From the Tennis Courts to the Streets: An Examination of the Ideology Subordinating Women Athletes

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For my parents, who let me have baseball gloves and fishing poles, instead of dolls and pink dresses.

"Girls are not suited for the same athletic program as boys. Under prolonged and intense physical strain, a girl goes to pieces nervously. A boy may be physically so weak that he hasn't the strength to 'smash a cream-puff,' but he still has the 'will' to play. A girl is the opposite."

Ethel Perrin, chairperson of the women's division of the
National Amateur Athletic Federation, 1928.

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents three different milestones in women's athletic history, and analyzes each for what it shows about the status of women's athletics at the time. The three events are the 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs, the eventual acceptance of women into the Boston Marathon in 1972, and the inaugural Olympic women's marathon in 1984. The methodology of ideological criticism is used to explain the prevailing belief surrounding each event that male athletes and male athletics are superior to female athletes and female athletics. This is done through an analysis of newspaper and magazine articles, television and news clips, quotations by involved parties, and other relevant sources found online. Also acknowledged are the ways in which this prevailing ideology changed in the years between and after the three events, to include a more equal stance on women's athletics.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In a 1974 *Ms. Magazine* article on the status of female athletes it was written, "Of all the repressions visited on women by the heavy-handed centuries of paternalism, perhaps the most insidious has been the denial of her physical powers. Despite the fact that the average man is larger, heavier, and stronger than the average woman, it is now clear that those differences are far less than it formally appeared (Crittenden, "Closing the muscle gap," 49)." The athletic sphere was one in which women were denied entry for quite some time, in large part because athletics may be seen as an institution that typically negates many of the characteristics associated with female gender identity (Boutilier, 36). The myth of the masculinization of athletic women has always been a social concern. Just as a male's participation in ballet can cause his sexuality to be questioned, a woman's participation in sport, and especially in "un-feminine," endurance-demanding sports, has historically caused her sexual preference to be questioned as well (Boutilier, 45). Some scholars even maintain that "femininity" is a code word for "heterosexuality" and that in order for many female athletes to escape the automatic notion that they are homosexual, they must engage in additional gender-appropriate activities and dress according to gender-norms (O'Reilly, 222). For example, the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) annual dinner, attended by many well-known amateur and professional female athletes, is preceded by an opportunity for the female athletes to get free hairstyling and make-up applications before sitting down to dinner with their traditionally male corporate sponsors (O'Reilly, 221).

Throughout women’s sporting history there has also been a hierarchy of sport acceptability (Boutilier, 35). Individual sports, such as golf, tennis, gymnastics and swimming, have a much longer history of societal approval than do team sports, such as basketball, softball and volleyball. As non-contact individual activities, sports like tennis offer the dual "benefits" of continued segregation of the female athlete from teammates and the continued confirmation of the participant's "femininity (Boutilier, 43).” Conversely, participation in team sports would not allow the female participant to perform glamorously and gracefully. Rather, she would be roughed up through contact with other women. However, individual events that were considered too strenuous or demanding on the female body were not proper by societal standards. Critics of female athletes maintained that tough participation in sports compromised women’s anatomical destiny as wives and child-bearing mothers (Guttmann, 132). Furthermore, sports attained approval if they were done for the correct, “feminine” reasons of play, enjoyment, weight control, social contact and cooperation. Conversely, the athletic motivations of competitiveness, physical mastery, aggressiveness, and “character building” were considered masculine and, therefore, unacceptable for women (Boutilier, 35). These perceptions still existed well into the 1980s, and traces of them still exist today.

Historically, sport has also functioned as a socialization agency for the male sex. As the great American frontier closed, lifestyles shifted from rural to urban, bureaucracy and technology advanced, and changes in the nature of work from brawn to brains have occurred, men found fewer ways in which to display their physical might, courage, initiative and independence (Boutilier, 101). As a result, the domain of athletics was one

of the last realms in which men had total control, superiority and the ability to assert their manliness. Along the same lines, the shift towards industrialization and suburban life caused many traditionalists to fear that the male sex would become weak and unable to fight in what is perhaps the most traditionally manly activity— war. Athletics, and particularly contact sports, were thus needed for men to increase their physical presence and pain endurance (Oppliger, 60). As a consequence of all these societal notions, the male sex was opposed to allowing women to enter its last, sacred sphere of athletics. Women's entrance into athletics would not only make women more masculine, but also make athletics more feminine (Boutilier, 103).

Another instance of sport as a male preserve is male dominance in the administration and organization of sport. Especially in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s positions on governing bodies such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Amateur Athletic Uunion (AAU), and International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) were almost exclusively the domain of men. For example, the 1984 IOC consisted of eighty-six men and only three women (Birrell, 51). It was only two years earlier, in 1981, that the first woman was elected.[1]

Although inequities still exist today, women's athletics have made tremendous strides since the 1960s. Women athletes have prevailed over incredible adversity. Countless motivated and talented women had to overcome lack of encouragement and

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[1] The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement. Its role is to promote top-level sport as well as sport for all in accordance with the Olympic Charter. The IOC is composed of a maximum of 115 members who meet in Session at least once a year. The Session elects a President for a term of eight years, renewable once for four years, and Executive Board members for terms of four years. The members are elected as independent individuals, active athletes or presidents or persons with an executive or leadership function within an International Federation (IF) or National Olympic Committee (NOC).

recognition, cultural disapproval, absence of a sport tradition, lack of training and mentoring resources, hostility on the part of the physical education establishment, and in many cases actual denial of competitive opportunities (Drinkwater, 1). The number of girls in interscholastic sports programs increased by 600% between 1970 and 1979, and by 1980 girls represented 33% of all high school athletes and 30% of intercollegiate athletes (Boutilier, 37-38). On the amateur level, women were kept from participating in a wide range of athletic competitions, such as the Boston Marathon. On the professional level, although women athletes had the opportunity to compete, they were grossly behind men in terms of prize money and media recognition. This was certainly the case with professional women's tennis. Gender has been, and still is, a fundamental variable in sports history (Drinkwater, 2).

As women's participation in athletics steadily grew in the 1960s and 1970s, the fight for athletic opportunities and equality became entwined with the women's liberation movement. The women's liberation movement had two major psychological effects for female athletes: (1) a belief among female sport participants that their own needs, rather than those of family or boyfriends, were acceptable, and (2) that a spirit of group cohesion and bonding could be built upon the female model of athletic's cooperative ethic (Drinkwater, 21-22). Arden L. Curtis of the Norwich, Conn., Free Academy, and chairman of the girls' activity committee for the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference was quoted in a 1972 *New York Times* article saying, "Girls are getting away from the so-called fact that it's ugly to be in sports. It's a fun and wonderful experience ("For-men-only barrier in athletics is teetering," July 16, 1972)."

Throughout the history of athletics, there have been numerous instances where motivated female athletes broke into what had traditionally been a male athletic sphere. In the following chapters three events are analyzed in an attempt to understand the hegemonic beliefs that posited male athletes and their athletic pursuits as dominant to female athletic participation. The three events are (1) the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs, (2) the fight for and eventual official recognition of female participants in the Boston Marathon and (3) the first Olympic marathon for women. These three examples span eighteen years. The first female ran in the Boston marathon, albeit unofficially, in 1966 as the women's movement was gaining speed. Seven years later in 1973 when King defeated Riggs in the spectacular "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, women's liberation was steadily increasing in visibility and influence, and it had recently gained a major victory in the form of Title IX.[2] When the International Olympic Committee finally voted to include a women's marathon in the 1984 Los Angeles Games, women had gained a new sense of power and self in the United States, and the efforts of the female runners were viewed as heroic, rather than deviant. Together, these three historic athletic events shed light on the ways in which American ideological beliefs toward female athletes changed and shifted throughout a formative period in American women's history.

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[2] Title IX was the first comprehensive federal law to prohibit sex discrimination against students and employees of educational institutions. Title IX benefits both males and females, and is at the heart of efforts to create gender equitable schools. The law requires educational institutions to maintain policies, practices and programs that do not discriminate against anyone based on sex. Under this law, males and females are expected to receive fair and equal treatment in all arenas of public schooling: recruitment, admissions, educational programs and activities, course offerings and access, counseling, financial aid, employment assistance, facilities and housing, health and insurance benefits, marital and parental status, scholarships, sexual harassment, and athletics. Title IX applies to all elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities. It also applies to programs and activities affiliated with schools that receive federal funds (such as internships or School-to-Work programs) and to federally funded education programs run by other entities such as correctional facilities, health care entities, unions and businesses.

In the following pages, these three events in athletic history are examined. Chapter one is a review of the relevant literature that currently exists on the study of gender differences in athletics. Chapter one also ends with an explanation of ideological criticism, the methodology used throughout the following chapters. Chapter two is an analysis of the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match. Chapter three analyzes women's struggle to gain admittance into the Boston Marathon and their eventual official recognition as participants in the 1972 race. Chapter four looks at the significance of the inaugural women's Olympic marathon in 1984. Following these analyses are some concluding remarks and observations.

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Many scholars have advanced the field of gendered sports criticism through a variety of means. Audio and visual portrayals of sport, as well as press coverage have all been scrutinized by communication scholars as well as scholars from other academic disciplines. In addition to general analyses of men's and women's athletics and media coverage, scholarly works have been written specifically on distance running as well as on tennis and even more explicitly on the King-Riggs match.

Auditory & Visual Imagery Examinations

Scholars have examined the visual media portrayals of male and female athletes and how each is represented. The mass media deals largely in symbols, and the dissemination of symbols to wide-ranging audiences may reinforce gender stereotypes. In their article "Gender Stereotypes in Wire Service Sports Photos" Wanta and Legett (1989) specifically analyzed photo journalism in sports coverage. The three main variables of power, emotion and dominance differentiate the type of photos depicting each sex. Mass media usually shows pictures of women when they are at their most emotional moments. Women are also usually shown in more submissive or helpless positions than men, whereas men are shown in elevated positions that depict them as the more dominant sex. Lastly, photographs of men usually capitalize upon their power. In Wanta and Legett's study, photo coverage of the 1987 Wimbledon Tennis Tournament was examined for evidence of these three variables. Tennis was chosen because of the

similarities in rules, styles of play, and ability of male and female tennis players. Also, tennis is a sport in which both sexes compete in tournaments at the same site and are thus covered by the same photographers. Wanta and Legett found that more photographs of male players were taken. Photographs focused more on females' faces and more on males' bodies. There were also more photographs of women in helpless positions, reinforcing the stereotype that women are more easily dominated than men.

The audio component of media coverage of male and female athletics has also been examined. Sport commentators have the power to shape and mediate the image of an event for the viewing audience. They frame the event in a given context, and using gender based language reinforces any social inequities that already exist in society. In "Separating the Men from the Girls: The Gendered Language of Televised Sports" Messner, Duncan and Jensen (1993) analyzed the commentary of televised coverage of the 1989 Nation Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball "final four" tournaments and the coverage of the 1989 U.S. Open tennis tournament. It was found that commentary created a gender hierarchy by marking women's sports and women athletes as "other," by infantilizing women athletes, and by framing the accomplishments of women athletes ambivalently. In the tennis coverage, CBS used pink on-screen graphics for women's matches and blue graphics for men's. Marking also occurred when a male player was called "one of the best doubles players in the world," whereas a female player was referred to as one of "the most animated girls on the circuit." Females were referred to more as "girls" instead of "women," but male tennis players were never referred to as "boys" instead of "men." Also, commentators used the first name of the women far more commonly than for the men. This infantilizes female athletes while

granting male athletes adult status. Moreover, “confidence” was a term more often used to describe strength in female tennis players. The authors speculate that this is because confidence is “given” trait for men, but an attribute for which women players must constantly strive. Great shots by women were more frequently described as “lucky” whereas men were more often described as imposing their will upon their opponent. Commentary also consistently upheld male power, such as how men were described as playing “big games.”

The effects of unequal mass media coverage have also been assessed. In “Denial of power in televised women’s sports” Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) examined television coverage of women’s team sports and “male appropriate” individual sports, such as marathon running. Specifically, they examined coverage of the 1986 New York City Marathon, an individual sport in which men and women compete together and which, because of its strenuousness, was still considered a masculine sport in the mid 1980s. The authors wanted to determine if the relative exclusion of women from team sports and from certain individual sports, like marathon running, constituted a symbolic denial of power. Duncan and Hasbrook assert that the mass media discourages female participation in particular individual sports, those considered to be more appropriate for males than females because of the "unfeminine" demands made on strength and endurance or because of the risk involved. The authors’ main conclusion was that media often sends ambivalent feelings towards female team sports and females in traditionally male individual sports, like distance running. Though very positive portrayals of female athletes would be shown, there would then be commentary that trivialized or belittled women’s participation. For example, commentators would trivialize a women’s

performance by discussing her glamour or sex appeal. Moreover, while the camera focused on the leading women runners, commentators would still discuss the men's race. Similar examples existed in coverage of women's team sports. Thus, Duncan and Hasbrook found ambivalence in positive portrayals stressing women's strength, skill, or expertise along with negative suggestions that trivialized the women's efforts or implied that they were unsuited to sport

In ""Battling" Gendered Language: An Analysis of the Language Used by Sports Commentators in a Televised Coed Tennis Match" Halbert and Latimer (1994) also scrutinized sports commentary. They considered commentary of the 1992 tennis "Battle of the Champions" match played by Martina Navratilova and Jimmy Connors. Using content analysis, the authors found that there were differences in naming practices, adjective and adverb use, amount and type of praise and criticism, and character flaws attributed to the players. For example, the commentators often only used Navratilova's first name when speaking about her. This was in contrast to the fact that when speaking about Connors, his full name was usually said. Navratilova also received a significantly higher number of criticisms and a significantly lower number of praises than Connors. Connors was described as "punishing" and "pouncing" on the ball, while Navratilova made "lucky" or "hesitant" shots.

Similar studies on sports commentary and coverage have also looked specifically at the Olympic Games. In their article "Gender marketing and racial stereotyping at the 2004 Athens Games," Daddario and Wigley (2007) explain how no sporting event exposes women's athletic contests to a wider range of spectators than the Olympic Games. Moreover, no sporting event draws as many female participants. The Olympics

encompass a multiple of sports and an interspersed scheduling of men’s and women’s contests, thus allowing for a broader and more diverse audience than any other televised sporting event. Twenty years after the 1984 Olympics, Daddario and Wigley still observed gender marking and racial stereotyping in the commentary of the 2004 Athens Games. Specifically in terms of gender marking, the authors noticed that female athletes were often framed in terms of familial roles and often commentators questioned their emotional and/or psychological states. Also, there existed the selective application of masculine descriptors to successful female athletes.

In “From diving boards to pole vaults: Gendered athlete portrayals in the "Big Four" sports at the 2004 Athens summer Olympics” Billings (2007) also analyzed coverage of the 2004 Athens Games. He explains how although there were twenty-eight events at the 2004 Games, nearly 85% of NBC's 2004 prime-time coverage was focused on the "big four" sports: gymnastics, track and field, swimming, and diving. This trend in coverage is nothing new. The aforementioned events have garnered the most media coverage for years, as network executives say they cast the widest net of viewer interest and can therefore bring in the most advertising dollars. Along these lines, viewers also come to expect great storytelling about athletes, not necessarily great performances. Billings examined over seventy hours of NBC reporters’ commentary of the four sports. He coded for descriptors, operationally defined as any adjective, adverb, adjectival phrase, or adverbial phrase that was applied to an Olympic athlete, and found that with track and field, the commentary was more even-handed than the other sports in terms of attributions of success and failure. Billings did find, however, a difference in comments about athletic ability. Female athlete’s ability was questioned and discussed far more,

and women were less likely than men to be depicted as athletically skilled. A final notable difference that appeared to encompass all four sports was that of subjective assessment. Sports requiring a judge for rating (gymnastics and diving) were more likely to yield differential treatment of men and women athletes, while the sports with objective assessments (track and field and swimming) rendered few gender differences. For example, in the track and field and swimming the person who ran or swam the fastest was clearly the best as measured by a stopwatch and needed no outside assessor for this determination. Different attributions were also ascribed to the failure of men and women athletes, with men faltering because the lacked concentration, while women failed because of presumed inexperience.

Examinations of Press Coverage

Multiple scholars have considered the differences in press overage of male and female athletic events. In a second part of their study for the article "Separating the Men from the Girls: The Gendered Language of Televised Sports," Messner, Duncan and Jensen (1993) also found that in sports coverage by four major metropolitan area newspapers over a three-month period in 1990, 81 percent of all sports column inches were devoted exclusively to men's sports while only 3.5 percent covered women's sports. 15.5 percent of sports column inches covered topics that were either gender neutral or about both sexes. Study of six weeks of a leading television newscast found that 92 percent of sports news time was devoted exclusively to men's sports, 5 percent to women's, and 3 percent to gender-neutral topics. This underreporting of women's sports contributes to the invisibility of women athletes in the mass media.

In “Stopped at the Gate: Women’s Sports, “Reader Interest,” and Decision Making by Editors,” Hardin (2005) explored how practices, beliefs, and values of sports editors affected decision making about coverage of women’s sports. Journalists are socialized into thinking of sports as a “male experience.” Hardin’s study found that sports section gatekeepers determine content based more upon their own sense about audience interest than on the audience itself. Moreover, their sense about audience interest is driven, at least in part, by personal beliefs and hegemonic ideology about women’s sports. Hardin discovered that in many male sports editors, the basic belief that women are naturally lesser athletes than men, and therefore do not compete on the same level, kept many editors from including female sports coverage in their publications. Hardin also found that women only compose about thirteen percent of sports departments. Media gatekeepers may also suffer from “group think,” which is when they seek uniformity with the supposed norm, thereby refusing alternate points of view and deeming themselves arbitrators of what readers want.

Similarly to Hardin’s study, Theberge and Cronk, in “Work Routines in Newspaper Sports Departments and Coverage of Women’s Sports” (1986) found that the limited coverage of women’s sports by the media is due not only to journalist’s bias, but also due to features of the newspaper production process that keep women out of the sports news. Men’s sports have the advantages of the assumption of greater public interest, and the greater resources of men’s commercial sports guarantee preferred access to the media. Sports news is also often biased by the standardization of content, which is often limited to men’s coverage. For example, as Theberge and Cronk explain, sports writers usually cover the same “beat,” or type of assignments, and since beats provide a

predictable flow of available information, editors are unlikely to switch a reporter off his beat and assign him to an unknown topic or area. It was found that only when beat writers had extra time did they pay any attention to women's or non-commercial athletics that were not part of their normal routine. Also, many news publications get their stories from wire services, which employ the same biased practices, so the stories newspapers get from the wires rarely include female coverage either. Thus, conclude Theberge and Cronk, women's sports are either trivialized, or the coverage of women's sports is focused on women's gender role characteristics. This continues the notion that sports is a man's world and women enter only as strangers.

Not only do female athletes already garner less press attention, but also male sports commentators and writers do not always know how to speak or write about the challenges female athletes face. In "It's time to tell the bloody truth" by Conway (1996), media coverage of Uta Pippig's performance in the 1996 Boston Marathon is critiqued. Uta Pippig, the women's champion, had menstrual blood and diarrhea running down her legs during the race and as she crossed the finish line. As Pippig's situation became apparent, male commentators on radio and television were unsure how to address the situation. Conversely, the only person to graphically and honestly describe what was happening on live television was female commentator Kathrine Switzer. "Physical problems" was all that most male commentators were comfortable saying, though some extended their descriptions to include "physical problems and diarrhea." Post-race media coverage by male commentators still only referred to Pippig's situation as "female problems," rather than just saying she had her period. Moreover, one male sports writer wrote, "Distance running, like childbirth, isn't exactly a dainty process," automatically

equating Pippig's running and competition with the female sex's role as childbearer, even though the two situations were in no way related. Conway points out how male commentators did not know what to do when a female athlete was not "pretty, perky and photogenic." Conway asserts that Pippig's performance is proof that female athletes can go through distress and anguish and still emerge victorious, and that male sports commentators and journalists must be able to handle the situations of all athletes.

