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# A Look at Coaches Qualms and Goals: A Comparison of Gendered Coaching Methods in Brazil and Boulder

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A Look at Coaches Qualms and Goals:  
A Comparison of Gendered Coaching Methods in Brazil and Boulder

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<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>METHODS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>POSITIONALITY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>BRAZIL</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>COLORADO</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LIMITATIONS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>REFLEXIVITY AND SOCCER</b>	<b>10</b>
<b><i>LITERATURE REVIEW</i></b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SELF-ESTEEM</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>GENDER AND THE SELF</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>SPORT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>GIRLS' IDENTITIES AND SPORT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>FINDINGS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>GENDERED COACHING METHODS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>EXPECTATIONS VERSUS PERFORMANCE OF BOYS IN SOCCER</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>WHY DO GIRLS NEED MORE EXTERNAL SUPPORT?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>BOULDER</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>BRAZIL</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>SUCCESS STORIES OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>INTERVIEW GUIDE</b>	<b>41</b>

This thesis is for my families in Brazil and California: Thank you for all the self-esteem, strength, resilience, and joy you have all provided me, on and off the field.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the importance of coaching methods for girls playing soccer. It differentiates between the methods coaches implement while training boys and training girls. The research indicates that soccer constitutes a space in which girls can gain self-esteem from an external source, namely their soccer coaches. These coaches provide this source of self-esteem in a way that both encourage girls to act within the realm of femininity while also exhibiting traits predominantly masculine traits, such as strength and competitiveness. By comparing soccer programs in Brazil and Boulder County, this thesis also begins work to show that, sometimes socio-economic disparities do not differentiate the gendered coaching methods that perpetuate the inequalities of the genders in soccer, while also providing girls a strong, external source of self-esteem.

## Introduction

At times, our expectations exceed our realities. We can predict, hope, dream, for specific outcomes, when in turn, these realities are entirely different from our initial presumptions. Our ability to adjust to these revisions of our expectations gauges the depth of our understanding of this unpredictable world we live in. This is the difficulty, and yet the beauty, of conducting research. If one's research entirely follows the outline one defines before even entering the field, the research has the potential of remaining merely an overview, albeit a complete one, of what the researcher already knows. The unpredicted, sudden, and sometimes-rattling changes in the research plan can lay the groundwork for a study entirely unpremeditated, but often more purposeful and meaningful to the task. Turbulent changes, which resulted in organic, real, and applicable solutions, have created and redefined my work. The result is this thesis, which reveals significant gendered differences in the coaching boys and girls receive in soccer, as well as the lasting effects these differences have on the players.

Sports constitute a particular space in which the selves of beings are constructed. Typically, sports transmit values such as teamwork, responsibility, and confidence. Sport can also be a space where people practice, and develop tools that may be important in real life, such as problem-solving and proper communication. Similarly, sports are also a space in which beings develop their sense of self concerning gender. One of the many reasons men and women have separate constructions of self is because of the varying assumptions about each gender. In sports, men are assumed to be stronger and more physical than girls are, for example.

The way girls learn sports has become significantly different from the ways boys learn the same sport. Soccer is one of the few sports with synonymous rules across the genders. The equipment, amount of contact allowed, and scoring are the same. However, when the one watches the games, the men's game is entirely different from those played by women. The men tend to kick the ball longer, get more physical while attempting to beat another player, and have a faster paced game. The women play a slower, more technical, and less physical game. While many variables adhere to these stark differences, in my research, I focus on particular coaching methods that may influence these changes in the game, and how these coaching methods are similar and different cross-culturally.

Brazil, a country known for being entirely passionate about soccer, is also a country that runs rampant with sexist ideology. In such a context, many Brazilians consider it inappropriate for girls to play soccer, as it is seen as a sport that reflects hegemonic masculinity. During my study abroad in Brazil, I assisted in starting a soccer program in the favela Trilho, located in Fortaleza. Throughout my time there, I worked with a group of ten girls, aged 14-18, playing soccer with them every week. Upon leaving Fortaleza, I compiled research about how a sport-for-development project, such as the one implemented in Trilho, should function and what types of hurdles one may need to overcome throughout the process. This research process influenced the follow-up work I have done in Boulder.

Boulder County is known for its soccer culture in Colorado. The soccer programs are constantly filled with youths looking to not only develop their athleticism, but also potentially further their careers into a soccer-centric one. That said, most coaches of soccer programs in Boulder have an extensive background in the sport. Their resumes reveal that they grew up playing the game, coached multitudes of teams, and even played professionally. The FC Boulder program strives to create well-rounded players who can play through college and beyond. The club started over 20 years ago, and is now one of the most successful clubs in Boulder County. The coaches, players, and parents are where I gathered my data to understand the construction of self of girls, specifically girls playing soccer.

I tend to believe that soccer runs through my veins, passed down through my dad, and dispersed into every cell of my being. I began my relationship with the world loved sport before I had any idea of how lasting an impact it would make on my life and my overall development as an empowered woman. When I was about six, I began to play on my first legitimate team, the Penguins. My pull to showing up to the games was more to play with my friends, rather than develop my soccer skills. My dad recognized this, saw the sport slowly slipping from my interests, and decided to change my perspective. Simply put, he bribed me to begin legitimately playing soccer. Before one of our games, he knelt down to me and explained, “Look, every time you touch the ball, I’ll give you a penny. If you pass it, you get a nickel, and if you score? Summer, if you score, I’ll give you a whole quarter!” Completely enamored with this scheme of emptying my dad’s pockets, I set out to become the most active Penguin on the pitch. Turns out, this simple bribe made me richer in both currency and culture, the game had won me over entirely.

My family began frequenting soccer games as a tangent to my new obsession. We attended San Jose CyberRay’s games, the local professional women’s team. As I watched other women excelling at making plays, also recovering from mistakes they had made, my collective effervescence for the sport grew. Brandi Chastain, one of women’s soccer powerhouses, and poster-child of female empowerment led the team from 2001 to 2003. Female role models such as Chastain showed me at an early age of development just how beneficial soccer can be at instilling the belief that any goal is attainable with hard work and determination. Although unintentional, soccer has positively contributed to my development as a human, and specifically as an empowered woman. I chose to explore why this sport was so essential to my self-esteem, if it has been to other girls across the world.

## **Methods**

This thesis draws on data collected in Brazil and Colorado. Several factors made the research project different in each setting. These include not only the cultural and socio-economic differences between the United States and Brazil, but also the influence of the seasons. I conducted the research in Brazil during the spring, a time to prepare for soccer, and in Colorado during the winter, or the off-season. In addition, the socio-economic status of the samples in each setting differs dramatically. Nevertheless, my analysis yielded valuable, if preliminary, insights into the role of sports in the lives of girls.

### ***Positionality***

I collected the data through methods of triangulation, self-reflexivity, and maintaining a field journal to provide a broad scope of understanding the connection between girl empowerment and soccer. The data collected is different in terms of quality, depth, and form. However, by pulling from theoretical frameworks such as stigma management (Goffman), sport equality (Messner) and intersectionalities of oppression (Crenshaw) the analyzed data provides ways to understand how sports and specific coaching methods can adhere to, and potentially inhibit or boost a girl's sense of empowerment. I use my coaching experience in Brazil as a reflexive exhibition of how my identity had the potential of empowering girls living in a favela. Then, my research in Colorado provides further reasoning for the different loci of empowerment, when relating to gendered differences in sport.

Adler and Adler (1987) describe a researcher's degree of membership in regards to three statuses; peripheral, active, and complete. A peripheral member takes a more distanced approach to the research. This research may participate in some of the community's activities, but no activities that stand at the core of the community's identity. The peripheral researcher is detached from the researched community, at times because of differences in demographics. An active member is more involved than the peripheral, but not as fully immersed as the complete member is. The active member has a higher level of trust, and may contribute to the development of the community. However, only the complete member is part of the community, joined through either demographics or a rite of passage. Throughout my research, my position changes on this scale. My time in Brazil was marked as partially peripheral, and at times active, because I would make significant contributions to the community but was also separate from the community based on my demographics. In Colorado, my research was positioned from a peripheral membership position. While I am also a member of the soccer community, I did not contribute to the teams that I studied, nor did I participate in activities with the group, such as soccer practices.

### ***Brazil***

I conducted the research while in Brazil for the Spring 2014 semester abroad. The opportunity to become involved in a developing soccer organization appeared when my program director spoke to me about soccer within the favela communities of Fortaleza. He explained that this project was still in the preliminary stages, and that I may even have the opportunity to coach the girls while researching. He put me into contact with the program director, Marta, who then explained that I would be assisting her in starting a soccer program from the ground-up, in a favela community known as Trilho. Trilho is a

favela community situated in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of Fortaleza. The disparity of wealth here is entirely apparent, as people will be driving by in BMW's while children on the street walk around with no shoes and tattered clothing.

As I arrived in Trilho, Marta provided me with a list of ten girls' names, and informed me that I would be creating the soccer program entirely. Unfortunately, on the first day of research, Marta's son was murdered in another favela. This rendered her unable to help me in the creation of the soccer program, and pushed me to become a complete member of the Trilho community, and start the soccer program alone. I lived in the favela for a week, to familiarize myself with the workings of Trilho, and the people as well. My hope was that the community members would accept me as much as possible, seeing me more as a contributor to Trilho than as an outside researcher.

While in Trilho, I employed the methods of participant observation, as I was at the forefront of creating the soccer organization for girls in the favela. I recorded data about my particular experiences in the favela, the choices I made throughout the course of creating the program, and the problems for which I sought solutions. Data was collected daily in a notebook containing informal interviews, observations, and the layout of each soccer practice. Throughout the day, I would write down observations of everyday life I found to be important, and then write a passage about all of the transpired events. The research in Brazil represents an almost-active membership role, as I was completely immersed within the community, had gained an insider-status, and had shared goals as the subjects I was researching (Adler and Adler 1987).

