

**BUMP, SET, SPIKE...SPANDEX:  
EXAMINING COACHES' AND ATHLETIC DIRECTORS' INTERPRETATIONS OF  
THE CANADIAN INTERUNIVERSITY SPORT WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL RULE ON  
PLAYER UNIFORMS**

**by**

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## Abstract

Despite a gender equity policy and an identical uniform rule for both men's and women's Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) volleyball players, every CIS women's volleyball team wears tight fitting spandex uniforms, while the men's teams wear looser and longer shorts to play. The dissimilarities between uniforms for the men's and women's volleyball teams demonstrate how CIS female volleyball players are governed in inequitable ways that feminize and sexualize the female players. Informed by feminist critical theory this research provides a discussion of the gendered power relations that work as a backdrop to the study of one aspect of organizational culture, namely the uniform rule that has developed in CIS volleyball. Using Martin's (1992) three perspective approach to organizational culture this study examines the women's volleyball uniform practice from the perspective of the Canada West, CIS women's volleyball coaches and athletic directors. The three main themes that emerged from the interview data reveal that volleyball culture, player input and the power of coaches and athletic directors all impact the women's uniform practices. Additionally, each theme provides support for Martin's **integration**, **differentiation**, and **fragmentation** perspectives. Most notable are the contradictions, ambiguities and confusion around the spandex uniform as they highlight the complexity of the issue by illustrating how coaches' and athletic directors' lack clarity and understanding about the practice and its implications. This study exposes the gendered sub-text that flows through the Canada West Volleyball organization and acts as a jumping-off point for engaging in new dialogue about team uniform practices.

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to think of women's volleyball without conjuring up images of athletic feats, long and lean bodies, and revealing uniforms. However, volleyball has a long history that predates many of the aspects that we relate to today's game. Volleyball was invented in the 1800's as a less physical activity for business men who did not want to play basketball (Bertucci, 1979). Because of its reduced physical contact, it was also considered a suitable sport for women; albeit with different rules from the men's game, specifically with regards to the height of the net, court dimensions and number of players permitted on the court (Reeser, 2003). The organization responsible for the standardization of volleyball rules was the Federation International de Volleyball (FIVB), formed in 1947 in Paris, France. This official governing body held the first men's world championships in 1949, followed by the women's in 1952. The indoor sport made its first appearance as an Olympic sport at the 1964 Olympics, with beach volleyball being a later addition to the Olympic Games (FIVB – history). The outdoor sport, which originally began as a men's game played along side women's beauty contests, did not become a FIVB sanctioned game until 1986 and made its first appearance as an official Olympic sport in 1996 at the Atlanta Games (FIVB – history). While the sport drew media attention, in part because of the bikini-like uniforms worn by female beach volleyball players, little research has been uncovered to date that critically analyses outdoor or indoor volleyball uniform rules. This study will focus on the latter by analyzing how coaches and athletic directors in one conference of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) league interpret the women's indoor volleyball uniform rule. Addressing this issue will provide a glimpse into the organizational culture of the sport of volleyball in its broader historical and cultural context.

Volleyball is now second in participation levels to soccer globally (Kenny & Gregory, 2006). However, after the successful introduction of beach volleyball at the 1996 Olympic Games, by 1998 the professional beach volleyball associations were struggling for viewership and sponsorship money (Beach Volleyball Database, 2008). As a means of survival, the two professional beach leagues sanctioned by the FIVB, namely the Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) and the Women's Professional Volleyball Association (WPVA), began a TV campaign to give exposure to an upcoming tour (FIVB - history). Goals of increasing public interest and enhancing the popularity and visibility of the sport were cited among the reasons for some major rule adjustments to the game in 1998 (Beach Volleyball Database, 2008). Among these new rules included changes to the uniform requirements for both beach and indoor volleyball players. Although the ruling applied only to those competing at the professional and international level, many volleyball organizations outside the FIVB jurisdiction, including the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) organization have complied with the FIVB uniform specifications. It is examining the reasoning behind and the implications of the uniform regulation for women's indoor volleyball in the CIS that will be the focus of this study.

### **FIVB Uniforms**

In the FIVB casebook, the uniform rule indicates that player jerseys should have an athletic look with short sleeves, a collar, and must follow the body line (2003). This regulation is the same for both women and men, but the FIVB ruling differs on the shorts for male and female players. Men's shorts are required to be fitted in the waist, must not be loose or baggy and the inseam must not exceed 10cm. The women's shorts are required to fit the bodyline, with inseam no longer than 5cm, or must be cut in an upwards angle towards the top of the leg. Women are also permitted to wear one piece uniforms (FIVB, 2003). These 1998 FIVB uniform changes for

both men and women differ significantly from the previous rules which simply required players of either gender to wear a jersey, shorts, socks, and shoes. While both the men's and women's rules now stipulate a prescribed fit and length of shorts, it is obvious that the women's shorts rule has been taken to more of an extreme than that of the men. On their website, the FIVB indicates the men's and women's rules changed for various reasons including: player development, spectator interests, marketability and sponsorship (FIVB, 2003, p. 5). Although the governing body cited commercialization as the reason for their amendments to the volleyball uniform regulations in 1998, a closer examination of the historically gendered treatment of male and female athletes is needed to more fully understand how this rule has been implemented at the amateur level.

### **Volleyball in Canada**

To date, Volleyball Canada, the governing body of volleyball in Canada and active member in international volleyball, has yet to adopt the FIVB's 1998 uniform amendment as part of its own governing mandate. Although Canadian teams must abide by the FIVB ruling while competing internationally, the uniform ruling is not in the 2008 Canadian Volleyball rulebook. Under Canadian volleyball rules, the uniform requirements consist of a jersey, shorts, socks, and shoes, with no prescriptions regarding fit or length of the player's shorts (Volleyball Canada, 2008, p.21). The only requirement is that all players must have the same jersey and shorts (p.21). On their website, Volleyball Canada does not specifically mention the reason for this divergence from the FIVB, but does provide a link to their policy<sup>i</sup> regarding gender equality. It states that: "Volleyball Canada is committed to encouraging gender equity in the administration, policies, programs and activities of the Association" (Volleyball Canada, 2007). The document goes on to explain the goals of the association which are: "To ensure equal opportunities, address the concerns and needs of both genders, to promote and support both sexes equally and to ensure

that governing structure encourages and promotes full and equal participation of both genders” (Volleyball Canada, 2007). Volleyball Canada appears to be employing a liberal feminist interpretation of gender equality, claiming that equal opportunity should be provided to the players. However, the terms equality and equity are not interchangeable. Kidd and Donnelly (2000) explain that, “Whereas ‘equality’ means treating persons the same, ‘equity’ means giving all persons fair access to social resources, while recognizing that they may well have different needs and interests” (p. 139). Therefore, simply providing equal opportunities for men and women does not ensure their fair and equitable treatment. In this study, gender equity will refer to the quality of treatment that male and female athletes receive, whereas equality will denote sameness. Volleyball Canada has created its uniform rule in accordance with their equality mandate as there is to be no difference in treatment based on the gender of the player.