Feminist Critique

In addition to studies that have looked at the visual, audio, and press coverage of male and female athletics, scholars have also used a feminist critique to analyze the overall position of female athletics in society. Graydon's 1983 article "'But it's More than a Game, it's an Institution.' Feminist Perspectives on Sport" explains how qualities associated with sport, such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and instrumentality, are all associated with contemporary societal notions of "masculinity." The view of sport as a male endeavor is upheld by the media. Commentary of women athletes usually includes talk of their physical looks and desirability. This promotes the idea that even if women are talented at athletics, they can never break out of male-defined societal values in terms of sexuality and/or domesticity. By keeping women athletes restricted to these roles, they are seen as less deviant and threatening. Moreover, Graydon discusses how some sports, such as tennis, swimming, or gymnastics, are considered "feminine appropriate," and in some ways less masculine than others. Thus, these sports are not as contrasting with traditional views of femininity. These are sports in which grace and aesthetics, not brute strength, are of paramount importance. Specifically to Billie Jean

King, Graydon further explains how when King's lesbian affair was brought to light, it was used to cast doubt upon her femininity and, therefore, made an excuse for her exceptional athletic talent.[3]

Similarly to Graydon, Abbas (2004) examined the connection between female athletes and physical masculinity. In "The embodiment of class, gender and age through leisure: A realist analysis of long distance running," Abbas explains that the modern-day link between women's running, fitness and the desirability of the muscular body was not natural. Muscles were initially seen as something women should not want. Abbas cites articles from running magazines of the 1970s and early 1980s that posit muscularity as an unavoidable causal *liability* of females who ran. Abbas shows, though, that throughout the eighties and nineties the shape of the ideal body for women changed from thin to toned, thereby linking the traditionally male notion of toned muscles with idealized femininity. Yet, although this became the ideal, women were still presented as being naturally disadvantaged in this respect. Abbas also explains how running attracted women in the 1970s and 1980s largely through claims that they would improve health and fitness and reduce body fat, rather than gain athletic ability, strength or competitiveness.

In "A Critique of Critiques: Radical and Feminist Writings on Sport," Theberge (1981) adds to the feminist critique of athletics by discussing how sexism in sport is manifest in a number of interacting forms, both structural and cultural. Often there is a disproportionately higher amount of funding for male athletic programs. This in turn

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[3] Billie Jean King was married to Lawrence King from 1965 to 1987. During the 1970s, she had an intimate relationship with her secretary, Marilyn Barnett, and became one of the first prominent American athletes to openly admit to having a gay relationship when it became public ten years later.

may result in unequal travel opportunities, facilities and equipment, coaching, medical and training facilities and staff, number of sport activities provided, scholarships, and media coverage. Although Title IX has decreased some of these inequities on the collegiate level, many still exist in the collegiate and other levels of women's athletics.

Specific studies from an ideological perspective

Some of the most specific studies of athletics from a scholarly perspective have taken place within the field of sociology. In "Once Upon a Subculture: Professional Women's Tennis and the Meaning of Style, 1970-1974," Spencer (1997) takes a close look at professional women's tennis through the lens of subcultural theory. Spencer explains that it was not until the 1970s that female tennis players started to get any media recognition at all. Sport subcultures are a reflection of the dominant culture. Using Hebdige's subcultural theory, Spencer maintains that the meanings of the subculture of professional women's tennis are revealed in distinctive styles that emerged beginning in the 1970s. The cycle of subcultural formation begins with oppression, then includes diffusion and resistance, and finally moves onto incorporation. Because organized sport was long considered a male domain, when women entered it became a contested ideological terrain. In the early 1970s women's tennis was oppressed by lack of equal prize money. As women resisted, they established their own tour and symbolically made known their resistance when the first nine members of the tour signed on for one dollar each. Spencer argues that through this new Virginia Slims tour and through the King-Riggs match, the once oppressed female tennis players developed their own subculture. This subculture included the new styles of tennis clothes that women players wore.

Among the intended meanings conveyed was the notion of glamour and/or entertainment linked with women's tennis. Eventually, the incorporation stage happened when the Virginia Slims tour went under the jurisdiction of the USLTA (United States Lawn Tennis Association) national governing body. The "Battle of the Sexes" match especially served to legitimate tennis as "big-money entertainment," and helped diffuse the meanings, values, and ideologies of women's tennis throughout the world.

Also from a sociological perspective, Spencer's 2000 article "Reading Between the Lines: A Discursive Analysis of the Billie Jean King vs. Bobby Riggs "Battle of the Sexes"" specifically focused on the "Battle of the Sexes" and how it was seen as a defining moment that served to legitimize women's tennis. In her study, Spencer explores how the dominant narratives of the King vs. Riggs match reflect the transformations that have occurred in the shift from second wave feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s to the third wave agenda of the 1980s onward. For example, Spencer describes the prevalence of commodity feminism in written discourse about the match. Commodity feminism presents feminism as a style composed of visual signs that describe who a person is. An example of this is the partnership between women's tennis and Virginia Slims, and specifically the tour's slogan "You've come a long way, baby."[4] Commodity feminism can also be seen in the growing number of endorsement contracts for female athletes since the "Battle of the Sexes." While endorsements have certainly increased, they still seem to marginalize the equally talented, but less physically attractive or lesbian athletes

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[4] Virginia Slims is a brand of cigarette manufactured by Philip Morris. The brand was introduced in 1968 and directly marketed to young, professional women, under the famous slogan, "You've come a long way, baby."

Sociological studies have also looked at the relationship between female athletes' participation in distance running and traditional gender roles. In "The relationship between female participation in marathon running and women's role in society" Penny (1990) surveyed 118 female half-marathon entrants and conducted select interviews to examine the relationship between participation in competitive running and women's traditional social roles and identities as wives and mothers. Subjects reported that running provided improved self-image and identity for women. Penny's specific sample of women tended to be young, of high socio-economic status and without children, but these same women said they were willing to adapt their current lifestyles and participation in half-marathon running to accommodate the expectations of the traditional woman's social role. Penny also noted the strength of the subconscious social definition of women's traditional inferiority due to the fact that of participants' own doubts of their ability, surprise at achievements, and the subordinate place of marathon running in their lives.

Along the same lines, the perceived self-image and identity of female distance runners has also been examined. In "Perceived benefits of marathon running in males and females" Ziegler (1991) explains how early studies in the 1960s and 1970s of women involved in sports showed that when women were asked to describe themselves as athletes, they described a competitive self that fit a more traditional masculine profile. When describing themselves socially, the same women described themselves using a traditional feminine profile. From these findings researchers deduced that masculine sex-role orientation was necessary for women to compete in sports. Ziegler negates these previous findings, showing that a female's participation in athletics is not contingent

upon the classification of her personality as masculine. In her study, Ziegler specifically focused upon male and female marathon runners to determine the reasons why each sex participates and what each sex gains from participating in distance running. He found that males, more than females, engaged in distance running for the physical benefits of increased muscle tone, knowledge of physical capabilities, and increased amounts of energy. More women reported that running had a positive effect on their self image, and made their lives richer. Women also reported more frequently that their friends and families found their running habits normal and healthy. Ziegler explains how these attitudes reflect the traditional expressive qualities of females, therefore showing that females need not equate themselves with the masculine in order to participate in sports.

Interestingly, studies have also found that male and female athletes may have perceptions about women in athletics that differ from non-athletes. In “Change and variations in the social acceptance of female sport participation” Snyder and Spreitzer (1982) studied changes in the social acceptance of female athletes between 1972 and 1981 by surveying men and women athletes and non-athletes. Snyder and Spreitzer’s study found that one's degree of involvement in sport is an important factor in his/her acceptance of others’ participation in sport. Specifically, the authors found that adult participants in the study who participated in running and/or racquetball were less likely than the general population to view athletic participation by females as reflective of their femininity.

Correspondingly, in “Interactions among male and female runners: Effects on gender relations,” Kuta (1995) examines how interactions among male & female runners affect their ideas about gender roles. Kuta interviewed both male and female members of

a running club and determined that though running, like other sports, remains male-dominated, women are active participants who can change gender relations in sports. Participating in running workouts and road races together led to interactions between the sexes that gave them a new way to relate to members of the opposite sex. Subjects noted that these athletic interactions positively affected their views of members of the opposite sex. Subjects reported feeling more comfortable with and having more respect for runners of the opposite sex, being able to relate to runners of the opposite sex as individuals, and having increased expectations of women after interacting with women runners. Although these changes were mainly limited to views of other runners, running also changed the ways in which subjects said they viewed other people in society.

METHODOLOGY: IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM

In my analyses in the following chapters, I employ ideological criticism. Ideological criticism is used when analyzing a rhetorical occasion primarily for what it suggests about beliefs and values. An ideology is a system of beliefs that reflects a group's basic social, economic, political or cultural interests. Every social group has its own ideology or special form of "social cognition" (Van Dijk, 12). Through these shared beliefs, the group evaluates relevant topics and issues and provides an interpretation of them that encourages particular actions and attitudes. Thus, the group's social representations, practices and discourse both reflect and maintain its ideology and serve as a means of ideological production, reproduction and challenge (Van Dijk, 12). Groups that share ideologies can be large or small in size, and their members can be very diverse.

For example, both a close-knit group of friends and the American public can each be considered a group of people that shares a common ideology.

The beliefs that make up the group's ideology are evaluative, which means they are beliefs for which there are possible alternative judgments, or ideologies (Foss, p. 239). For example, one group's ideology may be that chocolate ice cream is the best kind of ice cream and, therefore, superior to all other flavors. Another group may just as easily share the belief that strawberry ice cream is the best. Whether over more trivial matter like ice cream flavors, or more serious topics, such as Civil Rights, groups that share ideologies can be both formal and informal.

Individuals are not born already ingrained with an ideology. Rather, one's ideological outlook is the product of his environment, upbringing, educational level, and other factors. Furthermore, ideologies have to be both learned and changed by individuals that make up the group. Since persons may be members of several groups, they may have to learn various ideologies during their life (Van Dijk, 13). For instance, an Asian-American, female college student may have beliefs that she shares with other members of her cultural group, another set of beliefs that she shares with all women, and possibly multiple other sets of beliefs that she has in common with various student groups and organizations. Throughout her life, she will have to balance these multiple ideologies and call upon all of them to help her make sense of the world she lives in. Furthermore, in an individual's every day life as a group member, ideologies need to be readily accessible, retrievable and applicable in the formation or change of group based attitudes or the opinions of individual group members (Van Dijk, 13).

Multiple ideologies can exist within any one culture and be evident within that culture's rhetorical artifacts. However, some ideologies may be privileged and dominate over alternative beliefs. This privileging of one ideology over another is known as hegemony (Condit, 205). For example, it is hegemonic to believe that all people with green eyes are automatically better than brown-eyed people. Prevailing hegemonic ideologies act as a form of social control, dictating the decisions, beliefs and behaviors of the public and therefore maintaining the control of those in power (McGee, 5). It is important to note, however, that ideologies are not always negative (Van Dijk, 14). An ideology favoring Civil Rights for all citizens of a country is without a doubt a positive for all citizens. Whether positive or negative, the dominant ideology establishes the norm for society, thereby causing members of society to view the dominant ideology as natural and obvious. Thus, because not all members of society fit into the dominant group, these non-dominant members are always challenging the norm. To maintain the dominant ideology, rhetorical strategies and practices must be employed. Power and control are thus intimately connected to the discourse used by group members (McKerrow, 277). Ideological criticism, therefore, examines the role of communication in creating and sustaining an ideology.

With this methodology in mind, the following three chapters analyze the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, women's struggle to gain admittance into the Boston Marathon, and the first Olympic women's marathon. These events are critiqued for what they can offer about the male sports as dominant ideology that existed, and in many ways still exists, today. The events are also examined for what they can offer about the

arguments that were used to keep male athletics dominant and to keep women athletes excluded from competition.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE "BATTLE OF THE SEXES" TENNIS MATCH

The Language of Sport by scholar Adrian Beard examines the linguistic representation of related issues such as gender and national identity. Beard writes, "Sport does not exist in a world of its own but reflects the world around it. If there are gender issues in our society, then these are likely to appear in sport; and if language is central to human behavior, then the language of sport is likely to provide interesting evidence for how we view men and women differently (Fuller, page 2)." The "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs was like a microcosm of the larger Women's Liberation Movement of the early 1970s. Especially with the passing of Title IX in 1972, women's athletics were starting to have a role in the female sex's fight for equality. The match, which King played while also participating in the Houston women's tennis tournament during the same week, was one of the most watched televised events ever. Both King and Riggs made more money in the "Battle of the Sexes" than any other athlete, except prize fighters, had previously received for one appearance. The winner was set to win $100,000, along with ancillary rights, making the total well over $200,000 (Eskenazi, July 12, 1973). King, then twenty-nine, ran the fifty-five-year-old con man ragged, winning in straight sets (6-4, 6-3, 6-3) in a match the *London Sunday Times* called "the drop shot and volley heard around the world (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women")."

In agreeing to play Riggs, King had accepted a challenge that would end up proving not only her own athletic prowess, but also the athletic potential of female athletes all over. Riggs, though admittedly an over-the-top male chauvinist, was

representative of many men and women who believed in the early 1970s that female athletes were both physically unable to beat any man and too emotionally fragile to withstand a grueling competition. As such, there existed an ideology that placed male athletes and men's sports as dominant. Through the lens of ideological criticism, this chapter asserts that the 1973 tennis "Battle of the Sexes" between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs exemplified the hegemonic ideology that women's tennis was subordinate to men's. Additionally, King's eventual defeat of Riggs was a major challenge to that ideology and began the ideological shift towards a greater acceptance and appreciation for women's tennis.

THE PLAYERS: BILLIE AND BOBBY

Between 1961 and 1979, Billie Jean King was arguably the most dominant force in professional women's tennis. King won a record twenty Wimbledon titles, including the singles in 1966–8, 1972–3, and 1975. She also won thirteen US titles (including four singles), four French titles (one singles), and two Australian titles (one singles). Off the court, Billie Jean King fought for equal prize money for men and women and in 1971 became the first female athlete to win over $100,000 (Roberts, 83). In 1974, Billie Jean King became the first president of the Women's Tennis Association. She was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1987 and served as captain of the United States Fed Cup team in the 1990s. Throughout her career King fought ardently for the advancement of the women's game.

King's childhood is the perfect example of female stereotypes working against a young, girl athlete. King first faced the clout men had over athletics when she was eleven

and playing in a local tennis tournament for kids near her home in southern California. The dress code stipulated that the players wear all white, so King showed up in white shorts and a white t-shirt to get her picture taken with the rest of the players. Perry T. Jones, the man who ran the tournament, told King to get out of the picture because she was not properly dressed in a skirt or dress. King remembers, “That turned me inside out. He didn’t hurt my feelings or make me bitter, but I realized it didn’t matter how hard you tried— you had to dress the way this man wanted. What kind of attitude was that (Collins, “Billie Jean King evens the score”)?” Moreover, King only became interested in tennis in the first place due to gender perceptions. She developed into a star softball shortstop before her parents decided that she should pursue a more "ladylike" sport and give up playing baseball and football. Her father suggested tennis because it involved running and hitting a ball (Schwartz, “Billie Jean Won for all Women”).

Like King, Bobby Riggs was also born and raised in southern California. He began playing tennis seriously by age eleven and was coached in his early years at tennis by a woman, Dr. Esther Bartosh (Roberts, 31). As an amateur, he helped the United States win the Davis Cup in 1938. He then went on to win the Wimbledon and US singles titles in 1939. After winning the US singles again in 1941, he turned professional and played for another 10 years. In 1973 he emerged from retirement when he claimed that any half-decent male player could defeat even the best female players.

Riggs had first become known as a hustler and gambler when, in his 1949 autobiography, he wrote that he had made $105,000 in 1939 by betting on himself at Wimbledon to win all three championships: the singles, doubles, and mixed doubles (Roberts, 36). For many years while in retirement, Riggs was a well-known golf and

tennis hustler and made a living by placing bets on himself to win matches against other players. To entice others to play him, Riggs would handicap himself in odd and quirky ways, such as using a frying pan instead of a tennis racquet (Lipsyte, “An immovable barrier in the fight for equity”). He also pulled stunts that involved selecting very unorthodox doubles partners. At times he played with partners such as a donkey, an elephant and a lion cub (Finn, October 27, 1995).

THE MATCH

King’s desire to prove women’s athletic prowess and Rigg’s hustler personality led to the infamous “Battle of the Sexes” tennis match on September 20, 1973. Riggs, who claimed the women’s game to be inferior, had previously defeated the leading women’s tennis player Margaret Court on Mother’s Day in 1973 in a match dubbed the “Mother’s Day Massacre.” After that victory he had claimed, “I’m a woman specialist now. I’m going around the world to challenge all the women champions. England, France, Czechoslovakia, everywhere. Me against them, sex battles. I’ve found a whole different life. (Freedman, “The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?”). In an act King later admitted to loathing, Court had curtsied to Riggs when Riggs gave her flowers prior to starting the match. Thus, both King and Riggs entered into their “Battle of the Sexes” match with an intense desire for victory.

GETTING WARMED UP

Before being able to grasp the incredible significance of the 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, it is necessary to have an understanding of the women's movement at the time. It was within this larger movement that King's battle against Riggs took place. The consequences of King's win would never have happened if the status of women's tennis, and women's athletics in general, was not so low in the early 1970s.

The Women's Movement

King played her match against Riggs during what is now considered the second wave of feminism. Radical feminism of the late 1960s and early 1970s is considered one of the most influential social movements to transform the social and political landscape of America (Spencer, Reading between the lines: A discursive analysis of the Billie Jean King vs. Bobby Riggs "Battle of the Sexes," 2000). As early as the 1967 National Convention of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), radical women had begun to argue for accessible abortion, communal child care centers, dissemination of birth control information, and the sharing of housework to free women for the confines of domesticity (Echols, 1993, pg. 44). By August of 1973, just one month before the match, thirty states had ratified the Equal Rights Amendment ("Pursuit of Power"). Even before the "Battle of the Sexes" the women's Virginia Slims tour was dubbed as "Women's Lob," a takeoff on the phrase "women's lib." King's role as spokesperson for the emerging women's tour made people perceive her as a spokesperson for women's liberation in general. When she argued for, and won, equal prize money at the 1973 U.S. Open, she solidified the impression that she was an advocate of women's liberation (Spencer, 2000).

King was regarded as the consummate athlete and was aggressively outspoken about the status of women in sport. This, along with her feminist association, made King appear incongruent with being what societal constructs considered feminine. In contrast to King's more "masculine" style, journalists "raved about Chris Evert's femininity (Festle, 153)." Evert displayed the most apologetic behavior of any of the women on the tour, wearing make-up, bright nail polish, hair ribbons, and traditionally feminine dresses (Festly, 152). Compensatory gender actions such as these serve to counteract the stigma of women displaying athletic prowess.

While the "Battle of the Sexes" match was turned into a media spectacle for the sake of ratings and marketing, the match, and most importantly King's win, was of great consequence. "When I said yes to the Battle of the Sexes, I knew my life would never be the same again," declared King in 1995 (Finn, October 27, 1995). In the week after the match it was called "the single most commercially successful event in tennis history" by columnist Barry Tarshis of *The New York Times* (Tarshis, September 23, 1973). Women all over swelled with pride as King showed that women could withstand the pressure of tough situations and come out victorious. Even twenty-five years later, after many incredible gains for women's athletics and women's rights in general, a 1998 article on King's role as a tennis coach and mentor still referred to the match as "the most spectacular event in the modern women's movement (Lipsyte, July 12, 1998)." The "Battle of the Sexes" was both a marker and a turning point in the struggle for women's equality. The circumstances surrounding the match and the stereotypes regarding female athletes showed the blatant inequality and lack of respect given to women's athletics in

the early 1970s. Concurrently, the match, and specifically King's win, paved the way for advancements in women's athletics.

Women's tennis in 1973

1968 ushered in the "open era" of tennis, which produced competition between amateur and professionals, two categories which had previously existed in separate spheres. Prior to 1968 very few professional tennis players earned a living from playing in exhibitions, and even fewer women played tennis professionally (Spencer, Once upon a subculture: Professional women's tennis and the meaning of style, 1970-1974, 1997). Open tennis ushered in an era of dramatic growth: the number of televised matches skyrocketed, new techniques and technologies were introduced, and prize monies expanded. However, these changes mostly benefited men, and women's purses continued to be much smaller, at an average of one tenth the amount of the men's (Spencer, 1997). Thus, in 1970, after boycotting the Pacific Southwest Championships for lack of equal prize money, nine top female players of the day, including King, formed the Virginia Slims circuit.[5]

Sports commentators frequently tried to undermine the woman's game. For example, they would speak of the three-set game women play as compared to the five-set game men play in grand slams (Fuller, 182). Yet, they often failed to highlight the fact that in non-grand slam play, which means all but four tournaments per year, men also play a three-set game. King's win is therefore even more noteworthy since her victory against Riggs was in a five-set match. When Riggs defeated Margaret Court, he did so in

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[5] The Original 9, as they were called, included Billie Jean King, Rosie Casals, Nancy Richey, Kerry Melville, Peaches Bartkowicz, Kristy Pigeon, Judy Dalton, Valerie Ziegenfuss and Julie Heldman.

a traditional women's three set match (6-2, 6-1). Thus, Riggs entered his match with King with an inflated sense of self-confidence, and King entered it with an increased desire to prove Riggs wrong.