Along with the field notes on the development of the program and my auto-ethnographic reflections, I also interviewed people I considered key informants in the soccer program. These informants include my partner in creating the program, the favela's community leader, and other sport coaches. I interviewed all key informants formally, following an interview guide in Portuguese, as I speak Portuguese at a conversational level, and recording the interview with a recording device. I then transcribed the interviews, and translated them into English. To insure the accuracy of the transcriptions, I was advised by fluent Portuguese speakers. The interview guide included questions asking why these people chose to get involved in sport's youth programs, what their roles were within the favela, and how they set up successful sports programs in Trilho. The other sport coaches, the ballet and capoeira teachers, were selected for interviews as these were the other two sports offered to the youth of Trilho. In the interviews, I aimed to understand the social dynamics of the favela, and how these inner workings created a cohesive community. I then researched how other sports structured successful programs in the favela, such that they were conducive to the nature of the favela community. I formed an overall understanding of the social and cultural life of the girls, the safety in the favela, lack of access to resources, and an idea for a successfully structured soccer program. While in Brazil, I had the opportunity to be an integral part in the community; in Colorado, the data collected was from an outsider's perspective.

My role as a researcher coupled with my role as a coach for the girls. The research in Brazil was collected from an insider's perspective, one with shared goals of its research

subjects, and living experiences paralleled with the lives of the research subjects. Thus, the research is compiled through my own experiences, as a soccer coach, a contributor to the community, and a researcher. The data is compiled of my understandings of the struggles the girls had to face everyday in a subjugated favela community, and how playing soccer may have the potential of empowering them to break the cycle of poverty to which they are so susceptible.

### ***Colorado***

In Colorado, the data collection proceeded from an outsider's perspective. I did not participate in creating FC Boulder, and therefore I have no equivalent auto-ethnographic reflections. The research in Colorado primarily involved interviews with six soccer program insiders. I interviewed the athletic director of the girls' teams, coaches, and parents to understand how these stakeholders viewed their girls playing soccer. These interviews constitute a narrative of how others perceive the social dynamics and tools of empowerment in relation to the girls' participation in soccer. Along with the interviews, I observed two practices to understand how the social dynamics of teams played out on the soccer field and whether self-affirming events, such as confidence building, or an overt example of agency, transpired because of soccer. My role as a researcher in Colorado took a more distanced approach than in Brazil. Although I still hold an insider's status as a soccer player, my role was a peripheral researcher, as I did not contribute to the coaching in Boulder County, and was not actively involved with any of the teams pertinent to my study (Adler and Adler 1987).

The majority of coaches interviewed in Boulder County coached both boys' and girls' teams. After speaking to coaches specifically about their coaching methods, what kind of impact they believe soccer has on Boulder County's youth, and how soccer has influenced their personal self-shaping. I asked coaches to illuminate why soccer was important to their upbringing, and how involved they have been with the sport throughout their life. I also asked them to describe why they believed girls specifically should be playing soccer, if they had any specifically gendered reasons. Interviews were recorded and stored on a secure recording device. The interviews were then coded into important themes, and analyzed so as to understand the full scope of coaching methods, and the potential lasting effects these mechanisms may have. I coded the interviews for gendered coaching methods, and the stated reasons for why these differences occur. In each facet of the research process, all names have been changed to protect the identities of those interviewed and observed

### ***Limitations***

Some limitations stem from the small sample size. This was due to the timing of the research, as soccer season was ending when the research period began. Another limitation could be that the data across countries is uneven. Boulder data came mainly from observations of practice and formal interviews, while Brazil's data was compiled mainly through my own experiences creating the soccer program. Although these may not be seen as equal amounts of data, I triangulated the findings such that both sets of data are explained equally, and provide equal understanding of the arguments of this thesis.

### ***Reflexivity and Soccer***

Throughout the course of collecting both sets of data, my research has been situated from an insider's status, as I am a member of the soccer community, but varies in membership in relation to my contributions to each spaces soccer community. I began my relationship with the world loved sport before I had any idea of how lasting an impact it would make on my life and my overall development as an empowered woman. Although I do not currently play in a soccer league, the sport has nonetheless made a significant impact on my life. The "beautiful game" has taught me much more than how to make a perfect cross, juke out a defender, or properly take a penalty kick. Soccer has taught me to stay calm when things are not going as planned. It has taught me that my reactions to other's actions are how I can control a situation. Most importantly, soccer has taught me that I have the strength within me to move past what stands in my way, work together with others, and accomplish the goals that I have set out for my life.

### ***Literature Review***

We are products of our socialization and social influence. Our behaviors, mannerisms, and characteristics are created through our social upbringings, the experiences we consider the most important in our lives, and the experiences that subconsciously influence us. Our identities—by which I mean the ways individuals choose to present themselves in different situations, all of which influence the overall construction of the self—are shaped through both internal and external factors, due to our ascribed and achieved statuses, and societal roles.

Viktor Gecas and Peter Burke, leading scholars of self-conception and identity, define the self as "the process of reflexivity that emanates from the interplay between the 'I' and the 'Me... and [encompasses] all of the products or consequences of this reflexive activity'" (Gecas and Burke 1995:42). The self is constructed of two parts that interact with one another, the portion of the self that interacts within society, and the portion that reflects on these interactions. These are respectively called the "I" and the "Me." As Mead explains, a sense of the self is developed through interactions with other individuals, and reflecting upon what aspects of these interactions are accepted or rejected in society. The roles that others accept more, or that we deem more significant, are placed at the top of our hierarchical construction of the self.

The ways in which one interacts in society, the people one chooses to associate with, and the triumphs and tribulations one faces are all constructions of one's self-concept. One's initial conception of the self will influence further conceptions of the self, and how one chooses to interact within society. Humans can be both subjects and objects of themselves (Gecas and Burke 1995

The biographical-historical approach of self-construction focuses on the self “as a historical and cultural convention” (Gecas and Burke 1995:42). It examines the symbolic meanings and “nature” of the self, often examining narrative as a means to construct one’s identity. It is primarily concerned with how individuals make sense of their lives and give continuity and coherence to their sense of self (Agger 1991; Baumeister 1987). In this thesis, I argue that portions of self are constructed externally as they are ensured by external influences, before identities and roles are entirely internalized.

On the macro level, there are both situational and social structured forms of the self. Both relate to the ways that humans interact with external societal factors, the act of “saving-face,” and the explicit link between society and the self. Through day-to-day interactions, we construct our identities. We create forms of our identity by relating to or admiring others outside of ourselves. This is an external process, in which we create an understanding of who we are through our interactions. Gecas contributed to this school of thought, claiming that the self develops through social interaction and is based on the social characteristics, such as values and responsibilities, that humans uphold (1982).

A connection between the self and society is seen in how we construct our identities based on our relations and interactions, paralleling social structures. Our construction of the self comes in stages; we are constantly constructing our self through social interactions, while sometimes reconstructing *spoiled identities* (Goffman 1959). Through the process known as salience, we identify more deeply with roles and identities that we deem more important than others we consider less important. Composing the self as a hierarchical set of identities allows people to link society and the self, as people construct their identities and therefore selves through nuances and influences of society. We identify ourselves through our roles in social structures. As Hewitt states, “identity is primarily a matter of establishing and maintaining a situational relation between self, roles, and location” (2010:77). For example, a woman who has chosen to take care of her children over a career identifies more with her caregiver identity than her career identity, both situational, external roles. These are both situated identities; an identity in which people externally experience themselves from a single interaction or situation, and can explore themselves from the experience and what roles that experience entails (Hewitt 2010). Her self has been constructed not only through the ascribed status of women as nurturing beings, but also through the ascribed statuses women typically hold in societal structures and situations. Individuals have many identities, all of which are active agents in influencing one’s choices (Foote 1951).

Identities are formed both through external, situational factors, and through one’s internal sense of self-concept. Gecas and Burke (1982) outlined two ways in which one constructs one’s identity, the situational and structural approaches. Situational constructions of identity focus on the emergence and maintenance of the self in situated interactions (Gecas and Burke 1982:42). These situated identities are temporary, as the experiences within which they occur are finite. Roles constructed through social structures, and external influences, they are not simply an inheritance of the self. Gecas describes these roles as “the behavioral expectations associated with positions or status in a social system” (Gecas 1982:14), and these roles play out in situated identities. A social identity

is a more permanent form of identity, as it is not only seen in finite experiences, but is where an individual identifies himself or herself through interacting with other people. These feelings of attachment provide people with a sense of purpose, and therefore create an extended idea of an individual's identity (Hewitt 2010). Individuals tend to merge with roles and identities that they have invested the most time in, in the social world, and roles significant others identify them as, and roles that maximize one's autonomy (Gecas 1982, Hewitt 2010). At this point, personal identities can be formed, as the social space is larger and longer lasting than situated experiences, and the roles and social identities one takes on become one's life story.

### ***Self-Esteem***

The self is both an internal aspect of a person, but also an object that people can reflect upon. The self contains our situated, social, and personal identities, which are constantly forming and changing as our locations, interactions, and goals change. When we realize we are in a situation where a particular identity is required, a player on a soccer team for example, we consciously decide to transition into this identity. As a soccer player, one can reflect on how the game is going, how they are playing with their other teammates, and different ways that one can improve upon the game. This is the reflexive behavior of the self; the ability to realize the particular identity one has in a situation, and how one acts within this identity. There is an explicit link between the construction of the self and the society that the individual lives in. If a society or an outside individual accepts one's behavior, one may self-verify this behavior as a primary indicator of one's self. Self-verification is a pathway to self-esteem, as "self-esteem arises in us when we think and feel about ourselves in connection to how we think others see us" (Hewitt 2010:88). We develop ideas of who we think we are, and bring these ideas to interactions with have with these people. When we see someone as a brave person, instead of weak, our conversations about them and with them reflect this presumption. When others express how they feel about us, or integrate these sentiments into conversation, we create an image of ourselves, based off our reflexive internalizations of the ways we believe others perceive us. This is how our sense of self-esteem is developed. "How we feel about ourselves results from what other people tell us and also from what we want to be" (Hewitt 2010:90). When others express how they perceive us in a positive light, we reflect those positive sentiments in our own identities. Different people's opinions carry more weight than others do; one is more likely to develop a sense of self-esteem through a compliment from one's mom than from a random passerby on the street. Similarly, another way to maintain one's self-esteem is to set goals and achieve them. An athlete for example, will feel far more accomplished if she reaches her goal of being an Olympian, than merely playing for her college's team.

