

# SPORT, GENDER AND POLITICS: MOVING BEYOND THE O.J. SAGA

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## INTRODUCTION

For the last half of 1994 and the first nine months of 1995, North America was fascinated and sickened by the O.J. **Simpson** saga. Between January and October, coverage of the former football player accounted for more minutes of air-time on ABC, CBS and NBC prime-time news than Bosnia and the Oklahoma bombing combined; and thirteen times as much as the debate on Medicare.' Part gladiatorial combat, part soap opera, part show trial, part pornography, part police-and-courtroom drama – the **Simpson** trial generated an economy of hundreds of millions of dollars in television, publishing and novelties, and in lawyers, experts, legal and prison services. The trial alone cost taxpayers eight million dollars, and it was the very least of it. The gold rush is still on. Now that he has been acquitted, **Simpson** stands to make **multimillions** himself. 'The obvious precedent,' wrote Howard Witt of the Chicago *Tribune* in early October, 1995, was 'last month's pay-per-view Mike Tyson boxing match, which netted the convicted rapist a quick \$25 million.'<sup>1</sup> As this article is being completed, **Simpson** is negotiating to do a pay-per-view television appearance for \$40 million. He has also applied for trademarks on 120 commodity items, including placemats, pyjamas, aprons, and – yes – 'squeeze dolls' for little girls.

The effects of all this have been palpable, indeed inescapable. While it ran its course, the trial served as a textbook-case lightning rod for social and political disaffection. It was a massive circus that captured energy, exacerbated ugly and perverse attitudes with respect to race, sex and gender, and bred even deeper cynicism about the law, police and justice than existed before. On the one hand, the defence did not convincingly establish Simpson's innocence, so that large sectors of the (primarily white) North American public were angered by the verdict of 'not guilty' and the *National Enquirer* ran headlines such as 'O.J. targeted for death by Right wing groups'. On the other hand, the stunning revelations by the defence of racism, misogyny, corruption and tampered evidence in the **Los**

Angeles Police Department mortally undermined the prosecution's credibility and legitimacy as well. Following on the Rodney King beating by LAPD officers and the acquittal of the police by an all white jury, the **Simpson** trial further deepened convictions among African Americans that the police and justice systems are thoroughly rigged against them in the most spectacular of ways. And women of all **colours** wondered why, even if not guilty of murder, O.J. the batterer was being cast as a hero on his acquittal.

O.J. **Simpson** the black athlete and Mark Fuhrman the white cop seemed during the long months of the trial to be consummate antagonists, each stirring fierce passions of loyalty and hatred among his respective supporters. Yet notwithstanding appearances, these two men actually share a common ideology that unites them as much as the colour of their skins and their traditional political ideologies divide them. They share an ideology – a 'feeling-idea' that animates emotion and action – of coercive entitlement; and they share it as *men*. At its most blunt, it sounds like this. 'I like to hurt women when I make love to them,' Mike Tyson was quoted as saying in a recent issue of *Sports Illustrated*? 'I like to hear them scream with pain . . . to see them bleed . . . it gives me pleasure.' The authors of the article in which these words appeared repeated them with some incredulity. But Tyson likes to relate to men this way, so why not to women? Judging by the size of the audiences Tyson is commanding now that he has been released from prison, this ideology links him not only to **Simpson** and Fuhrman but to millions of other men as well. This ideology is actively constructed in the ritual formations of men's culture – above all, in sport; and it is celebrated and popularized by the mass media.

That the **Simpson** saga was profoundly entwined with issues of gender, colour and class in the U.S. today has been acknowledged with more or less depth in the mass media. Crucially, however, the saga is also linked to the specific cultural practice of sport, and the world of men's culture which sport both exemplifies and organizes. Like Tyson the rapist, **Simpson** the batterer is a not just one good boy gone bad for idiosyncratic reasons; but a predictable example of the inevitable spillage of values and modes of behaviour from the stadiums and arenas of contemporary sport into 'real life'. The complicity of sport in the violent actions of such athletes (and of many other men who emulate them) is not addressed in public discourse. To the contrary, the subject is conspicuous by its absence.

Were the **Simpson** drama to fully highlight its own tributary structures it would properly provoke not just a general breast-beating about racism and sexism (O.J. as victim of one, Nicole as victim of the other); but also a specific and overdue interrogation of the cultural practice of sport that made O.J. a hero in the first place, and placed him like a god in the popular pantheon. For it is in teaching the culture of masculinity and **masculinism**,<sup>4</sup>

with their specific values and modes of behaviour, that contemporary sport provides a school for authoritarian, punitive and vengeful ideologies for males; ideologies which then serve to animate other ideologies of inequality and associated behaviours of domination.

Despite the way that sport has largely been accepted across political lines as a benign and even positive cultural practice, in this essay I argue that in fact, as a central institution for the rehearsal and regeneration of masculinity and **masculinism**, sport is a central institution for the regeneration of anti-social and, by direct extension, anti-socialist, values in contemporary **society**.<sup>3</sup> Far from being the democratic and fraternal force its supporters have claimed, sport constitutes a master narrative of competition and domination – indeed a narrative of masters – through its inflection of gender, in an age when other master narratives are crumbling. As an embodied ideological practice, sport should be considered a central material and discursive institution that reproduces relations of inequality and strife. Because of the dominance of men's culture within mixed culture as a whole, and the dominance of sport within men's culture, sport's celebration of aggressive conquest has great influence and power, shaping personal and communal ideals and political reflexes.

The elaborate attention accorded to heavyweight boxing champion Michael Tyson a few years ago, and now – on a much grander scale – the media energy devoted to O.J. **Simpson**, are examples in grotesque but accurate caricature of the way the media exploit the charismatic celebrity of sport heroes more generally. Athletes are special because they are able to stir deeper regions of collective disturbance, desire and fear than most other men, even famous ones. With African-American athletes such as Tyson and **Simpson**, that ability includes the mobilization of racist beliefs about African-American males and their sexuality, a feature that carries an extra charge symbolically, economically and, in Tyson's and Simpson's cases, judicially. Had O.J. **Simpson** been a heart surgeon or an accountant – even an African-American one – the coverage of his trial would not have commanded nearly the degree of attention it has. Even Clarence Thomas' controversial nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court received only a fraction of the attention heaped on **Simpson**.

Professional athletes are our greatest culture heroes. Collective projections of ideal manhood are cathected to famous athletes in unusually intense ways – not least because the sport nexus has fiercely marketed sport figures to draw on these emotions and identifications. A good warrior, the athlete, our champion, is supposed to turn his violence outward against designated Others, against our enemies, not against us. When a famous athlete is accused of a violent crime in which he does turn against us, society is potentially confronted with a major contradiction: the dichotomy between the behaviour it approves in one arena (athletics) and

the behaviour it officially disapproves in most others. By omitting a discussion of the complicity of sport and the media in the violence of athletes and men as a group, television, newspaper and magazine discourses have prevented a potential tear in the ideological fabric that might have been effected by any discussion that questioned the values and nature of our most popular and celebrated pastimes.