The volleyball rules adapted by the CIS organization, the association to which all Canadian university sports teams belong, are essentially the same as those established by Volleyball Canada. While there are slight rule variations in terms of substitutions, player positions (eg. Libero<sup>ii</sup>) and hosting duties, there are no differences based on gender in the uniform requirements between the Volleyball Canada rulebook and those of the CIS. Therefore, the CIS appears to adhere to the gender neutral uniform rule specified by Volleyball Canada.

However, it should be noted that all CIS women’s volleyball teams do wear tight spandex shorts to compete in, while the men’s teams wear looser longer shorts, so the actual practice is not gender neutral as specified in the rulebook. This is problematic because it demonstrates that so-called equity policies and gender neutral regulations are not enough to eradicate the gendered treatment of male and female players. Current research and historical analyses of Canadian sport organizations has shown female athletes are governed in different ways than their male counterparts and this manner of governance can be oppressive to female athletes (Hall, 2002;

Hoerber, 2007). As such, women's spandex uniform should not be viewed merely as a garment worn by female volleyball players, but as an example of the ongoing feminization of female athletes. The tight fitting uniforms sexualize the female players by bringing attention to their lower bodies (legs and buttocks); in comparison to the men's uniforms which are looser and do not focus attention specifically on the male anatomy. A feminist lens is useful when examining the values and beliefs that guide the decisions of CIS coaches and athletic directors regarding the uniform rule.

### **Feminist Critical Theory**

Critical theory focuses on social injustices and problematizes structures and institutions that operate to maintain inequitable and unjust social and political relations (Marshall, 1997). The foundations of traditional critical theory are solid, but need to be re-conceptualized in order to be more useful in studying women's oppression. According Marshall (1997), a feminist critical approach combines strands of critical theory, feminism and post-structuralism to examine the effects of institutional power on women's lives. Different elements of each theory, like discourse deconstruction, troubling oppressive social structures, and critiquing patriarchy, are incorporated under one theoretical umbrella to address how policy and rule interpretations, for example, are gendered (Marshall, 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Dongxiao, 2004). Feminist critical theory examines how power and values are embedded in institutions and are not often seen as problematic by identifying both the formal and informal processes underlying oppressive power (Marshall, 1997).

This theory starts from the assumption that gender inequity results from purposeful, though perhaps unconscious, choices that serve some groups' ideology and dominance over others. Even the interpretation of sports rules and the resulting practices are affected by dominant discourses that create and reinforce inequitable power relations (Taylor, 1997; Bryce &

Humes, 2003; Skinner, Edwards & Stewart, 2004; Wilson, 2007). In order to critically analyze individual rule interpretations, it is important to have an understanding of the discourses that shape them and how they come to exist. Discourses are dominant forms of knowledge that are expressed through written, spoken and body language (Penney & Shaw, 2003). They work through social institutions to create ideologies, which are social constructs made up of widely held beliefs and values. They are used to control both the actions and bodies of people (St. Pierre, 2000, p.8). For example, a gender ideology refers to the commonly held assumptions and expectations that social actors have about what it means to be male or female. Powerful discourses not only inform the construction of gender ideologies, but are also the channels through which they are displayed (Clark & Cockburn, 2002). They are sustained by a persuasive form of social control known as hegemony which is central to feminist critical theory because it theorizes how gender inequities are the result of unequal power relations that are legitimated by their depiction as being normal and natural (Donaldson, 1993; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Connell (1987) first employed Gramsci's theory of hegemony to study gender relations in the now classic work, *Gender and Power*, by theorizing that what we view as ideal male and female bodies are socially created. She argues that although alternatives and challenges to these gender ideals exist, at a collective level certain ideological practices are sustained in order to institutionalize men's dominance over women.

Sport is an environment that is guided by heteronormative and masculinist ideals of gender, where powerful discourses produce and sustain the notion of male and female genders as binary opposites (Ross & Shiner, 2004; Travers, 2006). This dichotomizes the two genders and assigns them different signifiers with different values attached. For example, men are traditionally valued for their strength and physical abilities, whereas women are often seen as less physically capable, having their roles tied more to their femininity and sexuality. Connell

(1987) refers to these ideals as hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, and argues that these social categories provide justification for privileging males over females.

These social constructions become problematic in sport because powerful individuals like sport managers, coaches, marketing personnel and the media often rely on heteronormative views of women to manage the actions and bodies of female athletes. This often means that the athlete's beauty and sexuality is emphasized over her athletic ability (Guiliano & Knight, 2001; Hardin, Lynn, & Waldorf, 2005; Rinehart, 2005; Bissell & Duke, 2007; Chrouser & Gurung, 2007). For some coaches and athletic directors, feminine ideals guide the way they govern women's sports (Hoerber, 2007). For example, the rules of sports are often used as a way to feminize female athletes when they are altered from the men's game to accommodate a perceived inferiority in female physiology (Vertinsky, 1990; Hall, 2002). In fact, a historical analysis of Western sport demonstrates that the feminization of female athletes through regulations is a long standing practice (Cahn, 1993; Lenskyj, 1995; Wright & Clarke, 1999; Hall, 2002). It is one that needs to be investigated further because it is through the analysis of these social practices "that we become aware that certain interpretations of values are implemented and maintained by dominant powerful groups" (Hoerber, 2004, p.7).

Because the goals of feminist critical theory are to disrupt the status quo, to critique dominant power structures by analyzing taken for granted assumptions about gender, and to create alternatives meanings and practices that are more equitable (St. Pierre, 2000), this emancipatory approach is a very useful tool when looking rules of sport. However, an additional theory which focuses more on micro organizational cultures is needed to further unpack the CIS practice of spandex uniforms and to critically analyze interpretations of the volleyball uniform rule.