Self-esteem entails a sense of certainty within one's self. If external sources reassure someone that a particular display of them is good or praiseworthy, one is far more likely to feel certain about this particular self. Self-esteem is a contingent portion of empowerment of the self. Empowerment stems from many different things, but particularly from reassurance from other individuals and reaching one's goals. Self-esteem and self-efficacy are key ingredients of empowerment, an essential aspect of this

thesis. The ability to feel assured that one's actions are correct and socially accepted and the freedom to do what one feels important, rely heavily on how one's self is constructed.

### ***Gender and the Self***

Gender systems are comprised of gender beliefs and the ways one believes the respective genders *should* act, along with the social, cultural locations of these beliefs. Gender, described by Cecilia Ridgeway and Shelley Correll, “is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference (2004: 510). Constructed beliefs about the genders change according to cultural differences, and the social structures in given societies. The level of resources a community has and the gender beliefs they hold will influence how that gender system operates.

One's core conception of one's self is created through processual interactions (Gecas 1982). These interactions are situational, and based upon identity bargaining, constructing one's identity by sampling different aspects of the self until one appears to work in a particular facet of society. “Identity from the processual interactionist perspective is situated, emergent, reciprocal, and negotiated... view the self-concept as inseparable cause and consequence in social interaction” (Gecas 1982:11). When different genders play out these interactions, gendered information is created, attributing a person closer to one gender, and farther from another. A psychological study was done by Bettina Hannover to show that gender-congruent-information varies greatly between the genders. She found that females contained characteristics such as pursuit of harmony, closeness, and community, while males consisted of attributes such as agency, power, and competence (Hannover, *date*:180).

“Symbolic interactionism orients to the principle that individuals respond to the meanings they construct as they interact with one another. Individuals are active agents in their social worlds, influenced, to be sure, by culture and social organization, but also instrumental in producing culture, society, and meaningful conduct that influences them” (Holstein and Gubrium 2011:22).

Irvine situates symbolic interactionism as a way that individuals construct their sense of selves through balancing interactions in the external, social world, and internalizing the outcomes of the interactions, thus further developing a sense of who the individual is. Similarly, Mead speaks of the awareness of the self, stating:

This ‘awareness’ which has led many to assume that it is the nature of the self to be conscious both of subject and of object- to be subject of an action toward an object world and at the same time to be directly conscious of this subject as subject (Mead 2011:48)

An individual is aware and conscious of the outer world, the actions the outer world does to affect the self, and also the idea of the self as a subject. When an individual is conscious of himself or herself as the subject of an interaction, they can discern how their interactions in the outer world not only affect this outer world, but also further their own construction of the self as a subject.

The construction of the self depends heavily on whether and how others verify an individual's actions, a concept known as self-verification. Self-verification is a process by which individuals achieve statuses in society when outsiders verify that what they are doing is within the norm, and thus culturally acceptable (Gecas 1982). Once outsiders verify our actions, individuals tend to merge with the roles and identities in which they have invested the most time and with which others predominantly identify them.

An individual's gender is one of the most displayed and fluid formats of identity. Gender is a fluid identity, as manifestations of gender are constantly changing, depending on verification or rejection from the social world. The self is constantly developing throughout one's life, and begins when children start to play and interact with one another. Mead claims that children develop a sense of self through play and the idea of "doubling." Doubling occurs when a child is playing something, such as house, and pretends to be a mother. The child acts, as they believe a mother would, playing the role of a mother, while still assuming the identity of a child. By playing these games, and having the capability to construct a generalized other, Mead believes that children have created an empirical self that is reflexively conscious of the working organization of roles that constitute it as a social structure (Irvine 2011).

Ridgeway and Correll similarly unpacked the gender system, and showed how fluid gender is in all social contexts and relations. They state that:

Gender is not only a role taught throughout the developmental period of childhood, it 'is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference (2004:510).

Although gender may be a significant identity to individuals' sense of self, many inequalities lie within gender systems, as separation of the sexes is intrinsically a dichotomy. Ridgeway and Correll continue to define the gender systems through different contexts, explaining that gender is a background identity, more than a mere situational role that an individual might play in a situation. Background context, as they describe it, provides a bias to how people should play roles in their lives (Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

An important time of gender construction specifically is between the ages of 12-18. In these years, adolescents interact with one another while also absorbing aspects of culture such as social media and gender norms, discovering how society believes they should act in social relations, connecting to their gender. Integrating into the social world at this age, adolescents construct a more developed sense of self through reflexively choosing what peers to interact with, what extra-curricular activities to participate in, and what stakes to hold in issues such as feminism.

Because gender inequality is still thriving today, girls specifically have a difficult path of self-construction, and how their individual ideas of femininity may be verified or rejected. In 2005, Thomas ME did a study of the spatial segregation of girls in US high

schools. He found that high school is very important space where youth identity is performed. He states that:

The high school years in North America are years in which identities such as race, gender, and sexuality take on new meaning for youth and girls, with self and peer scrutiny evaluation weighing in regularly and heavily (Thomas ME 2005:1235).

This age of adolescence is specifically important to girls, as stereotypes and gender norms weigh heavily upon how young girls choose to perform their identity, and how their peers choose to perceive it. Teenagers are defining what they believe the norm to be through labeling, self-verification, and performativity.

Teenagers are negotiating difference in unique ways and are forced to confront the possibilities, and inevitabilities, of normative peer and adult sanctions (Thomas ME 2005:1235)

As gender is a dominant form of identity, high school aged girls are constantly navigating what it means to be a woman, and thus what it means to be feminine. While conceptions of women change over time, many overarching characteristics include being beautiful, good listeners, petite, compliant, and subservient. Girls, at this age, are both attempting to construct their own definition of femininity, while also consuming images of supposed femininity, whether from their peers or mediums such as social media.

Before a girl internalizes what she believes femininity is, she initially constructs this definition from external sources. These external sources, such as parents, teachers, and older peers, have a more concrete version of what they define femininity to be. Girls can view these as expectations, as how they *should* act in order to be perceived as feminine. In 2004, Jones and Myhill conducted a study to demonstrate the correlation between expectations and results, concerning gender identity.

In the classroom, teachers hold differentiated expectations for each gender and how well they should academically perform. Boys' "male culture" does not coincide with the values of education, which is why teachers do not expect boys to do well in school. On the other hand, teachers view girls as "compliant" and "wanting to please," and expect them to do better than boys are expected to do in school (Jones and Myhill 2004). The study interviewed teachers and observed classrooms in the UK to compare levels of underachievement of boys and girls. While 80% of the teachers stated in interviews that boys and girls should reach the same level of achievement, the language in their interviews told a different story. "The language relating to girls' behavior is passive and concerned with compliance, they are 'wanting to please' and 'willing'" (Jones and Myhill 2004: 553). Teacher's expectations and perceptions of girls differentiated significantly from their expectations and perceptions of boys. These perceived ways that the separate genders act can adhere to the continual patterns of separation of genders (Jones and Myhill 2004). Expectations from role models such as teachers are potential sources of internalized gender definitions.

Norms and beliefs about "appropriate" gendered behavior shape how girls and boys act and how they eventually form their own sense of femininity or masculinity. While the classroom is a place where boys and girls must play the roles of students, there are many

other spaces and roles where their gender identities are tested, verified, and internalized. The expected behaviors of girls and boys define how boys and girls opt to perform in society, namely in a school environment. External sources influence their perceptions of what their identities should look like (Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

### ***Sport and the Construction of the Self***

Sports are a platform where individuals can develop a sense of competency, teamwork, and communicative skills. In general, team sports follow the concept of expectation states theory (Ridgeway and Correll 2004), where individuals focus on accomplishing a shared or socially valued goal. In sharing the same goal, individuals work together to accomplish the expected task. While sports are a space for individuals to develop as athletes, they are also a setting for the construction of the self, specifically in reference to gender. Gender is displayed differently in sports than any other space, as the predominantly masculine behaviors of competition and athleticism come into play. Therefore, sports are an especially salient place for girls to perform gender identities, as these performances of femininity may not align with the gender norms prescribed for girls.

In describing the identity work done by members of a female rugby team, Matthew Ezzell (2009) conducted one of the most telling studies of the conundrum of gender identity. Ezzell examined how the women navigated their identity construction in response to the subordinated status that rugby women have regarding their sexuality. Ezzell states that the dominant representation of femininity is based primarily on white, heterosexual, middle-class women. Because the rugby players did not fit this framework, they would result to defensive “othering.” Defensive othering is similar to creating a badge of dignity. Both occur when someone is stigmatized about an aspect of their identity. Instead of feeling ostracized from this stigmatization, people partake in defensive othering, where they defend the supposed stigmatized aspects of their identity, and choose to embrace them.

Members of subordinated groups may use defensive othering to deflect resistance to their participation in dominant-identified institutions. For women in Western societies, sport constitutes one such institution. Women’s participation in sport challenges the essentialist equation of femininity with physical weakness and passivity (Ezzell 2009:114).