Lack of media coverage and funding

At the time of the "Battle of the Sexes" women's athletics were not nearly as prominent as they are today. At the time of the King-Riggs match, Title IX was only a year old, and its impact had not yet been felt. On the professional level as well, women's athletics did not get as much attention as men's athletics. As noted in the women's news journal *Off Our Backs* (1973), "it has been a struggle for American women athletes to gain recognition of the existence of women's athletics, much less to gain any respect as an athlete. The difficulty to a large extent is due to lack of media coverage of women's athletic events (p. 6)." Unlike their male counterparts, the top female athletes of the 1970s were never hounded for interviews or photographed for magazine spreads. Especially in the 1970s, the field of sports journalism was almost completely male dominated. This inherently resulted in less interest and coverage of female athletes. Bud Collins, a free-lance sports writer, admitted to this discrimination in a 1973 *Ms. Magazine* article. He wrote,

> [King] has had to knock the stuffed shirts off numerous men who control this lucrative sport-and-business. They're still trying to resist, but she's still knocking away at their paternalistic maneuvers. . . . I do confess to practicing some of the discrimination . . . the sin of last paragraphing in the coverage of tennis tournaments, for instance. . . .The stories will begin with the leading men's matches of the day, and then, somewhere at the bottom, a few lines will be allotted to the women. Occasionally they get the lead: usually on days when the men don't provide any news. But typically they're treated as also-played— or even left out entirely if space is tight (Collins, 1973, p. 40-42)."

The lack of funding and prize money for women's tennis at the time was also extreme. For the Pacific Southwest Open in Los Angeles in 1970, the first prize for the men was $12,500 compared to $1,500 for the top woman. When promoter Jack Kramer was told that the women were considering boycotting the tournament, Kramer declared, "Fine with me. I'll take the $1,500 and throw it in the men's singles (Roberts, 77)." He later reflected, "They knew how it was going to be. It wasn't going to change. The men were the big draws back then (Roberts, 77)."

ARTIFACTS UNDER REVIEW

In my analysis of the "Battle of the Sexes" I examine multiple artifacts having to do with the match. The largest analysis comes from written coverage and press commentary. The articles written for newspapers and magazines span a long length of time. The earliest texts come from the weeks leading up to the match in 1973. The most recent texts lead all the way up to 1998 and provide a retrospective view on the match. The majority of the press coverage comes from *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* historical database was searched for articles written about the match from July of 1973 onward. Basic internet searches were conducted to find supplementary commentary and information on King, Riggs and the match itself. This resulted in one article each from the *Washington Post*, ESPN Sports Century Online, and the BBC Online. All of the above sources were used for two purposes. First, the author's own commentary and narration was examined. Second, the sources were used for the quotations of others they

included. Statements by King and Riggs, as well as by other leading tennis players, were prevalent in the press coverage.

Also incorporated into this study are a number of articles about women's athletics and the "Battle of the Sexes" match that were published in *Ms. Magazine*. The articles used span from prior to the match in July of 1973 to November of1988. *Ms. Magazine*, which was started in 1972 by feminist and activist Gloria Steinem, is an American feminist magazine focusing on women's issues, politics and cultural critiques.

Lastly, although a full-length video recording or transcript of the actual match is not available, some clips of audio commentary and visual images were found in three different documentaries that include a section on the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match.

In all of the aforementioned sources great insight can be gained on the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match. Commentary and quotations from the newspaper and magazine coverage of the match at the time it occurred shed light on the subordinate status of women's athletics in 1973. The retrospective coverage, including the documentaries which lead all the way up to 2005, are telling of the kinds of advancements women's athletics have made in the span of time since King's victory.

THE MATCH HAS BEGUN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE "BATTLE OF THE SEXES"

To be able to understand the rhetorical significance of the "Battle of the Sexes" it is important to be aware of the cultural and societal constructs and ideologies that existed in 1973. The widespread popular notion was that truly aggressive, competitive athletics was not for the women's sphere. Athletics had traditionally been a male pursuit and the

belief that men's athletics were more significant than female's was the hegemonic ideology. In a 1988 joint interview with Martina Navratilova about advances made for women's tennis since the early 1970s King acknowledged this, saying, "It was interesting. I could never get the feminists of the early seventies to understand and integrate in their mind how sports fit. They could never get it. For men, sports have been part of their life. And women have really lost out by not having sports as youngsters (Kort, 1988, p. 60)." The controlling ideology favoring men's athletics set the norm for society and kept women's athletics in a subordinate position. Female journalist Brenda Fasteau wrote about this hegemonic problem in *Ms. Magazine* in July of 1973, saying, "Exclusion of women in sports is a concrete and difficult problem. But most young women never reach the point of challenging their exclusion from their college's athletic facilities or varsity teams. By that time, they have been well conditioned to think of gym as a drag— often doing dancing and exercises, instead of playing football, soccer, basketball, and baseball. From early childhood on, girls are discouraged from taking pride in active and strenuous use of their bodies; boys, meanwhile, are encouraged to get 'into condition,' to enjoy their athletic ability (Fasteau, 1973, p. 57)." American culture and society had for years taught girls that they should be docile, cute, and domestic, not aggressive and athletic. There existed, and to some degrees still does exist, the social perception that muscularity is linked with masculinity, which contributes to the belief that sports and femininity are not compatible (Fuller, 256).

Ingrained gender perceptions resulted in girls getting the notion that they should not strive to be the athletic stars. Sportswriter Bud Collins affirmed this was the case in tennis, writing in 1973 that "It's always been that way. The press plays up the men,

assuming that women players are of minor interest. Tennis officials have done the same thing, even though tennis was first introduced in this country in 1874 by a woman named Mary Outerbridge. But the game was run for the men— still is, basically— and the administrators soon considered themselves damn gallant for permitting women to tag along at all (Collins, 1973, p. 42)."

The ideology that men's athletics were the most important was so powerful and held so much control over society and the media that when King and other leading female players tried to challenge this hegemonic ideology by starting their own tennis tour, they had to make multiple concessions. The slogan of the original Virginia Slims women's tennis tour in 1971 was "You've come a long way, baby!" Many feminists were outraged at the slogan, claiming it insinuated that women's athletic prowess was some newfound adaptation and that women were never athletically talented. Also, they disagreed with the fact that it referred to women as "baby," a sometimes condescending nickname men give women. King agreed with these notions, but had to accept the slogan anyway. In 1973, just two years after the tour's inception, King explained, "That's one place where I disagree with some feminists. They think 'you've come a long way, baby' is a demeaning and offensive line; that it's not accurate about women's real position. But I think you've got to be a little pragmatic. Without Virginia Slims and the money and encouragement they've poured into the women's tennis game, we'd be nowhere. We'd be at the mercy of male officials as we've always been (Collins, "Billie Jean King evens the score")." Unlike their male counterparts of the day, women athletes had to be "pragmatic" and lower their standards in order to have the opportunity to play. Not only was the slogan a concession, but the tour's sponsorship was as well. In the same

interview King added, "I don't smoke, and I don't approve of smoking, so it was a real moral conflict for me when [Virginia Slims Cigarettes] came into the picture to back our tour. I wasn't sure I should lend myself and my name to it. I joined in kind of reluctantly on a wait-and-see basis, and I came to realize that Slims was doing us and the sport so much good that I'd have to live with my misgivings. You give a little to accomplish something big (Collins, "Billie Jean King evens the score")." King, and presumably other women on the tour, had to sacrifice their morals to be able to play.

Elements of Analysis

In the match itself and in coverage of it, six main elements of the male sports dominant/ female sports subordinate ideology stand out. They are (1) the match as a necessary spectacle to gain recognition, (2) King as a sexual object, (3) male prejudice against female athletes, (4) victory as a way for Riggs to prove his manhood, (5) press underplay of the match's significance and (6) the notion by members of both sexes that King would fail.

(1) The match as a necessary spectacle

The mere fact that King had to participate in an event like the "Battle of the Sexes" is telling of the way women in athletics were perceived in the early 1970s. Tremendously talented women such as King could not gain respect from the media and population at large through sheer ability alone; rather, they had to perform some outlandish spectacle to gain attention. Current day ESPN journalist Larry Schwartz highlighted this unfortunate truth when he wrote, "Billie Jean King won six Wimbledon

singles championships and four U.S. Open titles. She was ranked No. 1 in the world five years. She defeated such magnificent players as Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert and Margaret Court. Yet of all her matches, the one that is remembered most is her victory against a 55-year-old man (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women")."

The King-Riggs match was an athletic event like none seen before. Journalist Meredith Freedman, who watched the match live on television remembered, "It was in fact a sporting phenomenon that snowballed beyond anyone's imagination. I was already a hard-core tennis fan, but nothing ever equaled the drama of this match, and I doubt anything else ever will. . . . From their $100 seats the beautiful people who had flown in from Las Vegas and Hollywood— along with 30,000 more in the audience, and millions more watching at home, in barrooms, and at parties in 36 countries— saw Riggs enter the arena in a rickshaw powered by his famed 'bosom buddies' (Freedman, "The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?")." Riggs, ever the chauvinist, was escorted into the stadium by beautiful, scantily clad women. Realizing the magnanimity of the event, King played along with the spectacle and was carried in by big-muscled men on a decorated stretcher with a spread of white and pink giant feathers around the backrest. Riggs wore a yellow and red sweat suit to go with the color theme of the wrapping on the type of candy called a *Sugar Daddy*. Before the match started, Riggs gave King a giant *Sugar Daddy* candy. To reciprocate, King presented Riggs with a pet pig. This was meant to represent the description of a sexist man as a "male chauvinist pig."

The crowd in the stadium was nothing like the polite, docile type that usually attends tennis matches. As broadcast journalist Linda Ellerbee, who had attended the

match, recounted in a 1986 television special about events in the fall of 1973, "In September this complex pursuit of power [by the women's movement] was reduced to a moment of hand to hand combat Hollywood style. The gladiators were played by an aging rooster and an angry woman. The part of the Coliseum was played by the Astro Dome. The audience was played by us all. . . . It may seem like an inappropriate place to hold a tennis match, but actually it could not have been more appropriate since this tennis match seemed more like a Super Bowl ("Pursuit of Power")." The 50,000 person crowd screamed and cheered throughout the match. Riggs fans were yelling "Kill! Kill!" while King fans cheered, "Atta' boy Billie Jean ("Pursuit of Power")!" People from all over the country were there to watch and signs and banners hung everywhere. A large banner hung over one tier of seats reading, "Oconomowoc, Wisc. Says Beat Him Billie Jean ("Pursuit of Power")." One woman had a sign around her neck reading in bold letters "Libber Over Lobber," while the man standing right next to her had a sign proclaiming, "Whiskey, Women and Riggs ("Pursuit of Power")." Both had cocktails in their hands, representative of the party atmosphere that permeated the Astro Dome that night. When the last point was played and King easily defeated Riggs in straight sets, she tossed her racquet high into the air and threw her arms up in victory before jogging over to the net to shake Riggs' hand ("Pursuit of Power"). There was even a fireworks display that was set off upon the conclusion of the match, as King's name flashed in giant colored letters on the Astro Dome scoreboard ("Pursuit of Power"). While all this proved to be great television, underlying it all was the fact that a literal circus atmosphere had to be created in order for attention and excitement to be generated over women's athletics.

This spectacle was evident in the television coverage of the match as well. The introduction to the match started with a black screen with two circles in the middle. One circle was pink and had a picture of King inside it. The other circle was blue and had a picture of Riggs. As the announcer thundered, "Live from the Astro Dome in Houston, Texas, the tennis 'Battle of the Sexes,'" the two circles morphed into the signs for male and female ("Pursuit of Power").

(2) King as a sexual object

Coverage of female players often seems to focus more on demeanor, dress, and personal lifestyle choices than on the on-court activities (Fuller, p. 171). The media in the early 1970s, and even still today, gives more attention to attractive women and at times talks just as much about their sexuality as their talent. In fact, few female athletes today can even reach celebrity status without flaunting some sexuality (Fuller, p. 95). In an interview for *Ms. Magazine* just two months before the "Battle of the Sexes" match, King discussed the overshadowing role sexuality played for female athletes. She said, "Men have this image of you, and they don't want you to change, to grow. They like you best when you're young and cute and you don't ask questions. . . . If you're sexy, that's even better. Ability just isn't they key with the press. . . . Do the reporters care if a football player is ugly as long as he can block, tackle, and do his job? An athlete has to perform. Measure us that way; not on sex (Collins, "Billie Jean King Evens the Score")." But despite King's desires, Howard Cosell, one of the announcers for the "Battle of the Sexes," discussed King's physical appearance during the match. During his commentary Cosell said, "A very attractive young lady, sometimes you get the feeling that if she ever

let her hair grow down to her shoulders and took her glasses off, you would have somebody vying for a Hollywood screen test (Walters, "A Celebration: 100 Years of Great Women")." Upon hearing a recording of his match-time comments a few days later, King exclaimed, "I'm a jock! I'm am athlete! I love and have a passion for what I do. It's just horrible. He was talking about my looks! He didn't talk about one of my accomplishments (Roberts, p. 121)." Yet, King still had high hopes for the future of female athletes. After her defeat of Riggs, King speculated, "And I think you'll find in the next decade that women athletes will finally get the attention they've deserved through the years, that people will respect us as athletes and not just whether we're good looking and whether she's cute (Amdur, September 22, 1973)."

(3) Male prejudice against female athletes

At the time of the "Battle of the Sexes" intense and blatant male prejudice existed against female athletes. Rod Laver, an Australian tennis player who was ranked number one in the world during the 1960s epitomized the prejudiced male by commenting before the match, "Billie Jean ought to quit and have babies. Tennis is all right for a woman for a while, but after twenty-five, it's not feminine. That's the time to be raising a family (Collins, "Billie Jean King evens the score")." Perhaps the biggest believer in the traditional female roles was Riggs himself. In a July of 1973 interview about the upcoming match for *The New York Times*, Riggs brashly declared his determination "to keep our women at home, taking care of the babies— where they belong (Eskenazi, July 12, 1973)." In the same interview Riggs added that after he defeated King, "women's lib will be set back 20 years." Riggs kept promoting these sexist notions to the very end.

Leaning forward into the microphone in the pre-match press conference Riggs adamantly stated, "The male is king. The male is supreme. I've said it over and over again, and I still feel that way. Girls play a nice game of tennis for girls. But when they get out there on the court with a man, even a tired old man at age fifty-five, they're gonna be in trouble ("Pursuit of Power")." Although Riggs may have been acting particularly outlandish in hopes of further promoting the match, with this statement not only was his sexism apparent in his blatant favor for the male sex, but also it is evident in his word choice. Though he was playing King, a woman, and referring to professional women tennis players, Riggs called them "girls," not "women." So, when King was set to play Riggs, feminists and other fans were counting on the gutsy young woman to silence the man who had also claimed, "A woman belongs in two places, the bedroom and the kitchen, in that order (Freedman, "The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?")."

Riggs seemed to pride himself in being the ultimate sexist when it came to women in athletics. He declared, "Women play about twenty-five percent as good as men, so they should get about twenty-five percent of the money men receive" in response to King's request in 1971 for equal prize money for the newly formed women's tennis tour (Freedman, "The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?"). Then, further denigrating the women's tour, Riggs, then fifty-five, demanded entrance to the women's tour "since there's no sex after fifty-five, anyway (Freedman, "The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?")." In addition, after his defeat of Margaret Court Riggs had claimed, "I'm a woman specialist now. I'm going around the world to challenge all the women champions.

England, France, Czechoslovakia, everywhere. Me against them, sex battles. I've found a whole different life (Freedman, "The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?")." In preparation for his bout against King, Riggs' sexism showed through once again. An accomplished showman, Riggs hyped the match by practicing in a "men's liberation" t-shirt and declaring, "If I am to be a chauvinist pig, I want to be the number one pig (Barnes, October 27, 1995)."

(4) Victory as a way for Riggs to prove his manhood

Riggs positioned the "Battle of the Sexes" as a way to prove his manliness. Before the match, in an interview with ABC's roving reporter Frank Gifford, Riggs boasted, "I'm going to try to win for all the guys around the world who feel, as I do, that the male is king and the male is supreme (Roberts, p. 122)." Riggs most likely was well aware that the women's liberation movement was counting on a King victory to advance its status. The week before playing King, Riggs maintained, "It's the money and pressure that makes this match tough. It if it was for $20 she might win. But the minute it amounts to something, with the whole women's lib movement rooting for her, she will crack (Herman, "People In Sports: Mrs. King Ailing")." When King did not crack, and instead trounced Riggs in straight sets, Riggs felt as though he had to regain his manhood and somehow make it up to all the men who had been counting on him. In an interview two days after his loss, Riggs lamented, "I have no excuses, no alibis. I have to eat a lot of crow. I just feel like I've got to have a return match. I've got something to make up to the guys (*The New York Times*, September 23, 1973).

(5) Press underplay of the significance of King's win

While neither King nor Riggs denied the pomp and circumstance that went into making their match a commercially marketable and appealing event, the "Battle of the Sexes" still was a display of King's talent and Riggs' inability to tackle all female opponents. Yet while some critics appreciated King's win and its meaning for women's advancement, many still underplayed the match's importance. The day after King's victory, male *New York Times* editorialist John J. O'Connor wrote of the "national absurdity of the 'tennis battle of the sexes' (O'Connor, September 21, 1973)." He claimed, "In the end, the manipulated event was full of sound and pictures, signifying something about our culture, but proving nothing (O'Connor, September 21, 1973)." In another *New York Times* article the following day, the match's importance was again mocked: "The promotional and monetary zeal that went into the staging of this sports spectacular made it almost impossible to regard the match with any real seriousness . . . it was woman's lob, not women's lib, that won the night in Houston ("Say Hey, Mr. Mays. . . For Love or Money?")."

Even fifteen years later King's win was being underplayed. In a 1988 *New York Times* article about the America's Cup, reference was made to the match. It was written, "Imagine Mike Tyson fighting an exhibition match against a kangaroo— or to take a real example, Bobby Riggs playing Billie Jean King. Entertainment value? Sure. A meaningful contest between comparable opponents? No (*The New York Times,* July 28, 1988)." Even though Riggs was old and not as sharp as he used to be and King was young and agile, the match still held meaning for women athletes. Had King, like Margaret Court months earlier, lost to Riggs, then people would have claimed the match

proved women's inability to hold their own against male opponents. But, when the situation was reversed and a woman was victorious, critics just denounced the match's value.

(6) Members of both sexes believed King would fail

While King, unlike Riggs, did not make any extreme public claims about winning, she, too, felt confident in herself and had gotten into the best shape of her life ("Pursuit of Power"). Regrettably, many people of both sexes did not feel her same confidence. Gene Scott, a ranking male tennis player in 1973 who had practiced with King a few times, predicted she would lose. In a *New York Times* interview before the match, he was quoted saying, "You see, women are brought up from the time they're 6 years old to read books, eat candy and go to dancing class. They can't compete against men. They're not used to the competition. It's unfortunate. Maybe it'll change some day, but not now (Eskenazi, July 12, 1973)." Poncho Gonzalez, another leading player on the men's tour, stated in a television interview before the match, "If I had to bet money on anybody I'd bet Bobby Riggs ("Pursuit of Power")." Niel Amdur, a leading sports columnist for *The New York Times* was exceedingly confident of Rigg's victory. The week before the match he wrote, "Don't sweat it guys, Bobby Riggs will beat Mrs. Billie Jean King Thursday night . . . he just happens to be the better player. Tennis is still a game of levels. Even at 55 and 'with one foot in the grave,' as he likes to spout, Riggs is capable of raising his game to whatever competitive level he thinks it will take to beat Billie Jean (Amdur, September 16, 1973)." Later in his article, Amdur continued to say King would "try in vain" because Riggs would "dictate the tempo and grace of the match," and she just "simply isn't strong enough (Amdur, September 16, 1973)."