My aim here is to help motivate on the part of the left and progressive social movements precisely what the mainstream media discourse about O.J. Simpson has so assiduously avoided: a political examination of the role of sport in society today, within the context of still-neglected matters of gender relations, family arrangements and culture. Let me be clear from the outset about my terminology in this exposition. When I employ the term 'sport' here, I am referring to a delimited and specific field of activities within the broad field of physical culture. I am *not* referring to all physical activity (for example, the generic activities of running, jumping, throwing, swimming); nor all physical disciplines (for example, yoga, t'ai chi, dance). The distinction between active physicality and sport – though often blurred – is essential, for sport is only one way of being physically active and organizing physical activity. When I use the term sport I am speaking of physical contests, individual or team, based on the zero-sum objectives of taking territory and/or overpowering an opponent; contests that possess codified, standardized rules and measurements; and are organized into formal associations, with official records and designated champions. As well, for the purposes of this exposition, when I use the term sport I am using shorthand to refer exclusively to the *dominant sports* in the industrial world and transnationally (football, basketball, baseball, hockey, Olympic individual sports such as track and field and gymnastics, tennis, boxing and auto racing most specifically; not to more marginal or minoritarian sports like lacrosse or water ballet). There are important differences among these dominant sports – with American football and boxing weighing in clearly as the most aggressive and violent, while baseball and tennis appear the most gentlemanly, and hockey and basketball somewhere in between. However, there are also important generalizations to be made about all of these sports and their promotion, and I make them here. Further narrowing the field for the purposes of this article, I discuss these dominant sports almost exclusively as they include men and exclude women. There is a great deal to be said about the active relationship between women and sport, but it cannot be said adequately in this forum.<sup>4</sup>

In my thirty years as a socialist activist, I have become convinced that gendered institutions, values and behaviours shape 'small p' political culture (the politics of interpersonal and social life) in ways that *directly* affect 'large p' political culture (the politics of government and the state)

much more than has yet been taken into account in theories of political formation and **social(ist)** change. It is in this sense that developments in contemporary gender culture – organized and exemplified by the case study of sport – bear directly on the crisis of collective political agency today. While a critical attitude to sport is by no means generalized among socialists and Marxists, many of the scholars of sport within these traditions share a negative assessment of sport's broadest socio-political functions. A number of writers take pains to assert important positive by-products which sport has delivered to working class and oppressed individuals and groups (**e.g.**, active physicality, group coordination, physical mastery, group identity and differentiation). Nevertheless, there is broad consensus among many socialist thinkers that these **benefits** need not be tied to sport; and that they are generally appropriated, outweighed or negated by the broad negative valences and functions of the dominant sports and their culture.

To explain why sport, however contradictory, is more reactionary than progressive, most critical socialist scholars attribute its negative qualities directly to those of the capitalist mode of production. 'Modern competitive sport is a product of industrial society, the concentrated symbolic representation of its fundamental principles; this is the reason why it fascinates the masses in all industrialized countries, and in all countries moving toward industrialization.' Thus, according to this succinctly articulated view by Christian Graf von **Krakow**, the subordination of co-operation to domination occurs because **capitalism** is not a humane socio-economic system. The fundamental relationships sport validates are competition and ranking; the fundamental good that of high performance; the fundamental actions those of overpowering and dominating because all these are inherent in and constitutive of the capitalist system.

Without rejecting the rich acquisitions of this school of thought, however, something extremely important has been left out of its account. I am speaking here of sport's relationship to men organized as a **gender-class**; of the way sport is the concentrated symbolic representation of the **masculinist system** and its fundamental principles. Further, I am convinced that masculinism must be understood as the primary, constitutive core of sport and its culture. **Masculinism** and gender class are not 'add-on' categories to capitalism and economic class where sport is concerned. Rather, masculinism lies at the heart of what sport organizes and achieves. It is what is mobilized via the ideological reflexes sport nurtures and sustains to energize the other traditional political identifications – locality, ethnicity, nationality, and so forth – to which socialist sport scholars have paid so much attention by virtue of their more obvious relationships to economic class. Insofar as sport is our way to prepare young males to act as physical enforcers of a vigorously defended economic and gender order

grounded in inequality and domination, sport is not fun and games. Instead, it should be understood **as** a proto-military cultural practice that serves to demarcate undemocratically the ownership of physical coercion, a territory that is still almost exclusively men's; and that spreads the values of domination within the larger social sphere.

### SPORT AND THE GENDER ORDER

Just **as** every known human society has an *economic* order – a system for organizing how it gets the means of subsistence from the environment – it also has a social order for daily and generational reproduction which organizes and gives cultural meaning to the biological existence of two sexes and the in-built, bodily drive for sexual pleasure. The term I will employ for this system henceforth is the *gender order*.<sup>8</sup> When a gender order 'constructs' its ideals of masculinity and femininity – what the boys and men, women and girls are supposed to be like, or to try to be like – it is attempting to fix overlapping predispositions and potentials, shared by children of both biological sexes, into predictable behaviours ('roles') so that the work of daily and generational reproduction can proceed in a stable fashion?

Gender identity and gendered consciousness are products of the articulation of socially organized modes of economic activity and family organization with the biophysical and psychological needs, predispositions and potentials of humans. The biological givens place limits on the social possibilities – minimally, needs for food, air, water, shelter, clothing and procreation must be met. As well, however, given the psychoneurological equipment of humans, needs for identity formation and the formation of ideation must also be **addressed**.<sup>10</sup> The larger point flowing from these propositions that socialists need to integrate into the heart of their political theory and programme development is a simple one: specific arrangements for childrearing create, and are reflected in, specific patterns of adult behaviour. Matters such as the presence or absence of parents of either gender, the use of harsh punishment and general attitudes to children, the degree and kind of integration or segregation of the sexes – all these matters of childrearing, among others, will have consequences for the way adults conduct their personal and political lives.

In pre-capitalist patriarchal economies, the site of production and reproduction was the same – the family household. Fathers, uncles and older brothers were present in the lives of children, especially boys, throughout their childhood." In these families, the omnipresence and omnipotence of the family father could be very oppressive. Regardless, his presence and involvement in the socialization of children, especially boys, was an important feature of traditional agrarian and artisan family **arrange-**

ments. This changed with the advent of capitalism. Capitalism severed the site of daily and generational reproduction (the home) from the primary site of production (the factory, the office), and radically changed the place of the familial father in the daily childhood experience of boys. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the father's involvement in domestic and childhood life was limited largely to matters of authority and discipline. At the end of that century, with the establishment of a new family norm for urban capitalism in the 'family-wage system', it became possible for some fathers to become more present in the lives of their sons through the pursuit of leisure and recreation activities – most notably, around sport. The 'absent father family' is the usual term applied to the gender division of labour in the family-wagesystem; but the 'remote father family' would probably be more correct.

The remoteness of the family father and older men had its corollary in the 'overpresence' of the mother and women in childhood life – and these twin characteristics initiated a very particular pattern of parenting and childhood response, leading in turn to particular patterns in gender identity formation. These, interacting with the needs and motifs of capitalism and historical patriarchal traditions and values, have had major consequences for the development of cultural idealizations of masculinity and for the behaviours and actions of men as a class, and men in groups.<sup>12</sup> The deficits in parenting arising from this arrangement, produced according to some a virtual 'crisis in **masculinity**'<sup>13</sup> in the nineteenth century; one that has parallels today, with largely negative consequences for society as a whole.

Most notably, in creating a primary identification in boys with the women who preside over their childhood – an identification which must be superseded by a secondary and often antagonistic identification with men in adolescence; and in compelling boys to construct ideals of masculinity on the basis of remote and even fictive **examples**,<sup>14</sup> this parenting arrangement ensures that large numbers of adult men will fixate on super-aggressive masculine ideals and identifications – what I have called 'hypermasculinity' – in over-compensation for the qualities associated with disowned **femininity**.<sup>15</sup> These ideals, valuing the qualities of overpowering strength and gender entitlement, have been seen as a powerful overcompensation for early feminine identifications. But they predispose those who hold them against the qualities – and the politics – of the more 'feminine' (liberal, socialist) attitudes and values.

Institutions of male-exclusive culture, with their initiation ceremonies and ongoing ritual languages, are the numinous, charismatic heart of masculinist ideology. According to psychologist John Whiting initiation ceremonies 'serve psychologically to brainwash the primary feminine identity and to establish firmly the secondary male identity' in father-absent societies. In his study of a diverse sample of sixty-four societies

with male initiation ceremonies, Whiting hypothesized that 'in societies where the father is absent or plays a minor role in child rearing, the male infant perceives the mother as all-powerful, envies her role, and then adopts a feminine identification. Yet when he begins to notice the world outside the home, at about the age of five, he will in most societies perceive that men control resources and clearly occupy an enviable position. A secondary identification with the masculine role thus becomes superimposed on the female **identification**.'<sup>16</sup> If this insight is correct, it explains the ubiquitous presence of abusive rituals and reprogramming routines in the recruitment of young men to both outlaw gangs and official armed forces. I would also add, however, that the institutions of **masculinist** culture are also very important in their own right, for they serve to cohere, condense and establish men's power as a dominant gender class as a material fact that commands enormous amounts of the social surplus as well as social approval.