Defensive othering is used when one’s identity performance is rejected. In sport specifically, women are constantly subject to discrimination because expressing physicality and a competitive nature does not align with the Western ideology of femininity. Ezzell found that some rugby athletes would attempt to counteract this discrimination by “[engaging] in normative identification by positioning themselves as closer to conventional notions of femininity and heterosexuality than other female ruggers” (2009:115-116). While attempting to save face and reclaim a sense of normative gender identity, these rugby players were only reaffirming the stigma imposed on female athletes. By aligning themselves with more conventional manifestations of femininity, the female athletes were attempting to avoid stigmatization. Washington and Karen agree with this issue of gender identity, as they believe that because homophobic concerns are

an issue in women's sports, many women continually resort to an overt appearance of sexuality to counteract this assumption (2001). In this case, people outside of the rugby team negatively reflected upon the women's rugby team members' situated identities. Outsiders stigmatized them for not expressing hegemonic forms of femininity, and the girls resorted to defensive-othering by coining the term "hetero-sexy fit." With this, they Because they did not have a sense of assurance from external sources, the women felt a lack of self-esteem, and in turn attempted to mirror what others expected of them. This manifested into the women engaging in hyper-heteronormative behavior, expressed as being overtly promiscuous off the rugby field.

The cultural symbols of sport, such as competition and camaraderie, transform into constructions of one's gender, and influence one's choice of gender identity. Specifically with girls, the cultural symbols of soccer do not necessarily coincide with general assumptions of femininity. Thus, girls must find ways to express their femininity in different formats while playing the game.

Messner studied an incident he witnessed while at his son's soccer parade and came to realize that both boys' and girls' gender beliefs were being constructed by external sources, at an early age. During the parade of teams, the girls' team, called the Barbies, had a large float of a Barbie and blasted the Barbie song. The boys on different teams initially danced to the song. However, on realizing they were acting in a feminine way, they immediately changed their behaviors. Instead, they started throwing things at the float, expressing their disgust of the overtly feminine song. While watching this, Messner realized that the parents agreed with the boys' behavior, as most of them would smile and say, "That's just boys being boys" (Messner 2000). This is a clear-cut example of how external sources police the boundaries of gender and influence boys and girls. While sports should be a realm in which any gender can express how they feel, regardless of assumptions, it is nonetheless a highly sexist field.

Messner believes that this begins at a young age. The girls and boys he observed were aged 5-7, an age in which external sources are highly influential on one's construction of identity. The segregation of the genders in sport creates an initial line of inequalities between how the genders should be perceived while playing, and the assumptions external sources will hold around their separate displays of gender. Girls have a specifically difficult time in sports, as athleticism is not necessarily deemed feminine in our social world

### ***Girls' Identities and Sport***

In 2008, Eric Anderson studied men who transformed from football players into cheerleaders, and how their perceptions of women and sport changed as their athletic paths changed. He believes that team sports promote orthodox masculinity, a form of masculinity that assists in reproducing patriarchy as it looks disparagingly at femininity. He defines sports as a realm that is "highly segregated, homophobic, sexist, and misogynistic gender regime, sport not only contributes to the gender order, but it renders considerable costs for both sexes" (Anderson 2008:260). Sports produce a hyper-masculinity that ostracizes those who choose to express forms of femininity. Anderson found that the football players transitioning into cheerleading were astounded to realize

women could also be accomplished athletes, regardless of their lack of orthodox masculinity.

Sports have a significant influence on an individual's level of self-confidence. [Some of the] most salient benefits of athletic participation are found in elevated self-esteem, better school attendance, educational aspirations, higher rates of university attendance, and perhaps even post schooling employment (Anderson 2008:264)

Sports are so influential to youth because it is a salient realm for the construction of the self. As Anderson and Messner find, when the sexes are separated in sport, men and women will occupy different spaces of the sporting world. One of the reasons people opt to segregate women from men in sports is because of their potentially violent nature in sports. However, if the genders were not segregated at such a young age, this violent nature could either be diminished, or shared between the genders (Anderson 2008). As Anderson concludes, male team sports influence an orthodox form of masculinity that devalues femininity and promotes sexism and misogyny. The segregation of men and women in sport perpetuates the myth that women are at an athletic disadvantage to men. When the football players became cheerleaders, they familiarized themselves with the experiences of the women, and they adopted a new gender strategy that put men and women on a more even playing field.

Gendered expectations of women in sport greatly influence girls' participation rates, and self-esteem levels. For example, in a study of girls in sports, Cheryl Cooky determined that participation directly correlates with positive social outcomes, such as high levels of self-esteem (2009). Throughout the study, Cooky realized that there was a low turnout of girls in sports programs, because others assumed that girls would not be interested in participating. Cooky found that the agency of the girls, measured by their choice to participate in a sport, was constrained by outer social structures, namely gender assumptions. External sources assumed that girls would not want to play in sports, seen as a masculine realm, and therefore stripped the girls of the opportunity to play altogether. Gender beliefs and similar social structures are reproduced and transformed through collectives interacting, and reinforcing gender binary and the assumptions that come along with it.

Sports can be a very positive realm of the social world. Sports can contribute to the construction of a strong-valued self, and improve communication skills and teamwork abilities. However, the segregation of the genders in sports has created deeply embedded inequalities of how we perceive boys in sports versus girls in sports. The gendered beliefs of femininity and masculinity seep into sports, and influence the ways we think each gender should perform on the field. Throughout my findings, I discovered that these perceptions heavily influence how girls choose to construct their identity, specifically in relation to their soccer coaches.

## Findings

The expectations that society holds for genders seem to bleed into the realm of sports. As Messner states, when genders are separated to play sports, inequalities begin:

If traditional images of femininity have solidified male privilege through constructing and then naturalizing the passivity, weakness, helplessness, and dependency of women, what are we to make of the current fit, athletic, even muscular looks that are increasingly in vogue with many women? (Messner 1988:203)

We expect boys to be more physical, competitive, and autonomous, while we infer that girls will be more passive, team-oriented, and focused on the social aspects of the game, than the game itself. The media also portrays women and men's sports very differently. Women are judged using traditional gender beliefs, and are critiqued on how well they display these stereotypical gender norms while they play their sport. Men, on the other hand, are critiqued simply on skill and athleticism, not how well they display their masculinity. While there are many gender assumptions to navigate in the space of sports, it is also an arena where youth can develop values they will use outside of the game, such as communicative skills, autonomy, and responsibility. As a coach, it can be very difficult to balance providing self-esteem to your teammates, while at the same time remaining ungendered in one's coaching methods, when being sexist and gendered in one's approach to coaching can seem inevitable.

It is important to note that all the coaches I interviewed viewed soccer in a very positive light, and found it to be a realm that develops very strong values and prepares youth for the real world. Nate states that, "you can use the sport as a way to teach life lessons, in essence," while Brandon believes that:

Soccer is a metaphor for life. To get the full range of experience there, from failure, ultimate failure, to ultimate success and just to learn all those lessons again in a safe environment as a 16 year old, that's the point. (S.S. personal interview, Nate 11/3/15)

Soccer specifically, is a realm in which the development of the self can shift into an athletic identity and develop senses of autonomy, confidence, and self-esteem. All the coaches I interviewed continually stated that soccer is a metaphor for life. Learning to work together with a group of people towards a given goal, having the confidence to stand up to someone when necessary, and discovering how to learn from your failures can all be taught on the soccer field. Through soccer, I learned that my strength does not need to stay within the boundaries of gender beliefs, and that I can accomplish a goal if I work hard enough for it. Throughout this process, I have come to discover that most of these beliefs were instilled in me through my coaches. Through soccer drills and reassurance from my coaches, I came to find my sense of self-esteem. I found similar results while talking to coaches in Boulder, and coaching the girls of the favela in Brazil.

### ***Gendered Coaching Methods***

Throughout my research, I found that all the coaches I interviewed reinforced these expectations of separate genders through the way they chose to coach each gender, and their language around the differences in each soccer game. Nate has been coaching since his college career, and has found that coaching girls has been specifically influential for him. Throughout my time with Nate, he would attempt to speak about girls' soccer in a positive way, trying to avoid sexist undertones. However, as I asked him about the differences in the game, he began to gender his responses, realizing that he enjoyed coaching girls because of the clear differences in comparison to coaching boys. Nate specifically stated that while coaching girls satisfies him in some way, he does not appreciate their game as much as he does the boy's game:

It's funny because as much as I love coaching girls, I don't appreciate girls' soccer as much as I do boys, for different various reasons. But coaching girls is um, is definitely is as much as I can say is why I love sports in general. That there's a very team-oriented aspect to it, and there's a, the girls are very high on team and friendships... I'm still a very competitive person, [but] I think that coaching girls is better for me, in my personality (S.S. personal interview, Nate 1/21/16)

While Nate recognizes that as a man, he seems to be naturally competitive, he states the opposite about the women's game of soccer, and uses this form of the game to tame his competitive side. He assumes that the girls are going to focus less on the tasks and more on the social aspects of what it means to be on a team. Instead of focusing on winning, as he would with boys, he focuses on teaching values through his coaching methods to the girls:

So the girls in my opinion, on the whole, and this is just strictly averages, don't take the game as serious as the guys. So in general, you can use the sport as a way to teach life lessons, in essence. So I can help, I guess from a combination standpoint; stay around the game, help teach life lessons, essentially help be a guide for kids growing and trying to find themselves. (S.S. personal interview, Nate 1/21/16)

Nate understands the role he holds as a girls' soccer coach. He assumes that the girls would rather work on constructing social identities, identities they can use outside of the soccer field, instead of honing their skills and identifying more as athletes. Similarly, he assumes the boys' he coaches are far more interested in identifying as athletes, as this is conducive to their masculinity. He creates a clear dichotomy between the genders, based on the gendered beliefs constructed through inequalities in society:

[Again] with girls it's very much um, well again with the girls' side it tends to be a little bit more emotional, right? Uh guys are very much more, just again from a competitive nature standpoint, the lessons are very different in the sense that, you are trying still in the end, to get kids to be contributing members of society, you want the kids to, in fact to obviously be good players and such. But you are using this as a tool, the messages are very different because some of the emotional

factors that go into the games that would be boys versus girls. (S.S. personal interview, Nate 1/21/16)

As an external source, Nate heavily influences how the girls and boys he coaches choose to construct their soccer identities, and therefore their identities outside of the soccer pitch. He assumes that the boys are there to be athletes, to increase their strength and physical well-being. On the other hand, Nate assumes that the girls use the soccer field as a place to socialize, work on team building, and develop their communicative skills. Many other coaches interviewed held similarly dichotomizing philosophies about the different ways they coach the different genders.

