's significance depends on the specific historical circumstances in which is it produced, circulated and consumed, and so on" (Rodman, 2008, p. 350). There is no culture without context and context cannot be seen or understood as a compilation of linear relationships. Everything is intertwined creating a ripple effect for any change in society. Due to this complex nature of context, cultural studies does not begin with context but ends with context: "Context is the endpoint of a study; the point at which one reaches following the making or drawing of the productive relations between elements which comprise the broader context"

(Andrews, 2015, p. 8). Radical contextualism requires the researcher to analyze the conjuncture and is “concerned with how relations of force are organized into relations of power by the discursive practices that situate the lived world as humans” (Grossberg, 1997, p. 257). This study examined understanding how U.S. Women’s Soccer’s promotional empowerment campaigns and small interactions of power affected women’s subjectivities and lived experiences. It examined how this conjuncture in women’s sports has led to the creation of a particular postfeminist, neoliberal articulation of empowerment. Hall (1985) defined articulation and re-articulation as

a connection or link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or a fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not ‘eternal’ but has to be constantly renewed, which can under some circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections-re-articulations-being forged (p. 113-114).

It involves “mapping connections” of how meanings came to be in particular contexts. Therefore, in this study, I analyzed how the context of U.S. Women’s Soccer’s #SheBelieves and empowerment rhetoric has affected women’s articulation of empowerment for the 21st century woman. The empowerment analyzed in this study has its roots in the 1990s, articulated as a term used to describe collective agency where women became producers of social media with the aim of challenging social norms and prejudices. However, through various means, it has been rearticulated. This re-articulation served as the basis for this study: uncovering how and what this re-articulation of empowerment has come to signify. The only way to understand the re-articulation is through context and women’s soccer is at a pivotal moment in history creating a conjuncture perfect for studying and for social change. A conjunctural analysis requires “thinking historically not as an evolutionary development, but in terms of

moments of rupture and settlement” (Jhally, 2016, p. 325) which is precisely what was occurring in women’s soccer when the research began. There was still ample hype and attention coming from the 2015 U.S. Women’s World Cup Victory whose championship game between the U.S. and Japan proved to be the most highly watched game in U.S. history (“Women’s World Cup Final is Most-Watched Soccer Match in U.S. History,” 2015.). Along with high viewership, in March of 2016, five players sued U.S. Soccer for wage discrimination and threatened to boycott the Rio Olympics if they were still underpaid. Although they did not boycott and did play in the Olympics, the wage suit gained much attention and became a topic of discussion in the research. There was also much attention on smaller women’s movements occurring in 2015-2017; Harriet Tubman was announced as the new face on the \$20 bill, President Obama designated a monument for Women’s Equal Pay Day, there were more girls than ever playing sports (Dvorak, 2016; Werner & Hennessey | AP, 2016). There were other movements occurring in sports as well; Colin Kaepernick kneeling in the NFL (Witz, 2016), Megan Rapinoe kneeling in the NWSL (Hays, 2016), Michigan State Football Players holding up their fists at games (Al-Khateeb, 2016). The combination of sport being used as a platform for social justice issues and more visible women’s movements made 2016-2017 the perfect time to engage in a radically contextual analysis of the empowerment rhetoric.

2.2 Women’s Studies-Post feminist theory

The interesting aspect of the women in this study is they have grown up during a seminal period in the understanding of women’s agency in American culture. Scholars have argued that women today are rejecting second-wave and third wave feminist movements, and in turn, displacing and disarticulating the gains made by feminists before

them. Through the process of disarticulation and displacement, young women have entered into a society in which they “believe feminism has already done its work by achieving as much social equality for women in the home and workplace as one could hope or even wish for” (Kavka, 2002, p. 32). McRobbie (2009) elaborates on how disarticulation and displacement has led to this postfeminist society. Disarticulation of feminism occurred in two ways. First, disarticulation refers to “a force which devalues, or negates and makes unthinkable the very basis of coming together...on the assumption widely promoted that there is no longer any need for such actions” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 26). McRobbie (2009) describes disarticulation as a “dispersal” strategy, an uncoupling mechanism, used to dissuade women from using collective action for political and social change. Women no longer see collective feminism as necessary believing that equality has been achieved as evidenced by the vast amount of personal choices women are offered. The second aspect of disarticulation is one that rearticulates feminism into a negative viewpoint. This theory argues that for many women today, feminism has been rearticulated from its original meaning of power, strength, cohesion and determination to improve women’s rights to a movement fueled by anger and hostility to men enabling feminism to be seen as unfeminine and repugnant to this younger generation. Along with disarticulation, within postfeminist theory is the concept of displacement in which agency is not seen through political action but within the popular culture realm and through consumerism. The disarticulation of feminism coupled with displacement has caused women to dissociate with feminism preventing any collective agency for social justice. McRobbie (2009) argues that this new postfeminism gives rise to a new form of gender power perpetuated through popular culture including sport and empowerment campaigns.

Through these campaigns and slogans of empowerment in which women are taught to be independent, self-promoting and strong, “‘our’ young women are encouraged to conceive of themselves as grateful subjects of modern states and cultures which permit such freedoms unlike repressive or fundamentalist regimes” (McRobbie, 2009, p. 27).

Although some may argue women today consider themselves to be in the postfeminist era, there is

...little solid data, ethnographic or otherwise, on what ‘young women today’ are actually thinking, and although we do not even know which ‘young women today’ are in question, in terms of class, race, age, etc., two things seem fairly clear: that even if younger women have not completely rejected feminism, they are extremely ambivalent about it and that most younger women find the label itself extremely problematic (Ortner, 2014, p. 531-532).

This study explored how and if young women incorporated postfeminist ideologies into their subjectivities as a result of #SheBelieves empowerment campaign and rhetoric in U.S. Women’s National Soccer.

2.3 Neoliberalism-Economics and Political Studies

There is a great amount of literature on women’s empowerment that is based on the commodification of girl power and its use by campaigns and organizations to gain profit rather than promote social change (Cole, 1993; Gonick, 2006). Embedded within this commodification and presentation of girl power is neoliberal ideology which highlights individualism and choice feminism. Therefore, this project investigated how the neoliberal tenets present within the empowerment rhetoric in the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup aided in the construction created consumer driven, highly regulated, neoliberal subjects.

Contemporary American society was greatly affected by the neoliberal discourse presented by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s which promoted a

decreased social welfare state and increase in privatization. As Andrews and Silk (2012) state:

While the doses vary, the basic prescription of neoliberalism is the same: purge the system of obstacles to the functioning of free markets; celebrate the virtues of individualism (recast social problems as individual problems, such as drug use, obesity, or inadequate health insurance) and competitiveness; foster economic self-sufficiency; abolish or weaken social programs; include the marginalized (often by this shift in the role of government) or poor into the labor market, on the market's terms (such as through the workfare scheme)...(Giroux, 2004; Peck, 2003; Rose, 1999, 2000) (p. 7).

A neoliberal system removes responsibility from the government and instead puts agency on the individual regardless of any social, economic, political or institutional barriers. People are taught that their own success is a direct result of one's individual agency represented through consumerist choices (Harris, 2004a). As Cornwall et al., (2008) write, "Reduced to the exercise of individual preference... 'agency' joins 'choice' in a coupling of concepts that permits little scope for any talk about power, inequities or indeed any structural constraints at all" (p. 3). This focus on choice is what many have argued has resulted in "choice feminism" or "neoliberal feminism" (Rottenberg, 2014). In neoliberalism:

Collective forms of action or well-being are eroded, and a new regime of morality comes into being, one that links moral probity even more intimately to self-reliance and efficiency, as well as to the individual's capacity to exercise his or her own autonomous choices (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 421).

In neoliberalism, success or failure are seen as a result of personal choices regardless of structural barriers. With the increased autonomy of individuals, the barriers that young women face towards gaining equality in society and in soccer are completely ignored. Instead of encouraging the government to enact welfare programs to ensure women are given equal opportunities as men (i.e. the same pay rate, equal sports coverage on TV,

curriculum in education that highlights women's achievements and contributions, etc.) responsibility is placed on individuals to work and make choices within the system. Within women's empowerment, it becomes more about performing gender through consumption choices and personal growth rather than collective agency to combat the power inequalities.

Neoliberalism is not simply an economic policy but becomes a part of and is intertwined in people's everyday experiences. McGuigan (2016) writes, "The neoliberal structure of feeling is not just a matter of ideas and emotions. It is inscribed into habitual modes of conduct and routine practices governing everyday life in a largely unexamined and semi-conscious manner" (p. 23). Andrews & Silk (2017) elaborate on McGuigan's argument describing how neoliberalism has become a structure of feeling which has become embedded in habits and everyday experiences emphasized in sporting activities. The #SheBelieves campaign and U.S. Women's National Soccer assist in the creation of a neoliberal society normalizing beliefs of personal responsibility, individuality and choice. Through these concepts of individualism, consumerism, privatization, etc., the development of empowerment rhetoric can be better analyzed in 21st century women.

CHAPTER 3: Review of Literature

This research focuses on young women's perception of the USWNT's empowerment campaigns and how it has affected their subjectivity formation and lived experience. This project was influenced by previous work conducted in various fields but primarily focused in women's studies, cultural studies and political/economic studies. This literature review will begin with a comprehensive overview of the commodification of empowerment as described in white feminist theory as well as the empowerment discourse used in women of color feminist theory. This is necessary as it prevents normalizing white feminist theory's use of empowerment showcasing the different usage and understanding in different strands of feminism. Following the broad overview of empowerment discourse will be a review focusing more specifically on empowerment campaigns in sport. This will then lend itself to a discussion of neoliberalism within sport and the production of the fan. The review will finally present literature about the idealized *millennial* subjectivity as well as literature that highlights how companies have used marketing tools to create the idealized subjectivity.

3.1 Empowerment in White Feminist Theory

Crossing multiple disciplines but with a high prevalence within women's studies and feminist theory is the belief that empowerment and girl power have become terms so overused, they have been reduced to meaningless signifiers (Cooky, 2011; Riordan, 2001). As mentioned above, women's empowerment has been an undercurrent in American society for generations. However, the first large-scale event for white women was seen in the 1860s when women began to politically organize themselves to fight for the right to vote during the first wave of feminism (McCammon et al., 2001). After being granted the right

to vote, the women's movements continued, making great gains in the 1970s and 80s during second and third wave feminism. These movements utilized a strategy of gender neutralization to empower women and eradicate women's oppression by promoting gender equality and encouraging girls they were equal to boys (Cooky, 2011). The use of empowerment as a tool for eradicating oppression continued into the 1990s Riot Grrrl movement and the introduction of girl power. The term was popularized during this movement where women in the punk rock community joined together to produce art (music, zines, posters, poetry, media) that contained "radical messages to inspire young women to take action against patriarchal capitalist institutions that may constrain them" (Riordan, 2001, p. 287). However, as the movement gained power, girl power became absorbed into mainstream society; the concept of empowerment prevalent in the 1970s and 80s became rearticulated into a concept that works within the neoliberal constraints of society where girl power represented girls becoming "the idealized form of the self-determining individual' with great purchasing power" (Gonick, 2006, p.2). Companies and organizations have bombarded society with girl power and empowerment ideology to the point where "empowerment of girls is now something that it more or less taken for granted by both children and parents, and has certainly been incorporated into commodity culture" (Banet-Weiser, 2004, p.120). Instead of maintaining its initial purpose of collective agency to fight social injustices, this commodification and the domineering empowerment narrative "is credited to its very lack of threat to the status quo for the ways in which it reflects ideologies of white, middle-class individualism and personal responsibility over collective responses to social problems"(Gonick, 2006, p. 10). In fact, the Oxford English Dictionary defines empowerment as "a self-reliant attitude among

girls, and young women manifested in ambition, assertiveness and individualism” (Oxford dictionary-American English, U.S., n.d.) and therefore “individualism and individual empowerment were valued over collective impairment” (Cooky, 2009, p. 217). Girls are taught to remain independent and work within the limitations of the current system to be the best they can be. Therefore, patriarchal institutions do not perceive girl power or empowerment of girls as a threat, and instead reinforce and promote empowerment campaigns. The new individualistic nature of empowerment teaches young girls that the way to gain power is “through direct economic and political means...[using] commodified feminism not to empower girls but, rather, to encourage their dedicated consumption to pro-girl artifacts” (Riordan, 2001, p.291). There is no political agency left in empowerment as “Girl Power [is now] a different kind of political agency, one in which girls are primarily ‘empowered’ through consuming popular culture rather than through equal pay for equal work or the right to birth control” (Cooky, 2011, p. 222).

The commodification of empowerment and intense promotion of girl power has also led to a possible postfeminist mind-frame for many young women who grew up in the 1990s. After the 1999 World Cup victory by the U.S. Women’s team, Brandi Chastain appeared on the cover of Newsweek with the tagline “Girls Rule!” whilst the Spice Girls were in their prime shouting the girl power mantra in stadiums all over the world. Within Cooky’s (2011) analysis of girl power in sport she points out the irony of the use of girl power within the 1999 World Cup victory and their lack of attention to feminist issues. She states, “Girl Power discourse related to female athletes was employed in ways that dismissed the gains produced by second wave feminism...there was no mention of the feminist movement, which was responsible for the opportunities

the U.S. soccer team experienced” (Cooky, 2011, p. 216-217). Through this empowerment discourse, it appeared that men and women were equal where the “the alignment of female athletic achievement with Girl Power sent girls cultural messages that girls and young women are empowered, and feminist proscriptions for equality, such as Title IX, are no longer needed or desired” (Cooky, 2011, pg. 217). This ignorance of structural barriers has resulted in what scholars have labeled as “neoliberal feminism”(Rottenberg, 2014). Instead of focusing on how women should break down the structural inequalities in the workforce, academics and popular culture put the responsibility on the woman to be their own advocate in society. This is prevalently seen in Sandberg's (2013) well known book, *Lean In*, in which she encourages women to stop doubting themselves and instead provides advice as to how women can develop their own skills to advance in life. She is using a neoliberal understanding of empowerment in which the individual is seen as having the complete ability and having equal opportunities to achieve success. Academic literature has followed this neoliberal trend. By the late 1990s and 2000s the empowerment literature shifted focusing on how women have become empowered through individual business opportunities. For example, Gill & Ganesh (2007) found that white women felt empowered by being successful, independent entrepreneurs. This neoliberal feminism advances both neoliberal and postfeminist ideals of individualism and choice rather than political change.

The empowerment discourse pervasive in society not only serves as an empty signifier lacking any motivation for social change, but also contributes to a dominant white, male heteronormative discourse. Popular culture, empowerment campaigns and especially sport media have “a great deal of power in confirming and reconstructing

images that are congruent with hegemonic discourses about social group relations” (Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004, p. 302). Therefore with empowerment campaigns, “despite its rhetoric of strengths and self-determination, empowerment serves a regulatory and disciplinary function, drawing the line between who is empowered (right and strong) and who is not (wrong and weak)” (Bay-Cheng, Lewis, Stewart, & Malley, 2006, p. 76). The images associated with empowerment campaigns are ones which serve to reinforce the already socialized and institutionalized acceptable white female body and “femininity” (Riordan, 2001). White girls are shown that to be empowered they must conform to traditional “feminine” standards and norms including the importance of appearance, heterosexuality, focus on the body as a manifestation of worth and morality. Riordan (2001) addresses how the Spice Girls’ “...apparent message was that empowerment came in the way one dresses, looks, and uses her sexuality for a heterosexual male gaze to get what she wants” (p. 290). This once again emphasized the path towards empowerment was to look and dress a certain way, effectively excluding a majority of the population, specifically marginalizing the minority population of girls who were ignored in the presentation of girl power in mainstream media.

The re-articulation of empowerment is one which serves the current patriarchal agenda, reinforces the dominant heteronormative female, enforces consumerism as a means towards empowerment and effectively marginalizes a large proportion of the audience it is targeting.

3.2 Empowerment in Women of Color Theory

The review of the literature on empowerment, and the #SheBelieves soccer campaign, focuses primarily on a cis-hetero white, middle class, neoliberal interpretation

of empowerment, failing to mention race, sexuality or class as contributing or detracting factors of empowerment. However, when looking at women of color feminist academic scholarship, the use of empowerment resembles a more collective, community-based interpretation and attempts to address the intersection of structural inequalities faced by many women in the U.S. When looking chronologically at the discourse in women of color feminism, it follows a trajectory which can be argued was affected by white feminism in the 1990s; the “pro-girl” era described above.

In the 1970s and 80s, women of color feminists produced an abundance of texts demanding their voices be heard as a means to combat structural inequalities. One of the most seminal texts was *This Bridge Called My Back*, an anthology of essays addressing the “whiteness of the feminist movement” and putting out a call for intersectionality. In the introduction, Moraga (1981) writes about the faith the authors must have: “I am talking about believing that we have the power to actually transform our experience, change our lives, save our lives” (p. xviii). This “power to actually transform” is one strand of the empowerment discourse in women of color scholarship. The recognition of power and empowerment is echoed in Lorde's (1984) *Sister Outsider* where she writes about the use of the erotic, anger and differences as tools for women of color to become empowered and to fight against oppression. In the introduction to *Sister Outside*, Bereano writes, “Out of [Lorde's] desire for wholeness, her need to encompass and address all parts of herself, she teaches us about the significance of difference” (Lorde, 1984, p. 8). This quote is a direct reflection of the type of empowerment work that began in the 1980s: the use of intersectionality to realize the different parts of oneself that are being affected by oppression. The use of empowerment for self-realization translated into a

plethora of work within the mental health discourse. Simultaneously literature was being published on how self-empowerment could transform to collective empowerment between women of color and be used as a means to critique and fight structural inequalities (Francis-Spence, 1994; Gibbs & Fuery, 1994; Hill Collins, 1990). This trajectory of empowerment rhetoric from mental health to collective empowerment, mirrors the feminist rallying cry, “the personal is political.” These two themes of self-empowerment and collective empowerment will be described in greater detail below.

Unlike white feminism, which argued for the use of individual empowerment as a means to attain great economic success, women of color feminism used self-empowerment as a tool to improve upon one’s mental and overall health-health damaged by the structural inequalities they face. During this time, self-empowerment models were based around intersectionality and believing that women’s power is stripped from them through multiple aspects of their identities. As Brookman and Morgan (1988) highlight, “Social relations of power are so fundamentally structured in contemporary American society by the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and class that women’s struggles for empowerment cannot be understood without making these factors central to the analysis” (p. 23). This is exactly what sociologists and psychologists did; made women aware of the systems of oppression they faced because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc. (Gutierrez, 1991). The discourse was rooted in the belief that for women of color, “empowerment begins when they change their ideas about the causes of their powerlessness, when they recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, and when they act to change the conditions of their lives” (Bookman & Morgen, 1988, p. 23). The belief was only when a woman recognizes the manners in which society strips power

from her and then how to regain that power women “create healthy individuals, healthy communities and a healthy world able to solve human problems as they develop” (Braxton, 1991, p.11). The literature argues that improving the lives of women of color begins with self-recognition, self-confidence and self-empowerment.

However, unlike white feminism which tends to focus more on individual empowerment, women of color feminism promotes using self-empowerment as a vehicle for collective empowerment. Many scholars advocate how self-empowerment cannot only be a personal endeavor but must be used for political and social change. As Hill Collins (1990) writes, “while individual empowerment is key, only collective action can effectively generate lasting social transformation of political and economic institutions” (p. 237). One way to achieve societal transformation is through the creation of women of color groups that allows for collective empowerment. When discussing the importance of groups, Francis-Spence (1994) writes, “It is when we get together as black women that the other oppressions affecting us are addressed...A feature of black women’s groups is that they allow women to articulate the differences between women, for example by age, class and sexual identity...we begin to acknowledge the other oppressions which are so much a feature of our lives” (p. 112). Groups allow for the development of intersectional approaches to critique the structure of society and only when women come together as a whole to fight the structural inequalities, can progress be made. Therefore, in the 1980s and 90s, much of the scholarship published focused on using community groups, as well as banding women of color feminist scholars together, to engage in collective empowerment.

Although there was an abundance of literature in the 1980s, as a result of the appropriation of empowerment terminology and usage by white feminists in the 1990s as well as the commodification of girl power in popular discourse, the literature about women of color empowerment dwindled. However, in the 2010s, there was a renewed interest in women of color feminist literature on empowerment. In a study from 2010, Jones de Almeida interviewed women from the grassroots organization "Sista II Sista" regarding their understanding of empowerment, and her findings fall in line with the empowerment discourse from the 1980s featuring collective and community empowerment to target inequalities. Other literature has focused on the representation of black women in popular discourse as a site of empowerment. Lindsey (2013) highlights two videos featuring young women of color embracing their natural hair as empowerment tools for other young women of color to resist and rebel against white, patriarchal ideas of beauty and behavior. In her conclusion she urges others to "create a counter-public popular culture for dismantling stereotypes and challenging established ideals and norms" (p. 33) as a tool for women of color empowerment, a cry similar to many other women of color feminists from the 1980s.

Examining women of color feminists provides a more contextual understanding of the current research project. The understandings presented by the USWNT as well as the interpellation of the women in the study must be recognized as occurring within a white, middle class context. The review of women of color literature on empowerment show how in other contexts, empowerment ideology, presentation and women's interpellation differ.

3.3 Girl Power and Empowerment Rhetoric in Sport

Within the literature surrounding the empowerment discourse specifically in women's sport, there are two branches or subthemes. There is literature describing the intense girl power narrative prominent in professional women's sports and how it can affect girls and their consumer potential. The second branch is related to how sport programs have been used as empowerment campaigns to improve girls' lives. For the purpose of this project, the first subtheme, the manifestation of girl power and empowerment in women's sports, is most pertinent and will be explored.

Different from male elite sporting events, within professional female sporting events, the female gender is constantly highlighted in both positive and negative manners. On one hand, many have argued that women are constantly demoralized, defeminized and devalued in both the narrative and presentation of professional women's sports (Bissell & Duke, 2007; Fuller, 2006; Messner & Sabo, 1990). This includes but is not limited to the specific production of TV events (camera angles, commentary), an increase in heteronormative femininity in promotional materials, discussion of the female apologetic, etc. (Davis-Delano, Pollock, & Vose, 2009; Krane, 2001; Hargreaves, 1993). However, on the other hand, the argument has been proposed that sport is an arena that allows for women to break gendered stereotypes and because of this, there is a girl power mantra present in women's sports.

These opposing viewpoints both stem from the hegemonic masculine discourse pervasive in sport. Although there is contestation over what physical activity qualifies as a sport, it is mostly agreed upon that since the inception of sports, sports have been a "male terrain" with females being seen as the "other." This male terrain can be traced

back to athletics in Ancient Greece where women were barred from participating in athletic games because they had to reserve their “finite” amount of energy for child-bearing (Kidd, 1990). This has resulted in a legacy of sport as a male dominated terrain and been an instrumental site for the construction of hegemonic masculinity; a culturally accepted form of masculinity that “subordinates femininities as well as other forms of masculinity, and rejects and shapes men's social relationships with women and other men; it represents power and authority” (Courtenay, 2000, p. 1388; Connell, 1990). Sport becomes normalized as a male dominated terrain and creates a structure which privileges males both in and out of the sporting context (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 20). Therefore female participation in sport “represents a genuine quest by women for equality, control of their own bodies, and self-definition and as such represents a challenge to the ideological basis of male domination” (Messner, 1988, p. 197).