Sport is the most widespread and inclusive male initiation institution of our age. For untold numbers of boys and young men, through the various stages of capitalism, sport has provided a network of social fathers and male role models, augmenting or replacing the remote familial father, creating alternative sites for emotional bonding and social mobility to the woman-dominated family. In this translocal and transnational brotherhood women are absent, negatively mirroring men's absence from the family of kin. Sport successfully provides both real associations for boys and men, and symbolic genealogies in which men can existentially locate themselves when all other anchors have been tom up by the relentless demands of capitalist mobility.

More than any church, sport has been the great cultural unifier, the ecumenical force and common language, the **great** narrative for men and boys about heroic masculinity and the superiority of men in the industrial and post-industrial age. Sport's apparently timeless secret lies in the organized practice of embodied, supra-linguistic physical rites in de-racinated time and space. These constitute a symbolic language of meaning and loyalties; a language that brings together those who know how to speak it; a language that has been diffused by the mass media to every corner of the world. As pioneer Marxist sport sociologist Jean-Marie Brohm has written:

... sport has powerfully contributed to a *cosmopolitan consciousness*; a consciousness of a sporting humanity, in which the referential criteria are the record and the champion... Across a sporting planet, records and champions constitute a kind of *symbol of universality*. Through sport, the planet unifies itself around the values of competition. <sup>17</sup>

Universality, yes: the brotherhood of 'healthy, active men', regardless of class or skin colour; but one that appropriates and incorporates particularity: the flavour and loyalties of neighbourhoods and towns and the

special qualities of individuals. Fused together by sport, the painful contradictions among these levels in real life appear magically to dissolve in sport's fictive scenarios.

The power of these scenarios is based in the intense identification between supporter and athlete or team. This is the conduit through which vicarious participants (audiences) are linked to active practitioners (athletes). Boys from every social layer, every urban and rural culture develop it in childhood. 'You can change your job, you can change your wife, but you can't change your football team,' said Rick Parry, the chief executive officer of England's Premier Football **League**.<sup>18</sup> 'You can move from one end of the country to another, but you never, ever lose your allegiance to your first team. That's what English soccer is all about. It's about fierce loyalty, about dedication.' And – unspoken but so absolute as to be taken for granted – it is about those qualities *in the masculine mode*.

Sport has triumphed as a global culture because, since its birth in the nineteenth century, it has succeeded better than any other institution in filling the father gap. It has found a way to locate its practitioners in a male-defined and male-populated universe that is dynamic, like the constantly changing circumstances created by capitalist industrial growth. But at the same time it has provided – has itself become – a constant, even the *one* constant, in this ever-changing world where the requirements of manhood are so hard to fulfill. Sport locates its celebrants in a known symbolic universe of fathers (ancestors) and stable, patriarchal relational structures when real families, and real jobs, are in constant upheaval, even disintegration.

Around the referential criteria of men's records and male champions, sport has overtaken many of the previous functions of an established masculinist church: the moral instruction of children; the ritual differentiation of men and women; the worship by both of a common divinity forged in the masculine mode; the national and international experience of collective bonding around that divinity. Our stadiums are not only mass theatres of spectacular entertainments. They are also cathedrals of men's culture, where male athletes are demigods, the owners, officials and media the priesthood. Like organized religion, organized sport is both a horizontal international masculinist network of community-based associations, and a pyramidal power apparatus of enormous cultural **influence**.<sup>19</sup>

#### MARKETING – AND SUBSIDIZING – HYPERMASCULINITY

The basic assumption that underlies the entire growth and practice of the twentieth century sport nexus was captured in the pithy words of an advertising poster for the sports network in 1987: 'ESPN delivers the male'. (The typical ESPN viewer is a male high school graduate somewhere

between 35 and 49, with a household income of more than \$60,000.<sup>29</sup>) Calculate the coverage of women's athletic events on television as compared to men's. The disproportion is enormous; and it represents an extreme distortion downward of women's real participation rates in physical activities generally and in competitive sport particularly. Above all, note that the people who more than any others represent heroism and valour in our culture – the most marketable attributes of all – are men. Jackie Joyner Kersee may be as talented and accomplished as Carl Lewis – but it doesn't make any real difference. Martina Navratilova or Monica Seles may have throngs of admirers, but they do not have the charismatic weight or the economic clout of a Muhammad Ali, a Michael Jordan or a Joe Montana. All this is sustained by my own survey of the pictures of women athletes in *Sports Illustrated* compared with the photos of male athletes in three selected years, undertaken to determine whether the visual signals about women and athleticism had changed quantitatively and qualitatively in 'America's sport bible' over a roughly thirty-year period marked by massive changes in actual gender relations – including a major increase in the active physicality of women, through sport and other forms of participation.<sup>30</sup>

PER CENT OF TOTAL IMAGERY OF WOMEN IN  
*SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* 1970 – 1985 – 1993

	1970	1985	1993
Athlete in her own right	3.4	9.0	8.2
*Disqualified athletes	4.0	10.8	11.3
Accompanied by male	21.8	15.0	12.9
Supporter	24.0	24.7	25.0
Spectator	9.1	24.1	17.0
Sex symbol	8.7	14.0	24.7
Other	16.5	9.5	7.5

\*Disqualified athletes refers to images of women athletes that *blatantly* disqualify their athletic competence (falling, crying etc.). With respect to the most important category – 'athlete-in-her-own-right' the recent figure is still clearly and consistently under 10 per cent.

Sport heroes are men by *definition*. Over the course of the twentieth century they have acted as audience magnets of unheralded power – drawing into their orbit billions of men, whose attention was thus made available for the commercial propaganda of industrial and finance capital and for military and para-military mobilization. The integral relationship between modern sport, masculinity and masculinism was actively **culti-**

vated by the popular press in the latter half of the nineteenth century and grew qualitatively more intimate in the 1890s, when the 'sport section' of the daily newspaper was introduced. Radio's love affair with sport originated as a way to recruit purchasers for radios, then audiences for sponsors. It expanded the reach of professional athletics into living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms in the twentieth century's inter-war period. With each relationship between sport and the new media came new forms of interlocking ownership among sport and media organizations. Media barons bought teams and stadiums whose events in turn sold their papers or radio broadcasts.<sup>22</sup>

But it was the marriage of demographic research with television advertising in the 1960s, and the birth of 'psychodemographics' as an advertising tool in the 1970s, that increased by a quantum measure the ability of the mass media – especially television – to not only reach men, but also to extract their relatively plentiful dollars.<sup>23</sup> Using demographic and then psychological analysis, sponsors, owners and networks worked hand in hand to develop links between programming and advertising geared to group, sub-divide and exploit specific layers of viewers in targeted ways. The tools of 'psychodemographics' opened up the fears and desires of viewers to direct economic exploitation.<sup>24</sup> And as men were the relatively advantaged gender economically, they became the favoured audience for broadcasters and sponsors alike.

Thus the mature masculinist symbiosis of sport and the media typical of contemporary times came into being. Today, the interdependent relationships between the athletic, industrial and media sectors of this masculinist nexus are both broad and profound.<sup>25</sup> Total revenues generated by sport and sport-related activities of all types in Canada and the United States in 1989 (from the sales of tickets to the purchase of sports equipment) stood at more than \$88.5 billion annually according to one estimate, and was projected to rise \$160 billion by the turn of the century – at which point Canadian and American firms would be spending 13.8 billion dollars on advertising through sport alone, while globally sports advertising would reach \$30 billion.<sup>26</sup> As none of these figures include salaries to public education and recreation personnel involved with sport, nor the huge infrastructural costs involved in sport-related public education and recreation systems, even this estimate of the 'sport economy' is only partial.