Austin, the coach I interviewed who had the most extensive history in soccer, also had the most polarizing philosophies about how he has been coaching boys and girls throughout his 50 years of involvement with the sport. When speaking about what he enjoys most about coaching girls, Austin seemed almost annoyed, and began to speak about the difficulties girls have in soccer instead:

Well, the young ladies are very emotional. Young ladies are very suspect to a lack of confidence. Young ladies are not as athletic as the boys, so you have to really focus on developing their athleticism, to make them better players. To make them better athletes, to make them smarter. And make better decisions on the field. The boys tend to have a little more built in solidly because they play a lot of other sports, and they play a lot of backyard sports. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15)

Austin believes he must put more effort into honing the skills of the girls, while he is confident that the boys will know what to do when the game begins. His initial assumptions about the genders separate the boys' game from the girls' game immediately. As seen in Messner's theory of sport and separation of the genders, the second boys and girls are segregated into sexed teams, inequalities between the ways the games are played, and the genders are perceived manifest. These inequalities stem from external sources, such as parents and coaches. Parents and coaches seem to celebrate the differences of the sexes, and find it strange when a boy crosses over into a realm of femininity, and vice versa (Messner 2000).

Austin reinforces these gender beliefs by giving the girls "girl's time," as he calls it: They're 15 year old girls, you give them 15 minutes of talk time before practice, because they always need that. It doesn't matter if one other practice was an hour before this one, you still gotta give them another 15 minutes in. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15)

Austin does not give the boys he coaches 15 minutes to chat before each practice begins. He separates the genders in accordance to the assumption that girls tend to be "more emotional" and "more social" than the boys are. In doing so, Austin contributes to the construction of the girls' identities, as he reinforces the ideology that they *should* be more emotional and more focused on the social aspect of a team than winning the game itself. Similarly, Austin finds ways to reinforce gender beliefs about boys through his coaching

mechanisms. He takes a far less hands-on approach with the boys than the girls, because of his assumptions that the girls need more reinforcement from external sources than boys do:

With boys sometimes you can holler out on the field and actually rip ‘em. You know, verbally encourage them to do more. Boys like a line to be drawn in the sand, and they want to know where that line is. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15)

Here, Austin demonstrates how little he contributes to the self-esteem of the boys. He assumes that the boys know what to do while playing soccer that they have the confidence and autonomy to make their own decisions on how the game goes. At times, Austin will feel the need to slightly interfere by yelling something to the boys during the game, but he mostly believes the boys know what to do, and will not take much direction from him regardless. For the girls that Austin coaches, he takes an entirely different approach:

See I look at it this way, as a coach, I am, when things are going right on the field, the players are doing a great job, I don’t have a lot to do. When things are going poorly on the field, my job is to be the anchor that anybody can tie their boat to, okay? (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15)

Austin’s gender beliefs have been reinforced repeatedly, throughout his entire coaching career. He has found that women need far more support in soccer than men do. Soccer is predominantly a masculine sport, so his assumptions are rooted in the idea that soccer is intertwined with masculinity. These gendered beliefs influence the way he interacts with the girls, and thus the ways in which the girls construct their identity. Similar to Cooley’s looking glass self, the girls on Austin’s teams see that he believes they need support and overt encouragement, and they internalize this behavior as part of their identity.

Brandon, the last male coach that I interviewed, oversees his entire club, boys and girls teams included, and have seen significant differences in the ways boys and girls play soccer, and identify themselves with the sport. His children, two boys and one girl, all play soccer and deeply identify with their soccer identities. Brandon finds that soccer has increased his children’s autonomy significantly, as he believes:

[It’s] been a huge part of the formation of their identities and good character formation, all that sort of stuff that sport gives you. Soccer is, it’s like other sports I’m sure, but the cultural piece, the friendships, all that sort of stuff, no doubt has had a huge impact on their lives. (S.S. personal interview, Brandon 11/3/15)

Brandon believes that the strong character development he has seen in his children comes from their dedication to sport. His positive experiences with his children have influenced how he chooses to coach the girls on his club team as well, but he still holds significantly gendered beliefs about the way the games differ:

I love the kids, the girls game is really fun to coach because the pace is just a little slower than the boy’s game... Girls, everything is just back a notch, so the game is just a little slower, which is great because then you have an opportunity to just

teach a little bit more, and to be a little bit more thoughtful and methodical about what it is you are trying to do (S.S. personal interview, Brandon 11/3/15).

Here, Brandon is expressing similar sentiments to Austin, concerning how the girls need more attention. He believes that the boys' game has apparently progressed completely on its own, without much coaching or outside influence. Since the girls' game has not progressed as rapidly, Brandon feels that his role as a coach is to adjust the ways the girls play, the strategies that they choose on the field, and the ways the team should work together.

Finally, the one female coach I interviewed is Sasha, a highly successful soccer player. Her journey has brought her from a college career to the United States Women's National Team. She bases her coaching philosophy on empowering her girls through her own success story in soccer:

The best part of coaching is inspiring young women, and kind of using what I learned and use my story as an avenue to empower them and inspire them and just allow them like a way to dream and an avenue to dream. (S.S personal interview, Sasha 12/8/15)

She describes her own story as a pathway to empowerment for the young girls that she coaches. Her girls can see her story as an external source of how women can be successful in soccer, and can choose to mimic Sasha's behavior, in hopes of being as successful as she is. Sasha also describes the gendered differences in the ways boys and girls internalize coaching. She believes that coaches have a greater influence on girls than they do on boys:

I mean I would say girls buy into what the coach is telling them more easily. They're willing to listen and to implement the facets that we're trying to teach them as coaches. (S.S personal interview, Sasha 12/8/15)

Unlike her male counterparts, Sasha views these differences in a completely positive light, whereas the men I interviewed seemed at times upset that the girls' game was not as fast paced and competitive. She views coaching girls on a micro-level, as she has the ability to make tiny changes to the way the girls' play, such that the game can be fine-tuned to her liking:

They have a different vision, you know they're not just trying to go to goal all the time. If I tell them that we need to possess the ball and then we'll get the goal, they're going to figure out ways to overlap each other and do give and go's, and [be] just a little bit more creative and they buy in a little bit more earlier. (S.S. personal interview, Sasha 12/8/15)

Sasha views coaching girls as a focus on the process, not the potential results. She is concerned about the means, and the ways that girls get to goal, not getting the goal itself. From previous interviews, it seems that coaching boys is solely a means to the end, scoring as many goals as possible. According to Brandon, Austin, and Nate, the girl's game is a slower game. While they may view this as a stark difference between the

genders, Sasha takes this opportunity to focus on the fine detail of the games, slowly adjusting her players into successful athletes.

### **Expectations versus Performance of Boys in soccer**

All coaches interviewed stated how different the run of play of a girl's game is versus a boy's game. As Brandon sees it, "the boys game is so athletic now, it's so physical, it's so rough, the speed is so high" (S.S. personal interview 11/3/15). The boys are more fast-paced, goal oriented, and competitively physical. Nate and Austin attribute these factors to the growing levels of testosterone in teenage boys. As Nate states, "you know a lot of things, on the boys' side, tend to be a little bit more about results; winning and losing. And the testosterone and the bigger picture" (S.S. personal interview 1/21/16). Similarly, Austin believes that boys are more prone to playing outside sports, and have bigger egos that attribute to their overt competitive nature:

When you get into the boys you run into the ego issue of their, you know when they hit those teenage years and they're strutting their, they're strutting their stuff, and they're trying to show their manhood... The boys tend to have a little more built in solidly because they play a lot of other sports and they play a lot of backyard sports. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/16)

All the coaches expressed that they *expect* boys to be naturally competitive, confident, and athletic. Coaches assist in the construction of boys' situated identities as athletes. The assumptions they hold about how the boys should act on the field will influence the ways boys' choose to hold themselves while playing soccer. Similarly, boys do not need to grapple with the issue of doing their gender correctly, as soccer already represents a dominantly masculine sport. The physicality, competitive nature, and fast pace all attribute towards masculine gender beliefs. A boy's situated identity in soccer is particularly salient to the larger social world, as the ways of doing gender on the field meet the expectations for doing gender off the field. In this sense, boys can "develop a sense of themselves as whole beings acting purposefully and effectively in their social world by developing forms of identity that transcend a particular situation" (Hewitt 2010:82).

### ***Why do girls need more external support?***

Girls, on the other hand, are expected to act outside of the gendered beliefs of femininity while playing soccer. "There's a lot to do with women, when you coach women. It's a whole different sport" (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15). Soccer demands a high level of athleticism and physicality, as players will battle for the ball to make it towards the goal. This overt physical behavior is not typical of a supposed feminine construction of the self. Coaches recognize this, and assume that girls need more assurance of their athletic identities than boys do, because sports do not always coincide with femininity.

As seen in studies such as, “Barbie Dolls on the Pitch,” a girl’s situated identity within her sport can differ significantly from her overall self-construction, as an athletic situated identity can be ostracized in the grand social world. Girls in sports will engage in normative forms of feminine identification to reassure external actors of their femininity. Girls struggle with their situated identity in soccer, which is why most coaches feel the need to engage more with girls than with boys in how the game is played, and how they should act on the field.

Throughout my research, I discovered that this played out in a cyclical behavior: the girls would fear they were not acting feminine enough during the game; the coaches would recognize this lack of self-esteem, agree that their soccer identities did not coincide with normative femininity, and would finally reinforce feminine gender beliefs by creating a space more conducive to the social aspects of femininity and less masculine by competitive nature. In both fields of research, Boulder and Brazil, this cycle was demonstrated through the ways coaches chose to create practice, and instill self-esteem within their female players.