Even some of King's female peers thought Riggs would win. Years after the "Battle of the Sexes" King saw a television clip showing female tennis player Chris Evert predicting a Riggs victory. Evert had said, "I think that [Riggs is] really a tough player, so I'd have to give him the edge over Billie Jean (Walters)." King recalled in an interview, "How horrible it was for my peers not to be there for me (Sandomir, October 7, 1994)." At the time of the match, King was aware that public opinion stood against her. King's husband at the time, Larry King, remembered what it felt like the night of the match: "Billie Jean looked into the eyes of the players and she could see they all thought she was going to lose. They had no real faith, and Bobby had promoted this aura of 'any male can beat any woman.' That's what made the whole thing so great, that Bobby pushed a myth— like the myth that the world was flat for Columbus. The myth was there and everybody believed it, because it hadn't been proven wrong yet, but Billie knew what everyone was thinking: she had no chance (Robert, p. 118-119)."

GAME, SET & MATCH: LASTING EFFECTS OF KING'S WIN

In an interview for a 2005 documentary on her successful tennis career, King reflected on the "Battle of the Sexes" match, saying, "It had nothing to do with tennis. It had everything to do with social change— to try to change the hearts and minds of people to think of their daughters as having as equal of opportunities as their sons (*Legends of Wimbledon: Billie Jean King*)." In her 1986 television special Linda Ellerbee affirmed this, stating, "It wasn't just a matter of equal pay, it was a matter of recognition, a matter of closing the muscle gap ("Pursuit of Power")." The September 20, 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" between King and Riggs led to a greater awareness of both women's tennis and

women's athletics in general. "She has prominently affected the way 50 percent of society thinks and feels about itself in the vast area of physical exercise," Frank Deford wrote in *Sports Illustrated* after the match (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women"). He added, "Moreover, like (Arnold) Palmer, she has made a whole sports boom because of the singular force of her presence (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women")." Reflecting on the match in a November of 1983 article for *Ms. Magazine*, journalist Meredith Freedman remembered, "The pregame publicity was so staggering that the stars became household words (p. 101)." Although it was nearly twenty years after the historic match, even Riggs eventually admitted the power it had. Perhaps humbled by old age, he joked, "Billie and I did wonders for women's tennis. They owe me a piece of their checks (Barnes, October 27, 1995)." In her *Ms. Magazine* article Meredith Freedman also observed, "Billie Jean King resented that a young woman in her prime had to defend the honor of women's tennis against a middle-aged man. But she did it with class, and in so doing won the admiration and respect of millions, and a huge burst of interest in women's tennis."

As *Washington Post* staff writer Bart Barnes observed in 1995, shortly after Rigg's death, "Their contest was played in the early years of the women's liberation movement, and it attracted the attention of fans from a broad spectrum of society who saw in it a significance that transcended the boundaries of sport. Some called the match 'the libber versus the lobber' (Barnes, October 27, 1995)." King knew that a tremendous amount of pressure was on her to beat Riggs in order to advance both women's tennis and women's equality. She admitted, "[Losing] would ruin the women's tour and affect all women's self esteem (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women")." In a later interview

she added, “It was about social change, it wasn't about tennis. I knew that if I didn't win, it would put us back a few centuries or so (BBC News, September 20, 2003).”

Women all over were thrilled with King’s victory. Meredith Freedman wrote “Billie Jean King’s victory that night did more than put Bobby Riggs’ taunts and challenges to rest. It proved that a woman could function successfully under stress. For years after that match, many women told King their own personal stories of daring and success. Some thanked her for the money they won from betting on her, some because their husbands had to do the dishes for a year, and so many others because, inspired by her victory, they finally found the courage to ask for a raise (Freedman, “The Day Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs: Do you remember where you were?”).” Empowered by King’s win, women all over America felt motivated to break the gender constraints that surrounded them. In a 2005 interview Martina Navratilova remarked of the match, “It really set the women on the way to equality. All of a sudden they realized, ‘Hey, I can really do this. If she can beat a man, I can be a doctor instead of a nurse.’ It opened a lot of women’s eyes (*Legends of Wimbledon: Billie Jean King*).”

Advancements for women’s tennis in terms of both esteem and prize money have been made in the years since the “Battle of the Sexes.” Even by the end of the decade, noticeable changes had happened. In her December 30, 1979 article , “Women Athletes Gained Recognition and Also Respect,” *New York Times* journalist Carrie Seidman wrote, “As the decade ends, female athletes have earned not only recognition and support, but also perhaps more importantly— respect. In women’s professional sports, the growth can be measured in dollars.” By the end of the 1970s, men were still out earning women in most cases, but the gap in prize money was dwindling fast. In 1970,

there had been a total of $200,500 available in prize money for women tennis players on the circuit. By 1980, that number was at $9.2 million (Seidman, December 30, 1979). In a 2005 interview female tennis player Chris Evert affirmed the increase in attention King's victory brought: "Well I'll tell you what. After that match sponsors were all of a sudden interested in being associated with women's tennis. And so it improved the sponsorship, it improved the attendance at women's tournaments, it improved the media coverage, and all of a sudden women's tennis was the big sporting event (*Legends of Wimbledon: Billie Jean King*)."

With the help of King's victory over Riggs, the perceptions that women were too mentally and emotionally fragile to hold their own against men started to break down. ESPN journalist Larry Schwartz observed, "She was instrumental in making it acceptable for American women to exert themselves in pursuits other than childbirth. She was the lightning rod in starting a professional women's tour. She started a women's sports magazine and a women's sports foundation (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women")." Riggs had commented before the match, "I'll tell you why I'll win. She's a woman and they don't have emotional stability. She'll choke just like Margaret [Court] did (Robert, p. 94)." But when King did not emotionally crumble under the pressure, she proved Riggs wrong. In the days after her "Battle of the Sexes" win, *New York Times* sports writer Neil Amdur, who before the match had been a staunch Riggs supporter, conceded that, "Most important perhaps for women everywhere, she convinced skeptics that a female athlete can survive pressure-filled situations and that men are as susceptible to nerves as women (Schwartz, "Billie Jean won for all women")." King was a trailblazer, clearing the way for female athletes to prove they could be more than just

domestic housewives. Tennis star Martina Navratilova affirmed, "[King] was a crusader fighting a battle for all of us. She was carrying the flag; it was all right to be a jock (Schwartz, “Billie Jean won for all women”)."

In defeating Bobby Riggs, Billie Jean King opened up new doors for female athletes. Her talent and drive proved that women, like men, could thrive under pressure and come out victorious. After her win, the humbled *New York Times* sports journalist Neil Amdur captured how women all over the country felt when he wrote, “There can be no doubt that Mrs. King’s triumph, viewed by so many, has strengthened her as the Joan of Arc of athletics, the one who raised her racquet for battle when few women challenged the broad inequalities inherent in the sports structure (Amdur, September 22, 1973).” King had taken on the crucial task of proving women’s athletic worth.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The argument still exists that the “Battle of the Sexes” between King and Riggs was not significant due to Riggs’s old age. Many people assert that King, or any top female player, could never have beaten a man in his prime. This may be true due to the fact that men are, in general, naturally built to be bigger, faster and stronger than women. However, King’s win was still considerable. Margaret Court’s defeat five months earlier showed that, even though Riggs *was* an old man, he *was* capable of beating a woman at the top of her game. When King kept this from happening she successfully challenged hegemonic beliefs of the day and proved that any man was not always better than any woman. Although some people still tried to underplay her win, media and press

discourse after the match, and Riggs himself, acknowledged that King was just too good for Riggs to beat.

Moreover, the fact that the match had been turned into a spectacle made it possible for the match to have at least some consequence, not matter what the outcome turned out to be. So much pre-match hype and publicity had occurred that had King lost, the women's movement, at least in terms of equal opportunity in athletics, would have faced a major blow. The dominant hegemony of male superiority would not have lost any of its power. Even though Margaret Court's defeat supported the male sports dominant hegemonic ideology, her match against Riggs was not the incredible media spectacle that the Riggs vs. King match ended up being. The packed audience at the Houston Astro Dome and the fifty million television viewers assured that no matter the outcome, people all over were going to know about the King/Riggs duel. If she had lost, King might have been made out to be a fool and challenges to the dominant ideology would still have been seen as abnormal. All of her work towards equality in athletic opportunities for both sexes may not have seen the success that it did. Though some people still have underplayed the significance of King's win, any gains for women's status and any opinions that were changed for the better were still successes.

CHAPTER FOUR:
WOMEN AND THE BOSTON MARATHON

In the early 1970s, while Billie Jean King was fighting for equal prize money and recognition for professional women tennis players, female distance runners, and specifically female marathon runners, were struggling for the right to compete at all. Of the 23,869 official entrants in the 2007 Boston Marathon, 9,525, or a full 40% of them, were female (Boston Athletic Association). It is hard to imagine that less than two generations ago, the number of official female entrants was zero. It was not until 1972 that the AAU officially sanctioned women's marathon running. However, women were pounding the pavement, mile after mile, long before that. By successfully running the Boston Marathon in the years before women were officially allowed, female competitors proved not only their own athletic talent, but also the athletic potential of female athletes all over. Women like Roberta Gibb, Kathrine Switzer and Nina Kuscsik showed that women were physically and emotionally strong enough to withstand a grueling 26.2 miles. Yet, although they saw success, the running establishment, many people in the media, and public opinion still maintained the dominant ideology that placed male athletes as superior, more capable, and dominant within American culture. Through the lens of ideological criticism, this chapter asserts that the struggle for women's inclusion into the Boston Marathon demonstrated the hegemonic ideology that female athletes and their pursuits were subordinate to men's.

A LONG TIME RUNNING: THE HISTORY OF THE BOSTON MARATHON

The Boston Marathon is the world's oldest annual marathon, having begun in 1897 with fifteen runners starting from a line drawn in the dirt. Today it has grown to include 25,000 registered runners and around to 10,000 to12,000 unregistered runners, or "bandits," as they are called. Rich in prize money (currently $100,000 each to the men's and women's champions) and tradition, inspiration for the first Boston Marathon came from the revival of the modern Olympics a year earlier in Athens (Longman, April 14, 1996). Yet, although the marathon today evokes images of both men and women with guts and glory, it was not until 1972 that women were officially granted the right to race. This, however, did not stop a few daring women from breaking the rules.

Before 1972, women has been barred from the most famous marathon outside the Olympics— Boston. That rule did not keep women from running, though. Headlines were made in 1966 when twenty-three year-old Californian runner Roberta Gibb hid behind a bush at the start of the Boston Marathon, sneaking into the field without an official number and finishing the race in an unofficial time of 3:21:25 (Lovett). Gibb was the first woman known to complete the arduous Boston course. She remembered in a 1996 interview, "I was crouched in the bushes with the hood of my blue sweatshirt over my face and I didn't know if I was going to be arrested, or if people would laugh (April 15, 1996, CBS)." Gibb had not originally wanted to break the rules by entering. She initially tried to officially register, but the return of her race entry with a note saying that women were not physically capable of running a marathon inspired her to break the rules and sneak into the race (Derderian, 292). "I hadn't intended to make a feminist statement," said Gibb. "I was running against the distance [not the men] and I was

measuring myself with my own potential (Lovett)." From 1966 to 1968 Gibb was the unofficial first female finisher.

The following year in 1967 history was once again made in the struggle for women's inclusion in the male-dominated world of marathon racing. That year number 261 in the Boston Marathon was assigned to entrant K.V. Switzer. K., which stood for Kathrine, was a female. At the time she was a twenty year-old journalism student at Syracuse University, and due to the school's lack of a women's track program, she trained with the men's cross country team (Switzer, *Runners World*). Her mentor, a fifty year old man named Arnie Briggs, told her countless stories about running the Boston Marathon, prompting Switzer to want to try it herself. After proving to Briggs that she could handle a marathon by running a thirty-one mile training run, Briggs agreed to take her to Boston. He said, however, that it was wrong to run without registering and that Kathrine could get in serious trouble with the Amateur Athletic Union for not doing so (Switzer, *Runners World*). Switzer followed Briggs' advice and mailed in an application form with her name listed as K.V. Switzer. Though she did not tell race officials she was female, nowhere on the race application did it ask for the runner's sex since it was assumed all entrants would be male. In lieu of the pre-race medical examination, Briggs took a health certificate to race officials and picked up the official number. Not until four miles into the race did officials realize that Switzer was a woman. When her sex was discovered, director Will Cloney and official Jock Semple tried to grab Switzer and physically remove her from the race, or at least remove her number. Their attempt was thwarted, though, as her teammates from Syracuse, specifically her 235 pound All-American football player boyfriend, fended them off with body blocks (Switzer, *Runners*

World). As he tried stopping Switzer, Semple yelled out, “Get the hell out of my race and give me that number (Derderian, 304)!” Switzer eventually finished the race with an unofficial time of 4:20. While Switzer was creating a stir with her unauthorized entry, Roberta Gibb again ran the race, this time being forced off the course just steps from the finish line, where her time would have been 3:27:17 (Lovett).

In a post race interview after Switzer’s performance, Will Cloney was quoted as saying, “I’m terribly disappointed that American girls force their way into something where they are neither eligible nor wanted (Derderian, 305).” The media had captured photographs of Semple trying to push Switzer off the road, and these images were circulated in newspapers around the country.

The photographs of race officials chasing after Switzer that appeared in the national papers the next day brought the issue of women's long-distance running to the public. Race officials defended their actions, saying they were only enforcing rules that forbade men and women from competing in the same race and barred women from races of more than one and a half miles. Switzer's story and the surrounding publicity had made the quest for equality in road racing for women a political issue. Coming as it did in the midst of the women's liberation movement, it galvanized women in the belief that it was time to change the rules.

Switzer, Gibb, and a handful of other women continued to disregard the rules and run the Boston Marathon over the next few years until in 1972 women were allowed to compete officially in the Boston Marathon for the first time. However, when the AAU officially sanctioned women’s marathon running in 1972, there was still debate over how to incorporate women specifically into the Boston Marathon. Pat Rico, the AAU’s

women's track and field chairman suggested to director Will Cloney that the women start an hour and a half before the men (Derderian, 344). If this happened, it would be like creating a whole separate event, and women would still not be given the opportunity to run alongside the men. Eventually the Boston Athletic Association decided to allow women to race at the same time as the men, as long as they were scored separately for place and prize. To keep out too many hopeful females, however, any women wanting to run had to meet the men's qualifying time of 3:30 (Derderian, 344). Eight women officially entered that year and all eight finished (Boston Athletic Association). To prove her point that women did not need to look like men to run fast, Kathrine Switzer ran the 1972 marathon in tights and a white tennis skirt and with a bow in her hair. Since sports apparel companies were still not manufacturing women's running clothes, other entrants, like Nina Kuscsik, competed in button-down blouses.

In the years after the 1972 race women made great strides for proving themselves worthy of equal opportunity in running. By 1979 there were over 500 female entrants in the Boston Marathon (April 16, 1979, ABC). That same year Joan Benoit of Cape Elizabeth, Maine set an American record, running the third fastest marathon ever recorded by a woman: 2:13:15 (April 16, 1979, ABC). Benoit would go on to win the inaugural Olympics women's marathon in 1984. As Benoit affirmed in a post-marathon interview that year, "Women are capable of doing anything their little hearts desire, and their little hearts desire to do a heck of a lot of things (April 16, 1979, CBS)."

ARTIFACTS UNDER REVIEW

In my analysis of women's inclusion in the Boston Marathon I examine multiple artifacts having to do with the race. The largest analysis comes from written coverage and press commentary. The articles written for newspapers and magazines span a long length of time. The earliest texts come from 1967, and the most recent commentary I included leads all the way up to 2007. This span of time allows for examining women's inclusion from a retrospective point of view.

The majority of the press coverage comes from *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* historical database was searched for articles written about the Boston Marathon from 1967 onward. The same strategy was used to find articles from *The Washington Post*. Basic internet searches were conducted to find supplementary commentary and information on the Boston Marathon and the first women participants. All of the above sources were used for two purposes. First, the author's own commentary and narration was examined. Second, the sources were used for the quotations of others they included. Statements by women runners, as well as by race officials and directors, were prevalent in the press coverage.

Also incorporated into this study are a number of articles about women's athletics that were published in *Ms. Magazine*. The articles used span from 1974 to 1981. A few retrospective articles spanning from 1996 to 2007 about the first women to run the Boston Marathon were also found in *Runners World Magazine*, a periodical geared towards runners that includes, among other things, stories on important figures or events in the history of running.

Lastly, I analyzed television nightly news broadcasts about the Boston Marathon. These news clips were found by searching the Vanderbilt Television News Archives. The first news clip is from 1970 and the most recent is from 1996, the 100th anniversary of the Boston Marathon.

In all of the aforementioned sources great insight can be gained on women's inclusion into the Boston Marathon. Commentary and quotations from the newspaper and magazine coverage of the race at the time it occurred shed light on the subordinate status of women's distance running in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The retrospective coverage and interviews with the early women participants are telling of the way women runners were made to feel at the time, and how they view the marathon today.

THE RACE IS OFF: AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE BOSTON MARATHON

To be able to understand the rhetorical significance of female participation in the Boston Marathon it is important to be aware of the cultural and societal constructs and ideologies that existed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The prevalent popular notion was that physically and mentally demanding athletic activities were not meant for female undertaking. An event like a marathon certainly fit this criterion. The controlling ideology favoring men's athletics set the norm for society and kept women's athletic pursuits in a subordinate position.

In 1966 there were 540 official entries into the Boston Marathon. That number had increased to 740 by 1967. Each number of applicants had set a new record, though this number only reflected the number of men who would be running in the marathon

(Litsky, April 19, 1967). Because women were not technically allowed to run in the Boston Marathon, there was obviously no planned media coverage of female runners. Roberta Gibb recalls, "I remember it was unbelievable to the reporters. The fact that a woman could run the marathon was like saying you could fly to the moon. It shows how deep the prejudice was. That's one reason I came back and ran it in '67 and '68 (Cimons, "Four who dared")." This lack of media coverage is representative of the hegemonic ideology. Female athletics were not considered worthy of mainstream media attention. It must be noted, however, that when women snuck into the race and ran unofficially, some media did give them attention, though it was sparse. In many cases, the media attention that was given to these gutsy women did not take their athletic goals seriously, and women's attempts in the marathon were only deemed media worthy if they caused a scene. For example, after her former all-American football player boyfriend hit Jock Semple to the side of the road, Kathrine Switzer and her coach Arnie Briggs took off sprinting. Switzer remembers "all the photographers on the flat bed truck yelling, 'Go after her!' (Cimons, "Four who dared")." Her participation was not very newsworthy until officials physically tried to remove her.

In addition to the lack of media attention, women's lack of proper running attire is also telling of their subjugated position within athletics. Because of society's failure to take female runners seriously, athletic apparel companies also did not perceive a viable market in selling women's clothing. As a result, the pioneers of women's distance running did not have the appropriate gear that their male counterparts took for granted. For example, Roberta Gibb wore a black bathing suit, her brother's Bermuda shorts, a baggy sweatshirt, and size six men's running shoes in her first attempt at Boston in 1966

(Cimons, “Four Who Dared”). The lack of women’s athletic attire is a tangible example of athletic women’s’ subordinate status. Hegemonic beliefs that women could not and should not run seriously kept athletic apparel companies from tapping into the female runner market.

Nevertheless, even though the odds were against them, the women who ran the Boston Marathon in the late 1960s and early 1970s did so with grace and a fierce showing of talent. Roberta Gibb believes that it is important to recognize that the first female runners were running from the heart and therefore honoring the spirit of the marathon. She says, “It wasn’t my fault the rules were unjust. Why should my effort be demeaned as “unofficial (Brant, “A Woman’s Place”)?” That attitude of injustice was shared by many of the pioneering women marathoners. Each woman’s performance was inspiring. As Gibb asserted in a 2001 interview, “Breakthroughs tend to occur in pairs . . . My running inspired Kathrine [Switzer] to try it the next year. After that, the conflict and notoriety surrounding her marathon inspired a lot of other women (Brant, “A Woman’s Place”)."

Elements of Analysis

In the race itself and in coverage of it, six main elements of the male sports dominant/ female sports subordinate ideology stand out. They are (1) the dual reactions of race directors and other runners, (2) failed marriages of the top female competitors, (3) the belief that females were physiologically unable to run a marathon, (4) trivializing media coverage of female runners, (5) the necessity for women’s own reasons for running to become political and (6) the sacrifices the pioneering women runners had to make.