Clearly we are dealing with sums of money equivalent to the gross domestic products of small nations, or the budgets of large states, provinces and cities. For example, television rights for the National Football League alone, from 1990 to 1994, earned the NFL \$3.6 billion. (That is equivalent to the entire budget for hospitals in Ontario, Canada's most populous province.) As a result of sport's dramatic profitability, huge transnational corporate sectors are now associated with and utilize sport to

maximize their sales by reaching and influencing the richest audiences. Where once beverages (beer, soft drinks) and personal grooming were sports' main sponsors, now big-ticket items in hardware (cars, home office equipment, sound systems, etc.) and financial and communications services (credit cards, couriers, stock brokerages) are increasingly dominant in the sport nexus.

The industrial sector most closely associated practically and symbolically with the commercial performance of sport is the one that manufactures sport equipment. The number of elite professional athletes in the world is very small, speaking strictly of those who make a decent living as athletes. The trick is to use advertising linked to heroic spectacle – and in ways that blur their distinctions and create seamless webs between them – to motivate ordinary people to emulate athletes directly by buying sporting goods; and to worship them indirectly by buying fetish (novelty and fashion) items, and much larger commodities as well. And it seems that, indeed, nothing sells like the stuff that's peddled by big, strong, heroic champions – male, it goes without saying. Take for only one current example to what effect NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neal has been put. 'I take a stroll, attempting to count the stores in which one can purchase an item bearing the euphonious name of the seven-foot **spokescenter**,' Steve **Rushin** wrote in August 1994 in *Sports Illustrated*, in a story about his trip to the largest indoor shopping mall in the United States:

... An unmistakable size-20 Shaq shoe stands sentry in front of World Foot Locker. One cannot handle the autographed shoe, for it reposes under glass like the Star of India. What the shoe really is, is the star of Bethlehem, drawing Mall-walking magi into the store ... Sam Goody stocks the rap album Shaq Diesel ... At toy Works, I adore the Shaq action figures by Kenner. Shaq's film debut, *Blue Chips*, has come and gone at the movieplex. Shaq Attack! and Shaq Impaq beckon from bookstores. Shaq-signature basketballs line the shelves at Oshman's. Field of Dreams stocks wood-mounted photos of O'Neal: Shaq-on-a-Plaque. I stagger to the Coffee Beanery, Ltd., looking for Swiss Shaqolate Mocha, Vacuum-Shaq-Packed in a foil Shaq-Sack."

The economics of the sport industry sector reflect, reinforce and exploit the differentials of gender. For example, according to Richard J. **Barnett** and John **Cavanagh**<sup>28</sup>, Nike's shoe sales total over \$2 billion per year in the United States alone; and total sales in 1994 were \$4.73 billion. Between \$500-\$600 million comes just from basketball shoes sold through the Chicago **Bull's** superstar Michael Jordan. In 1993, Nike spent almost \$90 million on advertising and marketing. Nike clothes and shoes are made mainly by women in **non-union** factories in Southeast Asia. Typically, a pair of shoes costs \$5.60 to produce in Asia. This already includes a profit for the sub-contractors Nike uses. The same shoes are sold for over \$100 in Canada and the U.S.. The **workers who** make Nike shoes and sew Nike clothes are paid about \$1.35 per day, for an approximate annual wage of \$500 for each woman and the family that depends on her earnings. Michael

Jordan's promotional fee from Nike, on the other hand, was \$20 million dollars in 1993 – a fee that well exceeded the annual payroll of all the Indonesian factories making Nike shoes.

The marketing of sport and sport-related commodities is not a politically innocent venture, for through it fundamental messages are being diffused via **masculinist** conventions that link sport and the men who identify with it to much broader and more sinister ideologies and projects. Speaking of the surge of 'sport/war tropes' during and following the time of the war in the Persian Gulf in the United States, Sue Curry Jansen and Donald F. Sabo observe:

The growing presence of sport programming in international communications media, including the increasing prominence of American professional team sports in European sport media, seems to indicate that sport/war tropes and scenarios, derived from the images and icons of U.S. history and popular culture, are becoming part of the semiological structure of the global 'war system'. Sport/war media framing devices, which were so widely used during the Persian Gulf War, appear to have tapped into and revitalized the deep structure of patriarchal meaning and values that have pervaded hierarchies of domination in all Western societies for millennia."

For a long time, the vast public subsidy of privately-owned sport enterprises went unacknowledged and unquestioned, except by the smallest of minorities. 'Amid all sport's sponsors, the largest and oldest barely speaks its name,' noted *The Economist* in July 1992,<sup>20</sup> under a sub-head that read 'Thanks for the subsidy'. 'Greek cities supported the ancient Olympics; modern governments put billions into the infrastructure of sport, in schools, local playing fields and leisure centres. Less publicly, they also hand out taxpayer's millions to professional sport.'

The owners of professional sport – proprietors of teams, the international and national Olympic committees – are exquisitely aware of how important these billions are to their own prosperity and to the economic power they gain from such subsidies within municipal, state, provincial and even federal economies. The IOC's City Contract for awarding the Olympic Games, for example, holds not the IOC but the *host* city ultimately responsible for all the costs. The people of the province of Quebec are still paying for 'The Big Owe' as it is known locally, the stadium constructed for the 1976 Montreal games at a cost of billions of dollars, and hapless home to the Montreal Expos. Twenty years later, it is still leaching hundreds of millions of dollars in interest payments on its debt and for extensive repairs as it literally disintegrates piece by ill-constructed piece. The people of Ontario found themselves saddled with a \$350 million dollar debt in 1990 as a result of Conservative and Liberal government commitments to the Toronto Sky Dome. (In 1986, at the same time as it announced the allocation of \$300,000 to a campaign against violence against women, the Ontario government pledged \$30 million to the dome. By 1989 it had given an additional \$320 million, of which 150

million dollars was reclaimed by a social democratic government in 1993). Some cities are paying debts on empty stadiums because the resident teams picked up and left for more lucrative pastures. Out of the 94 stadiums used by professional football, baseball, hockey and basketball between 1953 and 1993 in the U.S. and Canada, 67 were publicly owned. **As** well, the more recent the construction, the greater the incidence of public ownership. There is a clear trend for the public to invest more, not less, in professional sport, despite the appearance of cutbacks in direct subsidy to Olympic, recreational and educational sport programmes."

Yet today, in more than twenty cities across North America, owners of sport teams are threatening to move away if more public dollars are not invested in even more and larger facilities. It is almost bizarrely incongruous that in today's neo-conservative political climate, when the business class worships at the altar of the market and agitates so vociferously to deconstruct most forms of government, sport owners and multi-million dollar players have no shame or sense of contradiction in looking to the taxpayer to underwrite the major capital costs of professional sport. To them this is a legitimate expense, when health, welfare and education are not. In Cincinnati, local government found **\$540** million for stadium construction just after laying off **400** staff members from its schools. And the pattern is being repeated all over the continent."

As difficult as figures on the extent of corporate sport may be to come by, it is almost impossible to assess the cost of the form of public subsidy to sport that takes place via its instruction in the public school and recreation systems. The purchase of equipment, the construction of facilities and the salaries of teachers and officials whose primary function is to teach sport (as the main form of physical education) are the principal categories of public expenditure on sport in these areas. This truly vast network of local and educational facilities and personnel where sport is practised underwrites the viability of commercial sport and is profoundly affected by its standards and icons. From its facilities emerge the few elite athletes who graduate from the local to the big leagues; and their devoted followers, the millions of fans who do not graduate with athletic honours but identify with and revere those who do. This is where masculinist ritual and veneration come together in childhood to produce the adult sporting male, organized and funded by the state.

### SPORT AND POLITICAL CHANGE

In North America we are living through a decade in which many of the quantitative acquisitions of the labour and social movements – affirmative action, environmental protection, abortion rights, childcare and welfare provisions and **liberal/democratic** commitment to universal education – are

being rolled back with extraordinary rapidity by governments of the Right. The growing governmental power of the Right is linked to a broad revival of religious fundamentalism and violent right-wing movements. With the **ascendance** of anti-social impulses in the commanding structures of power, we are witnessing a crisis of pro-social programme and organization; and a massive growth in the economies and the spectacles of coercion, where men's relative power and privilege as a gender class are most directly embodied and institutionalized.