## **Rules as an Aspect of Organizational Culture**

Organizational practices are those which shape the operations of an organization and can include formal or informal guides for behaviour (Martin, 1992). Equity policies, sports rules and even unwritten norms fall under this category. I argue that studying the spandex uniform rule as an aspect of organizational culture will reveal how gendered ways of thinking are embedded in sport rule making and how these create and sustain the inequitable treatment of female athletes. Martin's (1992) theory builds on DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional theory that argues there is homogeneity within and among organizations by expanding the level of analysis to explore the additional complexities of organizational culture, which includes conflict and ambiguity. She developed three approaches for analyzing organizational cultures known as *integration, differentiation and fragmentation* which helps to explain how values can be shared, viewed differently by different organizational sub-groups, or silenced altogether.

Fenton, Frisby and Luke (1999) and Hoerber (2004) used these same perspectives in their studies of sport organizational cultures and serve as the guiding studies behind my own research. They found evidence of consistent themes across the organizations, as well as other beliefs shared only at the sub-group level, and silenced and ambiguous values that contributed to the how the organizations handled policies and practices related to the gender of students and athletes.

## **Context and Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze how spandex shorts have become the uniform for women's volleyball teams in British Columbia and Alberta that compete in the CIS, when the CIS rulebook has no specific uniform requirements. This will be accomplished by interviewing the coaches and athletic directors of each CIS school in BC and Alberta with a

women's volleyball team about their reasoning and roles in implementing the spandex uniform practice. My research questions are as follows:

1. What considerations are made by CIS women's volleyball coaches and athletic directors when implementing the uniform rule?
2. What explanations do the coaches and athletic directors cite for the differences in the uniforms worn by male and female CIS volleyball players?
3. Do coaches and/or athletic directors feel there is a need to change the spandex uniform practice?

Coaches and athletic directors hold powerful positions within the CIS organization and it is their responsibility to help make team decisions (Armstrong-Doherty, 2005; Hoerber, 2007; Kihl, Kikulis, & Thibault, 2007), including implementing and enforcing the uniform rule. Because these team authorities often act as the cultural leaders for their teams, individual volleyball players were not consulted in this study. The aim of this research is to get the perspective of sport leaders as their voices would provide significant insight into the study of power dynamics and gender relations in CIS volleyball program.

Despite a gender neutral uniform rule and gender equity policies in the CIS, the practice of dressing the men's and women's teams according to FIVB uniform prescriptions illustrates that male female volleyball players in the CIS level are governed in gendered ways. I do not necessarily advocate that men's and women's teams should be run identically as this assumes the genders are socially neutral constructs and overlooks other external factors that may affect the men and women's teams differently. The uniform practices should be examined critically and this has not yet been done in the literature. The goal of this study is to shed some light onto why these uniforms continue to be chosen for amateur female athletes with a hope of providing

additional insight into the study of gender equity in CIS sport and potentially making recommendations for change to the CIS volleyball organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theories and literature that inform my study in more depth. The first section focuses on how feminist critical theory is useful for studying the gendered treatment of female athletes, because of its emphasis on socially created gender ideals and power. This approach helped me to analyze and critique the current gender order in CIS volleyball and the concepts of masculinity and femininity which are of particular relevance given the connections between power and gender ideologies and their impact on rule formation and implementation. However, in order to critically analyze sport rules one must also have an understanding of the organizational culture in which they are created, understood and implemented. Martin's (1992) theory examines organizational culture and how these manifestations impact the decisions made by organizational members. Her approach works well with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional theory as they both focus on the practices of organizational members and the resulting effects, although Martin's work offers additional perspectives on how this occurs.

In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the literature that contextualizes my study. Research on gender equity policies provides insight into the efforts taken by Canadian university sport organizations to create more equitable environments for student-athletes. The literature critiques liberal feminist equity policies and demonstrates how multiple interpretations of these policies can affect the ways in which sport is governed. This leads into a discussion of the sexualisation of female athletes by leaders in the sport world including coaches, sport managers, media professionals, and marketing agents. This literature is important because it demonstrates how feminized, heteronormative and sexualized ideologies of female athletes are perpetuated

through practices in sporting cultures. A review of the literature on how the rules of sport are influenced by these agents of sport and by other factors follows. It examines how rules are created and changed, interpreted, and how they are gendered. The chapter concludes with research on female athletes' uniforms and how dress code regulations and requirements have a long standing history in the study of gender and sport and a discussion of the damaging consequences that these practices can have on female athletes.

### **Feminist Critical Theory**

Feminist critical theory questions how the social construction of gender limits the possibilities for equity. Specifically, it examines how ideological agendas in organizational documents serve and benefit dominant groups (Marshall, 1997). Because these theorists study power relations found within structures, institutions and the social construction of knowledge, the sporting world is an interesting site to examine because it is embedded in politics, culture, the economy and historical patterns of men's patriarchal control over women (Cole, 1994; Theberge, 1985). The hierarchies in dominant forms of western sports are skewed toward reproducing and reifying a cultural myth of male physical superiority (Rinehart, 2005), making sport an institution that keeps most women from occupying positions of power and rewards men for monopolizing those channels (Theberge, 1985). It reinforces a power differential based on gender that is not only favourable to some males, but also constraining towards most women (Ross & Shiner, 2004).

The production of knowledge is an exercise in power where only some voices are heard and few are acted upon (Hoerber, 2007). Organizational decisions are rarely inclusive and tend to be patriarchal and masculinist, thus embedding and rationalizing gender inequities in organizational cultures (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Fenton & Frisby, 1999; Hoerber & Frisby, 2001; Hoerber, 2007). Because policies and rules are interpreted at different levels and

from varying points of view depending on the discourses available to the reader, they can yield multiple perspectives (Taylor 1997; Humes & Skinner, 2003; Skinner, Edwards & Stewart, 2004). Yet, powerful social actors determine the availability of discourses and are primarily responsible for the interpretations that take precedence in the governance of a sport (Hargreaves, 1990; Hoerber, 2004; Ross & Shiness, 2004).

## **Power**

Poststructuralists theorize that power is embedded in the production of knowledge and can shift from one source to another because as Foucault (1977) claims, no one is ever simply fully oppressed or dominated. However, it is important to understand that powerful groups often resist challenges to the historically entrenched social order by suppressing alternative or 'deviant' forms of knowledge, resulting in the maintenance of the status quo. As Green (2004) argues, "one person's agency is another's structure" (p.380). Power is mediated by and instantiated in structures and through institutions (Green, 2004), that create and communicate social knowledge that constructs our notions of reality (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). This results in "rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1977, p. 194) or master narratives about the ways the world should work that can become taken for granted and rarely challenged. While I agree that power is relational, I argue that it is often exercised in an exclusionary manner because as St. Pierre (2000) articulates, although everyone is born into relations of power, not everyone is free to fully express their agency.