(1) Dual Reactions: race directors and other runners

Initially, some of the most adamant opponents to allowing women to enter the Boston Marathon were the race officials themselves. Kathrine Switzer remembered of her 1967 run, “At 4 miles, the press bus went by. Will Cloney jumped off first, in his bowler hat and overcoat, and he walked in the middle of the road shaking his finger at me, as if to say, ‘You naughty girl, no, no, no.’ Then Jock sprinted after me from the side. I remember hearing his leather shoes. I turned, and he had me by the shirt and was snatching at my number, screaming, ‘Get the hell out of my race and give me those numbers!’ He grabbed for the front, and I jumped away from him and yelled, ‘Hey!’ He grabbed me by the shirt again and started going for my back. . . . I tried to get away, but he had me by the shirt. It was a nightmare. I felt profoundly humiliated and embarrassed (Cimons, “Four who dared”).” As Switzer’s testimony graphically shows, race directors were quite upset that they had mistakenly allowed a woman to register. As a result, Switzer, who was merely trying to run her own race, was publicly and nationally humiliated by Jock Semple. Photographs of Semple trying to physically push Switzer off the road circulated in national news publications over the next few days.

Another blatant example of race officials being the most adamant opponents to women’s inclusion is a statement given by Jock Semple. While being interviewed by reporters about the 1970 Boston Marathon Semple fielded the question of whether or not women would be allowed to enter. He answered to the male reporter, “No, there’s enough competition for women. Why do they want to tackle the toughest thing in the world? There’s only about half a dozen women in the United States who could run this. It’s just women and their stubbornness. [They] just want to do something that they’re not

supposed to do. That's all there is to it. You know that. You're married (April 20, 1970, CBS)." Semple said these last sentences with a smirk on his face, as if delighted in the fact that he made a jab at women who chose to be athletes. Semple's comments were offensive to women on multiple grounds. First, until 1972 the longest distance sanctioned for women athletes was the 800 meter run, so clearly there was not enough competition for women, at least in terms of distance running opportunities. Also, Semple shows his naivety, if not ignorance, by claiming only half a dozen American women could finish a marathon. In 1970 at least half a dozen women ran unofficially in the Boston Marathon. It would be absurd to believe that these were the only women in the entire country who trained long distances and were capable of running twenty-six miles. Furthermore, his chauvinistic claims that women only wanted to run to be stubborn and rebel affirm the male-dominant hegemony of the time. This attitude of subordinating women's athletic pursuits immensely trivializes the talent, hard work and dedication of the women who trained to run the marathon. Lastly, Semple's attempt at joking with the male reporter over the implied obstinacy of married women is chauvinistic and unprofessional. Semple made these comments to the reporter knowing that they could very well be broadcast on national television that evening. The fact that comments like these were made without a second thought is evidence of how prevalent the ideology of female athletic subordination was.

When it looked like race officials would finally have to give in and allow women to run, they did so begrudgingly. It was written in a 1971 *New York Times* article, "Will Cloney, the meet director for the Boston Athletic Association, has said he had 'great admiration' for Mrs. Berman as a runner, and that the time apparently has come to make

allowances for women in the Marathon. But, Cloney adds, revisions will not be made for this race ("Boston marathon skirts the female issue again," April 19, 1971)." Although Cloney acknowledged women's ability to run a marathon, he still refused to let them run in his race. The next year, when women were allowed to enter, race officials did not want to admit it at first. William Gildea of *The Washington Post* wrote, "This April 17 promises to be different. Although Jock Semple is giving in grudgingly— 'absolutely not, it's not true,' he is said to have replied recently when asked if women would be allowed to run— women, in fact, will be recognized in this year's race (Gildea, March 31, 1972)." Neil Amdur of *The New York Times* wrote "Will Cloney, the race director for the sponsoring Boston Athletic Association, calls the decision to officially record top female finishers 'very much an experiment.' How many women will start the grueling 26 mile, 385 yard race, and how many will finish in less than four hours to have their statistics duly recorded with others remains uncertain (Amdur, April 17, 1972)." He added, "In a move that officials hope will not offend more militant liberationists, a separate but equal category will be established for women competitors in the race to be run through the streets of the city tomorrow starting at noon (Amdur, April 17, 1972)." Even though it was inevitable that women would be allowed to run, and even though they would be running in what was technically a separate race, marathon officials simply refused to embrace their participation

In the face of women's courageous and impressive performances in the Boston Marathon, many men still retained chauvinistic attitudes. In a 1968 article on the race Robert Lipsyte of *The New York Times* wrote, "At the end of the ever-lengthening river of runners are men who would like to finish, preferably before nightfall, and along the

periphery are men who join along the way, and women who simply can't run quietly by themselves somewhere (Lipsyte, April 20, 1968)." Lipsyte subtly bashed female runners, implying they should not try to run Boston. Other subtle examples of cynicism about female marathoners existed in the popular press as well. In reference to Gibb's performance in the 1966 and 1967 marathons, it was written in *The New York Times* that "skeptics said no woman could run a marathon course that fast, especially a day after finishing a four-day cross-country bus ride. But she was back this year, sneaking into the field near the start again ("2 girls in marathon don't have lovely leg to stand on," April 20, 1967)." Though this article is giving Gibb credit for competing, it explains how many people were skeptical that a woman could have run as fast as Gibb did in the marathon.

In a 1970 *Washington Post* article that appeared the day after the race, it was mentioned that five women completed the course. While it certainly is positive that two years before women were officially allowed to enter the newspaper at least gave them recognition, the narrative of the article still takes an underhanded jab at female distance runners. It was written, "Female competition in the BAA marathon is no longer a laughing matter— at least for half the male entrants in the 26-mile-plus Hokington-to-Boston run ("5 women finish marathon," April 22, 1970)." Although females had proven they could successfully complete the course, the phrasing of this article seems to imply that the thought of women being capable of running the Boston marathon was once considered so unlikely it was a laughing matter.

Public opinion was in some cases still against female athletic rights as well. In a 1973 article it was written, "Mrs. Kuscsick and Kathy Switzer, another marathoner,

touched male-chauvinist nerves when they suggested that female runners should be allowed to compete on regular high school and college teams if they can qualify. They said women should be allowed to run in the Olympic marathon. 'Hold it,' yelled one chauvinist. 'If you push this too far, I'll guarantee there won't be a single woman in the Olympic Games (Cady, March 6, 1973).'" Perhaps the most chauvinistic, and even misogynistic, comment made towards female marathoners came from Boston Marathon director Will Cloney. In regards to Kathrine Switzer's entrance into the 1967 marathon, director Will Cloney proclaimed in an interview, "If she were my daughter I'd spank her (Washington, March 31, 1972)."

In opposition to the reactions of the race officials and some members of the press, early women marathoners often found acceptance within the running community. Male runners seemed to understand that their female counterparts must have loved running and been dedicated to training to be able to run over twenty-six miles in times as fast as they did. Of the 1967 marathon Kathrine Switzer recalled, "All the men kept coming up to me and saying it was great to see a woman out here. They were dressed exactly the way I was, so I wasn't trying to hide. The gun went off, and down the road we went (Cimons, "Four who dared")." Sara Mae Berman, a Cambridge local who also ran in the Boston Marathon before women were recognized found similar reactions. In a 1971 interview she recalled, "There's no problem for women with other male runners during the race. . . . Runners have positive attitudes toward each other. It's a sort of brotherhood that cuts across all ethnic, social and economic backgrounds ("Boston marathon skirts the female issue again," April 19, 1971)." About a man who encouraged her to remove her bulky sweatshirt even though she feared removing it would get her noticed by officials and

therefore removed from the race, Roberta Gibb recalled, “He ran along side me, and we talked for a while. He said he wished his wife would run. The other guys said the same. They all thought it was a neat idea, and they were all very supportive (Cimons, “Four who dared”).”

In a news clip from 1970 Eric Siegel, author of *Love Story*, was interviewed as he warmed up to run in what would be his first Boston Marathon. Reporter Bill Walker asked, “This has been an all male race now for seventy-five years officially. What do you think about them barring women (April 19, 1970, CBS)?” Siegel replied, “I think that the day will come that they’ll have to let ladies in this race. I think it’s very nice. If the ladies are prepared— let’s face it you’ll see ladies unofficially today beat, I promise you that Sara Mae Berman will beat me this year. I promise you and I’d be proud to be beaten by Sara Mae Berman. Why shouldn’t she have a number? If I’m entitled to a number why isn’t she (April 19, 1971, CBS)?”

Even many marathon fans who cheered the runners from the sidelines were well-disposed towards female participants. In a 1996 interview Roberta Gibb recollected of her first few Boston Marathons, “The crowds were really supportive. There was no sexism. There was not one person in the race or along the sides who said anything bad about the fact that I was a woman. I heard a lot of ‘Atta girlie’ (Cimons, “Four who dared”).” Thus, although the experiences of these three women may not have been the norm in all cases, their experiences do show that even though they were still denied official entry, there was a lot of popular support within the running community for what they were trying to accomplish.

(2) Failed marriages

The established hierarchy of male athletic dominance in the late 1960s and early 1970s pitted successful women athletes as deviants. It was believed that women marathoners were going against their predetermined societal roles of good wives and mothers. The prevailing ideology was that women did not belong in the highly competitive, endurance-demanding athletic sphere. Marathon running was supposed to be a male pursuit in which women did not belong. Many members of society still did not appreciate women's athletic abilities. As a result, it was considered emasculating for women to beat men. For example, Jock Semple, on the eve of the 1972 marathon, admitted to the prowess of the top women, though he did so in a way that still put them down. He's quoted in a *Washington Post* article saying, "They'll (the women running the next day) disgrace three-quarters of the men (Washington, March 31, 1972)." Though Semple in a way was praising the talents of the leading women athletes, he was overtly implying that for a man to be beaten by a woman, even a world-class athlete woman, is a "disgrace." Even though distance running today is a field in which it has become an accepted fact that women can compete on similar levels as men, this was certainly not always the case.

Three major female pioneers in the Boston marathon saw their marriages crumble and end in divorce, in part due to their participation and success in distance running. Kathrine Switzer, Roberta Gibb and Nina Kuscsik all got divorced after getting heavily involved in marathon running. In a July, 1972 article, it was written about Kuscsik that she "began jogging with her husband as a health measure. Now that she has become something of a celebrity in the East, she says her husband isn't quite as enthusiastic about

her running as he was ("For-men-only barrier in athletics is teetering," July 16, 1972)." Kuscsik is then quoted saying, "He'll just have to get used to it ("For-men-only barrier in athletics is teetering," July 16, 1972)." Unfortunately, however, this would not be the case. Kuscsik's marriage soon ended.

A 1973 *New York Times* article focused entirely upon this fact. The article by Gerald Eskenazi is titled "2 Women Marathoners Abandon Marital Route" and focuses upon Switzer and Kuscsik, who the day earlier had both participated in the Earth Day Marathon. Kuscsik is called at the beginning of the article "perhaps this country's most famous distance runner," so clearly she was well-known at the time (Eskenazi, March 19, 1973). She is frank with the reporter, saying, "I suppose [my husband and I are] officially separated. I got the alimony papers the other day (Eskenazi, March 19, 1973)." Eskenazi writes, "Coincidentally, the woman most responsible for women competing in the famed Boston race, Mrs. Kathy Switzer-Miller, also ran today and she disclosed that she, too, was in the process of getting a divorce (Eskenazi, March 19, 1973)." Switzer is quoted in the article, saying, "The fame that I received probably had something to do with my getting a divorce. I got into the public eye. Maybe that set up a competition with my husband, with me getting the attention. There is always a rivalry when a woman becomes famous. I've come full circle. I became well known as Kathy Switzer, then I ran as Kathy Miller, now I'm going to be Kathy Switzer again (Eskenazi, March 19, 1973)." First, although the article is in the sports pages and is supposedly about the Earth Day Marathon, the fact is that these two female athletes' personal lives are being scrutinized for all to read. One must wonder if a male athlete's divorce in the early 1970s would literally make headlines and be the topic of an article as well.

In a *New York Times* article six days later, Kuscsik's marriage was once again the topic of conversation. In the article "Woman marathon runner piling up trophies" sportswriter James Tuite writes, "But there are no longer five members living in the Kuscsik household. She is separated from her husband, Richard, and concedes that her running was partly responsible (Tuite, March 25, 1973)." Kuscsik is then quoted, explaining, "It wasn't just that I could outrun him. He could accept that. But people would throw it up to him and he couldn't take that (Tuite, March 25, 1973)." Though her husband initially felt comfortable with her being athletically more talented, society was not comfortable with it and belittled him so much that it ruined his marriage. Kuscsik, in the 1972 Boston Marathon, was the women's winner, finishing two minutes ahead of her husband. What makes it even more unfortunate that her talent led to her marriage's downfall is that, for Kuscsik, running had given her a confidence she had always lacked. Kuscsik said, "I never had any confidence in myself as a wife, as a mother, as a woman. Running gave me confidence and I came out of my shell. I guess my husband thought I wasn't the girl her married. I feel guilty as hell about it (Tuite, March 25, 1973)." As Nina Kuscsik's situation shows, gender perceptions at the time forced women to stay in their husbands' shadows, or else face the possibility of being ostracized by both the broader public and their own families.

Roberta Gibb also went through a divorce during the years of her first Boston Marathons. Like her female counterparts, this personal fact was also reported in the papers. In a 1967 article it was written, "Miss Gibb was seen throughout the route. Last year, when she was married to William Bingay (they are divorced), she supposedly finished in 3 hours 21 minutes 25 seconds ("2 girls in marathon don't have lovely leg to

stand on," April 20, 1967)." Gibb's marriage to and divorce from Willaim Bingay are merely extra facts thrown into the article. They have no bearing upon her athletic performance.

(3) The belief that females were physiologically unable to endure running a marathon

For a long time the belief existed that women's bodies were physiologically unable to handle grueling athletic challenges. It was thought that women could not have the endurance necessary to compete in an event like a marathon. Moreover, even if a woman did have the endurance, it was believed that such exertion would surely ruin her child bearing capabilities. When Roberta Gibb wrote for an application to sign up for the 1966 marathon, these incorrect popular beliefs were made very evident to her. Gibb remembers, "I wrote for an application in February. They refused, saying, 'Women are not physiologically able to run. Furthermore, they're not allowed to run.' I was mad. That was the first time somebody told me I couldn't be who I am because I'm a woman and that I couldn't do something that I love to do. To me, that was all the more reason to run. Then I had a mission (Cimons, "Four Who Dared")." Kathrine Switzer also remembers the argument that women were not physically capable of running a marathon. By competing in the Boston Marathon, she wanted to prove that women were capable of enduring such physical stress while still retaining their femininity. She recalls, "Underneath I had on burgundy shorts and a top that I'd dyed in the sink— very cute. I'd ironed my hair and put on my makeup. I was ready to go and wanted to look very nice. I was proud of being female. I wanted to show that a woman could be a woman and do the

marathon (Cimons, "Four Who Dared")." In preparation for the 1967 race Switzer had completed a thirty-one mile training run and told people about it. She knew her body was perfectly capable of running 26.2 miles. As she said, "It was no prank. Anybody who runs 26 miles has got to be serious (Gildea, May 21, 1967)."

In a 1979 *Ms. Magazine* article titled "Athletics and fertility," the author discusses some of common misconceptions that existed at the time about women endurance athletes. Though women had been accepted into the Boston Marathon seven years earlier, incorrect beliefs were still common. One focus of the article is on secondary amenorrhea, the temporary cessation of menstruation or occurrence of menstrual irregularities, which is common in female long-distance runners and other women athletes engaged in strenuous exercise. It is written, "Nevertheless, those who remain uncomfortable with women's participation in the once all-male preserve of sport have new fuel for their 'told you so' attitudes, and supporters of women's sports, including some whose research sparked the controversy, find themselves on the defensive. 'I've been harassed by people wanting me to say that women shouldn't run,' says track coach Dr. Kenneth Foreman (Larned-Romano, "Athletics and fertility," 38).'" The article continues to explain how just as there are female athletes with irregular periods, there are also female non-athletes with irregular periods as well. Also, a study on male marathoners showed that they experienced a marked and significant drop in testosterone levels following a marathon, but because it is not common for men to have monthly sperm counts, this little-known fact was not a hot topic of debate. Included was an interview with Dr. Dorothy V. Harris. Harris was a well-regarded leader in sports psychology and women in sport at Penn State University. She supported the promotion

of athletics for women, affirming, “Sometimes too little information can be dangerous; what we need is more. Obviously those who feel that sports for women is somehow inappropriate will grasp at the least shred of information to support their view. But this is the only bit of information I know of that could even be used in this way. Everything we know about sports for women— how it affects behavior, physiology, growth and development— is positive (Larned-Romano, “Athletics and fertility,” 41).” The article ends with the authors echoing the sentiment of female runners like Gibb: “What is alarming, particularly to women runners, is the covert but all too familiar suggestion that they must choose between athletics and fertility (Larned-Romano, “Athletics and fertility,” 38).”

Two years later, *Ms. Magazine* published an article examining the breakthroughs sports medicine, treatment and research had made that helped in disproving the physiological arguments that had been used to argue against women participating in strenuous sports. Discussed are some of the beliefs that had been prevalent when women first started seriously taking up athletic pursuits. It is written, “One of the main fears laid to rest was that women are too frail, that they get hurt more than men, especially in contact sports (Selden, “Frailty, thy name’s been changed,” 52).” Once women got equal treatment and training as men, it was shown that injuries were sports-specific, not sex-specific. Other beliefs that today can be interpreted as almost comical were also prevalent among skeptics: “Breast bruises turned out to be much less common than expected, even in rugby or boxing, and there is no known relation between them and cancer, as had been expected (Selden, “Frailty, thy name’s been changed,” 52).” A similar 1974 *Ms. Magazine* article titled “Closing the muscle gap” also dealt, in a

somewhat witty way, with the misnomer that rigorous athletics threatened women with breast cancer: "As for the danger of damaging tender breast tissue, this too has been greatly exaggerated. Doctors can find no relation between blows on the breast and cancer, and as one woman physiologist put it, 'Considering all the mauling the breasts go through in sex play and nursing, it doesn't make sense that they are easily hurt (Crittenden, "Closing the muscle gap," 55).'" Also initially feared was that women's bust-lines would irrevocably fall. The article continues to explain how, if anything, women's' bodies are better suited for endurance sports than men's. A woman "has more accessible calories to burn in the same activity because of the thicker layer of fat under her skin. This fat gives her a larger reserve energy supply for endurance contests, so she is less dependent on carbohydrate loading- filling up on starch to build of stores of glycogen fuel in the muscles. The insulating fat also makes a woman's slightly lower body temperature more stable than a man's. She relies less on sweating to dissipate heat; therefore she retains fluid and salts better and doesn't need to drink as much during exertion. As a result of this difference, a woman tends to perform better in cold but has less tolerance of heat than a man of equal size (Selden, "Frailty, thy name's been changed," 52)."

(4)Trivializing media coverage

Press coverage about the early female runners in the Boston Marathon reveals a great deal about the status of female athletes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Though there is not a great deal of overt sexism in written coverage, there are many instances where the word choice and phrasing in newspaper articles reduces the status of women.

This occurred multiple times in the titles of articles. A 1972 *New York Times* article that discussed the fact that women were finally allowed entry used a subtle play-on-words. The title was “Boston Marathon to Recognize Women’s Figures at Last Today (Amdur, April 17, 1972).” “Figures” can easily be seen as having double meaning, a number or statistic as well as body type. A *Washington Post* article on the same day was titled “Girls Go in Boston Today (April 17, 1972).” “Girls,” not “women” was used. If the sexes’ positions were switched, it is doubtful a male sports writer would say “boys” instead of “men.” When women were still trying to be included in the Boston Marathon, Steve Cady of *The New York Times* covered their fight with an articled titled “Marathon Giving Gals Run Around (Cady, April 20, 1970).” Just like in the latter articles mentioned above, “gals,” not “women” was used. In the same article Cady writes, “Only the men will be running officially, and this is what annoys the girls (Cady, April 20, 1970).” Within the same sentence he gives the male sex more respect by calling them “men,” not “boys,” but the female sex is trivialized once again through the use of “girls” rather than “women.” Additionally to often being referred to as “girls,” news writers also always signified women’s marital status. While the male runners were simply called by their first and last names, female runners’ names were always preceded by “Mrs,” “Ms,” or “Miss.” The male’s names were almost never preceded by “Mr.”