Although women have never enjoyed the dominance in sport as men have, women have always been involved in some aspects of physical activity both in history and mythology, such as in Sparta where young girls were expected to participate in athletics, or as seen in depictions of the Greek Goddesses, Artemitis (hunting goddess) and Atalanta (huntress and wrestler) (Guttman, 1991). However even with a long history of involvement, up until the 1970s/80s, “the low priority given to women’s sports was matched by detachment of most female athletes from the goals of women’s liberation” (Guttman, 1991, p. 209) where women themselves were not interested in using sport as battlefield for gender equality. This passivity lasted until feminists and athletes converged in the 1970s with Billie Jean King’s boycott of the Pacific Southwest Championship after learning of a gross winnings gap between men and women victors. This would later result

in the famous “Battle of Sexes” tennis match creating an iconic girl power gendered discourse that remains present in women’s sports today. Professional sporting events are an arena to showcase the strength of female athletes and the possibilities of women to engage in labor at the same level as men even though women still maintain a submissive position in society (Cho, 2013). Sport provides a channel for women to challenge gender stereotypes and push back against the constraints of the patriarchal institutions of society.

As women’s sports became more popular after 1970, there was more research conducted on marketing towards this developing fan base. Although these studies contribute to the neoliberal commodification of women’s sports, they serve as important texts in understanding how male and female sports differ, specifically in the motivations, values and environment within the leagues. Research on fans of the Women’s United Soccer Association (WUSA) league found that a majority of fans were parents and young soccer-playing girls (Southall, Nagel, & LeGrande, 2005). These fans and others of professional women’s sports have different motivations and reasoning for watching sports, many of which are tied to concepts of empowerment and social justice for women. Funk, Mahoney and Ridinger (2002) found that the top four reasons why women watched the 1999 World Cup were: “ (a) the players served as important role models for young children; (b) the entertainment provided at the World Cup was a good value for the money; (c) the event provided a valuable opportunity for family members to bond with one another; (d) the matches presented a wholesome environment” (Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002, p. 34). In response to these findings, it was also shown that fans of women’s sports reported that support for women’s opportunities was important to them. Many women’s soccer fans have less interest in soccer than do “traditional” fans and yet

they support the teams because they feel that it is important that women be given an equal chance (Funk et al., 2002). Social justice and girl power then becomes an important marketing tool for organizations and companies within women's sports.

Resulting from sport being seen as a male dominated terrain, the advances made by women in this domain are given more credence and value. Therefore, girl power and female empowerment become synonymous with the gendered strides made in sports resulting in a constant, ever-present girl power theme in women's professional sports.

3.4 Neoliberalism in Women's Sports

Physical Cultural Studies is highly engaged with the "understanding [of] how the sociopolitical-economic trajectories of certain neoliberal regimes and administrations became and continue to be mapped onto and appropriated within popular forms of culture" including the effect of neoliberalism on women's sports (Andrews & Silk, 2012, p. 5).

Although soccer is not the most dominant sport in American society, it has not remained immune to the claws of neoliberalism. Cashmore and Parker (2003) point out that the commercialization of soccer is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but the novelty of the celebrity athlete is one that fits in line perfectly with neoliberal ideology; individualism, privatization, consumerism, etc. Celebrity athletes become commodities in which they are "turned into 'things' to be adored, respected, worshipped, idolized...produced and consumed" (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 215). One such soccer celebrity that has crossed the boundary between sport, pop culture and the media is David Beckham, whose celebrity status serves as a beacon of the freedoms and success available from neoliberalism. His image aligns with neoliberal ideology in multiple factions: (a) individualism: he was able to achieve success through his own hard work and dedication

to soccer, (b) white, heterosexual masculinity: publicizing his marriage to the ultra-sexualized Victoria Beckham and their children, (c) privatization: he has developed his own line of fragrances and products, (d) consumerism: serves as an endorser for numerous products (Cashmore & Parker, 2003). Beckham and other sporting celebrities became an important component to private companies and consumerism as the “type of attachment and identification in play here [celebrities and consumers] are altogether more intense, perhaps more compulsive than those that tie consumers to inanimate objects as cars, clothes, or the latest digital gadgetry” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 218). This strong attachment to athletes, provides these celebrities with great power which many use to continue producing the neoliberal discourse rampant in society.

These sporting celebrities are not exclusive to men as seen during the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup when Mia Hamm became the face of the tournament. Longman (2000) and Krane (2001a) both noted this phenomenon describing Hamm as

the face of women’s soccer, the player the girls squealed for, the one personality who had pushed through the scrim of invisibility in a sport still trying to broaden its appeal beyond the weekend fields of suburbia...She was the one featured in the television commercials, the newspapers and the magazine stories, the broadcast profiles (Longman, 2000, p. 108).

Through the intense media attention, Hamm had strong political potential to challenge the dominant male discourse in and through sport and instead succumbed to the thrones of neoliberalism becoming an endorser for Gatorade, ViaCord, various shampoos and appearing in magazines such as *People* and *Sports Illustrated* (Krane, 2001; Thomas, 2010). Throughout all of her celebrity appearances, “Hamm was constructed in such a way to represent female empowerment, while at the same time, implicitly, was constructed to define and mold this group of female athletes and fans to fit the needs of a

largely capitalist, male hegemonic society” (Thomas, 2010, p. 80). Although Hamm promoted herself under a banner of female empowerment, unity and gender equality, in reality her celebrity neoliberal antics encouraged young women to become “complacent with the idea of gender and the division [between men and women] as a natural way of thinking” (Thomas, 2010, p. 82). This strong and powerful attachment between athletes and their fans lends itself to a possible reason for the strength and prevalence of empowerment campaigns in U.S. Women’s National Soccer. Young women idolize these players providing great value, worth and power to the promotional materials which feature players.

The literature within neoliberalism and sport has expanded beyond focus on the celebrity athlete to critical analysis of advertisements and promotional materials by sporting organizations and companies. There is extensive work surrounding Nikes’ commercials targeting young women where Hamm also appeared, specifically the “girl being born in America ad” which was part of Nike’s “ads with a conscious” campaign (Lucas, 2000). The most prominent female centered ads were part of Nike’s 1990 ad campaign which included ads titled “If you let me play,” “There’s a girl being born in America” and “The Fun Police” which all positioned themselves as empowering girls through encouraging women to live a healthier lifestyle, to play sports, to learn the rules of the games and to have fun (Lucas, 2000). However, Nike’s empowerment through sport occurs within a framework that promotes individualism, rejects resistance and represents girls as lacking their own agency. When Nike first started creating ads geared directly towards women the initial advertising campaign has dialogue which “addressed athletics as a personal experience of growth rather than a path to glory and physical

power” (Katz, 1994, p. 152). Women were taught that athletics are a personal endeavor and it is it up to the individual to maintain proper health and engage in physical activity. As Cooky (2009) argues due to campaigns featuring individual athletes and messages of empowerment via Nike, “...it is now a commonly held belief that girls and women have ample opportunities to participate in sport and, consequently, that girls and women who do not participate choose to do so because they simply lack interest in sport” (p. 260). This thereby effectively ignores all potential barriers for young girls to play sports which could be “based on a number of factors, including lack of transportation to and from sport activities; lack of funds to pay for equipment and registration fees; lack of organizations that provide sport to girls in urban communities; lack of space and facilities in urban communities” (Cooky, 2009, p. 261). This focus on the individual and lack of attention to the institutional barriers removes responsibility from the government and places it on the individuals and private markets to encourage women to engage in physical activity.

There is also a huge contradiction within these campaigns; although they are placing responsibility on the individual to partake in physical activity, they are simultaneously removing that individual agency. Thomas’s (2010) analysis of the commercials describes how in the “If you let me play” ad campaign individual girls are asking permission to play sports thereby removing both collective and individual agency from women. Therefore, “women’s participation in sport is dependent on the decisions made by those who have power and influence in her life” (Thomas, 2010, p. 24). Not only does neoliberal ideology remove government responsibility to overcome gender inequalities, placing the responsibility on the individual, but ad campaigns such as Nike

go further and remove the agency from the individual thereby rendering the social equality fight impossible.

Neoliberalism in sport goes beyond the consumerist practices of corporations and celebrity athletes, but can be seen in the “market-driven” theory behind professional women’s leagues and sports coverage of female athletics. A central component to neoliberalism is privatization where government regulation is removed to allow for “free market” principles driven by consumerism (Monbiot, 2016). Although this may appear logical in that people are given more freedom and choices, it in fact maintains a hegemonic discourse and the continuation of power positions held by certain groups resulting in marginalization of others (Andrews & Silk, 2012). This can be seen in the media production of sports where women are granted much less coverage and therefore women’s participation in sport is continuously seen as being trivial, unnatural and less visible than men’s. As Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum (2013) state:

While a common sense assumption is that the lack of news media coverage is primarily the result of audience demand... the amount of coverage and the quality of coverage contributes to a particular reception of sports, one that builds and sustains audience interest and thus ‘demand’ for men’s sports, while constraining audience interest for women’s sports (p. 204).

Without government regulation and policies requiring equal coverage of both men’s and women’s sports, ESPN and other media outlets create sport as a male-dominated terrain where not only are women’s athletic abilities absent but when women are present they are “sexually objectified or the targets of humorous sensualization...trivializing female athletes and women’s sports (Cooky et al., 2013, p. 205). Producers explain the lack of attention given to women’s sports is due to constraints by market forces and the desire to produce television that meets audience demands. However, producers ignore their agency

and affect in producing the desired demand. Production efforts plays an important role in producing demand and therefore by only focusing on male sports they are enhancing interest in men's sports simultaneously marginalizing women's sports. "It has been known for many years that sports news and highlights shows do not simply 'give viewers what they want,' in some passive response to demand. Instead, there is a dynamic reciprocal relationship" (Cooky et al., 2013). Neoliberalism grants large media corporations the ability and power to control this market therefore effectively maintaining a patriarchal, male dominated society.

The combination of celebrity athlete endorsers, media production of sport and the commercialization of female athletes has led to the complete removal of governmental responsibility of promoting gender equality in sport. Instead women and society are taught that in order to be a contributing member of society, i.e., empowered, one must partake in the tenets of neoliberal ideology pervasive in American culture.

3.5 *Millennial Subjectivity*

This research project investigated how women who have grown up in a pro-girl era popularized in and through women's professional soccer, have internalized this rhetoric and thus affected their subjectivity. These women, who grew up in the 1990s/early 2000s, are part of a larger generation of people considered to be *millennials* (Strauss & Howe, 2000). However, questions arise as to what is a *millennial* and what it means to be a *millennial*. People have defined it by age (Oblinger, 2003; Sandeen, 2008), others by certain characteristics (Strauss & Howe, 2000), some by consumer demographics (Smith, 2011). Yet when looking through the literature on the *millennial* generation, there are no boundaries or demarcations to definitively describe the *millennial*.

In an *Atlantic* article, Bump (2014) explains how the Census Bureau of the U.S. does not define any generation other than the Baby Boomers and instead cites a sociology professor at Columbia University who stated, “I think the boundaries end up getting drawn to some extent by the media... and the extent to which people accept them or not varies by the generation” (Bump, 2014). Based upon this lack of demarcation, this study suggests the *millennial* subject presented in popular and academic discourse is actually a discursive formation. The *millennial* subject presented is actually a mythological, idealized subjectivity embedded with popular rhetoric. The analysis in this research project, therefore, is not attempting to reify or understand the *millennial* subjectivity but rather what parts of the *millennial* discourse have been interpellated by these young women and how the discourse has affected the manners in which these women construct their identities and subjectivities.

The following section will explore some of the literature which has highlighted the *millennial* discourse and it’s interpellation by society. The first section will review literature on subjectivity formation, ideologies and ideological state apparatus based upon theories proposed by Althusser. This section will also include marketing literature which points to how consumers are created through promotional materials to illustrate the potential and creation of discursive formations. The second section of this literature review focuses on the embedded subjectivities present within the *millennial* discourse within popular culture in the United States. It will focus on the discourse’s presentation of (1) the generic *millennial*, (2) neoliberal tendencies of a *millennial* and (3) the idealized female *millennial* created in the 1990s pro-girl era.

3.5.1 Creation of the Millennial Subjectivity

Before reviewing the actual content of the discourse surrounding the *millennial* generation's subjectivity, it is imperative to understand the mechanisms of how the *millennial* subjectivity has been manufactured. This will be accomplished by reviewing the literature on theories of subjectivity identity and interpellation especially highlighting Althusser's theories of interpellation, identity and subjectivity. This will be followed by an overview of work conducted analyzing how marketing has been effective in creating an idealized subjectivity.

This research project utilized a post-structuralist approach to the construction of an individual's subjectivity noting that "knowledge of the world derives from the interaction between a primary, originally contentless, subjectivity and language that pre-exists the user of it, which generates the 'self'" (Berman, 1988, p.173). Through this ideology, subjectivity becomes fluid, malleable and generative as people are affected by their surroundings, surroundings Althusser named "Ideological State Apparatuses" (Berman, 1988; Weedon, 2004). These "Ideological State Apparatuses" are seen as, for example, religion, education, the state, the media, and are sites which produce an ideology through which people gain an identity and become subjects of that ideology (Weedon, 2004). Althusser (1971) described ideology as "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (p. 162) while other scholars have described it as representing the "imagined unified image of selfhood" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 173). The "Ideological State Apparatuses" produce an ideology, a particular set of beliefs, customs, morals, needs and wants that people can be attracted to or hailed by. This "hailing" is what Althusser has described as interpellation (Weedon,

2004). As people are bombarded with various ideologies throughout the day, they recognize various aspects of their lives in the ideology and through this recognition, people begin to generate and modify their subjectivity. One's subjectivity is the "conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world...it is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1997). Therefore, one's subjectivity is not unified or fixed but rather generative, affected by the "Ideological State Apparatuses" (Berman, 1988; Weedon, 1997). With regards to the this study, people construct their personal subjectivities based upon the extent to which they are interpellated by aspects of the idealized *millennial* subjectivity embedded in the *millennial* empowerment discourse.

Based upon Althusser's approach of interpellation, there has been a significant amount of research conducted on how marketing has functioned to produce an idealized subjectivity. Using a post-structuralist understanding, *millennial* is seen as a manufactured, artificial subjectivity arising from marketing and the discourse. This concept of manufacturing the *millennial* mirrors literature about the creation of the consumer in the postmodern era. Firat & Venkatesh (1995) argue that in the modern era, the consumer was not discovered by the market but was rather produced by the market as a result of rising expectations and increased advertising creating new needs and wants that had never existed before. As people watched commercials, they were interpellated by various aspects of it which then led to lifestyle changes and consumer habits. This notion of the creation of the consumer can be applied to the creation of a generation.

As marketing increased in the modern era and consumption became a hallmark of American life, advertising and the media were used as tools to influence people's impulses and needs directing them towards certain consumer choices. Although marketing and branding have constantly been used to manipulate and affect buyer's behaviors, the 21st century marks a shift in the potential capabilities of marketing. In earlier generations, the producer and consumer were seen as separate entities with a one-way stream of information. However, in the 21st century, the dichotomous relationship is destroyed and the distinction between the two is blurred. As Powell (2013) states

In the twenty-first century, the promotional industries are acutely aware that much promotion commences with the construction of the consumer as a desiring subject who makes purchases in order to fulfill the lifestyle choices made available to them through marketing and advertising (p. 62).

Companies are creating and presenting a lifestyle and embedded within this lifestyle are idealized subjectivities. Through marketing techniques, people become interpellated by both the lifestyle and subjectivities and through this connection, people discipline their choices, subjectivities and bodies. This concept of discipline is often presented by scholars who utilize a Foucauldian approach to suggest companies are disciplining the body and *millennial* subjectivity through the *millennial* discourse. Producers, using market surveillance strategies and data analysis are able to track online users behavior, essentially creating a modern day panopticon (Elmer, 2004). People become "digital consumers" who are "...confronted with a force outside his or her body and inner consciousness that actively constructs, manipulates, multiples, and distributes his or her digital identities through the network" (Zwick & Dholakia, 2004, p. 34). This outside force is the combination of various marketers using data surveillance to essentially discipline the *millennial* subjectivity, both digitally online and physically in reality. For

example, when purchasing items, there are many options available for each product which induces a sense of individuality yet simultaneously a “group-think” mentality develops as people become influenced and directed towards products by the purchases made by others; “best-selling” “most-popular” “other customers viewed” lists (Powell, 2013). Markula & Pringle (2006) elaborate on Foucault writing, “Foucault maintained that discipline takes ‘functional inversions’ across several institutions that then work together as sites for disciplinary techniques” (p. 81). The “best-selling” lists, articles about *millennials* and marketing towards this young generation function similarly to the “several institutions” discussed by Foucault serving as sites of disciplinary power to create and regulate the 21st century youth. There are more possible sites of surveillance and institutions of power than ever before as young people are bombarded with images and information on a daily basis through television available on TVs, computers, phones, etc. Fritzsche (2004) writes, “As many cultural scholars have pointed out, media consumption nowadays cannot be seen as an isolated process of encoding, but should be examined as a phenomenon embedded in daily life” (p. 156). There is an overproduction of ideas of the *millennial* subjectivity and this study attempted to unearth how this overproduction has been interpellated by young women. When relating this back to the current study, it can be seen how U.S. Women’s National Soccer promotes a particular lifestyle (young, athletic woman) which their fans embody in their every day life. As women associate with this lifestyle, they are easily interpellated by the corresponding subjectivity.

The discourse not only affects consumer behavior patterns and *millennial* subjectivity but reproduces power relationships. Foucault expanded upon Althusser’s

notions of “Ideological State Apparatuses” as more than just sites of ideology and subjectification. Rather, Foucault proposed that “an apparatus is a confluence of technologies of power, discourse, practices and material arrangements that constrain and direct what is possible-‘truth’ discourses, or objective knowledge, help circulate the effects of power...” (Bazzul, 2016, p. 11). Many scholars have argued the pro-girl movement of the 1990s and the current presentation of the *millennial* discourse are two sites which serve to maintain the unequal power relationship between genders in America. The 1990s discourse presented a young woman who was strong, empowered and equal to those around her. Scholars have argued that young women have been interpellated by these notions of equality and empowerment thereby allowing the generation to ignore the unequal treatment of women in American society (Cooky, 2011; Harris, 2004a). When describing girl power and empowerment discourse of the 1990s, Cooky (2011) writes, “On the surface, individualist notions of Girl Power! seemed to be empowering, yet they constructed barriers to both girls’ activism in general and girls’ engagement with feminist politics in particular” (p. 216). Many female *millennials* were interpellated by this discourse which gave rise to the postfeminist era which many academics believe American women have entered (Heywood, 2007; McRobbie, 2009). The literature is pointing towards the conclusion of how the female *millennial* discourse actually produced the current generation’s subjectivity.

3.5.2 Contextualizing the Millennial Discourse: The Embedded Idealized Subjectivities

The review above has described how people’s subjectivities are created, altered and generated through the idealized subjectivities embedded within various discourses as well as how marketing has been an effective tool in the 21st century to discipline and

affect one's subjectivity. The next sections will discuss the specific embedded subjectivities of the *millennial* discourse that has been presented to the women in the study, including the overarching *millennial* persona, neoliberal tendencies and the idealized female *millennial*.

The term "*millennial*" was coined in 1991 by generational scholars, Strauss and Howe (Horovitz, 2012) and generally accepted throughout academia as a person who came to adulthood in the 2000s; those born between 1982 and 2003 (Oblinger, 2003; Sandeen, 2008). Strauss and Howe (2000) have outlined seven defining characteristics of *millennials* that have been popularized throughout society and contributed to the fictionalized *millennial* discourse. These construed characteristics are: they believe themselves to be special and vital to the nation; they have grown up sheltered; they are confident; they are team-oriented; they are high achieving and highly educated; they feel pressure to excel; and they are conventional in that they believe social rules are necessary. These positive characteristics are seen in the media and in popular culture. For example, there was a *New York Times* piece published titled, *Generation Nice: The Millennials Are Generation Nice*; a research study conducted by *Pew Research Center* which creates a *millennial* who is "confident, connected and open to social change"; and a *Forbes* piece titled *New Millennial Values* which highlights a *millennial* as a person who is engaged in meaningful work, enjoys collaboration and prioritizes freedom of choice—all of which echo the characteristics developed by Strauss and Howe's work (Gross, 2012; Street, NW, Washington, & Inquiries, 2010; Tanenhaus, 2014). The *Pew Research Center* report on people they defined as *millennials* showed that people who classify themselves as *millennials* said the top five reasons their generation was unique was (1) technology use,

(2) Music/popular culture, (3) liberal/tolerant, (4) smarter and (5) clothes. Popular discourse is describing is a group of younger Americans who are greatly involved in technology, embrace differences and value social justice causes.

Although much of popular discourse presents positive attributes of the *millennial* subjectivity, many other articles present a very different, negative version of it. The *New York Times* acknowledged that many *millennials* are labeled as narcissistic while an online blog, *The Odyssey*, has a whole post dedicated to *Why There is a Negative Connotation with the Term 'Millennial'* (Heffernan, 2016). In the post, Heffernan (2016), a young woman herself, describes her interpretation of the negative *millennial* discourse:

Portrayed as lazy in the media, *millennials* get labeled as a generation full of cry babies and suck ups who are sheltered and supervised... The constant need to be praised, to feel important, the need to always be right...They feel they are here to solve the world's problems that older generations have failed to solve...The generation of *millennials* has been labeled entitled... Because of this feeling of entitlement, the culture the generation of *millennials* has fabricated is one that is occupied with free handouts. We are lazy because we expect to get what we want when we want it (p. 1).

This post summarizes much of the discourse presented about *millennials* especially after the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election in which the classification of people was blamed for Hillary Clinton's devastating loss. After the election popular media was filled with articles such as *Yes, you can Blame Millennials for Hillary Clinton's Loss* and *Blame Millennials for President Trump* (Blake, 2016; Kirchick, 2016). Some young people who identify as *millennials* have become so frustrated with the blame and negative associations they are fighting back using sarcasm and irony: *All the Things the Media has Blamed Millennials for in 2016* and *17 Times Millennials really Fucked in up 2016* in which the articles cite headlines such as *Blame Millennials for the Vanishing bar of Soap* and *How Millennials Ended the Running Boom* (Downs, 2016). Many people categorized

as *millennials* recognize these negative attributes of laziness and entitlement that have been rampantly reproduced in mainstream America. As this review shows, the *millennial* subjectivity in popular discourse differs and has various contradictions showing the power of marketing campaigns and their intended effects.

One aspect of the presented *millennial* discourse is that the idealized *millennial* is a person who is educated and fights for social justice. However, unlike previous generations, advocacy is no longer accomplished through protests or canvassing but through consumer choices (Harris, 2004b; Street et al., 2010). The presented discourse encompasses a more neoliberal approach to activism showcasing how in the 21st century, activism comes through consumer citizenship. The socially constructed *millennial* discourse creates a linkage between consumption and morality as Harris (2004b) summarizes:

Young people are newly obliged to create their own opportunities for livelihood, and civic engagement is difficult to operationalize in the absence of robust structures for participation. Consumption has come to stand in as a sign both of successfully secured social rights and of civic power. It is primarily as consumer citizens that youth are offered a place in contemporary social life, and it is girls above all who are held up as exemplars of this new citizenship (p. 163).