Green (2004) theorizes that power should be measured by the capacity of actors to redefine the parameters of what is socially and politically possible for others, indicating that "all activity takes place within the context provided by a set of pre-existing social structures" (p. 383). CIS coaches and athletic directors possess the power to shape the playing context for athletes because they have the capacity to establish rules and norms, passing on and instilling

models of behaviour over time (Barnett & Finnmore, 1999). Kihl, Kikulis and Thibault (2007) found that although there has been increasing support for athlete-centred approaches to sport decision making, there are few documented examples of this. In addition, it is administrators who 'give authority' to the players and their input is often "limited and expedited rather than judged as a critical part to enhancing policy making decisions (Kihl, et al., 2007, p. 24). Such organizational practices originate from and remain linked to normative behaviours and contradictions in the larger social and historical environment (Barnett & Finnmore, 1999).

### **Hegemony**

Hegemonic theories argue that ideological concepts and binary social categories, including male/female, and masculinity/femininity are socially created and bound by historical contexts. Western feminists contend it is white, upper/middle class, heterosexual males who possess the authority to create and maintain dominant ideologies that guide our values and actions (Shaw & Slack, 2002, Wilson, 2007). Hegemony is a theory of persuasive rather than coercive power. Complicity is a key element as ideas are achieved and sustained because subordinate groups come to believe their place in the social system is right and natural (Ross & Shiness, 2004). This does not mean total cultural dominance or the obliterations of alternative ways of knowing or being (Connell, 1987; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Hargreaves, 1990), but speaks to the cultural and ideological pressures that embed certain behaviors, while discouraging others.

### **Gender**

Anderson (1999) argues that while there are often many competing versions of masculinity and femininity in a culture at any given time, power structures influence which constructions of gender become dominant or subordinated. Biological differences between the

sexes are emphasized and ground masculine and feminine ideologies that are inscribed on the body (Sankaran & Volkwein-Caplan, 2002; Ross & Shiness, 2004; Travers, 2007).

### **Hegemonic masculinity and heterosexism**

According to Connell (1987) the most important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality and the appearance of heterosexism. A man's body should provide clues or signs of his sexual preference according to established symbols of ideal hetero-masculinity which historically have been bound to size, physical abilities, strength and sexual prowess (Connell, 1990; Dworkin & Wachs, 2000). Participation in sport is commonly believed to reify the notion of hegemonic masculinity because it facilitates the production of the idealized male body and provides an arena for the display of masculine traits, including athleticism and strength (Anderson, 1999). However, this hyper-masculine stage risks being viewed as homoerotic because bodily displays are generally associated with a feminine ideology. Ideal men are not meant to be viewed as objects of gaze; they "are not supposed to enjoy being surveyed" (Bordo, 1999, p. 173). There is a social association between male homosexuality and male body displays, including wearing tight or revealing clothing like sport uniforms (Bordo, 1999; Dunbar & Hunt & Messner, 2000; Adams, 2005; Miles, 2005; Reilly & Rudd, 2007). Because appearances serve as cultural symbolic systems that communicate personal characteristics to others, men's appearances must be policed to reject all signs of homosexuality and femininity (Swain, 2002; Reilly & Rudd, 2007). For example, Adams (2005) found that male ballet dancers are often criticized for allowing their bodies to be put on display. The rejection of 'feminine' clothing by most males reinforces 'natural' boundaries between the genders, and helps to ensure that male hegemonic discourses are maintained.

### **Emphasized femininity**

Unlike our understandings of men's roles as leaders, protectors and athletes, the feminine ideology is premised on reproduction. Indeed, a woman's value has historically been tied to her reproductive capability (Vertinsky, 1990). As a result they are often viewed as sexual objects whose bodies are meant for public display (Connell, 1987; Bordo, 1999). Like the hegemonic man, the ideal woman must also be heterosexual, however the ways in which her sexuality is displayed differs significantly from males because femininity must be emphasized (Connell, 1987). Accordingly, a female's role is to be beautiful, vulnerable and small (Ross &Shinew, 2004). Pronger (1990) argues that cheerleading is a sport that exemplifies the concept of emphasized femininity because the majority of the women who participate in this sport are petite, attractive and sexually appealing. They are seen as having the ideal feminine body and participating in a sport that is meant for the consumption of men. While I concur that cheerleading can be seen as espousing feminine ideals, I would add that female athletes competing in less aesthetic sports are not necessarily considered to be less feminine, though in these sports appearance monitoring becomes extremely important to ensuring that femininity and heterosexuality are not questioned (Dworkin, 2001; Adams-Curtis, Forbes, Holmgren &White, 2004; Ross & Shinew, 2004).

Most female athletes are encouraged not to overdevelop their muscles (Dworkin, 2001; Robinson, 2002) and to dress in ways that convey traditional notions of femininity, like wearing makeup and dressing in feminine uniforms (Ross & Shinew, 2004). For their efforts they are rewarded with social acceptance, the potential for media attention and for a few, lucrative sponsorship deals (Balsamo 1994; Koivula 1999; Guiliano & Knight, 2001; Shugart, 2003; Barnes et.al, 2004; Schultz, 2005). In contrast, those "who resist the gender regime will face alienation from the people around them and those most important to them" (Clarke, Gill &

Cockburn, 2002, p.657). Their femininity is heavily marked to reinforce the idea of the nature differences between men and women and to silence challenges to dominant gender categories (Hargreaves, 1990). This dichotomization locks people into fixed gender categories (Hargreaves, 1990) and provides justification for setting different rules for male and female athletes.

There is still a widely held belief that females are less physically able than males due to physiological inferiorities (Vertinsky, 1990; Hall, 2002). This notion is exemplified in sport, where modified rules are seen to be necessary for many women's games in order to accommodate their 'lesser ability'. In sports like women's basketball, volleyball, and hockey the rules have been adapted from the men's versions. Some examples include smaller and lighter balls for female basketball players, lower net heights for women volleyball players, and rules against physical contact in women's hockey. These feminized rules reflect the broader discourse around the lack of size, strength and overall fragility of the female body. They also serve to limit the potential for female athletes to challenge the dominant understandings about the capabilities of males and females.

### **Gendered Readings of Organizational Documents**

The rules of sport can be considered to be social constructions of power when they become institutionalized as written rules to govern sport behaviour. According to feminist critical theorists, "for any text with a plurality of readers, there will exist a plurality of readings" (Anderson, 1999, p.32). Therefore, we must take into account the broader context in which texts are understood, as organizational control and decisions are most often dependent on socially constructed ideologies (Connell, 1987). As sport operates primarily in a male-centric environment, it is not surprising that the creators of sport policy and rules are often guided by gendered 'truths' (Hargreaves, 1990; Marshall, 1999; Hoeber, 2004).