### ***Boulder***

In Boulder, all the coaches interviewed demonstrated stark differences between the ways boys and girls play soccer, as shown above. Nate specifically compared the physical capabilities of the boys he coaches to the emotional limitations of his girls’ teams:

In terms of just the players being able to pass the ball a lot more accurately [than girls]. Even just from a strength standpoint, hitting the balls over a great distance, so to speak, so that way I guess the game [between boys and girls] is very different. Um guys are, I think also by nature, physical. So that’s just part of the game. The, just how girls interact together, just for example in school or in life, just how a girl says something about other girls, there tends to be a caddy sort of feeling towards other girls. (S.S. personal interview, Nate 1/21/16)

He claims that the boys’ game progresses more physically, because by nature, boys are meant to be more competitive and athletic. He then speaks about the crutches of the girl’s game; specifically how crippling the social behavior can be to the progression of the soccer game. Throughout his interview, he expressed how much he enjoyed coaching girls, because they are less social and more competitive. These are gendered traits that society has constructed into normative, gendered behavior. Nate subconsciously recognizes this, and perpetuates these constructions through his selective coaching styles.

Austin also internalizes these gender beliefs in his coaching styles. His initial assumptions of the girls he coaches influences how practices go, and what he expects the girls to accomplish. As previously stated, Austin gives his girls’ teams 15 minutes to talk before practice begins, as he believes this is essential to their success. He assumes that because women are socialized to be more social, he must integrate this ideology into his coaching mechanisms.

While all the coaches interviewed saw soccer as a metaphor for life, it seemed as if this

metaphor was more essential to girls' development than to that of boys. All coaches implied boys did not falter from their athletic, situated identity while playing the game. On the other hand, coaches implied that girls had difficulty balancing their athletic identities with their ideologies of what it means to be feminine and powerful. Consequently, coaches saw soccer as a pathway to boost their player's self-esteem, not just to win a championship.

Austin spoke to this metaphor specifically in his interview, internalizing that girls need this metaphor for life, and that he could be an external resource of self-esteem for them: Interaction with other people, learning to compete, building confidence in themselves, and having confidence in people around them. You know, so it's all about support for each other, understanding situations, understanding emotions, dealing with wins, dealing with loses, you know dealing with setbacks, dealing with success. That all plays into it. It's a life lesson. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15).

Austin structures the way he coaches girls around his beliefs that women are not as strong as men are, either physically and mentally. His assumptions set up how the girls on his team will identify as athletes, and construct appropriately feminine selves. If this external source, a very successful soccer coach, believes they need more support throughout the game than their male counterparts do, it is most likely that the girls will begin to internalize this sense of helplessness and need for support.

### **Brazil**

While in Brazil, I realized that my coaching mechanisms were also structured around the ideology that girls are in need of an external source of support, to boost their sense of self-esteem. Working in the favela, Trilho, I realized how susceptible these girls were to behaviors such as drug addiction, prostitution, and early pregnancy. Simply walking down the street, I would see young boys holding guns, people buying drugs, and pregnant sixteen year olds sitting on the street.

I spoke with the community leader of Trilho, Sandra, who also compassionately allowed me to stay with her and her family while conducting a portion of my research, about the realities of the girls of Trilho. Sandra's job as community leader is to create the schedule for all the activities that take place at the community center, and to attend to the overall needs of the people of the community (S.S. personal interview. Sandra. 3/5/15). She has lived in Trilho essentially her whole life, and thus understands both the struggles and the beauties of living in a favela. When speaking to me about the girls and the lack of opportunities within the community, she stated:

Nas favelas tem os opções são: casar muito cedo, ou se juntar com o menino que já que também e viciado que entra no grupo de envolvido, entendeu? E elas não tem muito incentivo, no máximo para estudar. E as vezes até o ensino médio, isso quem chega no ensino médio, porque muitas delas engravidam antes de terminar o ensino fundamental. *The options of the favelas [for women, specifically] are: Get married very early, or get involved with a boy that is already hooked [to*

*drugs] and enter the group of addiction, understand? And the girls don't have much incentive, at most to study. And at times [they go] through high school, just those who arrive at high school, because many of the girls become pregnant before finishing primary school (S.S. personal interview. Sandra. 5/3/15).*

Whether consciously or subconsciously, girls of Trilho understand that these are their limited options, thus resulting to sexualizing their bodies, activities, and demeanors so as to unfortunately become yet another player in the cycle of poverty that they live in. During my time interacting with the girls, and playing soccer with them as well, I realized that paying attention to boys and sexuality, particularly with regards to their bodies, were constantly on their minds. Although culturally, hygiene is of utmost importance to the people of Brazil, the girls of Trilho seemed to amplify their cleanliness, beauty, and at times sexuality, consistently wearing make-up, short-shorts, and shirts that showed their mid-drifts.

Similarly, their actions solicit attention from the opposite sex, persistently responding to catcalls, rather than ignoring them, over-feminizing their mannerisms so as to appear more stereotypically female (incapable, clumsy, reliant upon men), and gravitating towards the boy's activities, in hopes of being able socialize with them afterwards. The girls chose to identify with hyper-feminine ideologies in the favela, as they seemed to believe that the ultimate source of self-esteem was from approval of their male counterparts.

Marta, a Fortaleza resident, and I opted to start a soccer program called Trilhando Caminho in a Trilho, because we have both experienced the positive outcomes that soccer can yield. Marta formerly started a youth soccer league in a favela, and witnessed an overwhelming sense of camaraderie between the players, and reported safer opportunities than the illicit behaviors that lie on the streets of Brazil (interview S.S personal interview, Marta 5/15/15). Marta and I structured the soccer program similar to other Sport-for-Development programs, as these have been proven to be highly successful at teaching girls both skills on the field, and for the outer world.

Sport-for-Development programs (S4D) have been wildly successful bringing together a group of people who lack vital information for their overall well-being due to their living situations, and are provided this information by a sport commonly played in said community. S4D programs promote community participation, as this participation leads to overall community development, and awareness. If a community is actively participating in an organization set within their neighborhood, individual solidarity will improve, and the people of the community will recognize this potential for further change and greater equity in relation to the rest of the community (Schulenkorf 2012). These programs encourage communication, collective effervescence, remove barriers between groups, and change attitudes and behaviors towards particular struggles that the particular population may be facing. Sports for development programs strive for active participation from the entire community, as integrating the community initiates a "social process to change their economic, social, cultural, or environmental situation" (Schulenkorf 2012).

Sports for Development programs bring together a typically subjugated group of people, and incorporate a sport into conversations about social change to initiate sustainable improvement within said group (Woodcock, Cronin, and Forde 2012). By bringing together a group of girls with a sport that is typically dominated by men, soccer, but attainable nonetheless, collective effervescence is created, thus providing the girls a place to speak about the gendered issues that they encounter everyday. Speaking about these issues can inspire change; inspire empowerment “[which is] an instrument for the transformation of gender structures” (Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014).

Moving the Goalposts exemplifies a successful S4D program, which teaches women about sexual health by introducing them to soccer, and extending the program to discussions on sexual and reproductive health, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS. Girls who took part in Moving the Goalposts appeared to have developed their leadership skills and increased their knowledge about HIV, overall enhancing self-autonomy (Woodcock 2012). Participants who participated for a longer period of time felt empowered, realizing that they themselves could move beyond the goalposts of expectations that their culture initially places in front of them. This empowerment led to other benefits, including strong perceived life skills, a better social life, and altered views about HIV/AIDS (Woodcock 2012)

Typically, Sport-for-Development programs are based in communities that are underdeveloped, specifically with regards to human development. Moving the Goalposts is stationed in Kenya, as there is high risk for HIV/AIDS contraction, and low educational understanding about the disease.

Trilhando Caminho was formed in a favela, São Vicente da Paula, a community that is both lacking of financial infrastructure, and therefore lacking in opportunities for success. Specifically, the girls of the favela are at a disadvantage compared to girls outside of the favela, as their financial status in Fortaleza inhibits them from a wider range opportunity. The girls were also subject to Machismo culture, an ideology of sexist and discriminatory behavior deeply ingrained in Brazilian culture. Machismo culture is almost counterintuitive, especially in São Vicente da Paula. Although the women take care of the household, feed everyone, and even at times are the main financial support, men are still held at a higher status, their opinion overrides everybody else’s in the family. As I learned, a woman’s role in Trilho is to attend to the household and the children, and most importantly, make sure her husband is content. Machismo culture is what dominates the spheres of work and home, and cultural aspect that allows a father to choose whether he wants his daughter playing soccer, regardless of the benefits of soccer for girls. The behaviors exhibited in their houses, such as domestic violence and early-age pregnancies, with relation to machismo create a cyclical belief that they are unable to move past the reality placed in front of them, unable to autonomously decide their paths.

All in all, it was difficult to find definite role models within the community that could show girls the beauty of a strong sense of self-esteem, the strength of moving past one’s situation, despite the odds, and reaching a brighter future. The girls of the community are brought up and taught to socialize through their parents. These parents have been

perpetuating the traditional culture of Machismo, the idea that men have the rule over a household whether the woman runs the house or not. Women, then, have very little options to express their femininity through a state of empowerment, and therefore result to expressing that they are women through forms that appear to be much more sexualized. These role models exemplify that the girls of the community must prove their identity of being a woman, of being desirable to men, by sexualizing their bodies, their appearances, and how they interact throughout day-to-day life. Simply put, the girls are lacking a role model that takes sexuality out of identity.