Millennial discourse teaches people the best way to be a contributing member of society is through their purchasing power and thus far it seems to be working. A website dedicated to marketing practices for younger people said that 50% of people between the ages of 18-30 (how they classify people as *millennials*) are more willing to purchase from a company if their purchases support a cause and 37% support paying even more to purchase a product or service to support a cause they believe in (“Who Are *Millennials* | *Millennial* Marketing,” n.d.). Another study found an even greater number in which 89% of those polled responded they favored companies that support solutions to specific social

issues (Tanenhaus, 2014). This is just one example of how people's subjectivities and actions are being affected by the presentation of the consumer citizens as the ideal *millennial*.

Thus far the discourse on *millennials* has shown the idealized subjectivity as one who is technology-driven, confident, open to social change and engaging in activism through their consumer practices and online behaviors. However, in possibly no other area is the consumer citizen most explicitly seen than in the presentation of the ideal female *millennial* subjectivity. As discussed in the literature on postfeminism, women, have, since the 1990s, become seen as one of the most untapped demographics for marketers. Marketers capitalized upon the win of the 1999 Women's U.S. National Soccer Team as well as the Spice Girls, Power puff Girls, Xena and the entire "pro-girl" movement to popularize the female consumer citizen. Cooky (2011) describes the relationship between this pro-girl movement and marketers explaining how since the 1990s, "marketers have taken notice of the girls...and their sport participation, consumption behaviors...Girl Power! and its athletic representatives were not featured in advertising solely to promote images of girl empowerment; they were also there to sell running shoes and sports bras" (p. 222). As young women began to see representations of women in marketing, and there were increased notions of empowerment used in advertising,

girls became the emblem of this consumer citizen via a problem knitting together of feminist and neoliberal ideology about power and opportunities, combined with socioeconomic conditions that appear to have favored their rise in status over that of young (and older) men (Harris, 2004b, p.165).

A new lifestyle for women was born from this 1990s discourse. In order to be part of this new lifestyle, not only did a woman have a consumer power, but the idealized woman

was one who took personal responsibility for her successes and failures rather than looking towards larger institutions or the state. The marketing and creation the female *millennial* subjectivity

weds the discourse of liberal feminism with that of neoliberalism, constructing sports as a space where girls learn to take responsibility for their own lives...part of the new global economy that relies on individuals with flexibility who are trained to blame their inevitable 'failures' on themselves rather than the system their lives are structured within (Heywood, 2007, p. 104).

During the 1990s and continuing to the 21st century, marketing, women's professional soccer and empowerment campaigns created the idealized female subjectivity: a woman whose power was derived through consumer choices, who was independent and who took complete responsibility for her life ignorant of any societal barriers or obstacles.

3.6 Conclusion

As evidenced from this literature review, there is an extensive literature on empowerment, neoliberalism and girl power but it is lacking in regards to how women have been interpellated by and experienced these discourses. This focus predominantly on the presentation of the empowerment *millennial* discourse without reviewing the internalization by young women has occurred even though researchers agree on the great political potential of empowerment and girl power campaigns. Therefore, this project will fill this void by examining how women have been interpellated by and have embodied the subjectivities present within the empowerment campaign in women's professional soccer.

CHAPTER 4: Epistemology, Methodology and Methods

As well as using an interdisciplinary approach to the theoretical framework, PCS methodology requires scholars to draw on epistemologies, methodologies and methods from a wide array of fields. For this project, epistemological frameworks, methodological and analytical techniques were drawn from, but not limited to, feminist theory, cultural studies, and psychology. What follows is an overview of epistemological understandings, methodological considerations and methods used during data collection. As part of the process of self-reflexivity, there is an interlude to express my personal feelings about events that transpired during the data collection process.

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Social Constructionist Epistemology

The purpose of this study is to better understand how young women were interpellated by, internalized and embodied the empowerment narrative pervasive in women's sports. Therefore, from the very beginning, the project sets itself up to be a qualitative research project. One of the basic principles of qualitative research is that it uses the natural settings as empirical sites and seeks to understand concepts within a particular context and how people bring meaning to phenomena within these contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this particular research study, the phenomena of importance is empowerment but more specifically on how women interpret empowerment. It is based around an individual's understanding, interpellation, connection, experience and stories of empowerment and therefore must be approached from a qualitative standpoint. Since this project focuses on only women's interpretations and their understanding and experiences of empowerment, it can be considered to be in line with feminist research.

Although there is debate as to what constitutes feminist methodology, one of the distinctive features of feminist research is the focus and recognition of the importance of women's experiences as resources for social analysis as well as women being the primary investigator to reveal these experiences (Harding, 1987; Reinharz, 1992). Many feminists argue that in social sciences, traditional epistemologies have excluded the possibility of women being the "agents of knowledge" and instead placed all value on men's understandings of society. Therefore, this study attempts to disengage with the traditional stance on epistemologies by using a social constructivist paradigm that focuses on how women make meaning of the world and how they have become the "knower" of knowledge (Harding, 1987).

The social constructivist paradigm follows the assumption that reality is "between a perceived external reality and a subjective meaning-making process...interpretation is that which occurs between the internal processes of the mind and the externally available processes of the social world" (Daly, 2007, p. 32). It takes into account how the

interpretive process are deeply embedded in, and shaped by, the shared meanings that we have about activity, language, and cultural symbols. As a result, we don't simply create idiosyncratic meanings of behavior, but we construct meanings on the basis of socially available, shared understandings of reality (Daly, 2007, p. 32).

These meanings are constructed through the course of interaction and experience. This paradigm is also appropriate in that it "seeks to theorize sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). In regards to this study, the shared meaning of empowerment and how empowerment is constructed through women's engagement with women's soccer was explored.

4.1.2 Feminist Reflexivity

Although, there is no singular method or epistemological framework used in feminist research, my approach as a researcher reflects the feminist perspective of incorporating the researcher into the project and seeing the involvement of the researcher as a person. For many feminist researchers, their research question and project is spurred from their own experiences in life and problems they see in society (Reinharz, 1992). This is how I began my research: thinking of my experiences playing and watching soccer starting at a very young age. Throughout my childhood, I always had women soccer players to watch and assumed it was equal for men and women. However, now that I am older, I can see the inequalities and wonder how, after 20 years, more progress has not been made. This was the beginning of my research, a question on the lack of progress that contradicted the messages of inspiration, hope and empowerment I saw as a child.

Within feminist studies, and in line with radical contextualism, research does not happen in a vacuum and instead is a part of the context of which it is studying (Grossberg, 1997; Harding, 2004). Although this may lead to strong subjectivity, translatability through self-reflexivity is a tool used to showcase the different powers and contexts which played a role in the construction of findings. It was vital that I reflected upon and balance both my insider and outsider status to be aware of how my positionality affected the research and was part of the research process (Adams, 2012; Reinhartz, 1992). As Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane (2012) state, “The goal of cultural praxis is to blend theory, lived culture, and social action with a self-reflexive sensibility to raise awareness as to how one’s own values, biases, social position, and self-identity categories

impact participants within the research...” (p. 35). Harding (2004) describes this self-reflexive sensibility as a requirement of strong objectivity and places the onus of the observer to recognize their bias in the project. She highlights that “[a]ll of the kinds of objectivity-maximizing procedures focused on the nature/and or social relations that are the direct object of observation and reflection must also be focused on the observers and reflectors-scientists and the larger society whose assumptions they share” (Harding, 2004, p. 55). It was vital that throughout the project, I understood how my contextual understanding of the world influenced this project.

When conducting the research, I was considered an insider as I almost met all the criteria for the research; classified as *millennial*, white soccer fan and I was able to relate to the participants as we shared similar backgrounds. Being an insider served as a benefit because as an insider, I “have a monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge of a group; the insider is ‘endowed with special insight into matters necessarily obscure to others, thus possessed of a penetrating discernment’” (Baca-Zinn, 1979, p. 210). When the participants discussed a particular game or commercial or aspect of their childhood, I easily understood and related to them. This created a more conversational and relaxed atmosphere and the small group interviews felt more like friend groups than interviews. This comfortable environment was beneficial to data collection as the women who at first were quiet, quickly overcame that shyness when they found commonalities with me and the others in the group. However, I also felt that my insider status affected the direction of the group conversations. My background from PCS and the schooling I have had positioned me with strong feelings towards empowerment and feminism. At times it was very difficult to keep my thoughts and opinions from affecting the women. Being aware

of my strong positionality, I attempted to remain as neutral as possible throughout the small group interviews preventing myself from reacting either positively or negatively to certain participant answers or agreeing and disagreeing with what had been said.

Although I attempted to remain more neutral, there were instances where my body language and tone of voice affected their answer resulting in interviewer bias and perhaps presenting findings that align with my apriori predictions of the research (Hildum & Brown, 1956).

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Interviewing Style

Since this study was based on a social constructionist paradigm, when approaching the interview, I followed the proclamation by Holstein & Gubrium (2003) in which an interview should be viewed as “a context specific social encounter in which knowledge is constructed in dialogue with participants, rather than a simple information gathering operation” (p. 4). Therefore when approaching the interviews, I used a semi-structured interview style which allowed me, the interviewer, to be an “active participant in the interview situation and ‘probe’ for further information” (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 85) resulting in a more conversational, fluid and dynamic interview. I was able to prepare a series of questions before that would be used in all focus groups providing structure and similarity between all the groups (see Appendix A for the interview guide). To ensure the pre-set list of questions was effective for my research question, I conducted two pilot studies. Although the pilot studies were comprised of women who did not meet the criteria for the study, working with them allowed me to continuously edit and revise the interview guide to ensure an engaged and fruitful discussion during the interviews. It

was through these pilot studies the idea to the conduct two mini “ice-breaker” activities was formalized.

Through meetings with my thesis committee members and advisors, it was decided to conduct small group interviews rather than individual interviews. One of the main reasons why small group interviews occurred rather than individual interviews was because groups aid with participant recall of memories and stimulate “embellished descriptions of specific events...or experiences shared by members of the group” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 704). Through the group format, women were able to dialogue with each other about their memories of the 1999 and 2015 World Cup as well as their shared understandings and construction of the girl power/empowerment discourse. This dialogue and shared creation of meaning was in line with the usage of the social constructionist epistemological paradigm and influence of feminist methodology. A social constructionist paradigm is interested in how people create meaning through society and feminist researchers have emphasized the contextual nature of research which cannot be achieved by withdrawing an individual from society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Wilkinson, 1999). Small group interviews allows for society to enter into the research and an examination of the ordinary social processes (discussion, interaction) and allow for a more naturalistic approach to research (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Krueger, 1988). Krueger (1988) noted that “people are social creatures who interact with others, who are influenced by the comment of others and who make decisions after listening to the advice and counsel of people around them” (p. 44). The use of a small group interview which allows for this more naturalistic approach to conversation provided an opportunity to produce richer data and insights that could

possibly not been accomplished through individual interviews (Morgan,1998). Small group interviews allowed women to engage with each other and the questions surrounding empowerment thereby creating more authentic and reliable data.

Another reason for using a small group interview was to address the balance of power and shift that power from me, as the interviewer, to the participants. Although I was ultimately the one leading the discussion, simply by having more participants than the interviewer, my power was decreased creating a less intimidating environment for the participants (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). Small group interviews showed themselves to be effective in creating an environment conducive to research utilizing a social constructionist paradigm.

Before collecting data, it was decided to obtain five small group interviews with three to five participants each. It was hypothesized that three to five participants would allow for participants to each give their perceptions and successfully dialogue with each other without there being an excess of people which would become overwhelming. It was also believed that five group interviews would provide data saturation, determined once the same themes and ideas continuously emerged and been explained in depth. All interviews were conducted at a Middle-Atlantic Level One Research University.

4.2.2 Recruitment and Demographics

There were various sampling methods used to recruit participants for this study. Since the study is explicitly examining young women's perception of empowerment, the primarily used sampling method was criterion based purposive sampling in which candidates were selected based upon particular attributes and characteristics. The requirements for this study were: a person who identifies as a woman born between 1991

and 1998 (18-25 years old); who considers themselves a women's soccer fan; and specifically watched at least two of the USWNT's games during the 2015 World Cup. Although the identity of a *millennial* will be analyzed, this particular age group fits within current literature in regards to women who came to adulthood in the 2000s. Also, it was required that the participants watched at least two of the USWNT's games, the basis being that through their viewing consumption they would have been familiar with either the #SheBelieves campaign or other promotional material by the USWNT. Convenience sampling was also used as participants were selected from universities located close to the research institution and snowball sampling was used in which participants' friend and social groups were contacted (Markula & Silk, 2011).

Recruitment occurred primarily across the particular university's campus. Paper fliers were posted across the campus including the various departments, school union and coffee shops. Fliers were also posted in off-campus coffee shops and neighborhood restaurants in the surrounding areas. Along with paper copies of fliers, digital copies were emailed to students via departmental list serves at the particular university as well as surrounding colleges and universities (Women's Studies, Kinesiology, American Studies, Psychology). Besides list serves, the flier and recruitment posting was distributed through the use of social media. I personally posted information about it via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and had a network of "Facebook friends" repost the information. I also utilized Facebook to connect with women's club soccer organizations at surrounding universities and communities to connect with women's soccer captains who distributed the information to their teams. In total I recruited eight women for two pilot interviews and 18 women for the five small group interviews. Each group contained between three

to five women, aged 18-25, all of whom identified as white or Latina (See Appendices B and C for participant and group demographics). For the purposes of this study, I am including the women who identified as Latina as white. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the five races are white, black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and the U.S. government issued standards specifying Hispanic/Latina as ethnicities and not a race. (“Race Classifications,” 2013). Therefore, in this study, all women who classified themselves as Latina will be considered as the white race. However, this is a point of contestation in academia and popular discourse and could be considered in future research (D. Cohn, 2014; N. Cohn, 2014; Liu, 2014).

4.2.3 Reflexive Practices

As described above, when conducting feminist research, especially feminist research utilizing a radical contextualist approach, it is important for the researcher to understand their involvement and effect on the project. It was important throughout the project to realize that my findings are only one of many possible interpretations of the data; it is only “one perspective on a moment in time” (Adams, 2012, p. 16). It is through one’s positionality that they interpret research and therefore throughout the study it was vital that I incorporated reflexive practices as tools to better understand how my positionality was affecting the project. Throughout the project, these reflexive practices took the forms of memos written after each interview about my thoughts, observations, feelings throughout the interview which allowed me to take a step back and separate my identity from that of the project. Based on examples provided in Schinke et al.’s (2012) article on reflexive practices, some questions I used to guide my memo-writing were:

How did my identity and social position affect the participant responses? What actions (verbal/non-verbal) did I exhibit which might have affected the discussion? How did my personal beliefs on empowerment and feminism affect the questions I asked and affect my body language? “How did my own identity, self-related views, values and social position privilege some questions in the data collection over others?” (p. 37).

Along with writing memos, throughout the data analysis process, I engaged in self-analysis constantly questioning myself as to why and how I was assigning certain codes. In my proposal I used a template provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) to make critical decisions about coding before I beginning the analysis process. As I conducted self-analysis and “self-checks” while coding, I would return to those decisions as guide to ensure my positionality was not negatively affecting the research. A final reflexive practice was to acknowledge my positionality in the thesis. Throughout this thesis I have addressed my subjectivity and explored how it has affected the interpretation of the findings. By highlighting and making my positionality known, I am engaging in reflexivity.

4.2.4 Ethical Concerns to Participants

With regards to risk and ethical concerns, there were no known risks to the participants. Participants were asked questions that were related to their viewing of the World Cup, perceptions of the players/female athletes, thoughts on empowerment, physical activity participation and questions related to the internalization of the empowerment discourse. In the beginning of the interview, each participant was read the Statement of Consent (Appendix D), given an opportunity to ask questions and asked to sign the form to signify their understandings and consent to be interviewed, recorded and

information analyzed. They were also told that if any of the questions made them uncomfortable, they could refuse to answer or stop participation at any time in the study. In the end, none of the participants left the room or refused to answer questions. Although there was no financial compensation for the study, I did bring baked goods for each session.

To ensure confidentiality, three steps were taken. First, each participant was given a pseudonym and all identifiable information in this paper has been altered so as to not reveal a participant's identity. Secondly, all data (audio files, transcriptions and notes) were stored on a password-protected computer and corresponding back up drives. Not only was a password required to turn on the computer, but each file containing research data was password protected. Thirdly, all data will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. This includes shredding all paperwork related to the research and deletion of all digital files. This project was IRB approved by the University of Maryland (Appendix E).

4.2.5 Analysis of empirical material

Once the data was collected (interviews conducted and transcribed) analysis occurred that primarily followed a thematic analysis approach as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006). A thematic analysis approach is “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail...it interprets various aspects of the research topic” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using a thematic analysis approach allowed structure in the initial steps of analysis but also afforded the necessary flexibility as the analysis continued. Although there is great flexibility with thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) highlight six

critical decisions that must be made prior to data analysis. These decisions not only guided the analysis but provided transparency and accountability for choices that were made later during the actual coding stages. In my proposal, I reviewed each of the six criteria and decided as to how to analyze the data. However, during the actual data analysis these criterion were used more as a guide rather than strictly adhering to the decisions (See Appendix F for the pre-analysis decisions). Once those pre-analysis decisions were made and all data collected, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis process as a guide for data analysis. The first step required familiarizing myself with the data after the data collection period. This was accomplished through personally transcribing the interviews and re-reading all the transcripts. While transcribing and re-reading, I wrote memos that highlighted possible themes and patterns I noticed during this preliminary stage. The second phase was similar to open coding conducted in grounded theory. I used the qualitative data software company, Dedoose, to actively open the code the data. I went through all five transcripts, coding line-by-line assigning very basic, preliminary codes as a means to generate ideas. I did not restrict each line to one code and therefore some passages of transcript were assigned multiple codes. Once this stage was completed, I had a total of 72 different codes that were used over 580 times throughout the five transcripts (See Figure 1).

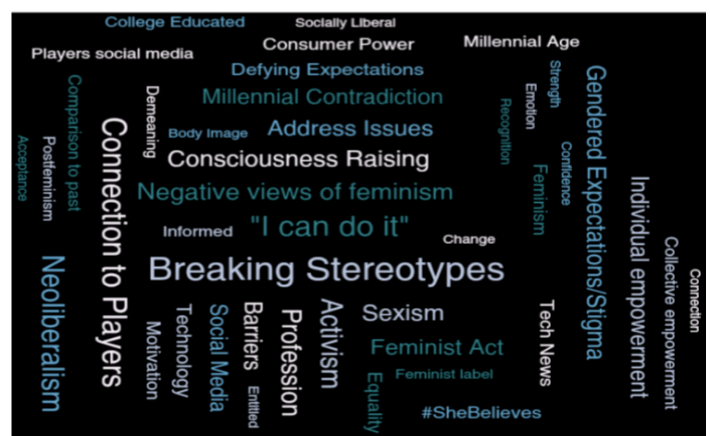


Figure 1. Code Cloud produced from Dedoose. Size of text illustrates frequency of code.

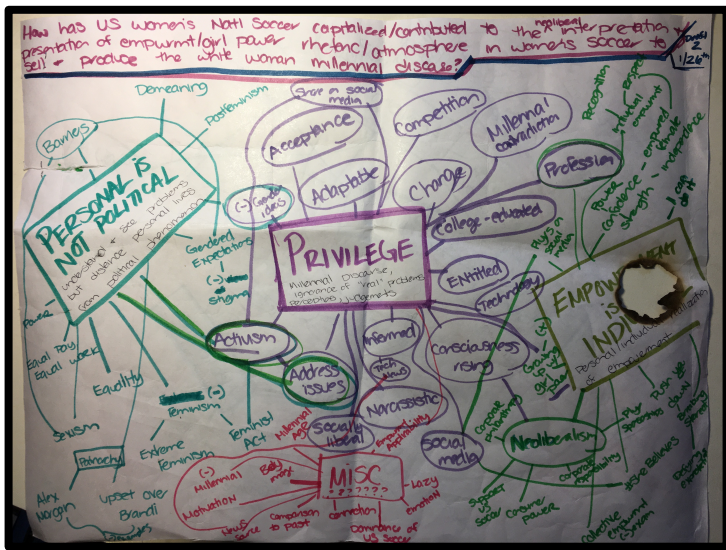


Figure 2b: Second attempt at code mapping during stage four of the data analysis process

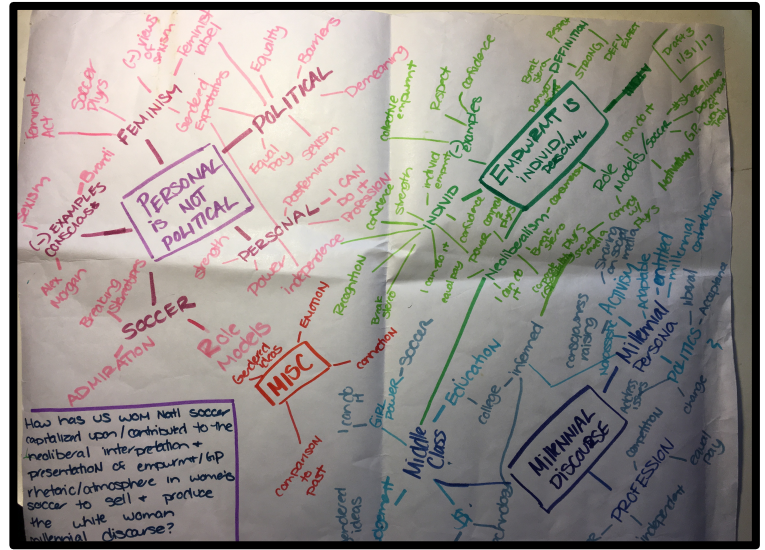


Figure 2c. Third and final attempt at code mapping during stage four of the data analysis process

4.2.6 Research Concerns

One of the areas of most concern for this study revolves around issues of representation both in terms of a diverse sample (as it was only white, educated women) but also with regards to the specific discourse. The empowerment discourse of study is targeted towards white, middle-class women completing excluding the voices of other races, classes and marginalized communities. There is the potential this project will endure similar criticisms to that which second wave feminism suffered, namely a project that is Anglocentric in nature and contributing to the normalization of whiteness (Riordan, 2001). However, this critique of the research project is part of the troubling nature of the empowerment discourse in general. As discussed earlier, Bay-Cheng et.al (2006) describes how the current articulated version of empowerment serves as a regulatory function as to who is empowered and who is not, who is seen and whose voices are heard. The empowerment discourse presented in mainstream U.S. does not affect, speak to or produce the same identity formation for women of different ethnic or social groupings- this issue will be addressed in the conclusion. Also, to combat the critique of contributing

to the normalization of whiteness, throughout this thesis I seek to emphasize how these findings and application are specific to the experiences of white women. By explicitly stating I am studying white women, I am avoiding generalization of these findings.

Another area of concern with the research project is my insider/outsider status and self-reflexivity. This was discussed in multiple sections of this thesis (Feminist Reflexivity, Reflexive practices, interlude, conclusion) and various steps were taken to ensure my subjectivity is made evident in how it affected this project (See Reflexive practices).

4.3 Interlude

As discussed throughout the paper, an important aspect when conducting qualitative research, especially utilizing feminist methodology and a radically contextual approach, is to understand how the researcher is affecting the research (Harding, 2004; Reinharz, 1992; Schinke et al., 2012). When discussing the importance of self-reflexivity, Schinke et al. (2012) wrote “ Self-reflexivity is an innovation in qualitative methodology whereby investigators situate their own personal identities to explore surprises and un-doings in the research process (i.e., unexpected turns in the research)...” (p. 35). While cultural studies scholar, Saukko (2002) wrote that “reflexivity is a tool to enhance awareness of our situatedness and, subsequently, to be more receptive to perspectives that approach the world from a different position” (p. 88). I include these two quotes as I think they exemplify the necessity of this interlude and reflection.