For example, according to Statistics Canada, public expenditure in Canada in the past five years has increased by a whopping 35 per cent in the judicial-prison system while commensurate reductions to health, education and social services have taken place. In the U.S. the trend is even more pronounced. In the last ten years the state of California has poured **10** billion dollars into the prison system and is planning to pour a similar amount into its gulag in the next few years to accommodate the flood of new convicts being produced by the 'three-strikes-and-you're-out' law recently enacted.<sup>31</sup> The funds are coming from the same sources as the funding of stadiums – a full scale gutting of health and education budgets. (Affirmative action has been killed in California state universities, with the exception of . . . athletes). In August 1995, conservatives in the U.S. House of Representatives voted to cut \$9 billion out of labour, education and health funding, while planning to vote the Pentagon \$7 billion more than it asked for.

Right-wing minorities with political programmes based on authoritarian, anti-humane, anti-cooperative and anti-environmental impulses have created effective vehicles (including economic associations and political parties) to advance their interests; while moderately egalitarian majorities are faced with a crisis of political programme and political instruments. This is happening despite almost a century of consumer capitalism and its supposedly liberalizing ideological effects. Since we are in the midst of a long wave of capitalist contraction and upheaval that will not be cancelled out in the immediate future by the effects of electronic or biotechnological innovation, or by the new capitalist frontiers in Eastern Europe, Russia and China, this means that women and those many men who support their reproductive, social and economic rights, in North America and in all other places where pro-social politics are in retreat, face some perilous times. The Republican majority in the United States Senate and House of Representatives have views on gender relations no different in effect from the masculinism now being reasserted in Eastern Europe, Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union; or demonstrated by the Chinese bureaucracy in their treatment of women at the recent United Nations Beijing Conference. The last Republican majority in both houses gave the United States **McCarthyism**, complete with its demonization of

homosexuals, non-conforming women and the left. The present majority is virulently homophobic, and appears hell-bent on accelerating the feminization of poverty and pushing back women's reproductive rights as part of its larger socio-political project.

What I am suggesting here is that the masculinization of corporate culture – with sport as its leading legitimating institution – has nourished ideals of masculine and elite entitlement and gross inequality among all layers of the population; and that these are helpful to and being mobilized by regressive political movements. The provenance of the violence and inequality of men's culture generally and sport particularly lies primarily in sport's ritual connection to combat and war as a masculine sphere that is qualitatively differentiated from and valued over the feminine sphere. With a very few exceptions, organized death (the hunt and war) and their rituals – notably athletics – have been the exclusive spheres of men since gathering-hunting days. But war is not all that men have done or been; nor is the technologized Clausewitzian 'total war' of the twentieth century equivalent to an aboriginal hunt for food, or organized self-defence against aggressors. To the extent that hegemonic masculinity draws its ideals directly from a hyperaggressive and dominating warrior culture – the warrior culture of the great class-stratified 'civilizations' – and in turn validates such a culture, the hypermasculinity, or 'surplus aggressivity', it models and creates will be itself anti-social: combative, competitive, and physically coercive. This suggests that changes in the gender conditioning of men and the institutions that achieve this conditioning are a precondition to lasting and meaningful changes in economics and politics.

The recent, hard-won formal right of women to participate in police and armed forces in many industrialized countries was undertaken to demonstrate that women are as capable of being warriors as men. However well individual women have succeeded – and there have been some spectacular successes – it has been a grudging, difficult process with disappointing results for those who saw major potential for gender equality in this strategy, and for the many of the extraordinary women who decided to prove their worth in warrior terms, even in the face of harassment and assault, as has been the case in the US armed forces. Women's formal right to inclusion has not changed their generally subordinate position within these hierarchies; nor much of the sexist treatment of women by men members; nor – and this is the superlatively important point – the nature and purpose of the hierarchies themselves. And so it is with women's situation in sport – a site where they too have sought inclusion on equal terms. We have yet to see qualitative transformations in men's sporting institutions, despite the extensive changes in family and kinship forms around them, and the significant incursion of accomplished women into their structures and organizations.

What this indicates is that the answers to dismantling the institutions of organized masculinist coercion – be they primarily symbolic like sport, or practical, like the military – can only come from strategies broader than the incremental inclusion of women within these structures. What is needed are strategies that affect the economic viability of these sectors and cause them, in **Marx's** formulation, to 'wither away'. And this in turn has a number of simultaneous and interdependent consequences. It means that social and political attention must be turned to changing the current arrangements in family organization, social parenting and identity formation that produce and idealize **hypermasculinist** norms and ideals across class and other cultural divisions. Central directions in social policy must be set and implemented, geared to help both sexes to compensate for the erosion of their time and resources within contracting capitalism in ways allow them to share reproductive work between them. Without such **policies**<sup>35</sup> that restore the father to childhood, we will not be able to diminish a key source of the feelings of violent instrumentality that sustain the athlete-warrior as the dominant icon of heroic masculinity and coercive privilege in our culture today.

The social willingness to redesign society along these lines is present, to more or less articulated degrees, among wide layers of the population in North America – a product of the felt need to find better ways of organizing family and sexual life under prevailing economic conditions. But that willingness is extremely difficult to develop or mobilize as long as the terms of public discourse and culture are so dominated by the norms, ideals and tropes of masculinist mass culture, including sport. For this reason, effecting deep changes in gender arrangements will also require effecting a number of other major changes to the political economy of gender relations, and sport in particular. Central to such an enterprise are changes in the ownership, control and content of the mass media of communications.

One of the most important staples of the mass media of communications in North America – particularly the U.S. – are genres of entertainment that present violent and anti-social spectacles of men's culture. Some of these are entirely fictive – such as police-dramas and men's action stories in television, films, novels, comic books and video games. Others present real battles with symbolic meaning – *i.e.* sport. In their 'official' political and moral rhetoric – *viz.* the **O. J. Simpson** coverage – media owners and editorial spokespersons disapprove of what these spectacles **celebrate**.<sup>36</sup> Yet funding for such spectacles increases year by year and decade by decade. As a result, one question that has become the subject of heated debate is: In presenting anti-social violence affirmatively, do the media **cause** violence? It would be accurate to answer no, not directly, the way mass unemployment, child abuse and transparent political tyranny do. Indirectly,

however, it would be equally correct to argue that they do – through the enforcement of profound political ignorance and their cultural validation of coercion and greed in the service of commodity consumption.

The interior landscape of the contemporary psyche has been saturated with physical and discursive practices literally engineered to penetrate its conscious defences in the service of buying and selling. In North America especially, the mystified ideal of 'choice' – of car, of house, of body, of toothpaste, of children – has been the credo of the consumer age. But, as Marxist theoreticians have long pointed out," real choice only exists in the presence of real options by those who are aware of the alternatives. The patent dysfunctionality of our political and economic systems demonstrates that we are suffering from a failure of the left and social movements to apprehend and make known real *political* choice. The consciousness wired for maximum consumer consumption is not the consciousness best wired for enlightened social action. If little in one's early cultural practice demonstrates social harmony, political responsiveness, positive action, respect and reciprocity, it will be difficult to envision – let alone implement – social choices that would lead to the realization of these principles in collective and individual life. Our collective ability to *imagine* actually finding alternative forms of economic and social organization is gravely threatened, as a multiplicity of media, old and new, continue to spew out endless bits of de-politicized information.