Smith (1991, 2001) contends that texts are responsible for social and organizational conditions and many researchers argue that a gendered subtext flows through institutional sport documents, like policies and rules (Edwards, Skinner, & Stewart, 2004; Frisby & Shaw, 2006). Martin (2000) suggests that even when gender assumptions and discourses appear to be gender neutral, they are often quite the opposite. As an example, Hoeber (2007) found gender inequity was embedded and rationalized in the organizational culture of an athletic department when she revealed several contributing factors including: a liberal feminist attitude, rationalizing and normalizing factors regarding inequity, and a silence surrounding oppositional discourses. When gender is ignored in discourse, it essentially neutralizes the differences between men and women that may be result in unequal treatment (Martin, 2000).

### **Martin's Perspectives on Organizational Culture**

Martin (1992) theorizes that there are different manifestations that make up organizational cultures: forms, practices and content themes. Cultural forms provide clues as to what employees are thinking, believing and doing and can be studied by examining organizational rituals, humour and dress codes. Cultural practices refer to the formal and informal modes of operation within an organization including structures, rules and unwritten norms. Those who study content themes explore the threads of concern that manifest themselves in the forms and practices of the organization. Martin (1992) argues that each manifestation is part of a matrix needed to study and understand organizational cultures.

Martin's (1992) book *Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives*, provides a theoretical guide for analyzing the multiple interpretations of sport rules. Using the transcripts from a previous study of a fortune 500 company, Martin developed her three perspective approach to describe the different types of interpretations that can co-exist amongst organizational members concurrently. Her approach is in keeping with feminist critical theory

because it takes gender relations into account and considers multiple and shifting view points of organizational activities, including rule making. With her perspectives of *integration*, *differentiation*, and *fragmentation*, she theorizes that similarities, differences and ambiguities can all exist simultaneously within an organization at one point in time, even though they are rarely static.

### **Integration**

Martin (1992) suggests that there often are some constant themes that exist in organizations that are well understood and shared by most organizational members and guide practices. She refers to this set of shared values as the integration perspective of organizational culture and argues it serves to control actions when leaders act as organizational cultural creators and transformers. In sports organizations, historically entrenched values are often passed down from league executives or boards through policies and rules in a top down fashion. Researchers who study integration argue that members of sport leagues follow these mandates, rules or informal norms not just because of external forces, but because they often share similar philosophies on how sport organizations should function (Barr, Mitchell & Crosset, 1999; Tajima, 2007).

Some members use these shared understandings to their personal advantage. In Wachs' (2005) study of a co-ed softball league, some female players were using a common understanding of female athletic inferiority to gain an advantage over opponents. For example, when a female player stepped up to bat, she would play up the notion of her inability by making jokes or looking afraid in order to draw the outfield in towards home plate and would then hit the ball into the outfield.

## **Institutional theory**

Institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) sheds light on the mechanisms that might be responsible for integrated or shared meanings in Martin's (1992) framework of organizational culture. Isomorphism is a term first coined by Hawley (1968) and refers to the constraining processes that force one unit in a population to resemble other units that face similar environmental conditions (Hawley 1968, cited in DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p.149). One could look at the consistency of the spandex rule across women's volleyball teams to be a result of isomorphic processes across CIS athletic departments due to coercive, mimetic or normative pressures.

Coercive pressure stems from political influences and the problem of being viewed as a legitimate and lawful organization. This type of pressure results from formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by others upon whom they are dependent and by social and cultural expectations of the society within which they are situated (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). For example, the women's CIS volleyball teams could feel an informal pressure to comply with FIVB uniform requirements because they are members of the elite volleyball community and the FIVB is the leading authority on international volleyball. Institutional theorists theorize increasing homogeneity is the result of increased conformity to the practices of larger institutions.

However, these same theorists argue that homogeneity may also result from an organization's response to uncertainty. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that when companies feel unstable in their position in the market they will model themselves after other organizations whom they perceive to be more legitimate and successful in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Martin, 2000; Amis & Shaw, 2001). This is referred to as a mimetic pressure in institutional theory. Studies have shown the FIVB's requirements about revealing female

uniforms have been a successful way of attracting audiences, sponsors and media attention (Balsamo 1994; Koivula 1999; Guiliano and Knight, 2001; Chrouser & Gurung, 2007).

If coaches and athletic directors from different CIS athletic departments were to exhibit isomorphic practices because of similar professional traits and a common understanding of how intercollegiate sports should be governed, this would be an example of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) third isomorphic pressure, known as normative pressure. Due to lack of variation in the professional traits of organizational actors, similarities across organizations are often apparent. This may be due to a small hiring pool with similar training and experience, the same promotion processes and/or having comparable skill requirements for occupations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Organizational homogeneity seems inevitable and unavoidable in institutional theory, however this theory does not allow for the differentiation or ambiguity that Martin (2000) suggests can also exist within organizational cultures. As she explains, organizational homogeneity may be the result of consensus, consistency and clarity of meanings among organizational members (integration), but a lack of cohesion (differentiation), silence and ambiguity (fragmentation) can simultaneously exist in organizational culture.

### **Differentiation**

Differentiation acknowledges that conflict and differences of opinion exist and helps to account for the inconsistent meanings and practices present in organizations. Martin demonstrates how it is possible for consensus to exist at this sub-group level using her concept of differentiation. Subcultures often arise as reactionaries and exert their own power in an organization by creating their own meanings that are in opposition to dominant discourses (Young, 1989; Martin, 1992; Bloor & Dawson, 1994). For example, in a study of female workers in industrial plant in England, Young (1989) found that although all the women were all working to make the same products for the company, the shop floor was divided into two groups

with different values in terms of work ethic, job security, friendships and the need for cooperation between them. Even shared events that led to a feeling of unity (e.g., wearing a rose on St. Georges Day) was divided in meaning between the two groups as the older group associated it with the royal family, and the younger women saw it as more of an informal social event. Young's (1989) study supports Martin's contention that multiple and diverse interests can be present in organizational sub-cultures. However, as Martin (1992) points out, the differentiation and the integration perspectives are limited on their own because some values are ambiguous, or not freely expressed and shared by all sub-cultural members.