Before beginning the soccer program, I spoke with a couple of sport coaches who had already implemented well-developed sports programs into the community of Trilho, to discover useful strategies to implement while creating the soccer program. I spoke with Gabriela, a ballet teacher in the community that created a ballet program for the young girls of the favela. She spoke of how positive an impact the program has had on the young girls of the community, and how they began to develop a sense of self-esteem independent of the feminine expectations Trilho held for them:

Só que, elas conversam muito madura para a idade delas. Estranha. Elas dançavam funke, e o funke é muito pesado. E hoje não. Hoje elas me falam que elas não gostam mais. Elas gostam de dança muita difícil mas elas não dançavam isso. Só alguém perguntar elas o que elas dançam, elas sabem, “Eu danço bale. E sou ballerina. *Only that, the girls would talk very tough for their age. Weird. The girls would dance funke, and funke is really heavy. And today no. Today the girls talk to me [and say that] they don't like [funke] anymore. They like more difficult dances and don't like to dance [funke] anymore. Someone will ask the girls what they dance, and they know, 'I dance ballet. I am a ballerina (S.S. personal interview. Gabriela. 5/12/15).*

In Brazil, funke dance is a hyper-sexualized form of music that dictates that girls should dance solely for the attention of men, and to show-off sexually pleasing aspects of their bodies. Gabriela describes that the young girls began to detach from this wanting to please the opposite gender, and found different ways to express their feminine identities, such that their sense of self-esteem could be developed without the need for approval for their sexualized behaviors. The ballet class has made a positive impact on both the community and the younger girls that attend the class. With positive, a strong woman leader, the right dance shoes, and just a little music, Gabriela has contributed to a strong sense of self-esteem within her ballerinas.

The most developed sports program in the community was the capoeira class, taught by Paulo, a German man who moved to Brazil ten years ago because of his passion for capoeira. Capoeira is a battle-dance sport that teaches youth to work together and communicate, with each other's bodies, to reach a common goal of creating a fluid dance-battle.

Capoeira class began in Trilho five years ago, allowing time for the sport to take root in the community, and presently, capoeira has become an integral part of São Vicente da Paula. Paulo brought the sport to the community with the help of his capoeira team, and

with the belief that the sport could truly contribute to positive human development within the community. As a passionate believer in social work, bringing capoeira to a favela was the ideal location to truly give back to a community in need:

*E pra mim, junta duas paixões, duas áreas que eu gosto que e a questão de trabalho social e a questão de capoeira que eu acho que conecta muito bem. And for me, this joins my two passions, two áreas that I like; the question of social work, and the question of capoeira that I think connects really well (S.S. personal interview. Paulo. 05/14/15).*

From the beginning, Paulo has believed that capoeira can make a positive social impact, both by introducing capoeira as an accessible sport, and providing positive alternative paths for the youth of the favela. Upon arrival to Trilho, he understood the issues that the population faced and is currently facing, and decided to create a capoeira program to promote a strong sense of self-esteem:

*“Por que eles queriam na verdade infelizmente a vida deles não tem muitos oportunidades de demonstrar, tem um desafio conseguir. Não está muitas vezes não está assim. Eu acho que assim, eu tento pelo menos a pintar a capoeira assim. Ah você não sabe fazer, você vai aprender. Vai tentar e vai ser você vai conseguir. E essa ai eu acho que e um grande atração pra isso. Because they want the unfortunate truth that their life does not have many opportunities to demonstrate, to have a dream that they can achieve. Not that many other times it is not like this. I think that, I try at least, to paint capoeira as such. You do not know how to [do capoeira], you will learn. You will try and you will get it. And this I think is the big attraction to capoeira (S.S. personal interview. Paulo. 5/14/15).*

Painting capoeira in a way such that the youth of the community have the ability to become capoeira masters if they just continue to practice, teaches the youth that if they are inspired to reach a goal, they will be able to do just that. Paulo has been instilling a strong sense of self-esteem in his students through his capoeira class by showing the youth that their goals are not far away if they continue to practice and work towards them. By being a positive role model, the youth of the community are that much more willing to continue to attend the class, as they respect Paulo for the man he is, and what he has achieved with regards to capoeira. They see Paulo as an example of someone with a strong sense of self-esteem that he has gained through his sport.

After observing the community for a significant amount of time, and talking to other sports coaches of the community, I set out to structure the soccer program. Marta and I created the program under CUFA, an organization created in 2005 that strives to increase youth development within favelas of Northeastern Brazil, using tools of inclusion such as sport. The general objective of CUFA is stated as such:

*Promover a ação efetiva de humanização do ser através da reflexão crítica e transformação de sua realidade através da prática esportiva do futebol, potencializando a concepção interdimensional junto às Mulheres inseridas no programa, deixando como legado um produto final que promove a real autonomia social. Promote effective action [with regards to] humanization through critical*

*reflection and transformation of reality through the practice of soccer, increasing inter-dimensional design along with women in the program, [therefore] leaving a final product that promotes real social autonomy (Periera de Lima, B. 2013).*

The program strives to introduce new formats of interaction between children of a multitude of favelas communities, therefore increasing the social development of a society. CUFA is for both men and women alike, but specifically promotes the social evolution of women, as women are the more subjugated population of the two, in favela communities (Periera de Lima, B. 2013). We used the structure of CUFA to create the goal of Trilhando Caminho, which is to broaden the options of the girls of Trilho, through developing their sense of self-esteem using soccer. Sandra backed the program, stating that:

*A gente abriu o leque de possibilidades pelo menos para elas jogarem. Ter a ousadia de ir em frente e ver outras coisas antes de se envolver, de casar de, ter filhos, né? We opened up the range of possibilities at least for the girls to play [soccer]. [For them to] have the confidence to go ahead and do other things before getting married and having children, right (S.S. personal interview. Sandra. 04/16/15).*

When we started the program, I decided to structure the practices such that they were balanced with developing the girls' soccer skills, but also skills for the outer world. One of the drills I taught them was how to properly defend a ball from an opponent. I demonstrated a stance where their legs were positioned such that they would not be able to fall if someone pushed them, and could move quickly so that their opponent could not get around them and touch the soccer ball. This exercise was meant to develop the girl's sense of both physical and emotional strength. I described to them that with this technique, the girls would have the autonomy to decide whether someone would be able to take the ball from them or not. Reflecting on this drill, I realized that I taught the girls this to develop a strong sense of self-esteem within them, as there were many external sources telling them they could not be or do the things that they wanted to. I was acting on my gendered beliefs that girls need more support than boys do, as they do not have as strong a sense of internal self-esteem as boys do. Similarly, the girls of Trilho are stuck in a cycle of poverty, seeing their mothers grow up as teenage parents, with potential familial abuse and drug abuse as their main sources of role models.

While the girls of Trilho seem to be prone to more illicit behaviors than the girls of Boulder, both stories relate back to the same theme: coaching methods for girls are based around developing a strong sense of self-esteem, as gender beliefs dictate that girls need an external source of support more than boys do. The girls in Brazil seemed to be exposed to significantly more difficulties than those in Colorado, solely on the basis of socio-economic status. Regardless of the unevenness in difficulties and opportunities presented to both populations of girls, the forms of coaching methods stayed synonymous. In Brazil, the coaching methods across three sports all focused on the common goal of instilling a strong sense of self-esteem within the girls who participated. Each program was created to provide an alternative path for girls, and give them a sense of what it's like to make autonomous decisions, unlike the restrictions that Machismo

culture creates for them. In Boulder, all coaches created methods such that girls could feel strong and competitive, while also identifying as feminine teenagers. While in Brazil, the sports were used mainly for development and construction of a positive sense of self, Boulder coaching methods were structured to continue this positive construction of the self, not create it from the ground up, like in Brazil.

Coaching methods for girls' foster a safe space to exhibit emotional behavior while also providing the opportunity to showcase strength and a competitive nature. Coaching methods provide this space for girls so that they can hone skills for the outer world, and test different identities that may not be stereotypically feminine. Regardless of how gendered these coaching methods are, there have been significant success stories structured around the ways coaches chose to shape their players.

### ***Success Stories of External Support***

Austin structures his role as a coach such that he is an ultimate source of support and therefore provider of self-esteem for the girls:

Because I really believe women need that type of support. And I think all players do to a certain extent, but probably girls more than boys (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15).

As previously shown, he describes himself as the anchor on the side of the field that the girls can hold onto if the game takes a turn for the worst. Similarly, he teaches his girls that it is okay to lose:

It's more like, 'It's okay, it's okay.' We'll work our way out of it, or if it doesn't work out, it's still okay. We're doing the best we can. And it's okay. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15)

Austin plays into the idea that competitive nature is not a dominant part of a girl's identity, and therefore, winning does not need to be the focus of the game at hand. Instead, he focuses on fostering a space of self-esteem, reassuring his team that win or lose, as long as they did the best they could, they should be very proud of their performance.

Austin was the most gendered coach I interviewed. Each of his responses was structured around his assumptions that girls are weaker than boys are, both physically and mentally. He feels the constant need to reassure the girls that they are doing a good job, while he assumes that the boys know they are doing a good job while playing. He encourages the girls far more than he does the boys, and claims that the girls can be far more manipulative than the boys can be:

Boys usually don't [play mind games with me]. Boys will step out and say, 'tell me what to do.' Girls will often try to manipulate the situation. It's okay that's the way they work. (S.S. personal interview, Austin 11/30/15)

Austin's gendered assumptions heavily influence how he coaches girls', which in turn has heavily influenced the construction of the self for his girls. However, Austin is considered a highly influential and successful girl's soccer coach.

Sasha was a former player on Austin's team. She began her journey with him while training for the national level of soccer. Austin's coaching heavily influenced the player—and the woman—Sasha became:

I can tell you that [Austin] was one of the most influential people in my life, coaches in my life... [He] is a person who, you know through teaching me just about the game and the actual literal pieces of soccer on their own and he, he has just invested in me as a human and a person, and cares about me and wants me to, to see me success and to believe in you know being successful as a man or a woman. And he's just really taught me about life and I think that's the, and connected soccer to life and what that means (S.S. personal interview, Sasha 12/8/15)

Sasha describes Austin as one of the most influential people in her life. She attributes her professional success to his nurturing of her identity as a soccer athlete, and her overall construction of self. Sasha credits soccer to all the successes of her life, and Austin as a key player in these successes. Not only was she asked to play at the national level, Sasha continues to use her story to instill self-esteem in future female soccer players. Similarly, she is a correspondent for a website formatted around empowering young girl soccer players to continue playing through other stories of successful women.