Further examples of phrasing abound. A 1970 *Washington Post* article on women running the Boston Marathon is titled “Marathon Misses.” Though perhaps chosen for its alliteration, the fact of the matter is that, as usual, female athletes are referred to as “misses,” rather than “women.” The rest of the article slams women even more. Writer Bob Addie calls the marathon the “latest rampart of masculinity to be stormed” and says

that "[Jock] Semple is as direct as most males in discussing the intrusion of women into masculine precincts (Addie, April 18, 1970)." Not only is Addie claiming the marathon as a male domain, but also he subtly expresses that women do not deserve to be a part of it by calling their struggle for the right to run an "intrusion." Furthermore, the word choice of "stormed" connotes negative associations of attack or confrontation, whereas the female marathon pioneers were merely aiming for peaceful inclusion. Additionally, after explaining how a handful of women will sneak into the Boston Marathon anyway, Addie writes that Jock Semple will "get even with them" by not letting the women get their hands on official numbers (Addie, April 18, 1970). By saying Semple will "get even" with the women who run the marathon, he is again implying that women have no right to do so and should, in fact, be chastised for wanting to run. Addie's last swipe at women is when he writes of the 1967 marathon "Everything was running . . . smoothly when, to [Jock Semple's] horror, a woman runner, number and all, passed him. It was 'K. Switzer' (Addie, April 18, 1970)." Addie's choice of the word "horror" signifies a lot. Though Semple was actually very upset that Switzer had snuck in, such a strong word as "horror" lets it be known that Addie was also shocked and considered the thought of a woman running the marathon to be horrific.

In a 1967 *New York Times* article discussing the day's Boston Marathon, Kathrine Switzer's infamous run-in with Jock Semple made headlines. Also mentioned was Roberta Gibb's participation. While it is a positive that their running is mentioned, the phrasing of the title leaves much to be desired. It is titled "2 Girls Don't Have Lovely Leg to Stand On (April 20, 1967)." Not only are they, as usual, called "girls," the title and in the article reference is made to the sexual attractiveness of their legs. As is

unfortunately the case, female athletes are often discussed just as much for their physical attributes as they are for their talents. The article then describes Gibb as "a willowy 23-year-old blonde" and Switzer as "the dark-haired Miss Switzer ("2 girls in marathon don't have lovely leg to stand on," April 20, 1967)." Gibb is also said to have "played coy" about her running and she is referred to in the article as a "femme fatale," two descriptions that take the emphasis away from her athletic abilities and place it upon unfair gender attributes ("2 girls in marathon don't have lovely leg to stand on," April 20, 1967)." A quote from a man who ran behind Gibb for eight miles is then included. He says, "I was enchanted by her flowing stride and those lovely, lovely legs ("2 girls in marathon don't have lovely leg to stand on," April 20, 1967)." Again, the newspaper editor's choice to include quotes about Gibb's physical attractiveness is telling of the lack of respect given to women's athletic abilities.

Further examples exist where female runners were described by their physical attributes. For example, William Gildea of the *Washington Post* wrote, "Kathy Switzer, former beauty contestant and fashion model who prefers to think of herself as 'a well-founded athlete,' has one love in life (Gildea, May 21, 1967)." In a *New York Times* article recounting the 1972 marathon sportswriter Neil Amdur described two of the finishers as "Mrs. Nina Kuscsik, a 33-year-old mother of three" and "Pat Barret, a pert 17-year-old redhead (Amdur, April 18, 1972)."

In press coverage after the 1972 marathon, many papers, such as *The New York Times*, ran an image of Kathrine Switzer fixing her ponytail while running. In *The New York Times,* the caption under this photograph reads "PRIMPER: Kathy Miller fixes her hair as she runs in race." For a woman with long hair, keeping her hair out of her face

during an athletic performance can be a nuisance. It is most likely that miles upon miles of pounding the pavement resulted in Swizter's hair tie loosening. Fixing her hair was necessary and not unusual for a female athlete, but the caption description of "primper" carries the negative connotation for Switzer that she cared more about her looks than her performance.

The descriptions used by the media also reduced female athletes to traditional gender roles. Among articles about the 1966 marathon were Boston area newspaper articles titled "Hub Bride First Gal to Run Marathon," "Blonde Wife, 23, Runs Marathon," "Housewife Wins Race," and "Show a Little More Leg, Gals (Derderian, 299)." Moreover, after her 1966 performance, reporters followed Roberta Gibb home and photographed her making fudge with a friend in her kitchen, as if to show that even though she ran a marathon, something at the time considered to be within the male sphere, she is still just a woman whose true position is within the female sphere of the home (Derderian, 330). This example also brings up the issue of what activities were appropriate for women to do in public and in private. Gibb's appropriate place by 1966 standards was not being physically active in public; rather, it was being domestic in the home.

This relegation of women to the home can also be seen in the descriptions of women runners. If married with children, this fact was always included. A 1970 *New York Times* article reads, "Five women, three of them mothers, finished the race Monday— all within three hours and 35 minutes ("5 women finish in marathon," April 22, 1970)." Two1972 articles similarly included the housewife description. One reads, "Mrs. Nina Kuscsik, a Long Island housewife (Amdur, April 17, 1972)." The second

says, “At least nine women were expected to compete, headed by Nina Kuscsik, a Long Island housewife and mother of three children (“Girls to in Boston today,” April 17, 1972).” The next year Kuscsik, with a little bit of humor, tried to rid herself of the housewife description. It was written, “The 5-foot-4-inch Long Islander resents being called the ‘galloping housewife’ because, as she pointed out, ‘I’m separated from my husband (Cady, March 6, 1973).’”

(5) The necessity for women’s own reasons for running to become political

Although they ended up being leaders in the struggle for women’s athletic liberation, the early women of the Boston Marathon did not necessarily lace up their shoes with grandiose ideals. In most cases, they wanted to run for themselves and because of their own personal love of running. In a 1973 interview Nina Kuscsik explained, “I don’t think of myself as a woman when I’m running in a marathon with men (Cady, March 6, 1973).” Likewise, in a 1996 interview Gibb reflected, “I didn’t make the decision to run the Boston Marathon to get publicity. I’d always loved running, and it was just a guttural level feeling that I wanted to be part of it. It wasn’t an intellectual decision; no pros or cons. It was just me saying, ‘I’m going to do it (Cimons, “Four who dared”).’” When asked how she felt about women not being recognized as entrants like men were, marathon runner Barbara Leighton of West Chester, Pennsylvania responded, “Well it doesn’t really bother me because I’m not competing against the men. I’m just more or less competing for my own interest and enjoyment, and it doesn’t matter to me if they don’t want the women in it (April 19, 1971, CBS).” Leighton was going to run for herself, whether officials accepted her or not.

In a 1972 *New York Times* article Kathrine Switzer was quoted saying "I run for personal satisfaction. . . . I find running the best form of relaxation and interest for me (Amdur, April 18, 1972)." For these women, running was something they initially just wanted the right to do for their own individual reasons. Many saw running the marathon simply as an incredible personal challenge to take on. In an April 20, 1970 interview on the CBS evening news Pat Tarnwasky of White Plains, New York explained, "We've all revolted against the leisure life. We're tired of sitting around on our behinds, and we wanna get up and do something. There's a challenge there and we like it (April 20, 1970, CBS)." Likewise, in the same news broadcast is a clip of the first female finisher Sara Mae Berman. After being asked by a male reporter why she decided to run the marathon she replied, "Why do people climb mount Everest (April 20, 1970, CBS)?"

Despite often running for their own personal satisfaction, the media often automatically pegged the first women marathoners as female fighters in the struggle for equality. For example, in a 1970 *New York Times* article by Steve Cady, Cady discusses how women runners planned on participating in the Boston Marathon that year. He writes, "Most of the world's top distance runners and some of the world's sturdiest suffragists will take to the pavement tomorrow at high noon in the 74th annual Boston Athletic Association marathon. The suffragettes will be running unofficially (Cady, April 20, 1970)." Cady automatically called the women entrants "suffragettes," regardless of whether or not they actually claimed to be making a political statement.

In a 1972 *New York Times* article on women athlete's successes in breaking into various male-dominated sports, it is written, "In a survey by the United Press International, some officials credited the increased interest to attitudes fostered by the

women's liberation movement. But many women athletes don't agree ("For-men-only barrier in athletics is teetering," July 16, 1972)." The article then quotes Kathrine Switzer: "It was a blow for my own individuality, not for women's lib. Running is the best thing in the world I can do for my body. And the men I beat don't seem to mind. They just assume I trained harder than they did ("For-men-only barrier in athletics is teetering," July 16, 1972)." Reinforcing how Switzer felt is a quote in the same article from Dr. Kenneth D. Miller, a professor of physical education and women's track coach at Florida State, who said, "In brief, if competitive athletics have valid, positive contributions to make for males, why shouldn't athletics do the same thing for females? And why should women feel any different about the various aspects of sport than do the men ("For-men-only barrier in athletics is teetering," July 16, 1972)?" Running, or engaging in any athletic pursuit for men is not interpreted as a sign of men asserting their liberated state. Likewise, just because a woman feels joy from pushing her body to its limits in sport, she should not have to carry the burden of being a leader in the fight for women's liberation.

Although the first women runners in the Boston Marathon ran for their own personal satisfaction, they knew that their performances would be scrutinized. As a result, they had to embrace the fact that they were leading the struggle for women athletes everywhere. Gibb remembers, "I wanted to show that men and women could do these things together, that it wasn't necessary to be oppressing one-half of the human race all the time, that it was so much better if we love each other and support each other and do things together. I was really careful not to make it into women versus men. I am not a political person. My idea was, once they knew women could run this, they themselves

would just open it up to women. I think they simply didn't know, and women didn't know either, that they could run these distances. Nobody knew (Cimons, "Four who dared")." Similarly, after winning the first official women's Boston Marathon in 1972 Nina Kuscsik explained, "I'd like to present an image that makes running look human for women. It's a beautiful form of recreation (Amdur, April 18, 1972)."

(6) Pioneering women's personal sacrifices

The first women to break into the marathon scene, whether they liked it or not, were perceived as women's liberationists who were fighting the battle for women distance runners everywhere. As a result, in addition to all of the regular stresses of running over twenty-six miles, these women had to bear the extra burden of not failing. If they failed, they may have ruined the chances for other women. In a 2001 interview for *Runners World* magazine, Roberta Gibb recalled how she ran her infamous 1966 Boston Marathon thirty-five years earlier: "I must have conveyed a sense of joy as I ran that day. Here was this young woman, just having a blast. I think that's why nobody hassled me. People cheered as I passed by. I was very conscious of the impression I was making. That's why I ran so conservatively. Can you imagine the headlines if I hadn't finished? That would've set women runners back another 10 years. So I took it easy, even though I felt so strong. I know I could have run a lot faster than I did, which was 3:21. (Brant, "A Woman's Place")." Gibb knew that her performance would be scrutinized and that if she did not do well her race could potentially be used as fodder for female opponents. Although she ran the incredibly respectable time of 3:21, it is very possible that she could have run even faster had she not had to worry about the

impression she was making. Gibb also recalled, “Up until miles 17, 18, 19, I was feeling great. In fact, I kept reigning myself in, afraid I wouldn’t be able to finish if I went too fast. I didn’t want to end up proving the wrong thing— that women couldn’t run marathons. But I never got out of breath (Cimons, “Four who dared”).” Gibb had to sacrifice the possibility of running a better time so that future women marathoners would not face as much discrimination. The male-dominant gender hierarchy in athletics made Gibb have to shoulder this burden.

The early women marathoners also had to run with the extra stress of the fear of being removed from the course. In a 1972 *Washington Post* article discussing women’s inclusion in Boston, journalist William Gildea recounted the hoops women previously had to jump through: “To compete in this, the most famous of foot race, women have had to jump out from alongside the road shortly after the start and then, while running, keep alert for the press bus, from which Jock Semple has been known to shout warnings at the women and threaten to give chase (Washington, March 31, 1972).” Washington acknowledged how stressful running the marathon had been for women in the previous years. The threat always existed that lurking around every bend in the road would be an angry man chasing after them. In the same article Kathrine Switzer was interviewed. She explained, “I was emotionally worn out. I was expecting a policeman around every street corner to stop me (Washington, March 31, 1972).” In a 1996 interview Switzer expanded upon the apprehension she felt. After explaining how Jock Semple tried to physically push her off the road and rip her official number off her sweatshirt, she recalled, “I was upset and crying. There were about 2 or 3 seconds when I paused and though, ‘I’m not wanted here. I’m going to walk off the course.’ And then I thought,

'No way. No way. If I quit now, people will say women can't do it.' That was my defining moment. I started that race as a naïve kid who wanted to run the Boston Marathon. At that moment, I grew up and became a woman. I thought about all that for the next 22 miles in the snow and cold (Cimons, "Four who dared")."

Unlike the men who were running, Roberta Gibb even had to base her running attire upon what would be least likely to get her noticed and thrown out. She remembers, "I jumped right in the middle of the pack when the starting gun went off. There was this studious silence from the guys behind me, and then I turned around and smiled and said, 'Yeah, it's a girl. And I'm getting hot in this sweatshirt.' One of them said, 'Take it off.' I said, 'But I'm afraid I'll get arrested, or thrown out.' The guy said, 'Take it off; we won't let them throw you out. It's a free road (Cimons, "Four who dared").'"

LASTING EFFECTS OF WOMEN'S INCLUSION

Looking back on the struggle for women's recognition as legitimate participants in the Boston Marathon, it is evident that the pioneering women of Boston helped spark a women's running revolution. In a 1996 television news broadcast about the 100th anniversary of the storied race, anchor Deborah Amos stated, "Tomorrow, when more than thirty-eight thousand men and women come from all over the globe for the one-hundredth running of the Boston Marathon, they will be taking part in a rite of spring, one that has spawned a series of American revolutions (April 14, 1996, ABC)." After discussing the revolution in running shoes, the broadcast's field reporter asserted, "And there were more important revolutions. Roberta Gibb hid behind a bush thirty years ago and jumped into the start of the all-male marathon after her official application was

rejected." An interview clip of Gibb is then shown, in which she says with a proud smile, "I didn't say I'll be a good girl I'll go back to my knitting. I said all the more reason to run (April 14, 1996)!" The fact that twenty-four years after women were given the right to race the mainstream American media was calling their inclusion a "revolution" shows how important to the struggle for women's equality marathon racing was. Revolutions are events that challenge and change the status quo and hegemonic practices in place. The female running revolution did just that. As women proved they were talented, dedicated and worthy of running 26.2 miles, they slowly, but surely, helped make distance running an acceptable pursuit for women all over the country.

It was only in 1972 that the Amateur Athletic Union, the United States based organization dedication to the promotion, development and regulation of amateur sports, officially sanctioned women's entrance into marathons, but by 1980 women accounted for 10.5% of entrants in American marathons (Road Running Information Center online). The opportunity for growth existed, though, as six and a half million women in America said they were regular joggers in 1980 (Boutilier, 38). Eighteen years later in 1998 women made up 20 to 25 percent of entrants in American marathons (Oglesby, 195). By 2006, this number had increased once again to 40 percent (Road Running Information Center online). In shorter events, such as 5 and 10 kilometer races, women entrants represent a full 50 percent. Clearly women's distance running steadily gained popularity as beliefs about women's lack of endurance faded and positive and supportive notions about women in athletics took over. Futhermore, in most races, women today earn equal prize money and garner about the same amount of media attention. Unfortunately, however, some speculate that women's participation in marathons will never quite equal

that of men due to the lack of time women have for training. With many women still restricted by child-rearing and homemaking responsibilities, they simply do not have the time to put in adequate training mileage for such a long race (Oglesby, 195).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Examining women's acceptance into the Boston Marathon from a rhetorical perspective makes it possible to gauge the strides women runners have made in the forty-two years since Roberta Gibb first laced up her size six men's shoes to run the twenty-six mile, 385 yard run from Hopkinton to Boston. The hegemonic shift from an ideology that pitted women distance runners as deviants to one of inclusion and acceptance can be seen in tangible and intangible ways. The market for women's athletic apparel has grown tremendously over the years. Major and minor brands carry a myriad of training and racing shoes, shorts, t-shirts, sweats, and other clothing items. Magazines devoted to running include articles geared towards both sexes, and even some features written specifically for female runners. Televised events like the Boston Marathon now include equal amounts of coverage of male and female lead racers, and vignettes on inspiring running stories about women are celebrated just as much as men's.

Today, although the stigma still exists that it is emasculating for a male to be beaten in an athletic contest by a woman, in the field of distance running it is much more acceptable. Contemporary studies have shown that over extended lengths of time and distance, performance differences between male and female runners shrink greatly. The current world record men's marathon time is 2:04, held by Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie, while the women's world record time is only eleven minutes slower at 2:15, held by

Great Britain's Paula Radcliff (runningusa.org). Furthermore, in the world of distance running, amateur competitions are often held as coed events. In road races from as short as five kilometers to as long as a marathon, men and women runners compete together. As such, it is a common sight to see many of the female racers finish ahead of many of the men. Similarly, since Title IX has resulted in the prevalence of females engaging in athletics from an early age, the nature of the sport of running allows itself to building a sense of equality between the sexes. All over the country boys' and girls' middle and high school level cross country and track teams are coed. Unless at sex-specific schools, cross country and track meets are coed events where boy and girl athletes compete on the same day at the same venue, albeit in separate races. As a result of training and competing together, certain camaraderie exists among runners. Sharing both training runs and races, men and women runners gain an appreciation and kinship for one another unmatched in other sports

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE 1984 WOMEN'S OLYMPIC MARATHON

Although women distance runners gained a tremendous victory in 1972 when the Amateur Athletic Union sanctioned women's marathon running, the fight for equality in racing opportunities was not over yet. The pinnacle of athletic performance— the Olympic Games— was still eluding female marathon runners.

In his analysis of gendered athlete portrayals of the 2004 Athens Olympics, Andrew Billings writes of the incredible popular power that the Games have. He states, "If the argument that television can consume a person's life is ever warranted, the most vivid exemplar may be the Olympic telecast. For two and a half weeks, American - and, indeed, global - viewership spikes as the Olympic mix of sport, nationalism, and spectacle moves to the forefront of our collective consciousness (Billings, 2004)." Television is the main vehicle for this athletic obsession, as well over 100 times as many people watch the Games through the mass media than do in person (Billings, 2004). Clearly, the Olympic events themselves, and the coverage of them, have an effect upon audiences world wide. While the Olympics act in shaping attitudes and popular opinion, they are also prime examples of any perceptions and stereotypes that already exist. Specifically, the Olympic Games can expose hegemonic inequalities within society and sport. Whether racial, gender-based, or nation-based, the ideologies that currently exist within society are likely to become apparent during the Olympic Games. This can be seen through the actions of the athletes themselves, and due to the media coverage of the Games and the popular reactions to the results that unfurl. Along these lines, since the

Olympics have such a tremendous influence over popular perceptions, the Olympics may also act as an agent of change, breaking down inequalities and misconceptions.

When the modern Olympics began in 1896, one dismissive tradition that was kept from the ancient games was the exclusion of women. All 245 athletes from fourteen nations who competed in Athens that year were men (Longman, June 23, 1996). Four years later at the Paris Summer Games, nineteen women were allowed entry. A hundred years later, by the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta, women made up 3,800 of the 10,800 athletes competing. That number was 1,100 more than participated in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics (Longman, June 23, 1996). But in the Barcelona Games, thirty-five of the 169 countries that participated did not send any female competitors. Such has been the case throughout modern Olympic history. Male competitors were considered the real athletes and the top draws. Not only did women have fewer events, but also those events often received scarce coverage, if any. In the United States, the situation began to change in the 1970s and 1980s, as the women's liberation movement came to a crescendo and a new work-out culture took over the nation. Women's athletics were starting to gain not just popularity, but recognition and status as well. Distance running specifically had grown leaps and bounds since the Amateur Athletic Union sanctioned women's marathoning in 1972. Lagging behind these advances, however, was the International Olympic Committee. It would be twelve more years before they also acknowledged women's marathoning. When they finally did include a women's race in the 1984 Games, many of the misconceptions about the abilities of female endurance athletes had been changed, though inequalities between the sexes still existed.

HISTORY OF WOMEN'S RUNNING AT THE OLYMPICS

Restrictions against women's participation in not only distance running, but also in all Olympic competition had existed since the revival of the Games in 1896 in Athens. When the revival occurred the Games were for men only, and the women's place was clearly defined by the founder Baron Pierre de Coubertin: "Women have but one task, that of crowning the winner with garlands (Graydon)." Even though women's events were slowly added to the Olympic program, prejudice against female athletes remained strong. In the 1960s the Press sisters of the Soviet Union combined to win five track-and-field Olympic gold medals during a career in which they set 26 world records. As a result of their tremendous talent, the Press sisters were under intense scrutiny. Rumors abounded that they were really men, and in the resulting turmoil the Olympics official sex test was instituted (Graydon, 9). The test was performed only on competitors entering events restricted to women. This implied that if women were "that good," they very well may actually be a man. The phrasing in the Code of the International Olympics Committee is as follows: "Competitors in sports restricted to women must comply with prescribed tests for femininity." While the test is based upon biology, specifically the examination of the make-up of the sex chromosomes, its wording equates sex with "femininity," a societal notion (Graydon, 9).