### **Fragmentation**

Fragmentation refers to the silences and ambiguities observed in organizational cultures, even when some values are shared by all organizational members or by certain sub-cultures. In this perspective, organizational values are seen as always being in flux, so meanings are constantly changing (Martin, 1992). This perspective recognizes that power is exercised rather than possessed and that authority is not always top-down or located in sub-cultures which can result in a lack of clarity or conflict. This dissensus can create symbolic and ideological ambiguity among members, the latter being of particular relevance to this study as this type of duality results from the conflict between espoused values and actual practices. Hoerber's (2007) study of an athletic department revealed that while members vocally indicated gender equity was an organizational priority, little action was being taken to ensure it was implemented. She found the ambiguities and silences within the department were detrimental to implementing gender equity policy, because staff members had a limited understanding of it and were unsure of proposing alternative to the existing notions of gender equality, which focuses more on equal opportunities to participate rather than on quality of treatment. As a result, the established and inequitable social order went unquestioned and unchanged (Hoerber, 2007).

## **Research Using Martin's Framework in Sport Organizations**

One study that employed Martin's three perspective approach in a sport setting is that of Fenton, Frisby and Luke (1999). In a case study of a low income multi-racial school, the researchers used focus groups, observational techniques, interviews and document analysis and found support for Martin's theory. Evidence of integration included a shared value among organizational members about the importance of physical education and fair play. At the same time, differentiation was apparent as students and teachers had differing values regarding student safety, gendered play, and the gym clothing policy. For example, the girls were displeased with the selection of spare clothing provided by the physical education teacher for those who did not bring proper gym attire. They felt that long pants or their regular clothes should be acceptable forms of clothing, but the teacher only provided shorts and t-shirts.

Also apparent were inconsistencies and silences, evidence of Martin's fragmentation perspective, around issues associated with gender, poverty and race. The school's policy was to treat everyone the same, so their practice of having a girls' only gym class were quite contradictory. The researchers also noted that although the multiracial makeup and poverty of the student body and community were acknowledged in a general way, these issues were absent in discussions about the physical education program. The findings of Fenton, Frisby and Luke (1999) demonstrate that the three perspective approach can be useful in explaining how the organizational culture of a sport organization influences its practices and policies, although they also argue that Martin's perspectives did not have equal explanatory power.

Despite this criticism, Hoeber and Frisby (2001) found Martin's concepts of integration, differentiation, and fragmentation helpful in analyzing the organizational culture of a Canadian university athletic department. They used her framework to gain insight into how the different meanings of gender equity could account for disjunctures between policy and practice. They

found the majority of organizational members shared a liberal feminist understanding of gender equity which meant ‘equal opportunity’ for male and female athletes. This initially appeared to demonstrate integration because of the consensus, consistency, and clarity among the group. However, the findings also suggested that subgroups within the organization had different meanings of the term ‘equal opportunity’ as some felt it was about funding that was not equal between male and female teams, while others linked it to equal treatment in terms of media exposure and game times. These variations provide evidence of differentiation. Fragmentation was also apparent when uncertainty was expressed regarding the implementation of the gender equity policy and in the contradictions between the members’ dialogue and direct examples provided of their practices. The results of this study once again demonstrate that Martin’s theory is helpful for studying organizational culture in a sport organization.

However, Hoeber and Frisby (2001), like Fenton, Frisby and Luke (1999), also made recommendations for future research using this theory. One suggestion was to “more fully examine the practices of administrators, coaches and athletes, in order to illustrate if desired organizational values are being translated into practice” (Hoeber & Frisby, 2001, p.199). My study addresses this suggestion directly by interviewing coaches and athletic directors in the CIS regarding their choices in volleyball uniforms. In addition, I hope to add a further dimension to Martin’s perspectives by incorporating different theories, like that of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) into her existing concepts. I use this multi-perspective approach to examine how organizational values, like gender equity, are expressed in CIS volleyball team uniform practices.

## **Equity Policies**

### **Canadian Equity Policies**

Sport uniform rules should be understood within the broader historical evolution of gender equity policies in university sport. Gender equity has been an ongoing issue for Canadian university athletics since second wave feminism in the late 1960's and 1970's (Harrigan, 2003). Since the merging of the men's and women's governing bodies of university sport in 1978 (Harrigan, 2003, p.58), and the 1984 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, gender equity has been a stated priority in Canadian university sport organizations. Harrigan's (2003) historical investigation indicates that starting in the mid 1990's the governing body of university sport, now known as Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), has made significant efforts towards greater gender equity. Between 1993 and 1997, the CIS developed gender-integrated sponsorship and television packages to ensure the exposure of women's sport. In 1997, it introduced an anti-discrimination and harassment policy and in 2000 an equity policy was established regarding athlete funding (Harrigan, 2003). However, much like Title IX in the US, most of the initiatives emphasized equal access to participation, and this quantitative focus does little to challenge organizational discourses, structures or conditions that create and sustain gender inequalities (Hargreaves, 1990; Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994; Slack & Shaw, 2002; Shaw & Frisby, 2006).

### **Liberal Equity Policies**

Liberal feminist approaches to gender equity, like those mentioned above, assume that all social categories (e.g. male/female) are neutral and can be treated equally. They ignore other social factors, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class that create inequalities (Penney & Shaw, 2003). By treating each social category as equal, it can be argued that liberal policies are aimed at governing a homogenous social body. This disregards research showing that policies will be

interpreted in different ways by individual readers and that these interpretations will be shaped by their own beliefs, values, opinions and culture (Taylor, 1997; Humes & Skinner, 2003; Skinner, Edward & Stewart, 2004; DeD'amico, Girginov, & Papadimitrou, 2006).

A good example of how policy is subject to individual interpretation is the USA's Title IX from the Education Amendments of 1972. The bill enacted during the period of second wave feminism indicates that: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (Yaracko, 2002, p. 80). As public universities in the US receive government funding, all programs in educational institutions were subject to comply with the law, including sports programs. Influenced by liberal feminist pressures, the bill addressed issues of opportunity for some female students. To liberal feminists, equal opportunity and equality were synonymous (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994), where the law formally recognized that female students at public universities and colleges should receive the same opportunities and funding that their male counterparts.

In the patriarchal sport arena, the bill was interpreted in such a way that failed to alter the system favouring males. For example, although the bill created more opportunities for female athletes to compete in university sports, it has also been credited with the decline of female coaches and administrators, as their positions were taken over by an influx of men into the system (Wolohan & Mathes, 1996). It has also been criticized for failing to address the lack of opportunities for women of colour (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994) and for causing strong feelings of resentment from the male athletes towards the female athletes, whom they saw as taking away their resources (Yaracko, 2002).

Policies alone do not influence behaviour, but how the text is interpreted and implemented is also important. One could argue that gender inequities in sport are the result of

'neutral' policies interpreted according to dominant ideas about male and female athletes and their sporting cultures. Sport equity policies may theoretically guide an organization's actions, but it is the interpretations of these texts that can impact the decisions of sport managers and affect the way a sport is run.