Among those who affirm the political importance of culture in affecting political life, there are many who belittle the importance of economic factors in shaping media culture. They would do well to re-examine their views in light of a number of recent corporate mega-mergers involving reconfiguring and monopolizing the underlying structures of media production and distribution on an unprecedented scale: Disney-ABC, CBS-Westinghouse, and the marriage of Sports Illustrated owners **TIME-Warner** with media maverick Ted **Turner**.<sup>38</sup> Even Turner, widely known for his 'rugged individualism' in corporate affairs, could no longer resist the dynamic toward cartelization and both vertical and horizontal integration on a global scale. On the other hand, those who dismiss or diminish the importance of gender culture to the dynamic and momentum of such corporate projects would do well to consider how large a role the products and the norms of hypermasculinity generally, and the revenues and conventions of sport particularly, play in the high-noon manoeuvrings of media capital and its new allies in the industrial and financial sectors. One must not neglect, especially now, either the centrality of sport-generated funds to media capital, or the formative nature of sport ritual and masculinism to media and corporate *culture*.<sup>39</sup> In sport the destructive effect of the concentration of the media in the hands of commercially driven and male-dominated elites has perhaps its best illustration.

If it is true that a significant part of the atavism of sport culture is due to its instrumental exploitation of men's gender anxiety by commercial and militarist interests, the question becomes: how to unravel the development of sport and physical culture from these imperatives. At present, emergent physical practices can be born; but they cannot flourish. The private, commercial ownership of sport and the mass media distorts communication and culture, and caricatures, omits or appropriates oppositional practices. But if we cannot democratize self-expression (including in our physical culture and its celebratory rituals), we cannot communicate our ideas without commercial mediation. This qualitatively inhibits our ability to learn from our experiences and forge common ideas and actions through our communications. Broadly speaking, then, we need to remove the huge, multi-layered public subsidies to sport in all their forms; and redeploy those resources in other, pro-social directions.

To achieve this, political action at the level of the state in at least three key ways is required. First, government must be made to change the practical and regulatory environment that sustains the current sport-media symbiosis. At the level of central governments, we need public policy that allows us to reclaim cultural space from its commercial – and athletic – inundation. After almost a century's experience with mass communications, and possessing a clear understanding of the patterns and outcomes of concentration (private and public) in the ownership of media, it is more than time to call for a major public rethinking of the criteria and objectives of broadcasting licenses, trust legislation and governmental regulatory bodies. It is time to rewrite the legislation regulating the airwaves and the ownership of other cultural industries and properties – including sport – in ways that reflect this new assessment. It is also time to demand that public broadcasting networks end their close relationships with commercial sport. It is time to increase, not decrease, public funds to cultural practitioners of all kinds to ensure that forms of extra-commercial speech can survive – indeed thrive. Without this, no emergent cultural development in physical culture can ever hope to challenge the dominance of masculinist corporate sport. Funding for the expansion of the non-commercial cultural realm, including physical culture, can come from increased taxes on those in the commercial sport nexus. Such taxes are more than fair, for they only seek to recover a part of the investment made in corporate sport by the community in the first instance.

Second, government should play a key role in disestablishing sport as the *official physical culture* of schools and public recreation systems. Educators and governments can work to devise policies to develop alternative experiences and alternative tastes in active physicality among children and youth by changing the place of sport in public educational and recreational systems. These systems are strategically important. They still

exist in public, not commercial space, and are therefore more amenable to change by the direct action of parents, teachers, students and community users acting as motivated citizens, not commercial consumers. These systems are also the most important sites of sport and proto-sport socialization of children, creating the formative experiences that shape them for life. Changing the way physical culture is taught and practised in the public education and recreation systems is therefore one of the key priorities in effecting a change in sport specifically, and in gender culture as a whole."

Finally, government must be brought to reduce all its expenditure on high performance sport radically downwards to reflect the actual contribution of such sport – negligible or negative – to the overall health and well-being of society. Governments claim to support high-performance sport, with its associated biomedical specializations and resulting athlete abuse, in the interests of advancing our capacities to achieve physical fitness and well-being. Meanwhile, in reality, the bodies of the majority of adults are trapped in life routines where adequate exercise and play – vital to stress release and therefore to immune and mental health – are impossible to come by. It will come as no surprise to socialists that poverty, not lack of access to an Olympic swimming pool, is the leading cause of ill health and the world's greatest killer according to the World Health Organization in a report it released in May, 1995.<sup>41</sup> The gaps between the rich and poor – including in gender terms – are widening, not closing; both within the industrialized countries and in the developing world. If physical activity is among the most important determinants of physical and mental health; and if access to it and practice of it are socio-economically and genderically differentiated; then the public policy conclusion must be to pursue strategies that make pleasurable, health promoting, recreational physical activity a reality for the majority of the population.

This goal, and not the subsidy of professional and high-performance sport, should be where we spend our public education, health, fitness and cultural dollars. It represents a real investment in population health; one that pays off both socially and economically. We do not need more high performance sport but the real opportunity to be active ourselves – to, literally, recreate ourselves. We do not need more steroids and betablockers. We need green spaces to play in, relations of harmony and inclusion among participants, and the social and economic wherewithal to enable people to take care of their health and physical needs.

The **wealth/health** equation has a distinctly gendered dimension with important consequences for overall population health. Not only are women more disadvantaged with respect to self-care and recreation by virtue of their poverty and longer hours of work as compared to men; their relative, indeed deteriorating poor health has a boomerang effect on the health of children and men – family members – throughout society. This points to

the need to devote *extra* attention to the health of the majority of women, not less. We should be targeting women's physical health with social policies that make true accessibility to active physicality a social priority and meaningful reality. And we need government action to reallocate resources so as to realize reordered priorities.

Within high performance and competitive sport, however, even as we act to reverse current norms in public spending on recreation and fitness, we should also support efforts to combat the unhealthy consequences of gross biomechanical and pharmaceutical abuses and obsessive training practices and relationships that characterize *athlete/coach/owner/government* interactions. We need to act on these matters because it is in the image of drugged and obsessive athletes – 'winners' – that millions of young people commit serious harm to themselves, both physically and psychically. The *drug* culture and other training abuses in sport can be dramatically attenuated in short order if government develops the will to impose *systemic disincentives* for banned substances and practices, disincentives that target employers (including governments) rather than athletes.

At present employers want athletes whose performances are enhanced by banned practices, yet officially claim they are opposed to such practices and walk away scot-free when individual athletes are apprehended. Corporate sport reaps the benefits of athlete abuse but does not bear the economic or physical costs of transgression. Athletes on the other hand continue to be caught in a double bind, knowing that performance enhancing drugs are key factors – often *the* key factor – in their athletic careers.<sup>42</sup> If employers had to forfeit standing and money to meaningful degrees, they would stop requiring *de facto* athlete abuse. And this would help to provide less self-abusive models to the millions of young non-elite athletes who emulate the aesthetic ideals of high performance sport. Anorexia and bulimia are the two disorders that most speak to the physical mortification among girls and young women driven by idealized femininity, including the athletic kind. The masculine counterparts of this are steroid abuse (estimated to be a factor in the lives of perhaps a million young North American men) and bicep and calf implants among older 'baby-boom' men. As well, it is time to encode standards for youthful participation in sport that correspond in letter and spirit to child labour laws, and undermine the exploitation of young people via sport.

## CONCLUSION

Earlier in this essay, I described sport as a practice geared to address men's need for connection with other men – fathers, brothers, sons – and to their apparently profound need for the society of men. I suggested that sport was

a cultural practice that grew vast by compensating for the loss of such company in early and middle childhood in industrial society; and by training good male workers, soldiers, managers and owners for life under capitalism. I described it as a ritual practice that brilliantly addresses, as well as grows out of, a 'crisis of masculinity', though not in pro-social or progressive ways. The selective reflection and celebration of masculinist and unequal relationships within sport and the media, and the exclusion of new and-actual gender relationships from the symbolic field do not prevent the *economic* changes that have eroded the traditional gender division of labour and compelled a renegotiation of gender relations from occurring in daily life. But they do prevent new cultural ways of dealing with these changes from emerging-and finding public validation. In this respect the culture of sport contradicts the economic times; it embodies a 'residual' gender ideology measured against actual life conditions. Seen through this lens, the domination of men's sport within the culture is a popular (mass) phenomenon, but not a democratic or pro-social one. This constitutes an excellent reason to seek to dismantle the grip sport now has on physical culture and the way it monopolizes media space and public attention.