Before the 1980s, there were no women's distance races in the Olympics. The longest race for women was the 1,500 meters, which had only recently been instituted in the 1972 Games. In fact, women had been excluded all together from track and field events until 1928 when organizers agreed to include events up to only 800 meters (Lovett). Despite a world record by winner Lina Radke of Germany in the 1928 Games,

many of the 800 meter competitors had not prepared well for the race and several collapsed in exhaustion. This led Olympic organizers to consider that such "feats of endurance" were "too strenuous" for women (Derderian, 294). *The New York Times* said after the race that "even this distance makes too great a call on feminine strength (Longman, June 23, 1996)." As a result, women's races in the Olympics were restricted to a maximum of 200 meters. The president of the IOC at the time, Count Henri Baillet-Latour, even suggested the elimination of all women's competition from the Games (Lovett). Luckily for women runners, such a drastic move was not taken. Nevertheless, no race over 200 meters was contested by women in the Olympics until 1960 when the 800 meters reappeared (Oglesby, 28). Organizers thought in this narrow-minded way, even though many a male racer was known to have collapsed after a tough race. Moreover, it is likely in the 1928 Games that the fallen women had not been given the same preparatory treatment as the men.

Two main reasons existed for the continued exclusion of any Olympic women's long distance races, and especially the marathon. The first, more technical reason was that the IOC's criterion for admitting an event was tough to meet. The second, more informal and widely-held notion, was simply that women were not physically capable of safely running for such long, grueling stretches of time.

Rule 52 of the IOC charter (Sports Programme, Admission of Sports, Disciplines, and Events) outlines the requirements for an event to gain approval to be held in the Olympic Games. There are three main criteria. They are as follows (Martin and Gynn, 334):

52.3.2. To be included in the programme of the Olympic Games events must have a recognized international standing both numerically and geographically, and have been included at least twice in world or continental championships.

52.3.3. Only events practiced by men in at least fifty countries and on three continents, and by women in at least thirty-five countries and on three continents, may be included in the programme of the Olympic Games

52.3.4. Events are admitted four years before specific Olympic Games in respect of which no change shall thereafter be permitted.

Although the 1970s saw a tremendous increase in the number of women around the world who were running, it was difficult to prove the first criteria, that of international standing and previous continental championships. In the late 1970s, most national track and field federations still banned women from entering long-distance running competitions because of the wide-spread notion that women's bodies could not withstand the physical exertion. Luckily for women, many believers in female's athletic ability were working hard to gain approval. The United States and West Germany led this change in thinking and were the first to allow women's long-distance competitions and women-only races (Martin and Gynn, 334).

Dr. Ernst Van Aaken, from the German town of Waldniel, played a major role in advancing women's distance running. He prompted women to run longer distances and lobbied governing bodies to provide women with racing opportunities (Martin and Gynn, 334). He was a major force in getting the women's 1,500 meters race added to the 1972 Munich Games Olympic program. On October 28, 1973, the first all women's marathon was held in Waldniel, West Germany. The following October Dr. Ernst Van Aaken

sponsored the first Women's International Marathon Championship in Waldniel. Forty women from seven countries competed in the event (Lovett). Two years later, when the race was held again, the forty-five finishers represented nine different countries.

Further advances were made in 1977 by Kathrine Switzer, who was famous to some and infamous to others within the distance running community for her unofficial performance in the 1967 Boston Marathon. Switzer, who was the director of the Women's Sports Foundation, had met an Avon executive who said the company was interested in sponsoring a women’s running event (Lovett). Switzer wrote a seventy-five page proposal describing how Avon might sponsor a series of events, and the company liked her idea so much they hired her to plan the races. It was this dedication on her part that led Switzer to plan the much needed international marathon series. She affirmed, "Obviously, we think it's time a women's marathon was made part of the Olympics. We're trying to prove to people that women are just as suited, or even more suitable, for marathoning as men (Lovett)." The Avon International Running Circuit, directed by Switzer, sponsored women-only marathons in Atlanta, Waldniel, London, Ottowa, San Francisco, and Los Angeles between 1978 and 1983. The Avon series helped to increase the number of female participants and the quality of national participation, both of which helped fill the requirements for adding the event to the Olympic Games (Martin and Gynn, 335).

Women-only marathons had become popular in Japan after the first IAAF sanctioned Tokyo women’s marathon was held in autumn of 1979 (Martin and Gynn, 331). Three years later, in 1982, Osaka was home to the first edition of what was to become an annual international classic for women marathoners. In 1979, marathoner

Jaqueline Hansen, who had broken the 2:40 barrier in 1975, teamed with other runners from around the world to form the International Runners Committee to lobby for the inclusion of women's long-distance races in international competition (Lovett). Nike Shoe Company gave its support to the committee and ran full-page advertisements in several running magazines calling for a women's Olympic marathon.

Further helping to fulfill the criteria was the announcement by the IAAF that it would include a women's marathon at the inaugural IAAF World Athletics Championships in Helsinki in 1983. This IAAF sponsored international championship was crucial in providing evidence of rapidly developing global interest in women's marathons (Martin and Gynn, 335).

Changing scientific opinion towards female endurance athletes also helped in the fight to get an Olympic women's marathon. The mid to late 1970s saw an increase in women's long distance races. The media attention brought by them, coupled with the growing scientific research on the physiology of human endurance, led to many in the scientific community to declare that, essentially, women were little different from men in their competitiveness, trainability, and performance competence (Martin and Gynn, 335). The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) in January of 1980 issued an opinion statement saying that "there exists no conclusive scientific or medical evidence that long-distance running is contraindicated for the healthy, trained female athlete. The ACSM recommends that females be allowed to compete at the national and international level in the same distances in which their male counterparts compete (Lovett)."

Despite these advances, with the 1980 Summer Olympic Games on the horizon, Olympic organizers had given no serious consideration to creating a women's marathon.

Many marathon skeptics believed that the race that seemed to have the best chance for inclusion in the 1984 Games was the 3,000 meters. They felt that the addition of women's races should be made gradually, with the 3,000 meters being added first, followed by the 5,000 meters, 10,000 meters, and then the marathon (Lovett). The debate over the women's marathon continued in the IOC until an executive board meeting held in Los Angles on February 23 and 24 of 1981. Listed in the minutes for that meeting is the simple statement: "Women's marathon to be included on the Olympic programme for the Games of the XXIIIrd Olympiad in Los Angeles, but not at the same time as the men's event (Martin and Gynn, 336)." At last female distance runners were receiving Olympic recognition.

Forty-nine women made up the field for the first ever women's Olympic marathon on August 5, 1984. The Olympic stadium was alive with 77,000 fans awaiting the finish. Joan Benoit of the United States won the inaugural 26 mile, 385 yard event in Los Angles in 2 hours, 24 minutes, 52 seconds. Her time would have won eleven of the previous twenty men's Olympic marathons (Drinkwater, 1). Benoit, born May 16, 1957 in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, was a star skier, field hockey player and track athlete in high school. She went on to study at North Carolina State University on a track scholarship (Oglesby, 28). She then pursued her running career after college, and set a world, course and United States women's marathon record time when she won the 1983 Boston marathon. Arthtroscopic knee surgery seventeen days before the 1984 Olympic marathon trials made many question her ability, but in the Olympic race itself, Benoit pulled ahead of the pack of runners after just three miles and never looked back (Oglesby, 29).

Just as unforgettable as Benoit's amazing victory was the finish of Switzerland's Gabriele Andersen-Schiess. Near delirious from heat exhaustion, Andersen-Schiess, age thirty-nine, staggered and zig-zagged her way into the Los Angeles Coliseum and around her last lap on the track. She dragged her lame left leg. The loss of bodily fluids cut off her blood supply causing numbness in her limbs. Her face slack, her body twisted, she relentlessly lurched around the track—moving away from officials who followed along, assessing if she needed to be removed. Her final lap took five minutes and forty-four seconds. A commentator covering the race noticed her deteriorating condition before she entered the Coliseum and was torn over reporting her situation (Drinkwater, 31). On one hand she deserved to get to finish. On the other, the image of her wobbling finish might have endangered the future continuation of the women's Olympic marathon (Drinkwater, 31). Andersen ended up finishing in thirty-seventh place. Six women did not finish the race. Andersen's time was 2:48:42, still a highly respectable women's time. Amazingly, Andersen-Schiess recovered quickly and was released by medical personnel only two hours later.

Women distance runners still had gains to make after the 1984 Games. A women's 10,000 meter race was not added to the Olympics until 1988, and the 5,000 meter race was not added until the Atlanta games in 1996. Yet, despite the inequalities between the sexes that still existed in Olympic level competition, the 1984 Games did prove to be, in many ways, an example of how much perceptions towards female athletics had changed since the first modern Games back in 1896.

ARTIFACTS UNDER REVIEW

In my analysis of the inaugural women's Olympic marathon I examine multiple artifacts having to do with the 1984 Games as a whole, and the marathon race specifically. The largest analysis comes from written coverage and press commentary. The articles written for newspapers and magazines span almost three decades. The earliest text comes from 1979, and the most recent commentary I includ is from 2006. This lengthy span of time allows for examining the first women's race from a retrospective point of view as well.

The majority of the press coverage comes from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Both newspapers' historical databases were searched for pertinent articles. I looked for those written about the arguments in favor of including a women's marathon, the 1984 Games overall, and specifically articles about the women's marathon. I also searched for articles about key players in the inaugural race, such as Joan Benoit and Gabriele Andersen-Schiess. Basic internet searches were conducted to find supplementary commentary and information on the 1984 Games and the first women marathoners. All of the above sources were used for two purposes. First, the author's own commentary and narration was examined. Second, the sources were used for the quotations of others they included. Statements by the marathoners themselves, other female athletes, spectators, and commentators were prevalent in the press coverage. Also incorporated is a news clip from ABC's television coverage of the 1984 Games. This news clip was found by searching the Vanderbilt Television News Archives.

In all of the aforementioned sources great insight can be gained not only in respect to the ideological changes that had already occurred by the start of the Games, but

also in regards to the hegemonic inequalities between the sexes that still existed in athletics as of 1984.

ANALYSIS OF THE 1984 OLYMPIC MARATHON

From 1974 to 1984 the world record marathon time for men was decreased by seven minutes. From the first recorded female marathoner's time in 1964 to the world best in 1984, the women's marathon record was decreased by an hour and five minutes (Bastian, August 5, 1984). As this shows, when given the opportunity to train, as well as some of the resources that previously only men had, female marathoners were capable of making great strides and proving their talent.

Elements of Analysis

In the Olympic marathon itself and in coverage of it, five main elements of the male sports dominant/ female sports subordinate ideology stand out. They are (1) the acknowledgment of the race's significance, (2) the diplomatic foot-dragging of the IOC, (3) the race as a micro-cosm of the larger women's movement, (4) the question of whether Andersen-Schiess's finish helped or hurt the future of women's marathon opportunities, and (5) the increase in media coverage that the race garnered.

(1) Acknowledgment of the race's significance

In his 1986 book *Heroes and Sparrows: A Celebration of Running*, academic and world-class distance runner Roger Robinson declared of the 1984 women's Olympic marathon, "No one could have scripted a more celebratory inauguration of the new era that Benoit's victory and the great race she led . . . A woman was enabled to achieve what Benoit accomplished. A woman was welcomed in that achievement by a roar of

acclamation that was unequaled for any male through the whole Games. Women competed with each other to the absolute rigorous limit of their will. And a woman endured utter exhaustion in the sight of millions of people - because she chose to do so. I have been astonished that so few feminists outside the USA seemed awake enough to fanfare the magnitude of what was achieved that day (Robinson)." The inaugural race was indeed welcomed by a roar of acclamation. From the moment Joan Benoit crossed the finish line it was clear that history had been made. In an article about the 1988 women's Olympic marathon in Seoul, South Korea, writer George Vecsey remarked upon the significance of the inaugural race four years earlier. He wrote, "There was less focus on the race being a triumph for female runners, because that issue was settled in 1984 when Joan Benoit won the first women's marathon in Olympic history. . . . It would have been hard to match the anticipation and controversy of the first women's marathon four years ago, following nearly a century of agitation for women to run that distance in the Summer Games (Vecsey, Sept. 23, 1988)." The 1984 race truly was an historic event. 77,000 spectators crammed into the Los Angeles Coliseum to see the finish of the women's marathon. After almost twenty-six grueling miles out on the roads of Los Angeles, the race ended with just over one lap around the track inside the Coliseum.

After the long struggle to get a women's marathon included in the program, the tremendous crowd support must have been an amazing affirmation to all the female competitors of their hard work. Columnist Jane Leavy wrote of Joan Benoit's finish, "Joan Benoit is used to running alone and in silence. But on that final, joyous victory lap around the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum today, she was embraced by the warm, loud roar of the crowd gathered to see the winner of the first Olympic women's marathon in

history and her marathoner's heart quickened just a bit (Leavy, August 6, 1984)." Malcom Moran of *The New York Times* similarly wrote on the day of the race, "With a daring that successfully challenged the finest female distance runners in the world and an ease that surprised even herself, Joan Benoit took a calculated risk, ran away from the field after passing the three-mile mark, and won the first ever Olympic marathon for women this morning (Moran, August 6, 1984)."

Gabriele Andersen-Schiess was also aware of the tremendous significance of the first ever women's race. Reflecting back in 2004 she said, "In another marathon I might have pulled out. But it was an historic marathon and it meant a lot to me to be in it, and it's really hard when you see the finish line so close just to give up (Cordes, August 18, 2004)." Former Boston Marathon winner Amby Burfoot noted about Andersen-Schiess's refusal to stop running, "Because a runner is going to say, 'I've trained all my life for this' (Leavy, August 5, 1984)."

Getting a women's marathon in the Olympics was also of major importance for female distance runners because, for them, the Olympic Games is the pinnacle of success. Due to the prevalent ideology that poses only men's sports as worthy of popular appeal, marketing, media coverage and professional opportunities, countless talented female athletes never get the chance to display their talents to the public at large. As journalist Jere Longman wrote in a *New York Times* article about the 1996 Atlanta Summer Games, "With the exception of tennis and golf, the Summer Olympics provide the highest summit a female athlete can climb— and the best chance of recognition and financial reward. While most of the best male athletes are drawn into professional sports, the best women aim for the Olympic Games (Longman, June 23, 1996)." Longman included a quote

from Donna de Varona, the television commentator and women's sports activist who won a gold medal at the 1964 Games in swimming. She said, "The Olympics are our only showcase, our Super Bowl (Longman, June 23, 1996)." Since most female athletes will never have the opportunity to reach the same professional level as men, they at least need the chance to participate in amateur competitions, such as the Olympics, so that they can do their best to challenge the male as dominant hegemonic beliefs. The Olympics at least provides women with a stage to showcase their talents and prove they are worthy.

(2) The diplomatic foot-dragging of the IOC

Even as women's distance running became popular around the globe in the mid to late 1970s, the marathon was still not included as a women's Olympic event. There was not even an event longer than 1500 meters. Despite the increase in popular support for women's distance running, bureaucracy stood in the way of increasing opportunities for female runners. This bureaucratic foot-dragging of the International Olympic Committee was commented on in a 1979 *New York Times* article written after that year's New York marathon. It was written:

> There may be more important indices of women's progress in recent years, but probably none so dramatic as 2 hours 27 minutes 33 seconds. That was how long it took Grete Waitz, a 26-year-old Norwegian teacher, to run the New York Marathon in Sunday's heat. . . . Progress has been slower on the bureaucratic side. For years, many people thought it was physically unwise for women to undergo so punishing a test. . . . Now, with marathons springing up all over the country, women runners have become steadily more welcome. Next September, they will be admitted to the famous 52-mile London-to-Brighton ultramarathon. But not the Olympics. Never mind that Mrs. Waitz's 2:27:33 would have beaten half the male Olympic marathon winners, and all the men who ran in the 1970 New York Marathon. The Olympics still do not recognize women who run 26 miles. Indeed, the longest Olympic race for

> women covers one metric mile. It is too late to do anything about the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. But it may still be possible to right matters in time for 1984 in Los Angeles. One standard objection to new events is that they take precious space and schedule time. But that objection cannot apply to the marathon. Adding 20 or 30 women to a race in which 70 or 80 men are already likely to run would hardly crowd the streets of Los Angeles. New York's streets handled 11,533 marathoners Sunday. Other's think too few women are involved in the marathon to justify an Olympic event. Let them note that there were 1,800 women in Sunday's race. And others still feel out of machismo or paternalism, that women athletes just cannot keep up with men. Let them remember the name Grete Waitz and the numbers 2:27:33 (2:27:33— and Waiting, Oct. 23, 1979).

Similarly to the author of the article, many proponents of women's distance running were becoming fed up with the obstinacy of the IOC to add longer running events, namely the marathon. Discrimination by the mostly-male athletic establishment had kept women from officially participating in AAU sanctioned marathons until 1972. The same prejudices were again blocking women from opportunities men already had. While the public support of female marathoning was a positive force in altering the male dominant ideology, the reluctance of official organizations, such as the IOC, was helping to maintain it.

(3) The 1984 Olympic marathon as a micro-cosm of the larger women's movement

Although women distance runners had won a crucial battle in 1972 when the AAU officially sanctioned women's marathon running, the lack of an Olympic marathon showed that the hegemonic inequalities between male and female athletes still permeated many well established institutions, such as the Olympic Games. As such, the inaugural

1984 race played a small, but significant role within the larger struggle for women's rights.

The Washington Post acknowledged the significance that the first women's Olympic marathon held. In an August 11, 1984 article titled "For Women, A Year of Giant Strides," it was written, "The instant Joan Benoit burst from the entry tunnel into Los Angeles Coliseum last Sunday, her cap brim cocked up and her legs pumping and her face stilled into the fierce concentration that had carried her over 26 miles, there were women who knew that for the rest of their lives they would never see another moment quite like this. Amy Rennert, the editor of Women's Sports and Fitness Magazine darted across the press box in tears and hugged one of her writers. Madeline Manning Mims, a gold medal sprinter in the 1968 and 1972 Olympics, sat stunned in front of her brother's television set and listened to the pounding of her own heart. Three-time Olympic pentathlete Pat Connolly watched on a wide-screen television set and felt her throat close with emotion— 'for Joan,' she said later, still moved by the memory. 'For women. For my daughter' (Gorney, August 11, 1984)." Women athletes, who were well aware of the ideological prejudices against them, knew they were witnessing an historical moment in women's athletics.

Moreover, not just marathoners, but all female athletes in the 1984 Olympics were being given a respect for their athleticism that had previously been missing. Jane Leavy of *The Washington Post* wrote, "They are the most diminutive conquerors. Mary Lou Retton wears size 3½ shoes. Joan Benoit is 5 feet 3. Ashford weighs 120 pounds. Now, suddenly, they are big. . . . they made that strange and irrevocable transition from being people to being names. . . . All three appear so fragile and yet so tough. Their victories

this week may change the perception of women athletes. No longer will those qualities be deemed mutually exclusive. They smile and they play hurt (Leavy, August 7, 1984)." Female competitors in the 1984 Games were exciting public passions the way only male heroes previously had. Leavy added in regards to the effects of the top women distance runners on society at large, "The goals are personal; the implications global (Leavy, August 7, 1984)." In the same article Joan Benoit was interviewed. She commented, "Now I'm finding [other male runners] are becoming supportive and encouraging. They realize women are capable of working very, very hard and setting goals for themselves and doing the best they can to achieve those goals. I mean, what's the difference (Leavy, August 7, 1984)?"

Sports writer Tony Kornheiser also recognized the impact the 1984 Games had on the advances of female athletes. He wrote, "From an equality standpoint, these were the Games in which women athletes were recognized and publicized for their athletic achievements as never before. Although Carl Lewis came into the Olympics the most highly celebrated athlete, his four-gold-medal achievement was written about quietly compared to the loud screams for such women as Mary Decker, Joan Benoit, Mary Lou Retton, Flo Hyman, Valerie Brisco-Hooks, and that unfortunate Swiss marathoner, Gabriele Andersen-Schiess. No longer will Olympic women be exclusively consigned to the deep pages of a sports section. The Games of Los Angeles have given them prominence equal to men (Kornheiser, August 13, 1984)."