When I first began working and proposing this project in 2015, the United States was a very different place than in 2017. 2015 was the year of the FIFA Women’s World Cup which saw the U.S. easily ride to victory in the most watched soccer game in U.S.

History (“Women’s World Cup Final is Most-Watched Soccer Match in U.S. History,” 2015.). This momentum carried along as there was increased media attention on the Equal Pay Lawsuit, the victory parade, the #SheBelieves Cup and the 2016 Olympics. The coverage of the 2016 Olympics heavily focused on the impact of female athletes including more commentary on the presence of sexism in the media within the Olympics themselves, a turn not seen in earlier Olympics (Rogers, 2016). 2016 was also the first year a major political party had a woman presidential candidate (Green, 2016). I felt this surge of pride in being a woman that I had not felt since I was a young girl in 1999 watching the FIFA Women’s World Cup. The combination of these events was the impetus for this research project. In my proposal, I wrote about this conjunctural period in women’s sports and how this conjuncture made studying women’s sports not only appropriate but necessary. However, everything changed, for me, on November 8th, 2016 when Donald Trump was elected president. I woke up feeling more deflated and upset than I ever had over an election. I felt that, as a woman, by electing Donald Trump, the country told me that I was a second-class citizen. By electing Trump and overlooking the fact that he bragged about grabbing women, had multiple sexual assault cases against him and had talked about women as inferior, the U.S. told me that I am not important. I am a very privileged person; I am a white, cis-gender, heterosexual, middle class woman-but I had never felt my privilege more than at that moment when he was elected. I had never felt that “second-class citizen” feeling until that day and I realized that I was experiencing what minority groups feel like every single day of their lives. I felt as if I had been sleeping until that day and I found this new passion and frustration for this country.

This reflection is important for this research project because the election happened in the middle of this project. Personally, after the election, I felt deflated and my interest and enthusiasm for this project waned. All the excitement I had about being a woman at the beginning of the project had completely shifted into frustration, nerves, disappointment and discontent. Although my excitement slightly diminished, Trump's election simultaneously validated the research for me. It is important, and especially necessary now, for women to express their values and opinions and to have a voice in academia and society. This project provides a platform to highlight this upcoming generation of women who will make changes in the future.

It is also to recognize Trump's election as it occurred in the middle of data collection. The first three interviews were conducted in the pre-Trump era and the second after the election results. Although there was not a drastic difference in conversation topics and tone between the two, it is important to note when the interviews happened. One possible answer to the lack of difference between the two pre and post Trump interviews was that I do believe the women were still processing the election similarly to how I was processing it which I can only assume because of my insider status within the participant group. Both the participants and I had not come to the realization of what a Trump administration would mean for women. The only slight differences that were seen were with regard to an increased discussion of fake news and sexism in the country. These effects and their meaning will be explained more in the conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this project is to understand the extent to which the discourses presented in empowerment campaign have been interpellated, consumed and reproduced in the lived experiences of 21st century, white women. As discussed in the literature review, academic literature has pointed towards empowerment campaigns, including U.S. Women's National Soccer's #SheBelieves, as being embedded with postfeminine (Genz, 2009; McRobbie, 2009), *millennial* (Harris, 2004a; Riordan, 2001) and neoliberal (Heywood, 2007; Rottenberg, 2014) discourses. The argument has been proposed that these empowerment campaigns have created a 21st century female *millennial* who embodies and acts upon postfeminist, neoliberal tendencies without any form of agency or resistance (Genz, 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Taft, 2004). However, this study proposes the 21st century female *millennial* presented in this academic scholarship is actually a discursive formation and explores how these discourses (*millennialism*, postfeminism and neoliberalism) have been consumed and experienced by 21st century women.

The section is organized based upon Figure 3 which provides a visual representation to the flow of the overall study. The top portion of the figure has been reviewed and discussed in the previous chapters, referring to the production of empowerment campaigns and rhetoric in popular culture including the #SheBelieves

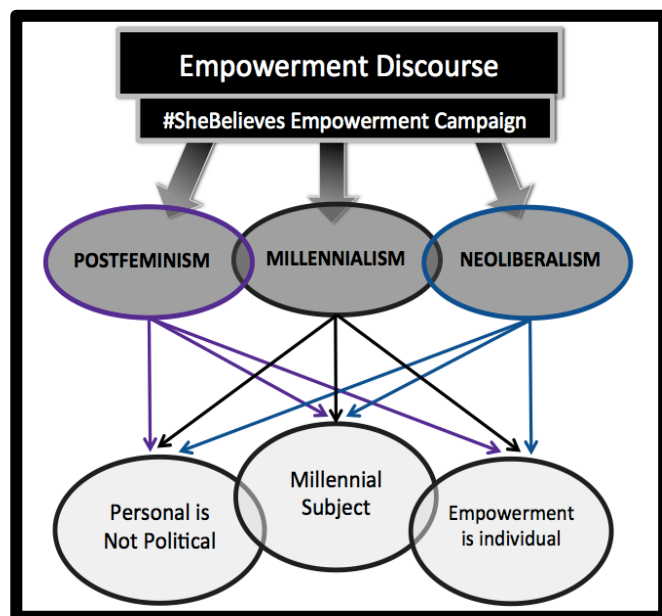


Figure 3: Visual representation of findings

campaign. Embedded within the #SheBelieves and other campaigns are discourses of neoliberalism, *millennialism* and postfeminism, as discussed in the literature review. The bottom portion of the figure, and this chapter, uses Althusser's notions of interpellation (Hall, 1985) and post-structuralist's theories of subjectivity (Weedon, 1997), to examine the extent to which, and in which ways, the women interviewed corroborated, invoked and rejected the empowerment rhetoric in the promotional material of the #SheBelieves campaign.

5.1 *Millennial Subject*

The literature has pointed towards the conclusion that one of the key elements contributing to the creation of the postfeminine, neoliberal subject has been the commodification and over-usage of empowerment rhetoric (Cooky, 2011; Gonick, 2006; Riordan, 2001). The literature describes how through empowerment campaigns, 21st century women have been greatly exposed to the *idealized* female *millennial* subjectivity which has been internalized and embedded into the 21st century female's subjectivity (Genz, 2009). Therefore, one of the essential elements of this study is to examine the extent to which this over-production of empowerment has affected the participants' general understandings of 21st century woman, labeled as a *millennial* (Strauss & Howe, 2000). This section begins with an overview of how women define and describe the *millennial*, followed by a more in-depth description of the 21st century woman *millennial* and the extent to which the participants associate with this description. This section ends with women's activist tendencies with regards to soccer. The entire 5.1 *Millennial Subject* section will focus on the extent to which these descriptions and understandings have been affected by and created through a neoliberalized version of individual

empowerment propagated and reinforced through women's soccer, and the intense pro-girl, girl power rhetoric seen in the 1990s.

5.1.1 What is a millennial?

Although the promotional campaigns in U.S. Women's National Soccer do not directly state that they are produced for the *millennial*, embedded within the discourse are notions of the idealized female *millennial's* subjectivity. Therefore it is important to first analyze the generic *millennial* and from there extract the characteristics specific to young women. Every group interview began with a version of an "ice-breaker activity" in which the women worked together to write down the characteristics of a *millennial*⁶ (Appendix G). This led to a discussion in which participants described their ideas on *millennials* as well as the ideas perpetuated throughout society about *millennials*. After conducting five groups, there was data saturation with regards to both the positive and negative attributes about *millennials*.

The negative attributes that were mentioned most often were that *millennials* are lazy, self-centered, entitled, spoiled and uninformed. However, it was uniformly stated across the groups that these are attributes are imposed on them from other generations and various sources rather than what they believe of the generation. Many women cited their grandparents and parents as well as magazines and other media outlets as the source of the negativity. They were quick to defend *millennials* agreeing that perhaps *millennials* are technology-obsessed and self-centered, but this is a result of the culture in which they were reared. In fact, many turned the negative attributes about technology and narcissism

⁶ Although I will be using the term "*millennial*", please note that in no way am I attempting to reify this notion of a static, definable category of a *millennial* or *millennial* identity

into positive ones citing social media and profiles as reasons for more socially liberal political views. For example, Holly⁷ described this self-absorption as a positive trait of *millennials*:

I feel like at the same time that we are the most into ourselves, we're the most accepting of other people, ...we are all sharing ourselves, all the time, automatically, so we're like "Okay, there are people like this and therefore be into yourself"...Everyone is doing it, we're all together. Oh there are different people who act different ways, I don't know how to explain it but I feel like yeah we definitely are more into ourselves but also at the same time, we're cool.

They described how through social media, they were able to see many other people's profiles which has allowed them to grow up recognizing and understanding differences between people. Although it has been described as narcissism, for some young women, the constant posting of selfies and sharing on social media, has allowed them to see the lives of other people from different cultures and lifestyles. They credit this era of social media and posting as one reason they believe *millennials* are more open-minded to those around them. Along with being more accepting, they believe that *millennials* are technologically-savvy, informed, independent, strong, capable, educated, adaptable and having more progressive, socially liberal political views who are open and welcome to changing society.

Another positive attribute of *millennials* that arose when discussing them was their ability to stay informed through the use of social media and technology. At times the participants even discussed how they felt they had to work harder in school than ever before because technology would soon be mastering their jobs. As Nina describes with regards to the speed of information, "Yeah, like everything is moving so fast, we have to not only keep up with other people and having access to all these resources, we have to

⁷ Please note all names used in this document are pseudonyms

keep up with the technology. So we aren't taken over by robots.” They also described how important technology was for them for not only staying informed but for general day to day activities from connecting with family, to submitting projects and assignments for school, to using the GPS for travel. Interestingly, in one group, there was a whole portion of the conversation devoted to not only technology but brands of technology. The women described how to be considered “cool” a person needed a specific type of technology (Apple over a PC) and if a person did not own an Apple laptop, they were, as Lily said, “making a statement.”

This discussion of technology, in all small groups, transitioned or encompassed a discussion of higher education. Almost unanimously throughout the groups it was mentioned that a *millennial* is a college-educated person and for them it was rare to not know people in college, as the quotes below illustrate:

Penelope: Most of my friends, at least, all went to college and there were a few where college wasn't the right time to go but most, I feel like most people in our generation, it's expected of us, at least where I am from, to go to college.

Nina: We're [*millennial* generation] the most educated, we're a really educated generation too, we are going to college, we're getting that high level of education.

They emphasized the need for education citing the job market as becoming very competitive. Many women described *millennials* as “young professionals.” The first thing one participant, Anna, said when I asked about *millennials* was “Yo-pro, young professionals” and elaborated on this saying “When I think of *millennials* I just think of like your typical college graduate... living in like a single bedroom apartment and is like having a new start up on some random technology that doesn't make sense but to them it does...” The findings show the women in the study have a more uniform understanding of the *millennial*; a narcissistic, technology driven, informed, college-educated young

professional. These findings are consistent with literature and other research on this younger age demographic (Schewe et al., 2013; Strauss & Howe, 2000; Street et al., 2010). According to Schewe et al., (2013), American *millennials* are “extremely technosavvy...characterized as ambitious and success driven, global in perspective...they are depicted as entrepreneurial and self-reliant, and tend to accept diversity in their world as if there were never was prejudice” (p. 5). The participants’ interpretation and description of a *millennial* aligned with that presented in popular and academic literature.

After completing the fifth interview, the data was saturated in which similar ideas of the *millennial* were repeated. Although many believe that the concept of data saturation is controversial, Morse (1995) writes that saturation is “operationalized as collecting data until no new information is obtained” (p. 147). With regards to this study, by the fifth small group interview, the discussion on defining a *millennial* offered no new ideas and instead repeated what had been discussed in previous groups. Therefore, this shows that the discourse on *millennials* has been effective in producing a rather succinct, ideal image of a *millennial*.

Although there was a succinct image presented of the ideal *millennial*, not all the participants were interpellated by the idealized subjectivity. When asked if they consider themselves a *millennial*, many either reluctantly said yes or “sometimes.” Some of them elaborated on their answers:

Lily: I don’t fit into the technology, social media hype, like I really am not a part of that aspect of it and I think that’s really big part of it

Katie: I think I identify with a *millennial* a little bit...I don’t necessarily think of myself as some of these negative aspects and I’m definitely on the top end of the older end of what would be considered a *millennial* but I think I still identify a lot with the phone and technology and things like that and I do see aspects of myself in what sometimes could be considered selfish.

The women were able to easily describe the discourse presented to them about *millennials* and yet when asked about it, it proved to be a much more difficult question. Most of the women were interpellated by the socially liberal aspect and being a more educated and informed citizen, but were less readily able to incorporate the technology, narcissism and social media into their subjectivity. Althusser's construct of interpellation requires subjects to recognize themselves and requires identification with the discourse in order for it to be internalized into one's subjectivity (Weedon, 2004). For some of the participants, there was no recognition (or only partial recognition) with the idealized *millennial* subjectivity presented in popular discourse and therefore, they reject the label of *millennial*. The rejection by women, who according to literature are categorized as *millennials*, provides support for the fluid nature of subjectivity that post-structuralism assumes (Weedon, 1997).

5.1.2 Who is the 21st century woman?

5.1.2a Strength, independence, limitless opportunities

Once an overview of the *millennial* was discussed in the small group interviews, I asked participants to describe the female *millennial*. The female *millennial* took on some of the traits of the *millennial* generation but exhibited more postfeminist and neoliberal tendencies. When describing the generic definition of a *millennial*, soccer never was discussed and instead women talked about how the media, their friends and families were the source of their information on *millennials*. However, when I specifically asked them about the *female millennial*, the women would constantly turn to examples from soccer as support for their ideas showcasing the influence of U.S. Women's National Soccer's promotional materials on creating this idealized female subjectivity.

When I initially asked the women to describe the female *millennial*, some of the first words said were, “capable, strong, powerful, independent, empowered, highly motivated and educated.” One participant, Robin, said:

Independent, that’s like the first thing that comes to mind because like now women sort of think like they can do everything, they can do it themselves, they don’t need the traditional like ideas that like women or like you know, men are superior to women, that kinda stuff. It’s not really so much a thing anymore.

Many women supported these claims of independence and strength through examples of women obtaining success in various professions (including women’s soccer) and through their own majors in college. Nina said in response to another participant declaring she is an architecture major, “Women are actually being considered people now where women are CEOs, women, we’re not just teachers and nurses, we are business people, we are architects, we are in jobs previously considered men’s jobs or men’s areas.” They also turned to soccer illustrating how the depiction and playing styles of the U.S. Women’s National Team have affected their beliefs of the 21st century women. When describing their favorite players and the sport in general, the participants said:

Nina: [Julie Johnston because] she was badass during the Olympics so I was like “you’re my girl.”

Charlotte: ... the girls are very aggressive and don’t stop... I remember I was watching a game and some girl like had blood just gushing down her face and was like “No I’m good, I’m fine.” I found that kinda funny and also empowering, we don’t need magic water spray to be perfectly fine, we can just wipe it off and be good.

The participants connected with players who they believe embodied the 21st century female which in turn affected the participants own subjectivity formation.

In their empowerment campaigns, U.S. Women’s National Soccer has highlighted the more prominent players, those who had success both on and off the field. In the

#SheBelieves 2017 video, Samantha Mewis describes that to her #SheBelieves means, “for young female athletes everywhere it’s just this example that shows we can be strong and confident and pursue our dreams” (U.S. Soccer, 2017b). These campaign materials promote players who fans idolize as being strong, capable women and therefore, the women in the study describe the 21st century woman exactly as that; a strong, capable, independent woman.

The women also described the 21st century female *millennial* as having limitless opportunities in her life and the ability to overcome any obstacle. This was primarily seen in how they idolized the USWNT Players. When talking about the women’s soccer players, the participants described how soccer showed fans the vast opportunities which exist for women in the 21st century:

Abby: It shows young people different options, different types of roles that they can fill. It can be a dream for a little girl to be a pro soccer player rather than a princess or something like that. It’s just kinda like more options that don’t necessary fill classic gender roles.

Marcia: ...you don’t have to be sitting at home with the baby or a teacher or a secretary, you can do whatever you want. You can go travel the world if you want to, go to college, get a degree. The world is your oyster.

USWNT players and empowerment rhetoric contribute to women’s understanding of the 21st century *millennial* as a woman who is strong, independent professional with limitless opportunities in life. These characteristics align with both postfeminist and neoliberal ideologies. One component of postfeminism is the concept of entanglement which incorporates both the “undoing” and “doing” of feminist politics (McRobbie, 2009). The undoing is a negative rejection and re-articulation of feminism, while the “doing” is displacement in which a new version of feminism is presented featuring choice and individuality. Gill & Scharff (2011) write, “Young women are offered particular kinds of

freedom, empowerment and choice in exchange for or as a kind of substitute for feminist politics and transformation” (p. 4). The participants were interpellated by the notions of “freedom” and “choice” promoted by U.S. Women’s National Soccer and therefore they believe the U.S. has entered into a more egalitarian, gender neutral society.

5.1.2b White

Along with the strength, individuality and opportunities of the female *millennial*, an unspoken assumption in the participant discussions was that she was a white, middle class woman who did not have to worry about racial prejudice or financial instability, ideas more in line with neoliberal and postfeminist ideology (Harris, 2004a). Postfeminist scholars have noted how this female *millennial* subjectivity “coexists with, and are, structured by, stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to race and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disability as well as gender” (Gill & Scharff, 2011, p. 4). Through their lack of discussion of racial barriers and possible sources of oppression, the women illustrated how their understanding of the female *millennial* represents the white race.

This lack of attention to racial barriers has been promoted through U.S. Women’s Soccer promotional material which creates images of its players as role models who embody a white, middle-class subjectivity (Narcotta-Welp, 2015). In the United States, soccer has become to be viewed as a very middle-class suburban sport, highly valued by middle class parents (Swanson, 2009). U.S. Women’s Soccer has capitalized upon the presence of soccer in middle class, white homes to produce games and players that appeal to more middle class values. In a study conducted by Funk et al., (2002) the researchers found that “rather than being motivated simply by factors associated with individual

pleasure, women's sports fans also may be motivated by the utility or function served by those sports (i.e. Providing positive role models for youth and representing an avenue for equal rights that transcends the world of sports)" (p. 35). However, players are only serving as role models for only certain types of women, primarily women of a white, middle class background. This was seen in the 1990s with girl power and empowerment campaigns and in the marketing of the 1999 U.S. Women's World Cup team. As Narcotta-Welp (2015) writes, "The subsequent marketing of the U.S. Women's National Team for the 1999 Women's World Cup employed strategies that tugged at the heart strings of white suburbia with what C.L. Cole and Michael Giardina describe as a celebration of the white, feminine, heterosexual 'suburban girl-child'" (p. 386). In 2015, similar promotional materials were presented by the U.S. Women's National Team through #SheBelieves. The team's racial composition has also contributed to this white-washed discourse. The U.S. Women's National team is comprised of mainly white, middle class women. Between 1999 and 2016, 68 different women were rostered for the U.S. Women's National team that competed in ten major events. Of the 68 players, 79% were white (McGovern, 2017) and in the past 25 years (1991-2016), there have only been a grand total of 14 players of color (Epps, 2016). This homogeneity has been replicated across the U.S. with regards to race and class status in youth soccer participation. In 2012, only 32% of U.S. households had an annual income of \$75,000 or greater and yet 54% of children in youth soccer came from this income group (Aspen Institute, 2016) and U.S. Youth Soccer is one of the only youth soccer programs to not have a policy affecting diversity, discrimination or inclusion (Epps, 2016). Young, white girls recognize and seem themselves in the players on the team and therefore are more likely to be affected

by the messages promoted by the USWNT players and U.S. Women's National Soccer. However, the same is not true for women of color. In an interview with young women of color about their experiences as athletes, many of them felt there was a lack of role models for them as they grew up (Bruening, 2005). This study was not focused on soccer and yet the women specifically stated how when they were growing up they finally felt they had a role model in Briana Scurry but were discouraged with the fact that the media only followed the success of Mia Hamm. They felt disconnected from soccer because of the whiteness of the team and the media's portrayal of players.

5.1.2c Middle-Class

Through the participants' descriptions of technology, education and profession, they viewed the 21st century female as both white and middle to upper class. With regards to technology, they described how important it was for them for general day-to-day activities-connecting with family, to submitting projects and assignments for school, to using the GPS for travel. However, what was missing from this discussion was of a person who was unable to afford any of these technologies. There was no mention of people in other countries or people below the poverty line who might not have smartphones.

Their emphasis on education and the importance of one's profession also exemplifies a middle class subjectivity. They described how college would get them a more privileged job, casting judgments on lower paying jobs for women (secretary, nurse, teachers, stay at home mom). The women in the study constantly described technology, college and a woman's profession as being central to the female *millennial* without any acknowledgement of potential social barriers that could accompany race or sexuality or

finance. They generalized the white middle class woman as the quintessential *millennial* which could be attributed as a result of the pro-girl rhetoric of soccer which idolized the white middle class subjectivity. Although girl power, soccer and the pro-girl rhetoric have encouraged the women in the study to strive for success, as Taft (2004) writes, “While Girl Power as ‘girls can be anything’ can give girls a sense of power and esteem, it hides both the material and the discursive forces shaping identity and the ways these gendered, raced, classed and sexualized identities may give girls privileges or pose challenges” (p. 73). The women in the study were interpellated by the choice, independence and strength exemplified in U.S. Women’s Soccer, not realizing the real political and societal barriers that they may face and that women of other classes, races and sexuality face.

5.1.3 Activism in the 21st century

One of the claims made by postfeminist and neoliberal scholars is that through empowerment campaigns and ideas of choice and liberation, women’s power comes in their consumer choices rather than through political change, creating a complacent and politically benign society (Harris, 2004a; McRobbie, 2009; Rottenberg, 2014). In her analysis of the GoGirlGo!, an advocacy project for the Women’s Sports Foundation (WSF), Heywood (2007) writes “its marketing strategies can be seen to participate in the production of new femininities that are market-driven consumer femininities that sometimes disregard the structural differences between men and women” (p.106). When I asked the women about how they can support women’s soccer, as well as support equal pay for the players, the women exhibited a neoliberal, postfeminist understanding in which social power is defined by consumer choices (Taft, 2004). Harris (2004a) writes

how young people (*millennials*) are part of a society that links “civic viability with consumption... Individuals are encouraged to exercise their citizenship responsibilities and rights in relation to privatized service providers rather than the state” (p. 69). Instead of engaging in more political activism to support the equal pay lawsuit, women in the study thought they should use their consumer choices to benefit the players. Many women described watching the games live, buying tickets, buying jerseys, buying books and buying products for which the athletes are sponsors. A big supporter of the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL), Abby said:

I convinced my dad to get me a jersey last Christmas and then I’ve also got a hoodie and this shirt [shows shirt] is actually American Outlaws which is the fan group for the national team, both men/women and my brother bought me a membership to this which gave me a free shirt so that was pretty cool.