Although Sasha's case is extraordinary in the sense that she reached the professional level of soccer, something very few people have the ability to do, her case of self-esteem is standard. Sasha's success is of standard proportions because she attributes some of her success to a coach that implements very gendered methods into the shaping of his players. Sasha draws self-esteem from this experience, because Austin assured her that regardless of her seemingly permanent feminine traits, she could still be a successful player. Austin and the other coaches I interviewed recognized the differences between femininity and masculinity, and implemented these differences into their coaching methods. Even if her identity as a woman may inhibit her athleticism, her identity as a soccer athlete, shaped by Austin, has been extremely successful.

While in Brazil, I also subconsciously implemented gendered coaching methods into my practices, with the girls of Trilhando Caminho. By teaching them strength exercises, my methods implied that their feminine identities, exemplified by wearing short skirts and flirting with boys, did not have to be their dominant displays of identity. Instead, I taught the girls that they could exemplify a strength on the soccer field that could be useful when standing up for what they believe in, regardless of if they deemed their actions as feminine or not. During soccer practices, the girls of Trilhando Caminho did identity work in the sense that they were reflecting upon how I chose to present myself, and potentially mimicking my behavior. Throughout my time there, I deliberately did not exhibit any stereotypically feminine behaviors, in hopes that they would gain a sense of

self-assurance from me. I structured my identity such that the girls would reflexively exhibit traits similar to mine, traits not seen as predominantly feminine, but more athletic.

In part because of my gendered coaching methods, the girls continue to play soccer in the Brazilian favela. Although soccer is viewed as a predominantly masculine sport, the girls of Trilhando Caminho have found a form of self-esteem and self-assurance from the sport, in the sense that they can hone their strength and teamwork skills in an athletic fashion. Recently, a kick-starter campaign raised roughly 650 dollars for the girls of Trilhando Caminho, to continue their journey in soccer. The money went to soccer shoes, equipment, and clean drinking water. Outsiders unrelated to the program recognized the importance of girls playing soccer in Brazil. The program was recognized as a sport-for-development program, providing girls a safe space to hone their strength and gain an overall sense of self-esteem. Trilhando Caminho continues to thrive today, teaching girls how to play soccer while also assuring them that their identities can be formatted around supposedly masculine characteristics, and still be seen as feminine.

## Conclusion

This thesis shows that, in sports, external sources heavily influence girls' levels of self-esteem. Girls specifically struggle with constructions of their identity in sports because being competitive and physical are not typical traits attributed to femininity. Soccer specifically, can be a very physical sport that requires high levels of athleticism, strength, and competitive nature. Girls who play soccer receive extra support from their coaches, reassuring them that their performances on the field will not inhibit their feminine identities off the field.

Throughout my research process, I came to understand that coaches opted to gender their coaching methods because they expected a higher level of performance and autonomy from boys playing soccer than from girls. The coaches assumed boys knew what to do on the field, that they were there solely to play soccer and not socialize, and that they had high enough levels of self-esteem such that they did not need reassurance. The coaches assumed the opposite of their girls' teams.

While many coaches spoke of how successful their girls' teams are, and how well they perform on the field, the way they described their coaching methods implied that the coaches felt the girls needed an external source of self-esteem. Regardless of their capabilities on the field, the coaches felt that by reassuring the girls when they played well, and coddling them when things did not go well during the game, they could construct a strong sense of self-esteem for the girls. Girls responded very positively to this form of coaching. When they knew they had an external source reassuring them of their performances, they were more likely to continue playing soccer, and continue to better themselves through the sport. This has been shown through both the stories of Sasha and her path to the national team, and the girls of Trilhando Caminho continuing their journey with soccer, regardless of what machismo culture may dictate.

When constructing ideas of the self, girls have a more difficult time navigating their identities within the realm of sports than boys. Boys are assumed to be competitive and aggressive by nature. This ideology, as Messner claims, begins the second we segregate the genders when they begin to play sports. This separation begins the formatting of separate coaching methods based on assumptions made about the separate genders. We assume these separations inherent to the being; but in reality, gendered assumptions are only solidified into the construction of one's identity if outsiders are to applaud or ostracize one's behavior. Women and girls alike have the tendency of "attempting to control and define their own lives and bodies [as] being shaped within the existing hegemonic definitions of femininity" (Messner 1988:204). Girls must find a balance between the hegemonic ideologies of femininity, and the athleticism that soccer demands.

Sports are a space of hegemonic masculinity that girls must navigate while attempting to preserve their feminine identities. Girls aged 14-18 specifically are at a time in their lives where identity construction is of the utmost importance, as their peers heavily influence whether they will be accepted or not based on their constructions of identity. Girls playing sports at this age have a particularly difficult time balancing between their identities as a feminine high-school student, and a competitive athlete. Sports are seen as "a highly segregated, homophobic, sexist, and misogynistic gender regime, [that] not only contributes to the gender order, but renders considerable costs for both sexes" (Anderson 2008:260). Girls attempt to incorporate ideas of hegemonic femininity into the ways they play soccer, by making the game more about teamwork, communication, and friendship; rather than competition, physicality, and winning. However, the ways the boys' and girls' games are structured are not solely attributed to the girls and boys playing them. Coaches play a significant role in the structure of the games, as they perpetuate gender beliefs into their coaching methods, and the ways they believe their coaches should perform when the game begins.

In my research, I determined that coaches sustain hegemonic ideologies of femininity while also instilling self-esteem within their players, by shaping the game around these ideologies of femininity. Coaches such as Austin would allow his girls a significant amount of time to socialize before practice, so the girls could continue feminine identity work while in a space typically paralleling with hegemonic masculinity. Coaches such as Nate would constantly reassure his players when they did something good, and would always find ways to relate soccer back to real world experiences. By using the soccer field as a metaphor for life, Nate creates a safe space for girls to try out identities outside of their feminine ones, and he ensures them that this is okay by encouraging competition and embracing the physicality of soccer.

In Brazil as well, I implemented gendered coaching methods and found them to be very effective. By constructing drills that were conducive to real-world situations and overall strength development, I found the girls began to accept the competitive and strength-building identity that stems from soccer, instead of simply acting within their ideas of hegemonic femininity to avoid ostracization or rejection from their society. I also displayed my identity as a strong and athletic woman, providing the girls an opportunity

to gain a sense of self-esteem from someone who has become so strong and empowered through soccer as well.

Although entirely gendered, all the coaching methods researched proved to be highly successful in creating strong athletic soccer players, who also developed a strong sense of self-esteem through reassurance from their coaches. Most coaching methods fell under the same category of implementing methods to view soccer as a metaphor for life, while also allowing girls a safe space to practice identities not seen as hegemonically feminine. The stratification of successes resulting from these methods moved from girls just beginning to gain a sense of self-esteem from soccer because of how much their culture inhibited them, to women being asked to play at the professional level because their sense of identity was strongly reassured by a coach.

With such positive outcomes yielded from such explicitly gendered methods, one may ask, is it worth changing these methods so that the genders play on an equal playing field? Clearly, women have still found ways to excel in soccer. The United States Women's National Team, for example, has become a force in instilling self-esteem in young girls across the nation with their seemingly endless success in the sport. Sport-for-Development programs that segregate the sexes have seen significant improvements for girls, not only through learning a new sport, but also through learning about their sexuality and protection against HIV and other infectious diseases. In my research alone, I saw results such as girls potentially breaking the cycle of poverty that inhibits their freedom, and succeeding in soccer to the extent of professionalism.

Inequality of the genders continues to perpetuate so many facets of our society today. Women still do not receive the same pay or treatment as men do in the workforce. Men who choose to stay at home with their children are questioned, and the genders remain segregated in spaces such as sport. The majority of the time, segregation yields disadvantaged and negative results. Women in the workforce must work twice as hard to reach the levels that men typically do, because society assumes they are not as focused on their work. Men who stay at home while their partner takes care of finances are ostracized, deemed as less masculine than men who choose to be the financial providers of the family.

In sports, specifically soccer, segregation seems to create different results. While coaching methods instill a sense of self-esteem within girls, they also reassure girls that they can balance their feminine identity while juggling a ball on the soccer field. Regardless of how gendered they are, and how sexist some coaches may appear, women continue to successfully dominate soccer. Women such as Alex Morgan are role models for girls around the world, exemplifying how to maintain one's femininity while being one of the top goal scorers this world has seen.

In conclusion, girls need soccer as a space to identify as strong, athletic, and competitive people. Soccer has been specifically pertinent in bringing girls together to teach them these lessons, and the coaches behind these lessons are seen as huge contributors to the construction of their girl's identities. Coaches implement different coaching methods for

different genders, under gendered assumptions about the capabilities of boys and girls. For girls specifically, these coaching methods have been shown to create high levels of self-esteem in the players, that can further a girls overall construction of self into a stronger woman. If coaching methods were to be equal for the genders, it is unclear to say whether the U.S. women's team would be as successful, or if girls would continue to play soccer to increase their overall levels of self-esteem. Soccer is a metaphor for life, and for how we choose to perform our identities in our everyday lives. The coaching methods implemented for girls have shown them that they can be both strong and feminine at the same time; creating the incredible women we see playing soccer today. So, do we equalize coaching methods, or find peace in the diversities that soccer brings?

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## Interview Guide

### Interview Guide for Coaches

1. What is your personal history with soccer?
2. What led you to continue pursuing it now?
3. Where did you grow up? What was that place's relationship to soccer?
4. What factors led you to playing soccer?
5. Do you think soccer plays a big role in Boulder? How/why?
6. What do you enjoy most about coaching girls' soccer?
7. Are there any specific aspects of the games that differ between boys and girls?
8. How long have the teams you've overseen worked together? Is there typically a quick turnaround with participants?
9. What is the overall structure of your soccer club/ how does the program function?
10. Why did you choose to work in the high school girl's department?
11. Why is it important for girls to play soccer?
12. Do you think there's a stigma attached to girls who play soccer?
13. What are the demographics of the girls currently enrolled at your age level?  
What are their characteristics?