Is there a crisis of masculinity today? Can men's gender distress be a direct, as well as indirect, factor in politics? And does it play a reactionary role? I think the answer to all three questions is yes. 'Thousands of men came early, anxious to get a good seat, waiting outside the stadium,' ran the lead sentence in a feature article in the *Toronto Star* late in September 1995.<sup>4</sup> The men it described were not waiting for a baseball or hockey game, however. They were waiting to attend a 20,000-strong meeting of 'Promise Keepers' – an evangelical Christian 'men-only group [that] fills [the] huge spiritual void', in the words of reporter Leslie Scrivener, a void left by 'poor relationships with their fathers and other men'. In the mass rallies, men pledge themselves to cherish and to 'serve' their wives and children, and to be good citizens in their communities. 'The movement seems to have touched a nerve among thousands of men feeling unsure of their roles as fathers and husbands in a time of dramatic social change,' Scrivener comments. One systems engineer manager – the typical member is white and middle class – felt 'an emptiness and need' that only men's company and collective solidarity could assuage. Combining evangelical religious techniques with the 'language of combat and sport', Promise Keepers has filled that manager's need and that of many hundreds of thousands of American and Canadian men. Promise Keepers began with a meeting of 4,200 men in a University of Colorado basketball arena in 1991 (its founder was the head coach of the university's football team); by 1995, it filled thirteen major U.S. stadiums and had an annual budget of \$64 million." There is a Promise Keepers industry of hard cover books, study guides, compact discs and cassettes of religious music, T-shirts, magazines

and much, much more.

At the same time, Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam lead a march on Washington by African-American men to 'atone' for their sins, and become good fathers and community members. Women are not welcome on the march, though some leading African American women activists gave the march their blessing. It is clear that Farrakhan, as well as Christian fundamentalists, intend to build their base and their agenda on the mobilization of men's gender anxiety. The messages of respect for women and commitment to children and community are important ones for men today, and clearly they are finding mass resonance. But the evangelical Christian or Islamic separatist traditional patriarchal gender frameworks to which these messages are being attached – via the **hyper-masculinist** metaphors of war and athleticism as part of the ritual invocation – will most likely organize men who are in gender crisis in explicitly Right-wing ways. This may be unavoidable if there are no alternatives that speak to men's gender needs from a socialist articulation that is emotionally and spiritually attractive. At present the men's movement that has been informed by feminism and socialism – despite tremendously important contributions to scholarship, theory and **education**<sup>45</sup> – remains minoritarian; not least because socialism as a movement has not itself integrated an understanding of the importance of gender issues and gender culture into the way it wants to organize society.

There are many people who share the critique of sport I have advanced here, in more or less complete or articulate ways. They are reformers within athletic institutions; individuals and groups who have chosen other ways to be physically active; parents looking for different ways to give themselves and their children the skills and health that physical activity can uniquely confer. Socialists would do well to support them, and to challenge the hegemony of hypenmasculinist sport culture in whatever ways they can. For until we pay much more attention to all our gendered institutions of ritual and parenting – in this case contemporary sport, social fatherhood and the remote father family system – we will continue to support inequality and domination in our midst even as we struggle to move beyond them.

#### NOTES

1. 'The O.J. Case: Further words of testimony', compilation of excerpts from the press, *The Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1995 (citing Rupert Cromwell of *The Independent*, London); Cf. Barbara Ehrenreich, 'Media Matters', *The Nation*, November 6, 1995: 'Altogether, Nexis reports 24,142 newspaper articles mentioning O.J. in 1995, compared with 12,175 containing the word 'racism', 7,688 touching on 'welfare reform' and a mere 1,592 on the subject of global warming.'
2. Howard Witt 'Churches and Comics' (Chicago Tribune Service) *Montreal Gazette*, October 2, 1995.

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3. In July, **1995**, *Sports Illustrated*, the 'bible of American sport', finally did a feature on sport and domestic violence. It acknowledged that serious wife abuse and date rape were proportionately more prevalent among athletes than among their non-athletic peers. William Mack and Lester Munson, 'Sport's Dirty Secret', *Sports Illustrated*, July **31**, **1995**, p. **67**. The violence of athletes also shows up in higher rates of arrest of athletes for other kinds of assault and criminal behaviour. See Austin Murphy, 'Unsportsmanlike Conduct', *SI*, July **1**, **1991**.
4. I use the term 'masculinity' to refer to a general conception, understood by all of a society's members, whether in compliance or transgression, of what ideal manhood should be. The term 'masculinism' I use to describe the male-dominant gender order of our society. I prefer this term to 'patriarchy' because 'patriarchy' is used to connote a gender order in which men are dominant in general; and a very particular mode of production and family form. I prefer to keep patriarchy as a term to describe the **latter**; and to use masculinism as the generic term for all male-superior gender orders. Masculinism is able as a term to subsume a number of different forms of family, and includes all arrangements in which men are the dominant gender. Given that the role of the family father as such has been weakened by the disintegration of the family wage system since the second world war, the term is also helpful because it draws attention to the privileged place of men and the values associated with their qualities and roles in social and political institutions – rather than limiting the view to the power of biological and family fathers *per se*. For a more detailed explanation of my preferred terminology, see V. Burstyn, 'Masculine Dominance and the State', *Socialist Register*, London, Merlin Press, **1983**.
5. For a full treatment of this thesis, see V. Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport* (working title), University of Toronto Press, forthcoming.
6. There are too many important contributions on women and athletics to list here. For two recent collections of articles treating a wide variety of themes, see Susan Birell and Cheryl Cole, eds., *Women, Sport and Culture*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, Ill., **1994**; and Margaret Costa and Sharon R. Guthrie, *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, **1994**. Cheryl Cole's 'Resisting the Canon: Feminist Cultural Studies and Technologies of the Body' marks a new stage in such scholarship, as sport is studied as an integrating force for women as well, not simply as an institution in which women should fight for inclusion. In dialogue with feminist studies on sport as a whole, see Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, *Sport, Men and the Gender Order*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, Ill., **1990**; Brian Pronger *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality, and the Meaning of Sex*, Toronto: Summerhill Press, **1990**.
7. Christian Graf von Krockow as cited in J. M. Brohm, *Sociologie Politique du Sport*, Presses Universitaires de Nancy **1992**, Nancy, p. **119**.
8. I have chosen this term because while biological sex characteristics ('sex') and sexual desire ('sexuality') are both important, both are always shaped and constrained by the effect of gender ('role'). Therefore I use gender as the organizing principle of the reproductive order. I consider men and women to be members of two distinct and ranked gender classes. For a discussion of my reasons for this view, see V. Burstyn, 'Masculine Dominance and the State' *Socialist Register*, **1983**. See Gayle Rubin's theorization of the 'sex-gender system' in 'The Traffic in Women', Rayna R. Reiter ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Monthly Review Press, New York **1975**, pp. **157–210**.
9. On the importance of childhood and gender for sport – and of sport for childhood and gender – see Michael Messner, 'Boyhood, Organized Sports and the Construction of Masculinities', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. **18**, No. 4, January **1990**, pp. 416–444. Michael S. Clarkson has surveyed the nature of parental involvement in the formation of elite athletes in team and individual sports, contemporaneously and historically. See 'In praise of single mothers', *Toronto Star*, August **25**, **1995**. The article was