When asked about player-sponsored products, Robin said “I love buying that stuff. I love buying all the stuff that they sponsor. Not just them but like any, I love the Olympics- I’m obsessed. So the Kellogg’s cereal boxes and things, I have them.” Some of the women even expressed how they wished there were more products for them to purchase with players. Abby stated

If I see anything Star Wars, like Star Wars Cheez-Its, I wouldn’t buy Cheez-its if they weren’t Star Wars but I’ll buy them because they’re Star Wars Cheez-Its. Like if they had stuff like that with women’s soccer players, I would buy like 10 of them.

Katrina even highlighted the importance of purchasing merchandise as she stated, “I mean I have jerseys, wear those proudly... Purchasing the merchandise, helping them bring in more revenue is the first thing I can think of, consumer power.” These women are employing neoliberal tactics of as a source of support depending on their consumer

power to elevate the respect of women's soccer instead of targeting FIFA and U.S. Women's National Soccer directly.

This section has shown how empowerment campaigns have been effective in promoting images of a strong, independent female *millennial* that the participants were interpellated by and reproduced in their own ideas of the quintessential 21st century female. The participants' descriptions of the general female *millennial* does embody a white, middle class postfeminine and subjectivity. The extent to which the women have embodied this subjectivity is varied. Many women did identify as a *millennial* and agree with ideas of equality, strength and individualism. They were interpellated by postfeminist and neoliberals discourse on activism as shown through their ideas on how to support the USWNT. However, there were some women who rejected being labeled or were hesitant to be labeled a *millennial* and showed resistance to this discourse.

The section above described the participants' corroboration and rejection of the 21st century female as a person who incorporated postfeminist and neoliberal ideology, primarily through their notions of individuality and equality. The following two sections (5.2 and 5.3) will explore how the women were interpellated by the presentation of this idealized female *millennial* subject and how they incorporated these principles into their personal subjectivities both supporting and contradicting postfeminine, neoliberal ideology.

5.2 The Personal is NOT political

"The personal is political" is a motto of various feminist movements used during a time when many issues that plagued women were believed to be caused by one's individual choices rather than through systems of oppression. Feminists fought back

through the use of this quote to showcase that their conditions were not the result of individual actions, but rather resulted from a political system in which women were undervalued and oppressed effectively linking personal problems with the political system (“The Personal Is Political,” n.d.). However, in this study, the opposite occurred in which women separated their personal experiences from their larger, more broad political ideas. Contradictions arose when discussing societal problems and systems of inequality with regards to sport.

This separation and contradiction can be attributed to the dynamic nature of subjectivity. When using a post-structuralist approach to subjectivity, it “theorizes subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the processes of political change and preserving the status quo” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). When participants were discussing their experiences and how they were interpellated by the empowerment rhetoric and the idealized female *millennial* subjectivity, there was great disunity and complexity to their understandings. These complex feelings gave rise to both political complacency preserving the status quo as well as calls for more political and social change. These contradictions will be explored below with regards to how the women understood sexism and feminism in the context of U.S. Women’s National Soccer.

5.2.1 *The Personal: Postfeminism and Neoliberalism Exhibited in Subjectivities*

When the participants discussed their personal beliefs and experiences, they tended to exhibit a more postfeminist (Genz, 2009; McRobbie, 2009), neoliberal (Rottenberg, 2014) ideology. This was specifically seen in how they engage with feminism and sexism on a daily basis in which they rejected feminism and instead mimicked empowerment language of equality and individualism. However, because

subjectivities are so dynamic and changing, the women tended to be split and express counter ideas to the major themes discussed below. Therefore, when discussing feminism and sexism in soccer with regards to postfeminism and neoliberalism, I will offer counter examples giving voice to the women who did not exhibit postfeminist, neoliberal tendencies.

5.2.1a Feminism

When I asked the women in the study if they considered themselves feminists, many were very hesitant to say “yes” primarily, they described, because of the negative connotations associated with feminism. For example, some of the responses were:

Cassie: Coming from a conservative background I’ve always heard of feminist being a negative thing so like it’s bad but like women at rallies, lift their arms up and have hairy armpits and I’m not like that.

Nina: I’m at that point where “Yes, I want equality for women” but I don’t want to be called a feminist because there is such a negative stigma to it.

Other women expressed how feminists were seen as man-eaters and constantly pushing feminist ideals upon people. One participant, Penelope, had started an organization for women leaders in engineering fields as a source of community and empowerment and yet she did not classify this as a feminist act or consider herself a feminist because as she stated, “...we are not trying to be like pushing it on people, like this is what we think, accept it or not.” McRobbie (2009) has described this negative articulation of feminism as the “backlash against feminism” which is a process of re-articulation in which women reject feminism typecasting it as having been fueled by men-hating, angry women. Although many of the women agreed with the fundamental ideology of feminism, on a personal level they were aligning with the postfeminist tendency of a backlash against feminist and the articulation of it as a negative label for “men-hating,” angry women.

According to postfeminist theory, part of this rejection of feminism results from 21st century women having an implicit assumption that feminism is no longer needed (Genz, 2009). A pro-postfeminist scholar, Denfeld (1995) writes, “for women of my generation, feminist is our birthright... We know what it is to live without excessive confinement. We are the first generation to grow up expecting equal opportunity” (p. 2). The presentation of equality in discourse becomes key in women believing that feminism is no longer needed (Cooky, 2011). It was through their egalitarian promotional materials, U.S. Women’s National Soccer had the greatest influence on the creation of postfeminist tendencies in the participants. The women in the study constantly articulated how they grew up watching women play soccer and experiencing girl power which for them signified equality. The quotes below illustrate this belief in equality:

Charlotte: I feel like cause we grew up with a lot of that stuff [girl power, Spice Girls, Power Puff Girls], the start of girl power that a lot of *millennials* are like, yeah I still have that value instilled in me and I can do this and girls rule, boys drool kinda thing.

Erica: I’ve literally never not heard the word that phrase girls can do anything... I always knew that there was a time when someone said you can’t be anything you wanted and obviously there are still traces of it in places but there’s always been someone telling me girls can do anything.

Many of the women would elaborate on how U.S. Women’s National Soccer served as an example of equality. Marcia said, “I think with that they’re really trying to show like what we’ve said, show girls that they can do anything if they want to play soccer, go for it...it’s not a boys sports, you can play, you can be just as aggressive on the field as the boys.” These ideas of equality presented in U.S. Women’s Soccer’s empowerment campaigns and in girl power rhetoric have contributed to women incorporating postfeminist ideologies of equality and the re-articulation of feminism into their subjectivities.

Although a majority of the women did reject feminism and believed in an egalitarian society, there were some women who did not reject feminism. In one particular group, Holly said she used to be afraid to be labeled a feminist but now proudly declares herself as a feminist and defends her position. In her words:

Yeah there are times where you're in a certain situation and it's like people wouldn't care that you want women to be equal to men but just the fact that you're like "Yes, I'm a feminist." They're like "Oh, so you want to oppress the penis?"...you're like "NO! Just listen for a second."

She recognizes the negative connotation and actively fought against it. In another group, Abby explained her frustration with people who believe in feminist ideology but are hesitant to be labeled as a feminist. She said:

...[when] I talk to someone and they're not a feminist, they have to explain that to me because otherwise I'm like "No." If you're not a feminist, you need to explain why because otherwise I don't wanna deal with you... "Okay, so you believe exactly what feminism says, you just don't wanna label yourself a feminist?"

There were some women who completely rejected the negative articulation of feminism.

Other discussions showed how women connected with the fear of being labeled a feminist and both expressed how they were not yet able to call themselves "feminists" but were working towards it. Women were becoming more comfortable with the term and beginning to think about it more positively. This was evident when a majority of the participants quickly labeled the 2015 women soccer players as feminists. Women in the study believed that soccer players were feminists because they were examples of equality serving as role models for young women. When asked why female soccer players are feminist, Marcia said, "The fact that they're showing that anything is possible. They're achieving their dreams of wanting to be a soccer player of playing and actually being really good..." The women's soccer team is comprised of players who women in the

study admire and see as role models which signifies the participants move towards a more positive relationship with the articulation of feminism.

5.2.1b Sexism

The incorporated postfeminist and neoliberal ideologies were also seen in how women engaged with sexism within U.S. Women's National Soccer and collectively the discussions illustrated how the women did not challenge the status quo through their complacency and lack of agency. When discussing sexism participants said they rarely experienced sexism or stereotyping and when they did, they chose to ignore rather than engage with the sexist practices. Their ignorance and disengagement with sexism can be seen when they described watching the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup. Many women discussed how even when they did see sexism at soccer, they ignored it. In response to a sign at a game that stated "Hope-I'm Solo" in reference to the national team's goalie Hope Solo, one participant, Marcia, said:

What people end up doing is shrug it off like, "Oh that sign is funny. He's saying 'Oh Hope I'm solo' and used her name." We shrug it off and think its funny... We don't really care about it... It's something that's not too sexist... I think we just kinda look past it.

Another participant described how she ignores sexism because she does not know what else to do. When I asked her how she responds to sexism at soccer games Robin said, "I definitely think it's one of those things you brush off because you don't know how to approach it so I am thinking but don't know what specifically could be done to stop that." The women were aware of sexism within their personal involvement with soccer but separated this from their political understanding of sexism. Scholars have suggested that women ignore sexism because it is a "trade-off" for women having the opportunity to play professional soccer. According to McRobbie (2009) institutions such as U.S. Women's National Soccer, which present a postfeminist ideal of equality, promote a

...highly conservative mode of feminine empowerment, the hallmark of which is the active connecting up of young women with notions of change, the right to work, and with new freedoms...Our young women are encouraged to conceive of themselves as grateful subjects of modern states and cultures which permit such freedoms (p. 27).

Although the women in the study were frustrated by the sexism at soccer, they felt it was a small price to pay in exchange for women having the opportunity to play soccer at an elite level. However, this is problematic since even these “small” scale incidents of sexism point to an unequal power relationship. Throughout his work, Foucault analyzed how power is not only distributed and enacted from above, but is unilateral and occurs as a result of micro-scale interactions (Allen, 2016). As Foucault (1977) wrote, “power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). When the women choose to ignore these subtle acts of sexism, they are effectively ignoring the various interactions of power that will continue to keep women inferior in society. The findings illustrate how women, on a personal level, were interpellated by the postfeminist and neoliberal ideology embedded within U.S. Women’s National Soccer. The following section addresses the contradictions within their subjectivities and how their larger political understandings reject postfeminism.

5.2.1c Sexism Contradictions

There were some experiences in which women described how they were not complacent citizens and instead attempted to address sexism in their lives. During the small group interviews, the participants discussed instances when they interacted with sexism and the tactics they attempted to use to overcome sexism. Instead of ignoring sexism as many other women in the study described, these women addressed it. Two of the women gave specific examples of while playing sports in high school, their team was not allowed to play against the boys’ team out of fear the girls would injure themselves:

Poppy: The girls varsity team was never allowed to play the boys varsity team. They were like ‘no they are going to hurt you. You’re not strong enough’ so they made us play the boys JV team. I was like “Why can’t we. I know them, I am better than some of the boys players...Let me play.”

Penelope: When her high school basketball team was not allowed to play the boys she said, “We asked our coach about it and was like ‘Guys I wish’ but there are safety things we can’t. I was like I will tackle them if you want, I’m not worried about my safety.”

Ultimately the women were unable to play the boy’s team, but this shows how the women did exemplify some small instances of resistance. They aligned more of their personal experiences with the political.

5.2.2 Political ideologies: A rejection of the idealized subjectivity

Unlike some women from previous generations, the participants separated their personal views of sexism (it is inconsequential) and feminism (rejection and re-articulation) from their broad, political beliefs on equality. On a broad, political level, the participants were cognizant of the inferior status of women in both society and in women’s professional soccer, adamant and secure in their belief that that women in the United States are still treated as second class citizens. They repeatedly emphasized how women have to work twice as hard as men to achieve the same positions or are characterized differently than men for the same actions. In all of the focus groups the women explained how although women have made political gains in the last 50 years, they still believe there are barriers and stereotypes (the gendered expectations) of women. Katrina summarized her beliefs on the challenges female face as “The stigma of being female. There are certain things you can’t do simply because you’re a female.” Others elaborated on this to explain how even when women do attempt to fight for their rights, they are pushed aside or criticized:

Poppy: Some times you get punished for being independent. People will criticize you if they think you’re being too bossy, if you’re like really just trying to be

yourself but they're like no, that's not how females should be, they should be inferior.

Holly: Even like look at the election, exactly. We have a woman running for president against a man so technically that is equal. But the standards the individual were held to were entirely unequal... it was the type of thing in which no man would have ever been called "shrill"...It's that whole concept of "Oh a man is bossy and that gets him a promotion. A woman is bossy and she a bitch and everyone hates her." It's that kind of thing that we still have to deal.

The women were aware of the patriarchal system present in society in which their gender was being oppressed and treated unequally. This inequality translated over to women's soccer as well where the participants were extremely upset and disgusted over the difference in pay between the men's and women's national teams. It was frustrating for them to see the high quality and dominance of the USWNT be ignored and demeaned simply because they were woman. The interesting part is that many of them began to reject U.S. Women's National Soccer's ideas of equality when they saw the USWNT players file the equal pay lawsuit. In the discussion they continuously waivered back and forth between the equality of women playing soccer and the inequalities present in the pay which can be attributed to the context and their age. The participants matured in an era in which postfeminism and empowerment campaigns were rampant. They came of age in the 1990s: they idolized women's soccer players; they saw the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA-First professional women's soccer league in the U.S.) begin; they saw Mia Hamm on Gatorade Commercials; they were a part of the 1990s girl power discourse in which a young, empowered, strong female subjectivity was valorized. However, in the 21st century, there has been the rise of the celebrity feminist and the resurgence of feminism. It's, as Zeisler (2016) writes, 21st century feminism is "... a tsunami, sweeping up fragments of feminisms past and deploying them in everything

from focused grassroots organizing to cynical commercial product pitches” (p. 128). In U.S. Women’s National Soccer, the media has highlighted the Equal Pay Lawsuit filed by the women’s players as well as publishing stories about the unequal playing situations of the teams and players themselves have taken to social media to fight for women’s rights. The women in the study are beginning to be interpellated more by the equal pay lawsuit and becoming more aware of the sexism in U.S. Women’s Soccer and society. Many participants also brought up the turf situation in which women had to play on turf and men played on real grass. Participants said they had that playing on turf can lead to increased injuries. However, research has shown this claim to be controversial (Ekstrand, Timpka, Hagglund, & Karlsson, 2006; Ekstrand & Nigg, 1989; Fuller, Clarke, & Molloy, 2010; Raina, 2016). They argued that because the women were doing equal work, they should have been paid equally. It was expected the women would approach the equal pay lawsuit from a more neoliberal understanding which would dictate that it is fair for the women to be paid less since their overall revenue is less than the men (Das, 2016). However, the women in the study rejected this neoliberal-based approach and instead criticized U.S. Women’s National Soccer and put the onus on the organization and political policies to increase the women’s revenue. As Abby stated, “A big part of how much money they bring in is how they’re treated by the U.S. soccer federation. ...If the federation treats them equally and promotes them in the same, then it’s likely that they’ll be, they’ll bring in more, similar revenue.” The women described how soccer is simply one of many institutions in the U.S. that treats women unequally and the participants were inspired by the lawsuit the USWNT players filed.

The women not only saw sexism with regards to the pay inequalities, but were frustrated by the covert sexism within women's soccer present in both 1999 and today. This was seen through their interpretations of the Brandi Chastain image from the 1999 World Cup and Alex Morgan from the 2015 USWNT. After the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup image of Brandi Chastain ripping her shirt off, there was great controversy over the image. Most of the women in the study knew of the outrage and were upset that there was ever any controversy citing how males constantly take their shirts off after the game.

Erica said she idolized this picture because it was defying expectations.

She's just completely in the moment, you don't normally, women typically are seen as more reserved when it comes to that kind of emotion and supposed to be not screaming and yelling and jumping up and down as a stereotypical view and the fact that she's just celebrating appropriately after scoring the winning penalty kick just this you know you see male athletes all the time doing, yelling, showing masculinity and this way it's just her showing a very instinctual celebration of an achievement.

Some of the interviewees went even more in-depth explaining how Victoria's Secret models show more skin and no one cares but because the image of Brandi was not produced for the male gaze, controversy ensued. As Holly summarizes:

I think like now, Victoria's Secret models are very much empowered and I don't know what the situation was in the 1999, but like, you know, we did evolve from a playboy bunny society in which like women in lingerie and like no clothing were like that was very much a man's decision for men and I think the theme it being for men is why men are okay with it but when she [Brandi] did this it was not for anybody and they were like "Hold on a second, that's not for me, who is this for? It can't happen."

The women realized this picture was out of the norm and did not align with the patriarchal media. They saw their beliefs in sexism in the media and did not allow it to influence their personal view of the picture.

The women also realized the covert nature of sexism with regards to Alex Morgan. In every interview the women expressed frustration that Alex Morgan is seen as the “face” of U.S. Women’s National Soccer even though, according to participants, her playing skills are not as developed or elite as some of the other players. Robin cited Alex Morgan as a direct example of sexism saying, “You definitely see her [Morgan] as the face of a lot of things which is like...not as fair to the other athletes cause she might not be the best player on the team but because of her looks.” However, the women did not criticize or blame Morgan for her publicity and instead blamed the sexist nature of society and U.S. Women’s National Soccer. Participants realized the USWNT’s players do not get paid very much and need to turn to alternative sources for income. Marcia said, “She [Morgan] took up modeling and she was like that was the last thing I wanted to do but it was more to make money because they don’t have as many sponsors as men do and I think that’s like definitely an area that needs to change.” The women were frustrated with the sexualized depictions of athletes and realized sexism within soccer goes further than the unequal pay.

This section discussed how 21st female soccer fans on a personal level were interpellated by U.S. Women’s National Soccer promotional empowerment rhetoric of equality and individualism. Many of the participants did exhibit postfeminist ideologies in which they believed they were equal to men. However, when discussing women’s rights on a larger, more political scale, the women were all quick to note women’s oppression and the uphill battle women have in society towards equality. Their subjectivities encompassed both complete acceptance of the status quo but also a

complete rejection of it. It is much more complex and nuanced than a simple direct interpellation, affected by many other factors in society.

5.3 Empowerment is Personal

This next section provides a more in-depth analysis of how women understand and have experience empowerment. During the discussions, there were two broad interpretations of empowerment; (1) acceptance and interpellation of the neoliberal discourse presented in U.S. Women's National Soccer empowerment campaigns and (2) rejection of empowerment rhetoric in popular culture. These two interpretations of the empowerment discourse (acceptance and rejection) will be presented below. The first section will describe how women's broad understandings of empowerment and personal experience exhibit neoliberal and postfeminine subjectivities while the second section will highlight some of the contradictions and rejections of the empowerment discourse.

5.3.1 *Defining and Experiencing Empowerment: Interpellation by the postfeminine and neoliberal subjectivities in U.S. Women's National Soccer*

5.3.1a Defining Empowerment

This first section analyzes how women understand the construct of empowerment, primarily through discussion of the discourse presented in women's soccer and in the 1990s era of girl power. During these discussions, two main ideas about empowerment were continuously discussed: (1) Defying expectations and (2) Respect and Confidence.

Similar to when describing *millennials*, in each of the small group interviews, women were asked to write down their initial thoughts when hearing the term "empowerment" (See Appendix H). Although the conversations differed between the groups, there were some unifying themes throughout the study. Some of the attributes of empowerment were similar to those described when the participants were asked to

discuss the female *millennial*; strength, power, independence. They stated that a woman is empowered when she feels not only strong but when she overcome an obstacle and increases for confidence and competency in life. For Nina, empowerment was a combination of defying expectations and being comfortable in that defiance:

I think when I think of empowerment, I think of someone overcoming obstacles and defying odds to fight for what they want and be who they are, be what they want to be without, and kind of, have everyone else understand that, not necessarily be okay with it but they are what they are and there is nothing you can do about it.

Along with simply overcoming obstacles and defying expectations, the women emphasized respect as both an outcome and stepping stone towards empowerment. However, they framed respect as an individual pursuit describing how one must gain their own confidence and self-respect before expecting others to respect them. Some of the comments were:

Abby: Also what you [Nina] were saying about overcoming what you think of yourself, you have to first change yourself and your view of yourself and have your own self-confidence before you can show people that you deserve to be equal.

Katrina: I think it's like sequential, a process. Once you believe in yourself others will be like "Yeah, you're right, okay, go for it" and stand behind you.

These are notions in line with neoliberal feminism promoted by Sheryl Sandberg's popular book and philosophy, *Lean In*. Within this ideology, there is a recognition of inequality, but women are supposed to "internalize the revolution" putting the onus on themselves to overcome this inequality rather than attempting to change the system of oppression (Rottenberg, 2014). Rottenberg (2014) describes this neoliberal approach to inequality: "By coming to terms with and working through their internal obstacles, women will then be able to muster the self-confidence necessary to push themselves

forward towards their professional goals” (p. 425). This is exactly what is being seen with the women in the study and their belief on empowerment. It is an internal process in which women have to find their own self-empowerment and respect instead of there being a natural, inherent respect from society.

The participants elaborated on how once a woman has self-respect and confidence, she can be empowered in any action. Some of the women stated:

Abby: I think empowerment is being able to do anything and be feeling empowered in that but that could be staying at home with the baby... empowerment is feeling empowered in whatever role you play.

Lily: For me it meant empowerment like oh you can do whatever you want to do so you can follow a different path, you don't have to do what everyone has done.

When describing this respect and lack of care about other's perceptions, the participants always returned to soccer players as the prime examples. Many women described the image of Brandi Chastain in the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup as empowering simply because Brandi's highly muscular body did not align with society's idea of the feminine body and yet Brandi looked confident. Katie's quote nicely summarizes what many of the women were describing with regards to the image:

She did it. She is so damn proud of the fact that she did it and they won and it's such a big deal and the pure energy coming out of her is really inspiring and empowering to just go do whatever you want to do, whatever you set your mind to, don't be afraid just go and do it and that backlash doesn't matter, you got it.

For the participants, being empowered means being strong, confident, respect and able to defy expectations; attributes they believe the USWNT players exhibit.

5.3.1b Personal experiences of Empowerment

Once empowerment as a construct was defined, I had the women describe an experience in which they felt empowered. Through these examples of empowerment, the

individualistic nature of their understanding of empowerment became ever more present. The phrase “Yeah, I can do it” reached a point of saturation as women constantly returned to it to describe feelings of empowerment. Many of the answers given about a time women specifically felt empowered are in line with how the women described empowerment above; overcoming obstacles and defying odds. For example, Katrina described how she felt empowered when she defied her swimming coach’s expectations and broke her speed record. Poppy told a story of how she asked to be captain of her varsity soccer team and at the end of the season proved to her coach her leadership skills and success as captain. Anna took the concept of individuality further when she described feeling empowered when she arrived at college:

I was thinking the first day I got to college cause it was the first time where it was up to me to make my own decisions and I was the one, at that moment, I was the one leading my own life my parents weren’t the ones making decisions for me anymore.

They were describing moments of independence, strength, and defiance, as well as highlighting recognition as an important part of feeling empowered. They felt empowered when others recognized their individual success. A couple women mentioned receiving awards (MVP, Coach’s award) at the end of the season as being empowered. Cassie described feeling empowered as a child when she was individually selected to be moved up age brackets to play with older girls in soccer. It became clear from this study that most of the women considered empowerment to be an individualistic pursuit.