### **Sexualizing Female Athletes**

While the focus of my study is on the women's volleyball uniform rule in the Canada West regional district of the CIS, it should be noted that other sports organizations have made similar suggestions regarding the possibility of implementing more revealing uniform requirements for their female players. In 2004, Sepp Blatter, president of the Federation International de Football Association (FIFA), the governing body of soccer, announced that women's soccer should promote a more "aesthetic look". He questioned why women players did not wear tighter shorts and suggested letting "the women play in more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball" (Soccer, 2004). Similar sentiments about the male soccer players' appearance were notably absent. By focusing on the female players' appearance and sexuality, Blatter is effectively shifting the attention away from the athlete's ability to more readily accepted social roles as sex objects or objects of the male gaze. In fact as recently as 2009, women's soccer uniforms were still being adjusted to fit a more 'gender appropriate' look. On February 24, 2009, the Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) league website unveiled the new professional women's soccer uniforms, now consisting of an optional skort<sup>iii</sup> (2009). While these instances provide examples of how female athletes are feminized as a marketing tactic of sport authorities, this practice can also be seen in media coverage of female athletes.

### **Media and Marketing**

Media studies have shown that feminized and sexualized language is the dominant way that female athletes are portrayed and discussed in the sports media (Guiliano & Knight, 2001;

Hardin, Lynn, & Waldorf, 2005; Rinehart, 2005; Bissell & Duke, 2007; Wilson, 2007). The media often represents women in keeping with cultural ideals of “natural” femininity and erotic beauty (Balsamo, 1994; Wilson, 2007). A female athlete’s attractiveness, sexuality and/or maternal obligations often dominate media coverage both linguistically and in imagery. In a study of the pictures taken of women’s beach volleyball at the 2004 Olympic Games, photographers had used highly sexualized camera angles when photographing the female competitors (Bissell & Duke, 2007). When compared to photographs of the male players, pictures of female volleyball players focused on individual body parts, with close-ups of their chests and buttocks and celebratory embracing rather than on acts of athleticism (Bissell & Duke, 2007). Other studies have echoed these findings, with some authors even suggesting that the images of female volleyball players resemble the photographs of soft-core pornography (Barnes, Bower & Thomsen, 2004). Despite the obviously sexualized uniforms of the women’s beach volleyball players, it is surprising that there is not more literature that critiques the practice.

## **Sports Rules**

### **Rule Interpretation**

Regulations are text that can be understood in many ways by different individuals and there is a wealth of literature dedicated to the study of changing sport rules (Kando & Watson, 1976; Kew, 1987; Kew 1992; Russell, 1999; McFee, 2004). While it has been suggested that games and sports change because of the rule inadequacies (Kew, 1992), it is more likely that our changing interpretations of the rules continue to shape and change sport (Kew, 1987; Russell, 1999; McFee, 2004). For example, Russell’s (1999) study of baseball rules, found that sports rules are often untidy and ambiguous because, as illustrated in an interview with one umpire who said, “When I’m right no one remembers. When I’m wrong, no one forgets” (p.41). This

implies that not only are multiple meanings of rules possible, but that power relations must also be examined when considering whose interpretations count.

### **Rule creation and change**

According to Vamplew (2007), exclusion has been the guiding principle behind modern sport regulations. In his historical analysis of the origins of sports rules of British sport, Vamplew (2007) argues that although rules were first established to govern the gambling habits of men to ensure no unfair advantages, rules were later used in order to determine eligibility. Rules were created to exclude 'undesireables' (women, professionals, non-whites) from competing along side wealthy, white men. When women did begin to participate in competitive sport at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was under a different set of rules than men (Hall, 2002). This ensured that women remained mostly excluded from participating in men's sports or against male competitors. Separation and exclusion are outcomes of power imbalances that need to be critically explored in sport in order to understand how rules become gendered.

### **Gendered rules**

Important questions to ask when looking at men's and women's sport rules are: Who makes the rules and why do differences between men's and women's rules exist? Hall's (2002) book, 'The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport' in Canada chronicles Canadian women's sport participation during the 1900's. She explains how in the early years of women's sport, rules about how a game should be played were created and enforced by female physical educators. It was assumed that only women could understand the female body and therefore have the knowledge to properly govern the body's actions. Women's rules were guided by the scientific discourse of the time that assumed a woman's body was weaker than a man's body. In fact, there was a widespread belief that women were chronically weak and had a limited amount of energy (Vertinsky, 1990). As a result, the rules of sport needed to take a female athlete's

inferior physiology into account. Unlike their male counterparts, female basketball players used the “Spalding Rules” to govern their games. The court was divided into thirds and each player was assigned to mark one zone. A player was not permitted to move beyond her zone as this could lead to over exertion (Hall, 2002). While the rule was an obvious feminizing of basketball, physical educators defended their actions by indicating that the rules were “not an adaption of the men’s game” (p.72), but a different game designed to suit the reduced physicality of women to ensure feminine qualities were maintained.

### **Female Athletes’ Uniforms**

Many researchers have studied the role that the feminist theory has played in shaping of women’s sports in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the prevalence of dress codes for female athletes.

As Bordo (1993) wrote:

We are no longer given verbal descriptions or exemplars of what a lady is or of what femininity consists. Rather, we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behaviour are required. (p.170)

Homophobia is one such factor that drove women’s sports leagues to enforce mandatory dress codes and ‘feminine’ uniforms for their players (Cahn, 1993; Lenskyj, 1995; Wright & Clarke, 1999; Hall, 2002; Shugart, 2003). Since sport was considered to be a man’s domain, participation within that arena conflicted with feminine ideals. One strategy to dispell the fears of overly masculine women and suppress any fears about lesbianism in sport was through the enforcement of female appropriate attire. These findings appear consistent across women’s sports from the early 1900’s to the present day, supporting the the idea that the reification of femininity in sport is an enduring practice.

## **Social Positioning and Attire**

Historical analyses of women's clothing have shown that a female's clothing reflects her position in society (Schweinzbenz, 2000). Hall (2002) argues that the feminine uniforms worn by female athletes in the 1920's and 30's were designed in ways that reminded not only the women but also their audiences of their feminine traits and of their social roles. The uniforms emphasized their beauty and modesty. Female basketball players wore knee length middies with bloomers and stockings covering the knee (Hall, 2002). The bulky and restrictive clothing effectively hindered the athletes' performances, ensuring that they did not challenge the notion of male superiority in sport. The guiding ideologies of uniforms design that emphasized femininity over function changed very little prior to the women's movement in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1940's and 50's when the all-female All American Baseball League was established, the players were still required to wear skirts and makeup in competitions. Although these modest garments may be quite outdated today, the act of feminizing female athletes through dress codes and uniform requirements is very much a current issue.