Twenty years later, sports Writer Jeff Cordes wrote, "Another reason the 1984 Olympic Marathon is remembered— Andersen was a woman, an accomplished athlete devoted to many sports. Her very public struggle was a microcosm of the struggles

women had made to achieve recognition in the era of Title 9 (Cordes, August 18, 2004)." Both the incredible successes of 1984 Olympians like Joan Benoit, and the tremendously heart-breaking performances of those like Andersen-Schiess, were regarded with a newfound respect and admiration. Women athletes were finally gaining the right to assert their talents, and experience failure, all within the public spotlight.

However, for all the advances made by the 1984 Olympics, the male athlete as dominant ideology still existed, and would continue to be an obstacle in the fight for equality in athletics. In an ABC news broadcast in August of 1984 reporter Rebecca Chase noted, "This year twelve new events opened up to women for the first time, including synchronized swimming, cycling, and the marathon, but eighteen events still remain closed to females, meaning women can compete for less than half the medals available to men. Women athletes here predict eventually that will change. Because as the '84 Olympics indicate, women athletes are coming on, and they're coming on strong (ABC, August 10, 1984)." Women athletes were, indeed, asserting themselves in the 1984 Games as never before, but blatant inequalities, such as the unequal amount of events for men and women, still existed. Another inequality was the disproportionate amount of tangible support male and female athletes each had. For example, reflecting on her race in 2004 Andersen-Schiess remarked, "I probably made some mistakes in training and preparation, but I never really had a coach. Things I learned I learned by myself (Cordes, August 18, 2004)." The fact that an Olympic caliber athlete such as Andersen-Schiess trained and competed on such a high level without having an actual coach is testament to the hegemonic differences in support systems between male and female athletes at the time. Another interesting example of the tenuous status of female

distance runners is the television commentary of the marathon. During the race there were three ABC television commentators, two male and one female. They were Al Michaels, Marty Liquori, a race analyst and former champion runner, and Kathrine Switzer. In a *New York Times* article written by Ira Berkow about the coverage of Andersen-Schiess's finish by these three, Berkow noted, "One sensed that Miss Switzer was torn more than the two men beside her. For, as Liquori had pointed out, women previously had been considered too weak to run more than a mile in Olympic competition (Berkow, August 7, 1984)." Switzer, who had devoted herself since 1967 to advancing the status of women's marathoning around the world, was especially aware of the fact that Andersen-Schiess's finish could jeopardize women distance runners' future. She was quoted saying after the race, "I remember thinking, 'I hope the IOC doesn't pull this out of the Olympics. Fortunately, she was made a heroine. At last, women had the right to be exhausted in public (Longman, June 23, 1996)."

(4) Andersen-Schiess's finish: Did it help or hurt?

The captivating finish of competitor Andersen-Schiess caught not only the world's attention, but also, as it turned out in many cases, the world's admiration and respect. When she competed in the 1984 Olympic Games Andersen-Schiess was no novice to marathon running. She had successfully raced in more than twenty marathons, and her personal best was 2:33:25, which she had run at the Olympic qualifying trials in December (Cordes, August 18, 2004). She had proven her athletic prowess in the past, but on that hot day in Los Angeles, her body did not cooperate. She was quoted after the race saying, "I tried to get myself going. I tried to relax more, to gain control over my

movements. But I just couldn't do it. I was hurting (Vecsey, August 7, 1984)." The temperature along the course that day ranged from the high 60s to near 90 degrees with high humidity. It was over 80 degrees in the Coliseum itself (Moran, August 6, 1984). While Andersen-Schiess's finish is today considered to be an example of heroism and courage, at the time it happened, the effect her finish would have was questionable.

In a *New York Times* article the day after the race, writer George Vecsey wrote, "First there were gasps, then there were cheers, and later there were questions, hard questions. The first women's Olympic marathon in history was turning into a controversy over an issue that could have been a matter of life and death. . . . In the brutal "sport" of boxing, no athlete would be allowed to continue twisted out of shape as she was, but the opponent in distance running is not external but internal— the sheer will to finish. It is the beauty of this event but also the danger (Vecsey, August 6, 1984)." For some critics who still lived by the ideology that female athletes were inferior to their male counterparts, Andersen-Schiess's marathon finish was the perfect example of a weak female, not a strong will. Her finish was considered by some to be the prime example of why women could not compete in the same capacities as men. As Jane Leavy explained in a *New York Times* article after the marathon, "It was a graphic reminder of why it had taken so long for Olympic officials to allow women to run the marathon, one of the most grueling events for men and women. The contrast between Schiess and Benoit was telling (Leavy, August 6, 1984)." Andersen-Schiess was also aware of the effect her finish had on popular opinion. It was written in a *Washington Post* article two days after the marathon, "Today, [Andersen-Schiess] was disturbed by some of the conclusions being drawn from her last lap around the Coliseum, the renewed questions

about women's fitness for long distance training (Leavy, August 7, 1984)." Andersen-Schiess was then quoted, saying, "I hope it doesn't deter other women or organizers from letting women run distance events. Sure I had a breakdown, but after a few hours I was fully recovered (Leavy, August 7, 1984)."

Some commentators, aware of the possible detrimental effect Andersen-Schiess's performance could have, argued in favor of women. A *New York Times* article stated, "Many experts in women's fitness were concerned that Miss Andersen-Schiess's terrifying finish, when she was removed on a stretcher, would further the misconceptions about female frailty, but all agreed that dehydration was not a problem limited to women. 'With the equality to participate come the equality to be totally exhausted in public,' [Kathrine] Switzer said. Doctors later found that Miss Andersen-Schiess was not in danger (Gross, August 12, 1984)." Other journalists even brought a bit of humor into their pro-female athlete arguments, joking that despite what any critics might have said, Andersen-Schiess still performed better than the male Phidippides, the original marathoner, whom legend says dropped dead at the finish.

In the fight to challenge and change male-dominant hegemonic beliefs, Andersen-Schiess's finish was luckily viewed by many fellow athletes, members of the media, and everyday spectators as a feat of strength, courage, and will, not as a sign that female marathoners were not yet worthy of having an Olympic race. One of the most notable signs of these popular shifts in ideology is the correspondence Andersen-Schiess received from supporters. *The New York Times* ran a feature on Andersen-Schiess a month after the race: "Few people who watched her that day could forget the sight: Dehydrated, bent like a pretzel, dragging herself toward the finish line some 400 meters away, Gabriele

Andersen-Schiess became, to many, a symbol of courage. . . . In the weeks following the race in Los Angeles, she received hundreds of letters, mostly from America, she said yesterday, but also from Europe, Australia and South America. . . . The letters, she said, surprised and satisfied her because she had perceived her Olympic experience as a negative one. She is, after all, an athlete (Janofsky, October 12, 1984)."

Andersen-Schiess's performance was, indeed, respected around the globe. *The Washington Post* reported on August 10th that "The Greek government today invited Gabriele Andersen-Schiess . . . to visit Greece. In Athens, Government Sport Secretary Kimon Koulouris said Andersen-Schiess had been asked to make a 10-day visit to the birthplace of the Games, in recognition of her courage and 'athletic effort in the Olympic spirit' (Greeks honor Andersen-Schiess, August 10, 1984)."

There were twelve doctors on the field at the Los Angeles Coliseum at the time of Andersen-Schiess's finish (Leavy, August 5, 1984). Dr. Richard Greenspun, the chief medical officer for track and field at the 1984 Games commented, "As she came through the tunnel, my first thoughts were, 'This is the most courageous thing I've ever seen.' If she had fallen, a doctor would have asked her. If her answers were appropriately incoherent, she would have had to be helped (Vecsey, August 6, 1984)." But Andersen-Schiess did not fall. Though she wobbled her way around the track, she managed to remain on two feet. Monica Regonesi of Chili, who finished 32nd, remarked, "Maybe they should stop her, but you should run with your heart and your legs until they don't work. We are not sure how she feels. In her mind, she wants to finish. You see men finish like that all the time (Vecsey, August 6, 1984)." Indeed, male competitors had

been known to physically deteriorate as much as Andersen-Schiess did, but the sight of a male athlete utterly exhausted was not such an uncomfortable sight for most people.

Perhaps the greatest indication of the popular shift in ideology from one that trivialized female athletic pursuits to one that revered them is the reaction of the media to Andersen-Schiess's finish. In a *New York Times* article written at the conclusion of the 1984 Games, Andersen-Schiess was referred to as "an athlete of stunning endeavor" who "gave essence and inspiration to the Olympic Games (Personal Best, August 14, 1984)." George Vecsey of *The New York Times* wrote, "[Andersen-Schiess] was an athlete with a huge amount of will, and she finished 37th, underlining the point that women can handle a marathon (Vecsey, August 2, 1992)." Only a little over a decade before, the mostly male-dominated American sports writing media had outwardly questioned if women's marathon running deserved official sanction. Now, the same institution was praising female competition.

Even twenty years after her incredible finish, the popular press was still extolling Andersen-Schiess for her courage and determination. Sports writer Jeff Cordes wrote in a 2004 article that her finish was an "indelible" and "unforgettable moment (Cordes, August 18, 2004)." He mused, "Why is Andersen's experience remembered a generation later? Because seldom are the struggles of world-class athletes portrayed in the raw on such a stage. Nearly 77,000 spectators watched Andersen's pursuit of the blessed finish— more on television (Cordes, August 18, 2004)." Cordes recalled how after the race *New York Post* columnist Dick Young had written, "They have given Joan Benoit her gold medal, and Grete Waitz her silver, and Rosa Mota her bronze. For you, Gabriele Andersen-Schiess, they should erect a statue alongside the Olympic torch atop Los

Angeles Coliseum, to immortalize as courageous an athletic performance as the old Stadium has ever seen (Cordes, August 18, 2004)."

In speaking of the virtue of courage in a 2006 article, sports writer Jerry Izenberg wrote, "In sports it is sometimes called heart, but in truth it is the collaboration of mind and body and spirit to overcome fear and pain. It is the will to beat back doubt, and the soul to push through failure. Over 55 years, I've seen plenty of courage (Izenberg, October 1, 2006)." Izenberg then wrote about athletes whose courage has been inspiring over the years. The sole female on his list was Andersen-Schiess. Of her he declared, "I had never heard of a woman named Gabriele Andersen-Schiess, but before the race ended she would set a standard for courage I have never seen surpassed (Izenberg, October 1, 2006)."

At the time it occurred, and still to this day, Andersen-Schiess's shaky stumble across the finish line often garners more attention than Benoit's major victory. In a *New York Times* article two days after the marathon, columnist George Vecsey wrote, "Mrs. Andersen-Schiess is on her way to being the transcendent symbol of these Summer Games, the athlete who may be remembered after the gold-medal winners blur together (Vecsey, August 7, 1984)." Four years later Vecsey maintained the same opinion. In an article about the 1988 Summer Games, he again noted that the focus of the inaugural women's marathon was placed on Andersen-Schiess. He wrote, "The 1984 race should have been remembered for Benoit's one-sided victory in 2:24:52, then the third-fastest time in women's history. But long after Benoit, Grete Waitz and [Rosa] Mota had won the gold, silver and bronze medals, the race became known for the appearance in the

stadium of Gabriele Andersen-Schiess, a 39-year-old endurance athlete from Sun Valley, running for her native Switzerland (Vecsey, Sept. 23, 1988)."

(5) Increase in media coverage

One very noticeable sign that the ideology positing male-sports as dominant was weakening is the fact that the 1984 women's Olympic marathon garnered a strong amount of media attention. Both the men's and women's marathons in the 1984 Olympics were held during peak television hours. The women's race was held in the morning during the breakfast timetable, and the men's was held during the evening prime-time slot. This newfound media recognition of women's Olympic marathoning would continue. By 1992 the women's marathon garnered so much media attention that ideal racing conditions were sacrificed at the expense of the best television times. In *The New York Times* sports writer George Vecsey wrote that, "The race should have been run just after dawn, they way they did it in Seoul four years ago, but what is the health of nearly 50 runners compared with American television time (Vecsey, August 2, 1992)?" Later on in the article, Vecsey asserted the power and popularity of televised coverage, stating, "All I know is that the sight of Joan Benoit Samuelson of the United States and Rosa Mota of Portugal running through great cities like Los Angeles and Seoul have been memorable. Marathons are great television (Vecsey, August 2, 1992)."

By the 1996 Atlanta Games, half of the 170 hours of television coverage was devoted to female sports, mainly swimming, gymnastics and track (Longman, June 23, 1996). Peter C. Diamon, NBC's senior vice president for Olympic programming explained that the Games allow a network to spend two weeks unfurling the compelling

stories that often involve women athletes and their struggles in fighting to gain equality in the Olympic arena (Longman, June 23, 1996). Harvey Schiller, the president of Turner Sports and the former executive director of the United States Olympic Committee said in 1996, "I think the American public loves champions, and especially when that champion is a woman. We have still not demonstrated equality in women's participation in sports. When a woman succeeds, I think the public recognizes how much harder they had to work (Longman, June 23, 1996)."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As journalist Jere Longman wrote, "Because women have struggled so long and resolutely to overcome cultural, racial and religious obstacles, their accomplishments carry a resonance particularly associated with the Olympics: sacrifice, struggle, elusive victory gained over great odds (Longman, June 23, 1996)." Joan Benoit, Gabriele Andersen-Schiess, and the rest of the competitors in the inaugural women's Olympic marathon were finally able to prove their talent, athleticism, and incredible will on a truly global stage. While the increased media coverage, recognition, and support of Andersen-Schiess were representative of the positive ideological changes in favor of female athletes that had happened by 1984, the Games still showed signs of hegemonic inequalities. The mere fact alone that it took until the mid 1980s and 1990s for women's distance races to be included is evidence of how strong prejudice against female distance runners still was.

Even today discrepancies exist in Olympic events for men and women. In events like speed skating, cross country, the biathlon, cycling, kayaking and swimming the men still have longer and more events (Knapp, February 16, 2006). In track and field, men

have a decathlon and a 3,000 meter steeplechase, while women only compete in a heptathlon. In the luge in the Winter Games, there is no written rule that the two-man luge needs to be two men, but it has always been two men anyway. Moreover, some events still exist today that are only for men. Ski jumping, currently under the most debate, the Nordic combined (cross country and ski jump), boxing, canoeing, and Greco-Roman wrestling are all men-only events (Knapp, February 16, 2006).

Still, the 1984 Olympic women's marathon stands as a pivotal moment in Olympic history. Certain moments can be looked back upon as ones when unjust ideologies were directly confronted and changed. In the 1936 Berlin Games, African-American track and field athlete Jesse Owens won four gold medals, thereby proving to Hitler and the world that the Aryan race was not superior to all others.

In the 1932 Games, which were also held in Los Angeles, American Babe Didrickson-Zaharias competed in three events, the maximum number allowed for women, and won all three, though she was later given silver in the high jump because she did not jump the traditional way. Though Didrickson-Zaharias's femininity was often questioned, her performance still challenged popular beliefs that female athletes were inferior. The medal ceremony for the men's 200 meter dash at the 1968 Mexico City Games is an example of one of the strongest ideological challenges of all. African-American runners Tommie Smith and John Carlos, heads bowed and fists raised in silent protest, peacefully, yet powerfully, challenged the injustices still faced by black Americans and asserted that the Civil Rights Movement had not gone far enough in securing equal rights for all.

Like these inspiring moments, the first women's Olympic marathon race successfully challenged the hegemonic ideology that women distance runners were not worthy of competing on the Olympic level.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters I have argued that the ideology positing male athletes and male athletic pursuits as dominant was prevalent through the mid 1980s, specifically in the realms of tennis and marathon running. Disparaging hegemonic beliefs towards female athletes resulted in a lack of equal opportunities, prize money, support and training systems, media coverage, and respect by the press and much of the general public. Also acknowledged, however, are the positive ideological changes that have occurred. Looking at the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, the Boston Marathon, and the 1984 Olympic marathon from a rhetorical perspective makes it possible to gauge how far all women's athletics have come in the past four decades. Women's athletic pursuits are now often seen as heroic, not deviant, and women athletes are not as blatantly ostracized by main-stream society as they once were. Admittedly, stereotyping female athletes as "butch," "manly" or even "lesbian" still occurs. However, this is not the prevailing societal belief that it once was. Although absolute equality and acceptance does not yet exist, female participation in sport is today at least viewed as an everyday norm, not as a breech on the male domain. Contemporary women are applauded for having the strength, will and endurance to compete in exhausting tennis matches and grueling distance races. Rather than negating the characteristics associated with the female gender identity, sport has positively added to it.

Although, overall, female tennis players and distance runners were both vying for equal opportunity and appreciation within their respective sports, each set of women athletes had slightly different objectives. Even if Billie Jean King was challenging

prejudices of her own in the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, generally speaking, women's participation in tennis in 1973 was much more socially acceptable than women's participation in distance running. Tennis was traditionally a sport played by the elite classes of society and was thus more acceptable. Tennis had for most of the century been a sport that was only played at country clubs, estates and resorts where the privileged classes of society sought refuge from the urban industrial world (Festle, 55) As such, the institution of tennis often discriminated by class, race and ethnicity, but not by sex within the white, upper classes of society. Furthermore, women tennis players also wore skirts, thereby outwardly reaffirming their gender. This is not to say, however, that female tennis players who wanted to compete professionally outside the realms of the country clubs were embraced with open arms. Prejudice certainly still existed.

For the early pioneers of women's marathoning in the late 1960s and 1970s, training and racing were tough. Despite passionately believing women deserved the opportunity to race, many women had to sneak out before dawn or after dark to train, train by running in place, train without appropriate workout clothing, and train in most cases without coaches or role-models for support due to the lack of societal and competitive acceptance (Oglesby, 195).

Thus, since by the late 1960s and early 1970s women's tennis had much more societal acceptance than women's marathoning, tennis players like Billie Jean King were fighting more for main-stream popular approval, whereas female marathoners were still fighting for initial inclusion.

Positive gains for women in both sports have been made in large part do to the success of Title IX. In the years since its passing in 1972, Title IX has had tremendous

success, especially at the collegiate level, by providing for equal funding and opportunities for men and women athletes. Although at the amateur and professional levels men's athletic events still usually attract larger crowds and bring in more revenue, women's programs from the elementary through collegiate levels are now at least equally supported in monetary terms. The hegemonic ideology of male athletic dominance and prominence no longer negatively affects the resources and opportunities female athletes have while growing up. In the majority of situations, girls no longer suffer from having a lack of proper equipment, training facilities, or coaches. Moreover, although some sports, such as football or gymnastics, are still dominated by the participation of only one sex, young girls in the United States are brought up having many more opportunities to participate in sports. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), 29,977 women competed in collegiate sports in 1971-72. By 1994-95 that number had increased to 110,524. 62,211 high-school girls participated in track and field in 1972-73, whereas 345,700 did so in 1994-95 (Longman, June 23, 1996). Moreover, youth recreation programs, after school clubs and private leagues all over the country offer programs for both boys and girls in almost all sports. Young girl athletes may still be called "tom-boys," but in many cases, it is now at least acceptable to be a "tom-boy." Unlike King, the average girl today would not be dissuaded by her parents from playing softball, and unlike Kathrine Switzer or Roberta Gibb, the thousands of women competing in the Boston Marathon every year do not have to worry about being chased off the course. For the most part, the ideology young girls now learn has changed from one of exclusion to one of opportunity.

While tremendous positive changes certainly have occurred in recent decades, the hegemonic ideology positing male athletics as dominant undoubtedly still exists to a certain extent. Though female athletes are now encouraged to engage in sports and physically exert themselves, male athletes still have greater opportunities. On a global level, male professional sports are still the big money-makers. Whether it is soccer in Europe, ruby in Australia, or football in the United States, professional teams recruit the top male athletes and, in many cases, pay them remarkably high salaries to compete. For just about every mainstream sport, crowds flock to see the men's events. Conversely, if women even have a professional outlet in any given sport, attendance and salaries often do not even come close in comparison to the men's. The argument exists that male athletes, being naturally bigger and stronger than females, can perform more outstanding feats of athleticism. They can hit a ball farther, or hit an opponent harder. While this may be so, hegemonic ideology still plays a part in the inequality that exists. It is not just a male athlete's brawn that makes his talent more popular, but also traces of the male sports as dominant ideology that still continues.

For these reasons, it is questionable if male and female athletes will ever truly be on an equal playing field. It will be interesting to continue the study of hegemonic ideology in sport and to see what changes, if any, occur in the years to come. Men may forever have more professional opportunities and garner more media attention. Hopefully, though, this does not discourage female athletes from pursuing and achieving their true athletic potential.

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