This constant return to the individual and attributing their successes and experiences of empowerment to their own strength is directly in line with neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is based upon a governance which

transforms the logic by which institutions such as schools, workplaces, health and

welfare agencies operate while creating a new form of selfhood, which ‘encourages people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well-being (Larner, 2000, p. 13 in Rottenberg, 2014, p. 421).

The women in this study have been interpellated by this idea of responsibility and incorporated it into their subjectivities and ideas on empowerment. The women attributed their empowerment to their hard work and dedication, which although true, ignores all the systems of privilege they experience as white women. This masking and ignorance of structural inequalities is a byproduct of the “neoliberal feminism” (Hains, 2009; Rottenberg, 2014). U.S. Women’s National Soccer has been instrumental in creating a neoliberal version of empowerment focusing on individual success masking the intense structural oppression and barriers many women face in becoming empowered and successful. As Hains (2009) writes:

Problematically, mainstream lifestyle-oriented feminism is generally targeting women of privilege: the well-educated, middle- to upper-middle class women-typically white, heterosexual women-who face fewer forms of discrimination than do other women, and who can literally afford to buy into the artifacts of lifestyle feminism (p. 97).

U.S. Women’s National Soccer is part of this mainstream promoting messages of individualism and dedication, placing the responsibility of success on a woman’s ability to work hard and believe in themselves. The #SheBelieves campaign (note, not #WeBelieve) was about inspiring young women to achieved their personal success and dreams but never provided any solutions or guidance as to how to overcome inequalities or potential barriers. This empowerment message without substance continued into 2017. In 2017, as part of the #SheBelieves Cup, U.S. Women’s National Soccer created a video asking players to describe the meaning behind SheBelieves. In the video, top rated players such as Tobin Heath, Carli Lloyd, Christen Press, Becky Sauerbrunn described

SheBelieves as “self-love; dreaming really big; believing in oneself; strength from others believing in you; being strong and confident to pursue our [USWNT] dreams; be empowered like we were to live our [USWNT] dreams; doing the unimaginable; reaching for your dreams and goals; spend every single day working to achieve your goals. It takes time. You have to be patient but most of all you have to believe in yourself every step of the way” (U.S. Soccer, 2017b). Even Carli Lloyd’s new book is titled, “When No One was Watching” (Lloyd & Coffey, 2016) which not only hints at Lloyd’s dedication, work ethic and prowess but highlights her as an individual rather than part of the collective team.

U.S. Women’s National Soccer’s constant focus on hard-work, individuality and success masks not only the privilege of these players but is a deterrent distracting young women from really becoming educated on the gendered inequalities within soccer and within society. U.S. Women’s National Soccer is promoting a myth of equality showing how “feminism no longer needs to be enforced politically as it is now up to individual women and their personal choices to reinforce those fundamental societal changes” (Genz, 2009, p. 20). The women in the study constantly described how they have never been told they could not achieve anything. Multiple times throughout the interview Katrina would say, “I think it goes back to the same thing my mom always told me ‘you can do anything you put your mind to it’ doesn’t matter if you are boy, girl, white, black, purple, you can do it.” The women in the study have been interpellated by the images of success produced through U.S. Women’s National Soccer putting the onus on themselves to improve their confidence and achieve their tasks. Banet-Weiser (2015) discusses how discourse, “...focuses on the individual girl as a change agent, thus putting the burden of

confidence on her body, rather than addressing the structural and infrastructural mechanisms that operate to diminish girls' confidence" (p. 184). Through U.S. Women's National Soccer and other popular discourse women are made unaware of the concrete barriers and possibilities for social and political change that could be achieved if they harnessed their power as a collective demographic. The #SheBelieves Empowerment Campaign from the U.S. Women's National Soccer and girl power present in the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup are presented as a "...gentle, non-political, and non-threatening alternative to feminism, it functions as a way for girls to identify girl positive feelings with a non-political discourse and to think about girl hood in cultural ways rather than as a space for social and political action" (Gonick, 2006, p. 10). These messages of individualism have been interpellated by young women and incorporated into their beliefs of equality, power and empowerment.

5.3.2 *Rejecting Neoliberal and Postfeminist Empowerment*

Although many of the women were interpellated by the postfeminist, neoliberal presentation of empowerment in soccer and popular discourse, there were a small percentage of women who completely rejected this discourse. Many women rejected the individual nature of empowerment and presented an understanding more in line with women of color literature on empowerment which stresses the importance of collective empowerment through community (Hill Collins, 1990; Jones de Almeida, 2010). Other women completely rejected girl power and empowerment rhetoric citing it as demeaning and commodified. These two types of rejections will be explored below.

5.3.2a Collective Empowerment

Some of the women rejected the more neoliberal feminist understands of empowerment which puts onus on an individual to become empowered to achieve success. Instead, they discussed the importance of collective empowerment for women.

In the small group interviews, the women stated:

Holly: If women as a group are empowered, I think that is the first step to getting up to that level of equality.

Katrina: I think it is empowering to know that there's like a big movement with all these females who have the same goals and they really just want equality.

They acknowledged the necessity of collective empowerment for feminism and tangible political change and noted how they became empowered through either participating in or witnessing collective empowerment. For example, Lily described how she felt empowered by seeing so many women in STEM:

[In] my masters program, which is a science program, 18 of us, 16 were women... it just shows to me there's always this idea that there are so few women in STEM, so thinking of that trend... that's empowering, maybe there is this shift. All of our professors, everyone who works in our department, 90% of them are men but the next generation is almost all women and when I think about that, when I see that, I feel empowered.

Abby, another participant in a STEM field, described feeling empowered when she saw Kate McKinnon in *Ghostbusters* because “I really related to her. For once, it's like the first time I've ever seen a female character whose like, labeled as an engineer.” The women saw empowerment not as a personal feat but through the recognition in and of other women. It was about other women achieving success and all women harnessing their power for change. This concept of collective empowerment is more in line with the literature on women of color empowerment. Within this discourse, scholars have pointed towards community efforts and focused more on how women can become empowered

through working with other women (Francis-Spence, 1994; Hill Collins, 1990; Jones de Almeida, 2010). Many of the women in the study were not interpellated by the individualism promoted in U.S. Women's National Soccer and #SheBelieves but rather found alternative sources and avenues for empowerment.

5.3.2b Rejection of Empowerment

All the participants in the study were USWNT fans and had witnessed empowerment campaigns but many outright rejected these campaigns and girl power from the 1990s. Many women discussed how empowerment has been rearticulated and commodified. Elsa stated, "Empowerment for me has gotten divorced from a lot of what it originally meant. I wrote meaningless too because I see it as being coopted by these celebrities who are like I feel empowered by posting naked images." There became a standard as to what could or could not be considered empowerment rooted in discussions about the nude images of Kim Kardashian and Victoria's Secret models. The women believed empowerment was being used an excuse to objectify women's bodies online. They applied their understanding of empowerment to the 1990s girl power era. In the studies, most of the women completely rejected the 1999 Newsweek cover of Brandi Chastain that read "Girls Rule." In four out of the five small group interviews, the women in the study found the headline "Girls Rule" as problematic and demeaning towards women arguing that it could have been written as "Women Rule." Abby said:

It's infantilizing to women, it makes it a lesser kind of thing. You wouldn't say boys rule if the men won something. And it's also like thinking about it now, until this happened, girls didn't rule at all but now that they won, they rule.

Others went further taking issue with "girls" or "women" and equated it to using "gay" to describe marriage. Candace said, "it's like when you say gay marriage, it's just

unnecessary to put the gay part before, there's no need, there's no need to point out that she is a female, like yes, we see that." They wanted the team to be highlighted for winning rather than for being women who won insinuating being a woman as a barrier the players had to overcome in order to win. Their frustration with the cover shows how the participants' subjectivities have changed, they are no longer interpellated by this girl power language. Lily described how she felt very inspired and empowered by the Spice Girls whose motto was "Girl Power!." Lily said:

I was in elementary school and Spice Girls were huge, we did Spice Girls in the talent show, so it was at the time girl power felt like, I just remember feeling very empowered and now when I look at the Spice Girls I'm like Oh God, that's what the image was, yuck. They wear nothing! That's the image that was given to little girls as girl power?

As context, discourse and people change, their ability to be interpellated by idealized subjectivities changes. Although in their definition and discussions of individual empowerment reflected a more neoliberalized understanding, there were many who outright rejected the empowerment or rearticulated it to mean collective empowerment.

5.4 Overview of Findings

This findings section has shown the complicated and complex nature of subjectivities and experienced interpretations of the empowerment discourse. There were postfeminist, neoliberal tendencies with regards to how women defined the 21st century female *millennial*, empowerment and their personal experiences of empowerment, sexism and relationship with feminism. However, the women, from a societal and political standpoint rejected the idea of an egalitarian society and realized the sexist nature of U.S. Women's National Soccer. Many women went farther and rejected the entire individual-based empowerment discourse. It shows that the 21st century female is a dynamic,

complex person who cannot be defined by specific discourses. There is no exact female *millennial* that is described in academia and society and instead this is a discursive formation representing an idealized subjectivity. The women were full of contradictions and their subjectivities were constantly changing depending upon the context. This points to the general conclusion that U.S. Women's National Soccer has great power and potential to impact women's subjectivities yet there are many competing institutions of power and great agency against these ideologies.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

In this last chapter, I will provide a summary of the entire research project. This will then be followed by the significance of this research (academically, socially, politically) which will lend itself to a discussion of future research and possible directions for similar projects. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of the project.

6.1 Research Summary

This project was conceived and developed following the well publicized and successful 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in which the USWNT claimed their third World Cup victory. Initially the project began as a review of the #SheBelieves empowerment campaign from the 2015 World Cup but quickly developed into a thesis project interviewing and understanding women's experiences with empowerment rhetoric in U.S. Women's National Soccer. Specifically it was interested in examining how young women who matured in the 1990s, the era of girl power, have been interpellated by and internalized the empowerment discourse affecting their subjectivity formation. These women have been described as the *millennial* generation and therefore part of this project encompassed determining how women understand *millennials* and how soccer has contributed to the creation of this subjectivity. Many scholars have suggested the girl power era has created a neoliberal, postfeminist female *millennial* subject (Genz, 2009; Harris, 2004a; Heywood, 2007) but research has yet to engage with women of this era. This thesis addressed this hole in the research by addressing **to what extent and in what ways have young white women been interpellated by the empowerment rhetoric and idealized postfeminine-neoliberal subject embedded within U.S. National Women's Soccer's empowerment campaigns?** Using qualitative methods through small group

interviews, 18 women fans of U.S. Women's National Soccer were recruited from a large sized university in the mid-Atlantic U.S.A.

Through small group interviews, there arose a variety of contradictions and confirmations of previous theories. On a broad level, when looking at how these young women interpreted the female *millennial* subject, they discussed a young, independent, educated professional woman using women soccer players as role models. This showed how the women's idealized female *millennial* was in line with the *millennial* discourse and its presentation of a neoliberal, post feminine subject. However, when women were asked about their own identification as a *millennial*, many rejected the label. This shows how many were not consciously interpellated by the *millennial* discourse as well as providing support for the notion that the *millennial* generation is a discursive formation rather than a concrete, realistic category. These complex and contradictory understandings were replicated when women discussed their understandings of sexism and feminism in society and soccer. This was explored in the "personal is not political" theme. On a personal level, through the women's feelings of feminism and experience with sexism, the women's ideas aligned with postfeminist tenets of equality and a negative re-articulation of feminism. The women utilized postfeminist ideology of gender equality to reject second and third wave feminism and to overlook sexism within U.S. Women's National Soccer as an inconsequential consequence. However, when I asked about their political views of feminism and gender, women rejected postfeminist views of equality, firm in their belief in the oppression of women. These competing ideas were also seen with how the women viewed empowerment in their life. When discussing experiences of feeling empowered and their definition of empowerment, many of the

women described neoliberal ideology in which individual success and responsibility is favored. Yet the sample was not unanimous. There were many women who outright rejected empowerment and others who viewed empowerment in more collective and community terms. When analyzing the results, it was difficult to come to a single conclusion because of the nuanced and complicated nature of subjectivities as well as the contradictions presented between U.S. Women's National Soccer empowerment campaigns with their treatment of players. Instead, the findings show that U.S. Women's National Soccer does have great power and has been influential in creating subjects who submit to some postfeminist, neoliberal ideologies. However, there are many alternative sources that may influence these young women's subjectivities and women do have agency in the formation of their subjectivities.

6.2 Significance

Between beginning this project and ending it, there have been significant changes within the political and social realm of the United States primarily resulting from the 2016 Presidential Election and victory of Donald Trump. Although it has been a difficult time for many women, it has also been a time of great community building and strength between women. Therefore, the value of studying empowerment and experiences of power has become even more vital within U.S.-based scholarship. This section will review the significance of this research with regards to its political and social contributions as well as its academic importance.

6.2.1 *Political and Social Significance*

Foucault (2003) writes, "It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power...but of detaching the power of truth from forms of hegemony, social,

economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (p. 318). This, he describes, is the role of the intellectual and was the goal and significance of this project; it is not about devaluing or contradicting the truth of these women’s experiences of empowerment but rather understanding the power U.S. Women’s National Soccer and popular discourse maintains with the production of truth. For Foucault, power is not a linear process but power occurs everywhere, including small interactions throughout the day (Foucault, 2003; Rabinow, 1991). Based upon this omnipresent ideology of power, these small interactions between U.S. Women’s National Soccer and fans (social media, empowerment campaigns) have great power over young women and culture. This study shows how this power has been both productive and dangerous for women and women’s fight for equality. Therefore, there are messages of both warning and hope with regards to the usage of empowerment rhetoric and how women have been interpellated by this discourse.

Embedded within U.S. Women’s National Soccer is the presentation of a young, postfeminist-neoliberal idealized subjectivity. U.S. Women’s National Soccer and the #SheBelieves campaign and empowerment rhetoric are presenting professional sports, and society, as an egalitarian society where the only barrier preventing women from achieving success is hard work ignoring the very real inequalities women face in the U.S. The study shows the women are interpellated by this discourse of equality and hard-work and rooted in their subjectivity is the belief that they live in a society that will foster them and wants to them to succeed. Even though they were very cognizant of the sexism within society and soccer, when asked personally about their beliefs of equality, a majority of them believed equality had been achieved and all that a woman needed for

success was individual motivation; representing more of Sandberg's *Lean In* neoliberal feminism (Rottenberg, 2014). The women idolized the women's professional soccer players and believed that U.S. Soccer was successful in promoting and supporting the women's team. This happiness and gratuity and the positive messages of girl power and strength were internalized into their subjectivity resulting in a state of complacency. Through the empowerment and equality U.S. Women's Soccer presented, the women did not feel their rights were threatened or the need to engage in political and social justice fights. However, November 8th happened and Donald Trump was elected president of the U.S. Personally, this was the wake-up call and the complete collapse of the beautiful society that soccer had created in my mind. And apparently, I wasn't alone for on January 21st, women all across the world, came together to meet this newly envisioned world of inequality. January 21st, 2017 was the Women's March on Washington; an event that began as a Facebook idea and blossomed into one of the largest protests in U.S. history (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2017). If U.S. Women's National Soccer had not promoted and created a postfeminist, neoliberal woman, would Trump have been elected? If white women had not been told their whole life they were equal, would they have always been fighting for their rights in such large numbers as seen in 2017? This study shows how impactful U.S. Women's National Soccer and these microcosms of power can be in creating complacency and lack of social agency. The women, myself included, very much believed that the U.S. was in a place in which women were admired and respected, an image represented by the independent, professional subjectivity in popular discourse. The findings serve as a warning to showcase the power to which empty messages and superficial ideas of empowerment can have on subjectivities and an entire generation.

Although the study shows the ease at which complacency is created and social inequality accepted as a part of life, it also provides a message of hope. The women were constantly remaking and rethinking their ideology which can be utilized for rethinking social justice. These superficial ideas of empowerment promoted by U.S. Women's National Soccer can be rearticulated and easily interpellated by women soccer fans. For example, although not elaborated to a great extent, some women did suggest creating a consumer boycott against U.S. Women's National Soccer until the equal pay lawsuit between the men's and women's players was settled. As the participants' favorite players began to post more information about the inequalities in U.S. Women's National Soccer, the participants' attitudes towards U.S. Women's National Soccer changed. These fans love soccer and have a strong connection to the USWNT (Cashmore & Parker, 2003) but once it was presented in a different manner, their feelings changed. If empowerment was presented as a tool for women athletes to unite against unequal pay, this study suggests that women fans would easily abandon previous connections to girl power and embrace this re-articulation of empowerment. This has already been seen with regards to how women in the U.S. are understanding their position as evidenced by the Women's March on Washington and the strike on International Women's Day (Hassan, 2017). Subjectivities are malleable and U.S. Women's National Soccer has the ability to rearticulate girl power and empowerment into a collective and political movement. Empowerment and girl power have great potential and the power and support U.S. Women's National Soccer generates from these campaigns can be harnessed for visible change for sportswomen and all women.

In conclusion, this study has great value for rethinking both the power of U.S. Women's National Soccer and their presentation of empowerment. Understanding that U.S. Women's National Soccer is a corporation that will most likely not be a champion for women's rights unless it improves their profits, this means that the responsibility lies with players. As the literature shows (Cashmore & Parker, 2003), the players are role models who have created connections with so many fans who respect and embody similar lifestyles. If players are able to rearticulate empowerment and girl power, which thus far has shown to be integral in the creation of a complacent, privileged generation into a political movement, they have great potential in creating a movement and transforming young, white women's subjectivity.

6.2.2 Academic Significance

The empowerment discourse has been widely studied across multiple fields and is an ever-present concept in mainstream media and therefore can appear, to the outsider, as a saturated topic unworthy of study. Although there have been many studies on critiquing empowerment campaigns (Banet-Weiser, 2004; Gonick, 2006; Riordan, 2001), there has yet to be any change in the empowerment campaigns themselves. For the past 20 years, the context of the U.S. has changed multiple articles have been published and yet, similar superficial messages of girl power and empowerment remain prominent. The lack of evolution and development in empowerment showcase the intense power and importance of empowerment rhetoric in society justifying it as topic worthy of study.

In the literature on empowerment and across multiple disciplines, theories of postfeminism and neoliberalism have been widely written about and debated amongst scholars. However, both of these theories and the current presentation of the *millennial*

discourse, discuss people as simply subjects without agency. The literature presents a young female *millennial* as a definable person easily manipulated and coerced into different characteristics and patterns. This study attempted to problematize this static presentation and instead show the fluidity and resistance of young women. The postfeminist and neoliberal academic scholarship has reduced this generation to docile bodies that lack agency. As Shilling (1993) writes, “the body is affected by discourse, but we get little sense of the body reacting back and affecting discourse” (p. 81). There is little research with regards to the small interactions of resistance and how the information presented in popular discourse is being interpreted. Most of the research is centered on how empowerment is being presented to society and therefore, “Focusing solely on the popular culture celebration of Girl Power and girls’ sports may lead one to make drastically different and somewhat limited conclusions on the state of ‘real girls’ sports today” (Cooky, 2009, p. 224). It follows along with Stuart Hall’s concept of encoding and decoding in which programs are created with specific messages (encoded) but the intended message is not always received (decoded) by the audience in the same manner. Therefore, using a feminist epistemological base, this study gives value and importance to women’s lived experiences and interpretation of U.S. Women’s National Soccer empowerment campaigns.

The previous research and discourse also does not factor in the temporal importance in young women’s lives with regards to postfeminist and neoliberal tendencies. Much of the empowerment research was conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s when the intended audience of the empowerment/girl power discourse were young women just developing their identity and understanding their place in the world. The

studies conducted have not focused on women who have reached adulthood through this empowerment discourse and not seen how growing up with empowerment has affected them in adulthood. As I conducted the research, ideas from the participants' childhood were constantly discussed such as the 1999 World Cup, Power Puff girls, girl power memorabilia as well as conversations related to current empowerment posts on social media. The participants' maturation with girl power did affect their subjectivities and this is a dimension lost in previous literature. Academically, this paper attempted to fill holes and add a nuanced and complex understanding of subjectivity formation and lived experiences of the 21st century female.

6.3 Future Research

Even while I was beginning this project and writing my proposal, I found myself torn in so many directions with regards to the direction this project was going to take. Now that the project has been completed, it has only created more possible future projects and directions. Below I will discuss two potential future research which could use this thesis as a foundation.

In my proposal, one of my initial sub-questions I wanted to investigate was how U.S. Women's National Soccer and women's empowerment rhetoric has affected women's understandings of their bodies. However, after conducting the pilots, this subtheme proved itself to be a much larger project and warranted much more time and in-depth data analysis than I could afford based upon time constraints and the general direction of the project. Therefore, one possible future direction is to better understand how women's corporeal bodies and their understanding of the body have been affected by empowerment campaigns. However, taking it even further, research could draw upon

the body and empowerment as a source of connection between players and fans. During the interview questions, when I showed the women the picture of Brandi Chastain there was an almost instant change in the atmosphere of the room. The women became more lively and excited. In between smiles and giddiness, Nina said, “that moment, especially from playing soccer before, you know how happy she is, right here. You know how that feels. Getting me hyped just looking at it.” That quote “getting my hyped” is an aspect which should be studied further. In body cultural studies, there is discussion of overcoming the mind-body Cartesian dualism and instead embracing the body and human as an entire being that is a part of those around them (Blackman, 2008). The concept of emotional contagion has been described as

the ways in which feelings can be shared between people with the result that their moods can shift and changed... This phenomenon suggests that people can be connected physiologically and emotionally and can communicate this exchange of feeling of which they are not necessarily consciously aware (Blackman, 2008, p. 46).

Therefore instead of discussing empowerment as a fixed, postfeminist, neoliberal interpretation, I could have examined it from a perspective in which empowerment was an emotion, a source of affect and connection between players and fans. How could the body connection between players and fans be a source of communication and source of empowerment? Instead of separating the mind from the body and the mind’s interpretation of empowerment, further research could investigate the affective body’s interpretation of empowerment.

This concept of affective empowerment could be incorporated with a more interdisciplinary approach within Kinesiology, combining Exercise Physiology and Physical Cultural Studies. From a PCS perspective, I would expand upon women’s

understandings of the body, their personal physical activity habits and relationship with empowerment. However, an exercise physiologist could examine the physiological response to images of Brandi Chastain or other iconic moments in women's soccer. How does the context of the sporting situation and the participants' relationship to soccer affect their physiological response and exercise behavior? How is the physiological affected by the interpretation of the discourse? Using a multi-leveled approach by using the various fields of Kinesiology would not only fall in line with PCS's use of interdisciplinary methodology but would prevent the continuation of the mind body dualism and instead present the body and mind as a unified, interconnected being. This approach, utilizing all aspects of Kinesiology, would also contribute to demolishing the epistemological hierarchy some scholars argue exists in academia and within Kinesiology (Andrews, 2008).

This project studied only white women's understanding of the empowerment campaign within U.S. Women's National Soccer. It would be interesting to investigate this further in two ways. First, the same study could be conducted with women of color to determine if they are being interpellated in a similar manner as white women. How does race affect women's relationship and engagement with the empowerment rhetoric in U.S. Women's National Soccer? This is also necessary because previous research has shown that women of color's interpretation of empowerment is much different from white women's understanding (Francis-Spence, 1994; Hill Collins, 1990). To gain a better holistic understanding of the power of empowerment rhetoric, white women and women of color's relationship with the embedded subjectivity within U.S. Women's Soccer needs to be analyzed. However, another direction for future research would be to study

the relationship between women of color's subjectivity formation in relation to empowerment campaigns created in sports organizations that are more racially diverse thus providing more role models of similar races. For example, in 2015, 72% of the WNBA was comprised of African American athletes ("2015 Women's National Basketball Association Racial and Gender Report Card," 2015) whereas 76% of players on the U.S. Women's National Soccer for the SheBelieves tournament in 2017 are white (McGovern, 2017). It would be interesting to study how women of color view empowerment campaigns when framed within a sport comprised of similar racial backgrounds.

