9F Dunja Antunovic, Bradley University

“We Wouldn’t Say it to Their Faces: Analysis of Feminist and Postfeminist Discourses around Online Harassment of Women in Sports Journalism”

In April 2016, a US-based independent sport media organization Just Not Sports launched #MoreThanMean, a digital media campaign to raise awareness about online harassment of women in sports journalism. The campaign began with a four-minute video on the organization’s Facebook page which reached over 3.7 million views within the first few weeks. The men behind the campaign and the two women sports journalists featured in the video subsequently appeared in interviews with major media outlets in the US. The campaign is an example of public engagement with issues feminist sports media scholars have researched for decades. Using the #MoreThanMean campaign as a case study, this paper assesses how feminist discourses circulate in the sports media environment. Although online spaces allow for self-representation of political activism, feminist messages become postfeminist as they journey from online platforms to mainstream media (Darmon, 2014). With a particular awareness of the contemporary postfeminist context (McRobbie, 2004), this study examines how various producers of content—including women sports journalists, Just Not Sports, ESPN, and mainstream media—engage with feminist politics in relation to online harassment. This study considers the corporeal implications of digital media activism upon gendered forms of power in the sports journalism industry.

9F Kent Kaiser, University of Northwestern

“Women’s Sports Have ‘Arrived’—Not! Newspaper Sports Coverage Pre-/Post-Title IX”

This paper presents results of a quantitative content analysis of large-, medium-, and small-city newspapers from 40 years before and 40 years after the passage of Title IX. It shows large-city newspapers (agenda-setters for other media and thus purveyors of media hegemonic ideas) have actually strengthened practices that undermine women’s sports—indeed, the media sample examined here shows the situation to have been better for women in 1932 than in 2012, in terms of quantity of articles and space on the first pages of sports sections. These findings provide concrete evidence to counter postfeminist suggestions that women’s sports have “arrived” or that there is little more to do. The quantitative findings are bolstered by qualitative evidence, as well. What is new and even more interesting here is that, meanwhile and while still far from equal, medium- and small-city newspapers in the same time period made greater strides toward equality, however unintentionally those strides might have been. Within the data set, movement toward equality appears in an inverse relationship with the newspapers’ city size. Therefore, this paper suggests that the most media-savvy strategy to break through intractable power structures and to claim the media agenda might involve a local, grassroots-level-up approach.

9F Ally Quinney, Florida State University

“@UFC and Third-Wave Feminism?: Gender, Fighters, and Framing on Twitter”
Since its 2013 inclusion in the UFC, discourses on women’s MMA are increasing on social media. While the UFC’s inclusion of female fighters is positive for gender equality, I question the extent to which this change has truly impacted the perception of women in the sport. In an attempt to analyze public perception of female UFC fighters, I use framing analysis and an intersectional feminist lens to examine a dataset of tweets published over a four-year period. I draw from research on women’s sport (Channon 2014; Jennings 2014; et al.), feminist media theory (McRobbie 2009; et al.), and social media (Bruns and Burgess 2012; Heinecken 2015; et al). I found that there is an imbalance in attention paid to female fighters in regards to gender, race, class, and sexuality, and this constructs contradictory messaging about gender equality, female fighters’ bodies, and the UFC on Twitter. The inclusion of women in the UFC has the potential to make contributions to gender equality both in and outside of the octagon. However, if gender, sexuality, race and class, are not included in both the online and offline discourses about female UFC fighters, the UFC’s potential to improve gender equality will be reduced.

9F Julie Brice, University of Maryland
“The Influence of the Empowerment Narrative of U.S. Women’s Soccer on Female Millennials”

The 1990s sparked a pro-girl movement where concepts such as “girl power” and women’s empowerment became rampant in U.S. culture. Although “girl power” rhetoric originated as a collective social justice movement in punk rock, it was quickly commodified into mainstream culture including women’s soccer as evidenced by the 1999 Newsweek Cover with a “Girls Rule!” headline featuring a shirtless and celebratory Brandi Chastain, and in the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup with the U.S. Women’s National Team’s #SheBelieves empowerment campaign. Research has shown that empowerment rhetoric is part of the neoliberal agenda encouraging women to engage in activism via their purchasing power rather than with feminist, political activism. However, there is little research exploring how the cohort of women who experienced “girl power” as children negotiate the empowerment rhetoric in a “post-feminist” society, especially as it pertains to the empowerment campaign in women’s soccer. To begin to address this gap, in this presentation I share preliminary findings drawn from interviews conducted with female millennials who consider themselves fans of women’s professional soccer. The following sub-themes will be addressed: (1) How did the empowerment campaign shape female millennials’ physical activity practices, and understanding of their selves and bodies? (2) What is social activism and public engagement to female millennials and how does the empowerment campaign inform this social activist understanding? Results will be analyzed through a critical lens that aims to advance understandings of postfeminism.