

The Female Athlete Engaged in “Masculine Sports”; A Study of the Depiction of Female Athleticism in Post-Title IX Western Sports Films.

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Though women did achieve institutional rights to participate in so-called “masculine sports”, with the enactment of the federal law of “Title ix” in 1970s, they were not recognized well as male athletes by the sports authorities, public or media. Despite this marginalization, since 1970’s, women have been increasingly portrayed as great athletes in media including cinema. The purpose of this study was to examine the “Post-Title ix” cinematic portrayals of female athletes engaged in "masculine sports" and to examine whether the portrayals had genuinely catered to the empowerment of female athlete or had reaffirmed the masculine hegemony under a falsified female empowerment. The study was conducted based on secondary data. To construct the theoretical and conceptual framework, Michel Foucault's theory of “Panopticism”, Margret Duncan’s idea of "ambivalence" and Judith Lorber’s argument about media overemphasis of heterosexuality were taken to use. The Post “Title ix” films “She’s The Man (2006) by Andy Fikman, “Bend it like Beckham” (2002) by Gurinder Chadha, “Million Dollar Baby” (2004) and “The Next Karate Kid” (1994) by Clint Eastwood and Christopher Cain were randomly selected. The findings revealed these films to have taken measures to counterbalance the dismantled power hierarchy between patriarchal system and the empowered female athlete, using different strategies such as highlighting the heterosexuality of the female athlete, making her a disciple of a male coach or by reaffirming typical gender stereotypes. The films were celebrations of “masculinity” which used female athletes as tools to glorify patriarchy. Despite the attainment of institutional rights women have hardly gained social sanction to remain in the territory of “masculine sports”.

Keywords: Female athleticism, Masculine sports, Title- ix, Panopticism, Ambivalence