6.4 Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study was the use of a homogenous sample. The interviewing of only white women was decided upon early in the process and justified through previous literature. The literature on white women's understanding and women of color's understandings of empowerment differ significantly (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Hill Collins, 1990; Riordan, 2001; Sandberg, 2013) and therefore in order to maintain unity across the interviews, only white women were interviewed. White women were also only interviewed because of soccer's high prevalence among white, middle class young women compared to other races as well as comprising a large portion of the fan base for U.S. Women's National Soccer (Andrews, 1999; McGovern, 2017). However, the limitation of this homogenous group arises not from race, but from the geographic location of the interview. All the participants were students of a large mid-Atlantic university in an area that is more Democratic-liberal leaning and the participants were all from middle to upper class families ("How liberal or conservative is your

university?,” n.d.). Their socioeconomic status and their activity on a liberal campus affected their understanding of empowerment and description of the *millennial*. The study should be repeated with white women of differing political ideologies and socioeconomic status’ to provide more depth to the results.

When asking participants about the #SheBelieves empowerment campaign, a majority had never heard of the campaign or only seen the hashtag. However, when at a conference and speaking with other scholars, I learned that the campaign was very well received and publicized in other parts of the country. Therefore, one of the limitations was the decreased prevalence of #SheBelieves in the mid-Atlantic and future studies could be conducted in other cities in which #SheBelieves was more popular.

A limitation with all research is researcher bias and the mannerisms through which researchers affect their projects (Chenail, 2011; Reinhartz, 1992). However, in feminist studies, the researcher’s influence is not ignored but rather embraced and explained throughout the research process. Harding (1987) writes, “Thus, the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests” (p. 9). I do not present this work as the universal truth of women’s understandings of empowerment but rather my interpretation of their understanding and this could be perceived as a limitation. Through my influence on the study and the homogeneity of the sampling size, it is difficult to make the information generalizable to the entire population of young women. However, by narrowing the scope to white women, I have been able to grapple with and investigate on a complex level, detailed level their experiences understanding the complacency and contradictions within their subjectivity.

6.5 Concluding Remarks and Reflection

Throughout this thesis I have critiqued the #SheBelieves campaign and empowerment rhetoric within U.S. Women's National Soccer highlighting its artificiality and contribution to the creation of a politically banal and complacent generation. However, throughout this entire process I have never stopped believing in women's soccer and have found encouragement through my idolization of the amazing women soccer players. I have come to respect Hope Solo more than I ever thought I would, not because of her amazing talent as a professional goalkeeper, but because of her tenacity and dedication to the fight for gender equality. Messages of empowerment and encouragement are inspiring and necessary but they need to be supported through measures of collective, social change which is what Hope Solo and some of the other players are attempting to achieve through their Equal Pay Lawsuit.

Between 1999 and 2016, although gender politics have changed, women's position in sports and society as the inferior gender has not. This study has shown how influential U.S. Women's National Soccer can be in inspiring young women as well as shown that young women are active agents in the creation of their subjectivities. Therefore, the #SheBelieves campaign has the power to ignite a social movement. In a 2015 popular press article, Mertens cites a 1978 paper by Hollis Elkins-a University of New Mexico Women's Studies professor- who asked why women's movements had never been concerned with women's sports. Mertens (2015) argues that 35 years later, the same question can be applied to society and makes a case for sport as a feminist movement. Mertens (2015) writes, "Feminists need to focus on sports because it's an institution of massive cultural significance and an area rife with 'serious' issues, such as

sexual violence, pay inequality, and a lack of women in leadership positions” (p. 1). Sport and soccer are a reflection and composition of society replicating the same problems that plague other factions of women’s lives. U.S. Women’s National Soccer has the potential to address and make significant progress in many areas of women’s life if only #SheBelieves and empowerment rhetoric became more about empowering women to reject complacency and return to its initial purpose of inspiring revolutions than selling empowerment in the form of a t-shirt.

APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION

- Introduction
 - Welcome, introductions and thank the participants for taking time out of their schedule to talk to me about being a women's sports fan
 - My primary interest is to understand your experiences, thoughts and feelings of being a female fan of women's professional soccer." Adding to this, I am interested in how you see events in women's professional soccer relating to feminism and shaping *millennial* identity
- Procedure
 - "I am here to learn from you all. I have questions to ask, but I encourage you to include anything you feel is important. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions and I am not looking for anything in particular. Rather I am trying to better understand your perspective. The interview should last anywhere between an hour and an hour and a half and there might be the possibility for a follow-up interview either in person or via email."
 - "I am going to be audio recording our discussion if that is okay with you. The recordings and transcripts of the conversations are confidential, meaning that when I report the results of the study, I won't use your real name or any information that would allow other people to figure out who you are and what you say."
 - "You have the right to choose not to answer any particular questions or to end the interview at any point if you wish"
 - "Before we begin, I'm just going to have you look over and sign a copy. If you'd like to keep a copy, I have extras"
 - SIGN FORMS
 - "Are there any questions before we begin? Is it okay if I start recording our conversation?"
 - (If yes, start the recording)

QUESTIONS

Background/IceBreaker---Girl Power/Millennials/Social Activism

1. PIECE OF PAPER
 - As a group write down what comes to mind when you hear the term "*millennial*"? Definition, traits, ethical principles, image, etc.
 - Probe: How closely do these traits align with your behaviors/ideas?
 - Probe: Do you consider yourself a *millennial*? Why? How?
2. What are some traits of a female *millennial*?
 - Probe: What is one of the biggest challenges facing female *millennials*?
 - Probe: How do *millennials* tackle this problem (above)? What are some of the first steps to be taken?

3. Can you tell me anything you know about the equal pay lawsuit being filed by members of the women's soccer team?
 - a. Probe: What are your thoughts? If they are not making the same money, should they be paid equally?
 - b. Probe: What can you do, as a young woman, to support the women's soccer team?

Girl Power and She Believes Narrative—Hashtag Activism

1. During the World Cup, the USWNT initiated the #SheBelieves campaign. Tell me anything you know or remember about the campaign. Did you engage with the campaign in some way? Can you tell me about a time you used the hashtag.
 - Probe: What was the purpose of the hashtag?
 - Probe: How do *millennial* soccer fans engage with social media today?
 - ****If unsure of #SheBelieves, start with #betterforit

World Cup/Post-Feminism

SHOW PICTURE of Brandi Chastain “Girls Rule”



1. What do you remember about this image or about the 1999 World Cup?
 - Probe: What do you think of the tagline “Girls Rule”? How did this idea of “girls rule” affect/inform your experience as a woman/girl?
 - Probe: (if they don't know about image) What is going on in this image? What emotions/actions is she done? How do you feel about her body? What inspires you about this image?
2. Can you compare and contrast your experiences with the 1999 World Cup with the 2015 World Cup?
 - Probe: How did the two World Cups differ in their affect on your life? Did you still idolize players? Did you engage more with social media? Do more to support the team?
 - Probe: How was #SheBelieves connected to the “girls rule” we saw in the 1999 games?
3. When you hear the word “girl power,” what is the first thing that comes to mind? What does it mean to you?
 - Probe: What do you remember about “girl power” from childhood?
 - Probe: When you see the tagline “Girls rule,”/girl power what affect does this have on women? Women's self esteem?
4. As a group write down what comes to mind when you think of empowerment? Definition, traits, ethical principles, image, etc.

- Probe: Tell me about a time you felt empowered. What other events/activities/concepts empower you? What actions make you feel empowered?
 - How do these experiences of empowerment/inspiration aspects help you achieve goals?
 - How is inspire different than empower
5. Explain a time you have felt empowered during a sport (playing or watching)?
 - Probe: How did the #SheBelieves campaign empower you, if at all?
 - Probe: Have you ever found sports to be disempowering?
 6. What does feminism mean to you?
 - Probe: Is girl power and #SheBelieves a feminist act? How so?
 - Probe: Do you consider yourself a feminist?
 - Probe: How have you exhibited feminist/what are some feminist acts you've done?
 - Probe: Is there still a need for feminism?
 7. How has women's soccer affected your views on feminism?
 - Probe: Would you consider the women's soccer players to be feminists?

EXTRA QUESTIONS IF TIME PERMITS/NECESSARY/COME UP

8. When you see Abby Wambach, Carli Loyd or Alex Morgan, how do you think they feel about their bodies?
 - Probe: How does this affect your body self-esteem?
 - Probe: How do the bodies of the players affect your body self-esteem?
9. How do you engage in physical activity? What types of physical activity do you do? How often?
 - Probe: Has this changed as a result of being a soccer fan? World Cup?
10. What needs to be done to publicize women's soccer?

APPENDIX B: Participant Demographics

Name °	Race*	Age
Robin	White	19
Anna	White	19
Marcia	White/Hispanic	19
Abby	White	23
Katie	White	24
Lily	White	23
Candace	Hispanic	21
Elsa	White	20
Erica	White	21
Charlotte	White/Hispanic	21
Amy	White	20
Cassie	White	25
Penelope	White	19
Katrina	White	19
Poppy	White	18
Nina	White	19
Holly	White	19
Anita	White	18

° All names used are pseudonyms

*Indicates based on participant's self-definition

APPENDIX C: Group Distribution

Group Number	Participants [°]	Race*	Age
1	Robin	White	19
	Anna	White	19
	Marcia	Latina/White	19
	Abby	White	23
2	Katie	White	24
	Lily	White	23
	Candace	Latina	21
	Elsa	White	20
3	Erica	White	21
	Charlotte	Latina/White	21
	Amy	White	20
	Cassie	White	25
4	Penelope	White	19
	Katrina	White	19
	Poppy	White	18
5	Nina	White	19
	Holly	White	19
	Anita	White	18

[°] All names used are pseudonyms

*Indicates based on participant's self-definition

APPENDIX D: Consent Form

Project Title	The Influence of the Empowerment Narrative of Women’s Soccer on Female <i>Millennials</i>
Purpose of the Study	<p>This research is being conducted by Julie Brice and Dr. David Andrews from the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a female between the ages of 18-25, have identified yourself as a women’s soccer fan and have watched at least two of the U.S. Women’s Soccer Team’s games in the 2015 World Cup. You have also agreed to participate in a small group interview consisting of three to five women.</p> <p>The purpose of this research is to better understand how female <i>millennial</i> soccer fans (for this study born between 1991 and 1998) have interpreted the empowerment rhetoric and “girl power” discourse associated with women’s sports and how this interpretation has affected their subjectivity, physical activity and social justice motivation.</p>
Procedures	The procedures involves meeting with the principal investigator for at least one small group interview (between three to five women) lasting between 60-120 minutes. There is a possibility for either follow-up individual interviews via email or in person. All group interviews will be recorded and transcribed.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no known risks to participating in this study . While we do not anticipate addressing any sensitive issues, if you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may refuse to answer or stop participating at any time.
Potential Benefits	<i>There are no direct benefits to the participants. However, the research will broaden and contribute to current literature on empowerment rhetoric. The research will also have an impact on the understanding of how empowerment campaigns affect female millennials’ identity and physical activity. The conclusions can help to improve and change the empowerment discourse in the U.S. leading towards gender equality.</i>

<p>Confidentiality</p>	<p>Your personal information will not be collected beyond the names required for these consent forms. We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality: (1) your name will not be included with any public presentation of collected data by providing you with a pseudonym; (2) only the researchers will have access to identifying information; (3) all data will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. All audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer.</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<p>Right to Withdraw and Questions</p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Principal Investigator: Ms. Julie Brice Physical Cultural Studies Department of Kinesiology 1223 SPH Bldg College Park, Maryland 20742-2611 Tel: (301)910-6174 E-Mail: jubrice@terpmail.umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Faculty Advisor: Dr. David Andrews Physical Cultural Studies Department of Kinesiology 2357 SPH Bldg College Park, Maryland 20742-2611 Tel: (301) 405-2474 E-Mail: dla@umd.edu</p>
<p>Participant Rights</p>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant please contact:</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>		
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, you are willing to share your answers in a small group interview and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>		
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]		
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT		
	DATE		
	I understand and give my permission for this interview to be audio-recorded. * Please check yes or no*	YES	NO

APPENDIX E: IRB Approval



1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@um.edu
www.umresearch.um.edu/IRB

DATE: June 3, 2016

TO: Julie Brice
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [884004-2] The Influence of the Domineering Empowerment Narrative of Women's Soccer on Female Millennials' Perception of their Bodies, Physical Activity and Social Justice

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 3, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: May 15, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 15, 2017.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

APPENDIX F: Pre-Analysis Questions

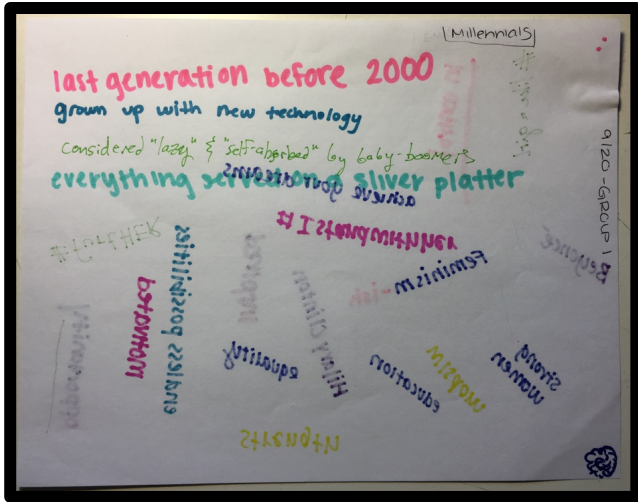
Pre-Analysis Decisions based upon Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Thematic Analysis Guide

Decision To be Made	Decision and Justification
What counts as a theme?	Although this will change as the data is reviewed, I will look at the prevalence of certain data to create themes.
Description of the data set	I will not be providing a rich description of the entire data but instead the accounts which relate to the subthemes of identity formation, postfeminist, embodiment, etc
Theoretical or inductive framework	For this study, it will be a combination of the two in which the data will be analyzed for specific themes as determined by the theoretical frameworks (postfeminism, radical contextualism, neoliberalism) yet will also be viewed from a more inductive standpoint allowing the data to reveal ideas/themes.
Semantic or Latent themes	This analysis will be based in the latent level which will “go beyond the semantic content of the data , and identifies the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations –and ideologies- that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).
Epistemology	A constructionist perspective will be used, as discussed in the previous section.
Questions used	During analysis, themes will be developed based around the initial research question, the sub-questions as well as questions that are seen as “probe” questions used during the interviews.

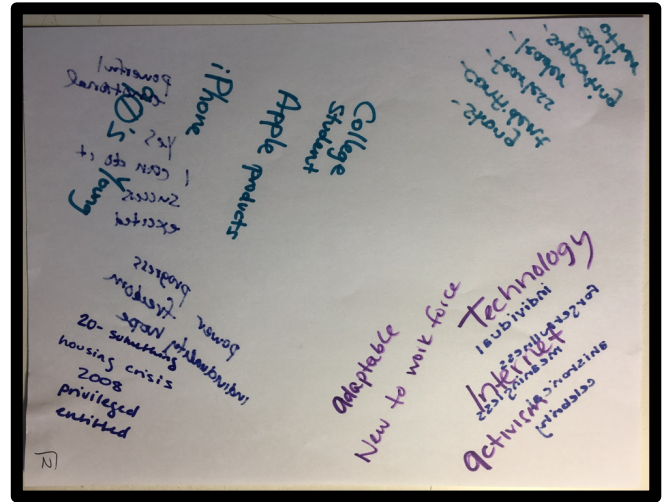
APPENDIX G: Millennial Characteristics Webs

Word maps created when participants asked “What comes to mind when you hear the term ‘millennial’?”

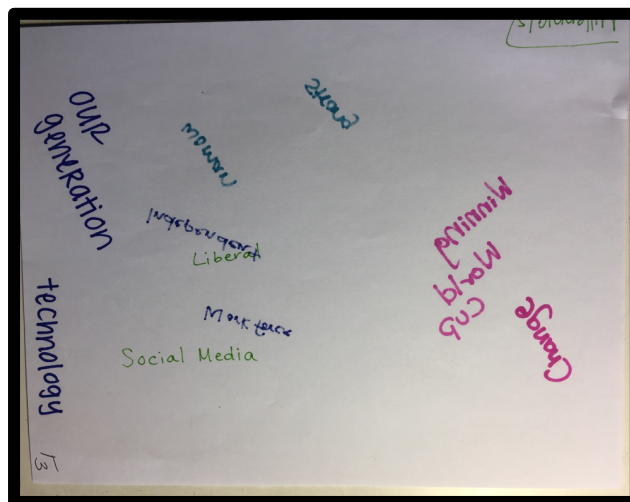
Group 1:



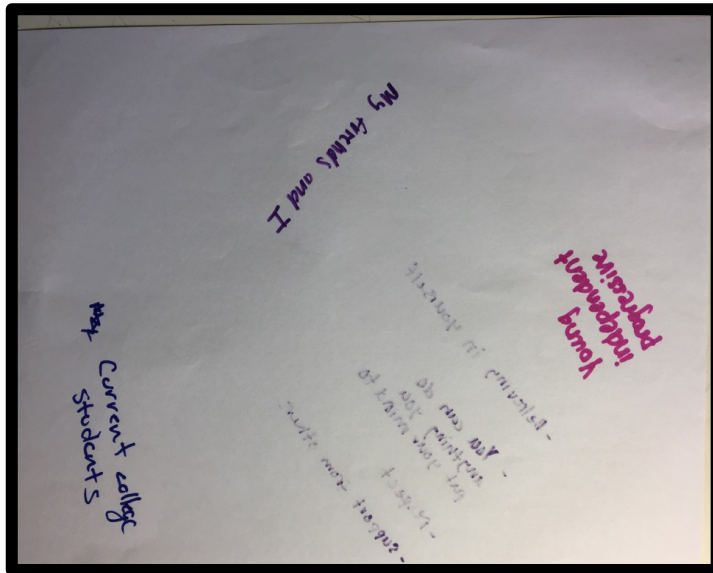
Group 2:



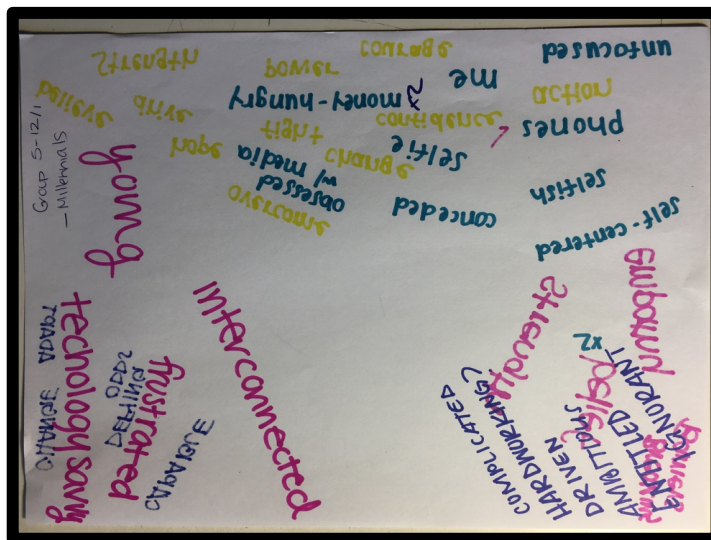
Group 3:



Group 4:



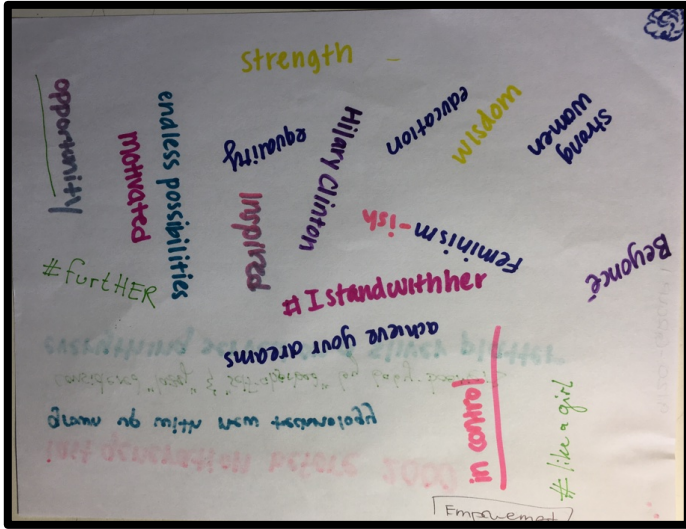
Group 5:



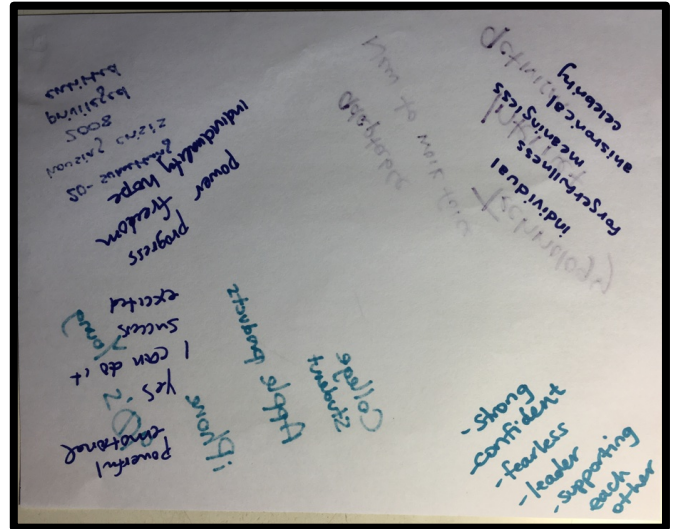
APPENDIX H: Empowerment Characteristics Graphics

Word maps created by participants when asked to “Please write down what comes to mind when you think of empowerment.”