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- poorly named, since its focus was not primarily on the mothers of the 23 of the top 30 **players** in the NBA **who grew** up without their fathers, but rather on the players **relationships** with their absent fathers. This **story** represents just one section of his **larger** survey, in **which** the pattern of absent (usual) **or authoritarian** (minoritarian, but **marked**) **father** is replicated throughout all the major sports and their high-performance practitioners. In personal interviews, these players all talked about wanting either to please their absent fathers or to show them up, dominate or humiliate them via their athletic performances.
10. For a review of recent research findings on how the mind structures memory, feeling and ideation, see Joseph E. **LeDoux**, 'Emotion, Memory and the Brain', *Scientific American*, June 1994. For an assessment of the importance of sexuality in gender identity, see Ethel **Spector Person**, 'Sexuality as the Mainstay of Identity: Psychoanalytical Perspectives', *Signs*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1980.
  11. Cames, Mark C., *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989.
  12. See Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid And The Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, London, Harper & Row, 1976; Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction Of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and The Sociology Of Gender*, University Of California Press, Berkeley, 1978; and Michael Kaufman, *Cracking The Armour: Power, Pain and the Life of Man*, Toronto, Penguin Books, 1993.
  13. See Anthony **Rotundo**, 'Patriarchs and Participants: A Historical Perspective on Fatherhood in the United States', in M. Kaufman **ed.**, *Beyond Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, 1987. Also see Mark Cames, *op cit*.
  14. For an in-depth and cogent discussion of the role of men's cultural genres in all media in the development of ideals and behaviours of manhood around fictive ideals in U.S. culture, see James William Gibson's *Warrior Dreams: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1994.
  15. That there are also negative consequences for girls and women is also understood. The effect of parenting arrangements on women's gender-identity is the subject of a whole literature of its own.
  16. Cited in Mark C. Cames, 1989, *op. cit.*, p.106.
  17. Jean-Marie Brohm, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 126, (my translation, author's emphasis).
  18. CBC *Sunday Morning*, Centrepoint ('World Cup 1994'), May 30, 1993.
  19. Rejean Tremblay, a senior Montreal sports writer, observed to *Globe and Mail* reporter Kirk **Makin** in the middle of the 1994 Stanley Cup playoffs that 'many years ago people here were Catholics. Now they are Canadiens' fans. This is something unnatural. It goes much too far.' Sport psychologist Saul Miller told **Makin** about a 'revelation' he had one day at a Denver Broncos football game 'while 75,000 fans roared and the team romped under its 40 foot Bronco mascot.' Miller was on the field and 'looked up at this huge horse up there, painted orange. I swear it looked like the great god Ba'al or something. It was their tribe, and they chanted and sang.' Kirk **Makin**, 'The Peanuts and Beer on Canada's Spectator Sports', *Globe and Mail*. May 21, 1994.
  20. William Oscar Johnson and John Walter, 'Every Day is Game Day', *Sports Illustrated*, Dec. 2, 1992.
  21. Women's images in advertising averaged out at about 28% of total imagery (31%, 28.5% and 26%) and story illustration averaged out at about 12.5% (11%, 14% and 12%).
  22. For a **good overview** of these **developments**, see Sut **Jhally**, 'The **Spectacle** of Accumulation: Material and Cultural Factors in the Evolution of the **Sports/Media Complex**', *The Insurgent Sociologist*, No. 12, Vol. 3, 1984.
  23. For an analysis of men's relative economic privilege within changing family demographics in the post-war period, see **Barbara Ehrenreich**, *The Hearts of Men*, New York, Doubleday, 1983.
  24. For a brilliant history and analysis of advertising's project of emotional manipulation, and the tools (**'psychodemographics'**) developed to effect this, see Joyce Nelson, *The*

*Perfect Machine*, Between the Lines Press, Toronto 1987.

25. For some idea of the reach and extent of the sport nexus in 1992, see the survey, 'The Sports Business: Faster, Higher, Richer', *The Economist*, July 25, 1992, pp. 3-17.
26. Tom Fennell, D'Arcy Jenish, et al, 'The Riches of Sport' *Maclean's*, April 9, 1990, pp. 42-45.
27. Steve Rushin, 'The Megamall', *Sports Illustrated*, August, 1994.
28. Richard J. Barnett and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*, New York/Toronto, Simon and Schuster, 1994. Total sales for Nike in 1994 - \$4.73 billion, according to Christopher Hume, 'Nike Selling the Swoosh along with the Shoes', *Toronto Star*, October 28, 1994. For a grand overview of corporate-sport-governmental relationships in the Olympic sector, see Vyv Simson and Andrew Jennings, *The Lords of the Rings: Power, Money and Drugs in the Modern Olympics*, Stoddart, Toronto, 1992.
29. Sue Curry Jansen and Donald Sabo, 'The Sport/War Metaphor: Hegemonic Masculinity, the Persian Gulf War, and the New World Order,' *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 11, No 1 (March 1994).
30. *The Economist*, July 25, 1992.
31. Robert Baade and R. Dye, 'Sports Stadiums and Arena Development: A Critical Review' *Economic Development Quarterly*, 2 (3), 265-275. See also sport scholars David Whitson and Don McIntosh 'Becoming a World-Class City: Hallmark Events and Sports Franchises in the Growth Strategies of Western Canadian Cities' in *Sociology of Sport Journal* 10, 1993.
32. *The Economist*, September 9, 1995, p. 90.
33. Editorial, 'Budget Scandal', *The Nation*, August 28/September 4, 1995. Cf. Tom Hayden and Connie Rice 'California Cracks Its Mortarboards', *The Nation*, September 18, 1995; and Mike Davis, 'Hell Factories in the Field' and editorial 'The Prison Boom', *The Nation*, February 20, 1995, pp. 223, 229-237;
34. For a brilliant theorization of this idea, see Gad Horowitz, *Repression: Basic and Surplus Repression in Psychoanalytic Theory - Freud Reich and Marcuse*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1977.
35. So far, only Sweden has undertaken to legislate policy that enables men as well as women to become qualitatively more involved in childrearing. Other countries, however supportive of the 'family' also support the traditional gender division of labour.
36. Michael A. Messner and William R. Solomon, 'Outside the Frame: Newspaper Coverage of the Sugar Ray Leonard Wife Abuse Story', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 10, 1993, pp. 119-134.
37. For a recent productive elucidation of Marxist cultural theory's general argument in this direction, see Judith Stamp comments on Adorno and Horkheimer in her's *Unthinking Modernity: Innis, McLuhan and the Frankfurt School* (Montreal and Kingston; McGill Queen's University Press, 1995) pp. 31, 35-39.
38. 'Ted turns over a new leaf' *Variety*, Sept. 25, 1995. Note the sport trope of the copy: 'The man who used to position himself as a moody loner was suddenly transmogrified into an ebullient team player'.
39. Michael Maccoby, *The Gamesman: The New Corporate Leaders*, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1976.
40. Recent curriculum changes at the University of Toronto School of Physical and Health Education provide one very concrete example of the way that physical activity can be re-thought and re-taught; and show what the preparation of a new kind of physical educator could be like. There are three key directions evident in these changes. The first accentuates the elements of pleasure and cooperation in physical activity, and minimizes pain and competition. The second validates both homosocial and heterosocial sport, with emphasis on women's vigorous physicality and men's access to non-sport physical disciplines. The third politicizes and makes cultural the way that the understanding of the

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body and physical activity are taught. The University of Toronto's changes represent a balanced, integrated approach which it hopes will be **carried** out into the public systems by its graduates as they become educators themselves. Unfortunately, U. of T. is virtually **alone** among all North American schools in moving in this direction.

41. *Why are Some People Healthy and Others Not? The Determinants of the Health of the Population*, Aldine DeGruyter, New York, 1994; Cf. Editorial 'Elucidating the Relationships between Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health', *American Journal of Public Health*, June 1994, Vol. 84, No. 6, pp. 892–893.
42. For a political and economic history of the development of steroid use among Olympic and other professional athletes, and the specific conditions of Canadian Olympic sport at the time that Ben Johnson tested positive for steroids at the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, see V. Burstyn, 'The Sporting Life' *Saturday Night*, March 1989.
43. This and the following quotes taken from Leslie Scrivener, 'In changing world, men flock to Jesus', *Toronto Star*, September 24, 1995.
44. Joan Breckenridge and Gay Abbate, 'Movement issues 'wake up call' to Canadian men,' *The Globe and Mail*, September 25 1995.
45. And among these, a number – including Michael Messner, Donald Sabo, Bruce Kidd, R.W. Connell and Jim McKay – have made pioneering contributions in the field of sport studies.

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