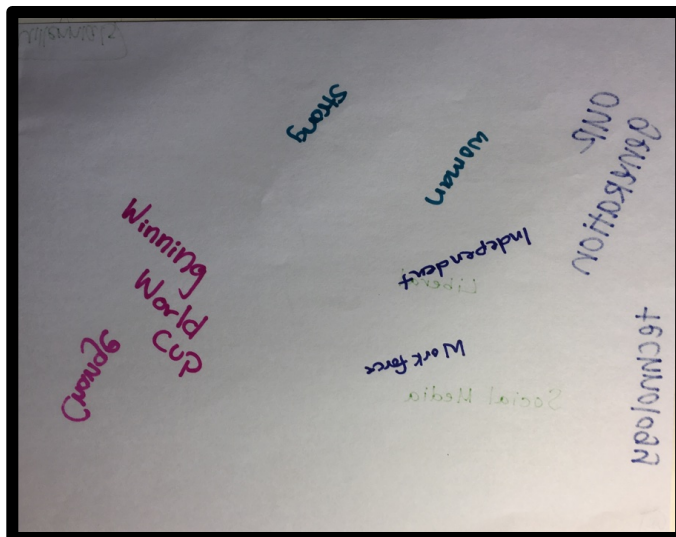
Group 1:



Group 2:



Group 3:



REFERENCES

- 2015 Women's National Basketball Association Racial and Gender Report Card. (2015, October 21). Retrieved March 7, 2017, from
- 2017 SheBelieves Cup. (n.d.). Retrieved March 23, 2017, from /womens-national-team/tournaments/2017-shebelieves-cup
- Adams, C. (2012). Historical methods and traces of the past: Embracing the complexities and engaging in reflexivity. In K. Young & M. Atkinson (Eds.), *Research in the Sociology of Sport: Qualitative research on sport and physical culture*. United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Al-Khateeb, Z. (2016, September 24). Michigan, Michigan State players protest during national anthem. Retrieved from <http://www.sportingnews.com/ncaa-football/news/michigan-state-michigan-players-protest-national-anthems-penn-state-wisconsin-colin-kaepernick/mdl49nfjn4bz15en64ypsi1yb>
- Allen, A. (2016). Feminist perspectives on power. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/feminist-power/>
- Althusser, L. (1971). Lenin and philosophy. In *Monthly Review*. New York.
- Andrews, D. L. (1999). Contextualizing suburban soccer: Consumer culture, lifestyle differentiation and suburban America. *Culture, Sport, Society*, 2(3), 31–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14610989908721846>
- Andrews, D. L. (2008). Kinesiology's inconvenient truth and the physical cultural studies imperative. *Quest*, 60(1), 45–62.

- Andrews, D. L. (2015). *Radical Contextualism and Articulation*. Lecture, University of Maryland.
- Andrews, D. L., & Silk, M. L. (2011). Physical cultural studies: Engendering a productive dialogue. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 28(1), 1–3.
- Andrews, D. L., & Silk, Michael (Eds.). (2012). *Sport and Neoliberalism: Politics, consumption and culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Andrews, D.L., & Silk, M. (2017). *Sport and Neoliberalism: An affective-ideological articulation*. Manuscript Submission.
- Ashcraft, K., & Kedrowicz, A. (2002). Self-direction or social support? nonprofit empowerment and the tacit employment contract of organizational communication studies. *Communication Monographs*, 69(1), 88–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750216538>
- Aspen Institute. (2016). *State of Play 2016: Trends and Developments* (p. 28).
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2004). Girls rule!: gender, feminism, and nickelodeon. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21(2), 119–139.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180410001688038>
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2015). “Confidence you can carry!”: girls in crisis and the market for girls’ empowerment organizations. *Continuum*, 29(2), 182–193.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2015.1022938>
- Bay-Cheng, L. Y., Lewis, A. E., Stewart, A. J., & Malley, J. E. (2006). Disciplining “Girl Talk.” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 13(2), 73–92.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J137v13n02_05

- Bazzul, J. (2016). The Constitution of subjectivities: Discourse, practices and repetition. In *Ethics and science education: How subjectivity matters*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Berman, A. (1988). *From new criticism to deconstruction; the reception of structuralism and post-structuralism*. Urbana & Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Bissell, K. L., & Duke, A. M. (2007). Bump, set, spike: An Analysis of commentary and camera angles of women's beach volleyball during the 2004 Summer Olympics. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 13(1–2), 35–53.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J057v13n01_04
- Blackman, L. (2008). *The body: Key concepts*. Oxford & New York: Berg.
- Blake, A. (2016, December 2). Yes, you can blame millennials for Hillary Clinton's loss. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/12/02/yes-you-can-blame-millennials-for-hillary-clintons-loss/>
- Bookman, A., & Morgen, S. (1988). *Women and the politics of empowerment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Retrieved from Table of contents
<http://www.gbv.de/dms/bowker/toc/9780877225041.pdf>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braxton, G. (1991). Wellbeing is our birthright. The meaning of empowerment for women of color. *Health/PAC Bulletin*, 21(4), 9–11.
- Bruening, J. E. (2005). Gender and racial analysis in sport: Are all the women white and all the Blacks men? *Quest*, 57(3), 330–349.

- Bucic, T., Harris, J., & Arli, D. (2012). Ethical consumers among the Millennials: A Cross-National Study. *Journal of Business Ethics, 110*(1), 113–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-1151-z>
- Cashmore, E., & Parker, A. (2003). One David Beckham? Celebrity, masculinity, and the soccerati. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 20*(3), 214–231.
- Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 16*(1), 255.
- Chenoweth, E., & Pressman, J. (2017, February 7). Analysis: This is what we learned by counting the women’s marches. *Washington Post*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/07/this-is-what-we-learned-by-counting-the-womens-marches/>
- Cho, S.-Y. (2013). A league of their own: Female soccer, male legacy and women’s empowerment. Retrieved from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2228158
- Cohn, D. (2014). *Millions of Americans changed their racial or ethnic identity from one census to the next*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/05/millions-of-americans-changed-their-racial-or-ethnic-identity-from-one-census-to-the-next/>
- Cohn, N. (2014, May 21). More Hispanics declaring themselves white. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/upshot/more-hispanics-declaring-themselves-white.html>

- Cole, C. L. (1993). Resisting the canon: Feminist Cultural Studies, Sport, and Technologies of the Body. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 17(2), 77–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/019372359301700202>
- Connell, R. W. (1990). An iron man: The body and some contradictions of hegemonic masculinity. In M. Messner & Sabo, Donald (Eds.), *Sport, men and the gender order* (pp. 83–95). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books.
- Cooky, C. (2009). “Girls just aren’t interested”: The social construction of interest in girls’ sport. *Sociological Perspectives*, 52(2), 259–283.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2009.52.2.259>
- Cooky, C. (2011). Do girls rule? Understanding popular culture images of “girl power” and sport. In S. Spickard Prettyman & Lampman, Brian (Eds.), *Learning culture through sport* (pp. 210–226). Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Hextrum, R. H. (2013). Women play sport, but not on TV: A longitudinal study of televised news media. *Communication & Sport*, 1(3), 203–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513476947>
- Cornwall, A., Gideon, J., & Wilson, K. (2008). Introduction: Reclaiming feminism: Gender and neoliberalism. *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, 39(6), 1–9.
- Courtenay, W. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men’s well-being: A theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 50, 1385–1401.
- Csorba, E. (2016, May 2). The problem with Millennials? They’re way too hard on themselves. Retrieved May 16, 2016, from <https://hbr.org/2016/05/the-problem-with-millennials-theyre-way-too-hard-on-themselves>

- Daly, K. (2007). *Qualitative methods for family studies and human development*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Das, A. (2016, April 21). Pay disparity in U.S. Soccer? It's Complicated. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/22/sports/soccer/usmnt-uswnt-soccer-equal-pay.html>
- Davis-Delano, L. R., Pollock, A., & Vose, J. E. (2009). Apologetic behavior among female athletes: A new questionnaire and initial results. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *44*(2-3), 131-150.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690209335524>
- Denfeld, R. (1995). *The new victorians: A young woman's challenge to the old feminist order*. New York: Warner Books.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Third Edition). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.
- Downs, C. (2016, October 31). All the things the media has blamed Millennials for in 2016. Retrieved February 9, 2017, from <https://www.merryjane.com/culture/things-media-blamed-millennials-for>
- Dvorak, P. (2016, April 21). Harriet Tubman will be on the \$20 bill but still doesn't rate a statue in the Capitol. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/harriet-tubman-will-be-on-the-20-bill-but-still-doesnt-rate-a-statue-in-the-capitol/2016/04/21/cc5f533c-07cd-11e6-b283-e79d81c63c1b_story.html
- Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary theory: An introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis P.

- Ekstrand, J., & Nigg, B. M. (1989). Surface-related injuries in soccer. *Sports Medicine*, 8(1), 56–62. <https://doi.org/10.2165/00007256-198908010-00006>
- Ekstrand, J., Timpka, T., Hagglund, M., & Karlsson, J. (2006). Risk of injury in elite football played on artificial turf versus natural grass: a prospective two-cohort study * Commentary. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 40(12), 975–980. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjism.2006.027623>
- Elmer, G. (2004). *Profiling machines: Mapping the personal information economy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- empirical: definition of empirical in Oxford dictionary (American English) (US). (n.d.). Retrieved May 6, 2016, from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/empirical
- Epps, S. V. (2016, September 9). Soccer in the U.S. still looks like it's for white girls. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2016/09/09/soccer-in-the-u-s-still-looks-like-its-for-white-girls/?utm_term=.f763f9e31952
- Firat, A. F., & Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(3), 239–267.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (2003). Truth and power. In P. Rabinow & N. Rose (Eds.), *The essential Foucault* (pp. 300–318). New York, NY: The New Press.

- Francis-Spence, M. (1994). Groupwork and black women viewing networks as groups: Black women meeting together for affirmation and empowerment. *Groupwork*, 7(2), 109–116.
- Fritzsche, B. (2004). Spicy strategies: Feminist and other empowerments in girl culture. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl* (pp. 155–162). New York: Routledge.
- Fuller, C. W., Clarke, L., & Molloy, M. G. (2010). Risk of injury associated with rugby union played on artificial turf. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 28(5), 563–570.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02640411003629681>
- Fuller, L. K. (Ed.). (2006). *Sport, rhetoric and gender: Historical perspectives and media representations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Funk, D. C., Mahony, D. F., & Ridinger, L. L. (2002). Characterizing consumer motivation as individual difference factors: Augmenting the Sport Interest Inventory (SII) to explain level of spectator support. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 11(1), 33.
- Genz, S. (2009). *postfeminities in popular culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gibbs, J. T., & Fuery, D. (1994). Mental health and well-being of black women: Toward strategies of empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 22(4), 559–582. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02506893>
- Gill, R., & Ganesh, S. (2007). Empowerment, constraint, and the entrepreneurial Self: A study of white women entrepreneurs. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35(3), 268–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909880701434265>
- Gill, R., & Scharff, C. (2011). *New femininities: postfeminism, neoliberalism, and subjectivity*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan.

- Giroux, H. (2004). *The terror of neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the eclipse of democracy*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Gonick, M. (2006). Between “Girl Power” and “Reviving Ophelia”: Constituting the Neoliberal girl subject. *NWSA Journal*, 18(2), 1–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/nwsa.2006.0031>
- Green, E. (2016, July 26). “We are preparing to shatter the highest glass ceiling in our country.” *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/hillary-clinton-first-female-presidential-nominee/493163/>
- Gross, T. S. (2012). The new Millennial values. *Forbes*. Retrieved from
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/prospernow/2012/07/05/the-new-millennial-values/>
- Grossberg, L. (1997). Cultural studies: What’s in a name? (one more time). In *Bringing it all back home: Essays on cultural studies*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Guttmann, A. (1991). *Women’s Sports: A History*. Columbia University Press.
- Hains, R. C. (2009). Power feminism, mediated: Girl Power and the commercial politics of Change. *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 32(1), 89–113.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2009.10162382>
- Hall, S. (1985). Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and the post-structuralist debate. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2(2), 91–114.
- Hall, S. (1993). Encoding, decoding. *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 4, 90–103.
- Harding, S. (1987). *Feminism and methodology*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

- Harding, S. (2004). Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is “strong objectivity”? In S. N. Hesse-Biber & M. Yaiser (Eds.), *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research* (pp. 39–64). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harris, A. (2004a). *Future girl: young women in the twenty-first century*. New York: Routledge.
- Harris, A. (2004b). Jamming girl culture: Young women and consumer citizenship. In *All about the girl* (pp. 163–172). New York: Routledge.
- Hassan, J. (2017, March 8). International Women’s Day 2017: 5 women changing their world for the better. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/03/08/international-womens-day-2017-5-women-changing-their-world-for-the-better/>
- Hays, G. (2016, September 16). U.S. soccer midfielder Megan Rapinoe kneels again for national anthem before friendly. *espnW*. Retrieved from <http://www.espn.com/espnw/sports/article/17558219/us-soccer-midfielder-megan-rapinoe-kneels-again-national-anthem-friendly>
- Heffernan, C. (2016, March 8). Why there is a negative connotation with the term “Millennial.” *Odyssey*. Retrieved from <http://theodysseyonline.com/marquette/negative-connotation-term-millennial/348043>
- Helstein, M. T. (2007). Seeing your sporting body: Identity, subjectivity, and misrecognition. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 24(1), 78–103.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Yaiser, M. (2004). *Feminist perspectives on social research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Heywood, L. (2007). Producing girls and the neoliberal body. In J. Hargreaves & P. Vertinsky (Eds.), *physical culture, power, and the body* (pp. 101–120). London: Routledge.
- Hildum, D. C., & Brown, R. W. (1956). Verbal reinforcement and interviewer bias. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 53(1), 108–111.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040518>
- Hill Collins, P. (1990). *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2003). Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 3–30). Londong: Sage.
- Horovitz, B. (2012). After Gen X, Millennials, what should next generation be?
Retrieved July 14, 2016, from
<http://www.usatoday.com/money/advertising/story/2012-05-03/naming-the-next-generation/54737518/1>
- How liberal or conservative is your university? (n.d.). Retrieved March 8, 2017, from
<https://www.crowdpac.com/games/lookup/universities?name=University Of Maryland College Park>
- Jhally, S. (2016). Stuart Hall’s pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will: reflections on an intellectual life. *Cultural Studies*, 30(2), 322–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2015.1089919>

- Jones de Almeida, J. (2010). How empowered am I? Is there a match between my perception of self-empowerment and empowerment measures? *Researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 23(2), 47–67.
- Katz, D. (1994). *Just Do It: The Nike spirit in the corporate world*. New York: Random House.
- Kavka, M. (2002). Feminism, ethics, and history, or what is the “Post” in Postfeminism? *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 21(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149214>
- Kidd, B. (1990). The men’s cultural centre: Sports and the dynamic of women’s oppression/men’s repression. In M. Messner & D. Sabo (Eds.), *Sport, men, and the gender order*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books.
- Kirchick, J. (2016, September 16). Blame millennials for President Trump. *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/09/16/if-america-elects-a-president-donald-j-trump-blame-millennials.html>
- Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women’s sport. *Quest*, 53(1), 115–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2001.10491733>
- Krueger, R. A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Larner, W. (2000). Neoliberalism: policy, ideology, governmentality. *Studies in Political Economy*, 63, 5–25.
- Liu, E. (2014, May 30). Why are Hispanics identifying as white? *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/29/opinion/liu-study-hispanics-favor-whiteness/index.html>

- Lloyd, C., & Coffey, W. (2016). *When nobody was watching: My hard-fought journey to the top of the soccer world*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Longman, J. (2000). *The girls of summer-the US women's soccer team and how it changed the world*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider : essays and speeches*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press.
- Lucas, S. (2000). Nike's commercial solution: Girls, sneakers and salvation. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 35(2), 149–164.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/101269000035002002>
- Markovits, A., & Hellerman, S. (2006). Women's Soccer in the United States: Yet another American "Exceptionalism," 4(2–3).
- Markula, P., & Pringle, R. (2006). Exercise-disciplined into docile bodies. In P. Markula & R. Pringle (Eds.), *Foucault, sport and exercise: Power, knowledge and transforming the self* (pp. 72–91). London & New York: Routledge.
- Markula, P., & Silk, M. (2011). *Qualitative research for physical culture*. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Martinez, E., & Garcia, A. (1998). What is ' neo-liberalism'? *Third World Resurgence*, 7–8.
- McCammon, H. J., Campbell, K. E., Granberg, E. M., & Mowery, C. (2001). How movements win: Gendered opportunity structures and U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919. *American Sociological Review*, 66(1), 49–70.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2657393>
- McGovern, J. (2017). #SheBelieves, but who is she? Race, ethnicity, and the U.S. Women's Soccer Team. Retrieved from

<https://thesocietypages.org/engagingsports/2017/02/28/shebelieves-but-who-is-she-race-ethnicity-and-the-u-s-womens-soccer-team/>

McGuigan, J. (2016). *Neoliberal culture*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

McRobbie, A. (2003). Settling accounts with subcultures. *Culture: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, 3, 246.

McRobbie, A. (2007). Postfeminism and popular culture: Bridget Jones and the new gender regime. In Y. Tasker & D. Negra (Eds.), *Interrogating Postfeminism* (pp. 27–39). Durham: Duke University Press.

McRobbie, A. (2009). *the aftermath of feminism; gender, culture and social change*. London: SAGE.

Mertens, M. (2015, June 5). Women's Soccer is a feminist issue. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/06/womens-soccer-is-a-feminist-issue/394865/>

Messner, M. A. (1988). Sports and male domination: The female athlete as contested ideological terrain. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 5(3), 197–211.

Messner, M., & Sabo, D. (1990). *Sport, men, and the gender order*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books.

Monbiot, G. (2016, April 15). Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems. Retrieved May 16, 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>

- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (Eds.). (2015). *This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of color* (Fourth edition). Albany: State University of New York (SUNY) Press.
- Morgan, D. L. (1998). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Morse, J. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5, 147–149.
- Narcotta-Welp, E. (2015). A black fly in white milk: The 1999 Women's World Cup, Briana Scurry and the politics of inclusion. *Journal of Sport History*, 42(3), 382–393.
- Negra, D. (2009). *What a girl wants; Fantasizing the reclamation of self in postfeminism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nguyen, C. (n.d.). interpellation | The Chicago School of Media Theory. Retrieved February 14, 2017, from <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/interpellation/>
- Oblinger, D. (2003). Boomers, Gen-Xers, Millennials and understanding the new students. *EDUCASE*, 37–47.
- Olmstead, M. (2015). Acknowledging the importance of Title IX in the U.S. World Cup Win. Retrieved March 3, 2017, from <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/sports/acknowledging-the-importance-of-title-ix-in-the-u-s-world-cup-win/>
- Ortner, S. B. (2014). Too soon for post-feminism: The ongoing life of patriarchy in neoliberal America. *History & Anthropology*, 25(4), 530–549.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930458>

- Peck, J. (2003). Geography and public policy: Mapping the penal state. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(2), 222–232.
- Powell, H. (2013). Consumers, marketers and marketplaces. In H. Powell (Ed.), *Promotional Culture and Convergence: Markets, methods and media* (pp. 60–84). Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Rabinow, P. (Ed.). (1991). *The Foucault reader: An introduction to Foucault's thought*. London: Penguin.
- Raina, P. (2016). US Women's Soccer team won't play on turf. *Injury Prevention: Journal of the International Society for Child and Adolescent Injury Prevention*, 22(2), 4.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Riordan, E. (2001). Commodified agents and empowered girls: Consuming and producing feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 25(3), 279–297.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859901025003006>
- Rodman, G. (2008). Cultural studies and history. In N. Partner & S. Foot (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of historical theory*. London.
- Rogers, K. (2016, August 18). Sure, these women are winning Olympic Medals, but are they single? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/19/sports/olympics/sexism-olympics-women.html>
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rose, N. (2000). Government and control. *British Journal of Criminology*, 40(2), 321–339.
- Rottenberg, C. (2014). The rise of Neoliberal Feminism. *Cultural Studies*, 28(3), 418–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.857361>
- Sandberg, S. (2013). *Lean in : women, work, and the will to lead*.
- Sandeen, C. (2008). Boomers, Xers, and Millennials: Who are they and what do they really want from continuing higher education?. *Continuing Higher Education Review*, 72, 11–31.
- Saukko, P. (2002). *Qualitative research in cultural studies*. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Schewe, C., Debevec, K., Madden, T., Diamond, W., Parment, A., & Murphy, A. (2013). “If you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all!” Are young millennials the same worldwide? *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 25(1), 3–15.
- Schinke, R. J., McGannon, K. R., Parham, W. D., & Lane, A. M. (2012). Toward cultural praxis and cultural sensitivity: Strategies for self-reflexive Sport Psychology Practice. *Quest* (00336297), 64(1), 34–46.
- Seidman, S. (1994). *Contested knowledge: Social theory in postmodern era*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.
- Shilling, C. (1993). *The body and social theory*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA & New Delhi: Sage.
- Smith, K. T. (2011). Digital marketing strategies that Millennials find appealing, motivating, or just annoying. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(6), 489–499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2011.581383>

- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., & LeGrande, D. J. (2005). Build it and they will come? The Women's United Soccer Association: A collision of exchange theory and strategic philanthropy. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 14(3), 158–167.
- Staff, T. P. B., & Australia. (n.d.). 17 Times Millennials really fucked up in 2016. Retrieved December 12, 2016, from <https://www.buzzfeed.com/tahliapritchard/killing-so-many-things>
- Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next generation*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Swanson, L. (2009). Soccer fields of cultural [re]production: Creating “Good Boys” in suburban America. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 26(3), 404–424.
- Taft, J. (2004). Girl power politics: Pop-culture barriers and organizational resistance. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl: Culture, power and identity* (pp. 69–78). Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tanenhaus, S. (2014, August 15). The Millennials are generation nice. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/fashion/the-millennials-are-generation-nice.html>
- The Personal Is Political: Where did the feminist slogan come from? (n.d.). Retrieved February 16, 2017, from http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/consciousness_raising.htm
- The Year of U.S. Women (Again). (n.d.). Retrieved March 3, 2017, from <http://www.si.com/vault/2016/07/25/1017092/the-year-of-us-women-again>

- Thomas, M. (2010). *The media and the postmodern athlete: A political economic analysis of Mia Hamm and David Beckham* (Masters of Arts Thesis). Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
- US Soccer. (2017a). #SheBelieves around the country. Retrieved March 17, 2017, from [/womens-national-team/shebelieves](#)
- US Soccer. (2017b). *What does SheBelieves mean to you?* Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHJQYf9g4fs>
- USWNT. (2015). #SheBelieves Letter to Fans. Retrieved March 17, 2017, from [/womens-national-team/shebelieves/shebelieves-letter](#)
- Van Sterkenburg, J. and A. Knoppers (2004). Dominant discourses about race/ethnicity and gender in sport practice and performance. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 39 (3), 301-21.
- Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory, 2nd edition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Weedon, C. (2004). Subjectivity and identity. In *Identity and culture: Narratives of difference and belonging* (pp. 5–21). Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill International (UK) Ltd.
- Werner, E., & Hennessey | AP, K. (2016, April 12). With new monument, Obama and Dems seize on Equal Pay Day. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/with-new-monument-obama-and-dems-seize-on-equal-pay-day/2016/04/12/ae8a0280-00cf-11e6-8bb1-f124a43f84dc_story.html

- Who Are Millennials | Millennial Marketing. (n.d.). Retrieved July 14, 2016, from <http://www.millennialmarketing.com/who-are-millennials/>
- Wilkinson, S. (1999). Focus groups: A feminist method. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23, 221–244.
- Witz, B. (2016, September 1). This time, Colin Kaepernick takes a stand by kneeling. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/sports/football/colin-kaepernick-kneels-national-anthem-protest.html>
- WNT Launches #SheBelieves Initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved December 2, 2015, from </stories/2015/05/12/16/37/150512-shebelieves-community-launch-rel>
- Women’s World Cup Final is Most-Watched Soccer Match in U.S. History. (2015). Retrieved February 19, 2017, from <file://localhost/Users/Jules/Library/Application%20Support/Zotero/Profiles/dfnmxslid.default/zotero/storage/NBXDCN5V/150708-wnt-victory-breaks-tv-records.html>
- Zeisler, A. (2016). *We were feminists once: From Riot Grrrl to CoverGirl®, the buying and selling of a political movement*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Zwick, D., & Dholakia, N. (2004). Whose identity is it anyway? Consumer representation in the age of database marketing. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 24(1), 31–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146704263920>