In the past two decades major governing bodies of women's sports have instituted regulations around the players' attire. For example, the Australian Women's Cricket Board has imposed expectations that skirts and dresses must be worn by female players at all official functions. Glamour shots of the cricket players are also available on file for media consumption (Wright & Clarke, 1999). In golf, professional 'image ladies' have been hired to promote a more publicly acceptable image for the LPGA golfers, and on some American university campuses there are mandatory 'makeover' classes for members of women's varsity sport teams (Lenskyj, 1995). This policing and constant monitoring of the female athletes' appearance acts to silence fears of homosexuality and legitimate heteronormative beliefs about how women should look and behave. It homogenizes particular feminine ideals as a means of reproducing

the gender order (Schultz, 2004), which is favourable to males and constraining for women (Ross & Shinew, 2004). The spandex uniform appears to be an extension of this feminizing practice designed to solve the 'image problem' for female athletes who may appear overly masculine, but I argue that it also carries with it potentially dangerous consequences for volleyball players.

### **Damaging consequences**

In line with Connell's (1987) notion of emphasized femininity, researchers of women's eating disorders have found that the most desired bodies among women are thin and toned, not overly muscular, and very similar to the build of an adolescent male (Markula, 1995; Dworkin, 2001, Robinson, 2002). Arguably this body ideal is rarely attainable for most women, and especially challenging for high level athletes, because their sports require significant strength to compete and because their increased activity leads to increased muscle development (Robinson, 2002). In one study of female volleyball players, Barnes et al. (2004) found they expressed resentment over having to wear spandex shorts as they served as a reminder that women are unable to meet idealized body expectations. In fact, studies that link body image to clothing have found that larger-bodied athletes or those with a lower body image have a preference for larger, looser clothing (Chattaraman & Rudd; 2006). This becomes problematic when athletes who do not feel confident with their bodies are made to wear revealing uniforms.

Although lowered self-image and eating disorders are most noted in aesthetic sports like gymnastics and figure skating where the women's bodies are judged as part of the sport (Beals, 2002), volleyball players are more likely to employ body altering techniques than less body revealing sports like basketball and softball (Martin, Schalabach & Shibinski, 1998). Studies have shown that volleyball players as young as 16 years old use extreme dieting techniques, like diuretics and laxatives and calorie intake monitoring (anorexia and bulimia) to achieve a slim and toned physique (Martin, et al, 1998; Beal, 2002). The pressure to possess the ideal female

body combined with a uniform that displays so much of their lower bodies could contribute to higher instances of eating disorders on women's volleyball teams compared to other team sports. As Urla and Swedlund (1995) so aptly claim, "not all bodies are subject to the same degree of scrutiny or the same repercussions if they fail" (p.300). I argue that spandex uniforms not only feminize and sexualize the female volleyball players, but place additional harmful pressure on the athletes to meet cultural ideals of beauty and femininity.

### **Summary of Relevant Literature**

In this chapter, I began with a review of the literature on feminist critical theory, hegemony and Martin's (1992) three perspective approach to organizational culture. Following the theoretical discussion, I explained how liberal feminist and heteronormative gender ideals have affected sport policy and rules, women's sport media and marketing, and have had potentially damaging effects on female athletes. By adopting a feminist critical approach with its focus on power and gender relations and organization cultural theory, I will be able to examine and explain how Canada West's volleyball uniform practices are shaped and informed by traditional and oppressive gender discourses. As rules can be interpreted and enacted in multiple ways, a historical and social review of research on women's participation in sport becomes crucial to analysing the spandex uniform practice. It acts as a backdrop for this study, and illuminates the underlying social problem that drives my interest in this study, that female athletes are feminized in the governance of their sports. In the next chapter, I outline the methodology that will be used to address the research questions.

### 3

## METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the criteria for sample selection, a discussion of ethical issues, the rationale for my data collection methods, and a description of data analysis techniques are provided. In addition, the challenges encountered and criteria for research soundness are discussed.

### Sample

Martin (2000) has criticized researchers for putting too much emphasis on understanding organizational values by talking only to those in top administrative positions because this reinforces the notion of shared organizational meanings and ignores the voices of those who may have different interpretations. However, researchers of sport organizations have found athletic directors are the prime decision makers in athletic departments and coaches have a major influence over the operation of their sport, whereas athletes remain relatively uninvolved in the governance of their sport programs, even though there have been calls for greater athlete involvement (Armstrong-Doherty, 1995; Hoerber & Frisby, 2001; Kihl, et al., 2007). As such, this study considers coaches and athletic directors to be the primary decision makers of team uniforms for university volleyball teams given CIS policies and rules, as a starting point for examining this issue.

Initially I had planned to interview every CIS women's volleyball head coach and athletic director from each CIS school with a volleyball program in British Columbia and Alberta. However, one athletic director refused to participate on the grounds that he was not the correct person to speak to, and directed me to the associate director of the athletic department, whom he felt had more insight into my topic and control over the volleyball program. I have included this

associate athletic administrator in my study, because s/he fit the participant criteria of this study because s/he had direct authority over the women's volleyball team and worked directly with the coach on team decisions.

I also had difficulty obtaining an interview with another athletic director, although I was reassured by the coach at the school that s/he was independently in charge of the team's budget and that the athletic director had very little role in the women's volleyball program. As a result, my sample population included five athletic administrators (1 woman, 4 men) and six coaches (2 women, 4 men) from every CIS school with a women's volleyball program in British Columbia and Alberta, for a total of 11 interviewees. It was not financially feasible for me to interview other coaches and athletic directors in the CIS or Canada West conference.

It was important for this sample to consist of members of the same regional governing association of the CIS, for two reasons: shared governing policies, including bi-law rulings, and a shared historical context. Canada West governs the CIS universities in BC, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This regional governing body creates and operates under rules that are not unanimously shared by all of the CIS member universities, but ensures organizational members of Canada West share similar processes across the four provinces. Additionally BC and Alberta share a similar historical sport background. In the early days of women's participation in sport, eastern Canadian women's college teams were run almost exclusively by female physical educators, while those in western provinces were run primarily by men (Hall, 2002). As a result, eastern universities women's teams played according to modified rules, like the 'Spalding Rules', whereas western teams played according to the men's rules of the games. Arguably these different systems can be attributed to different knowledge sets and philosophies about the capabilities of women by the athletic directors. Although I am unable to confirm that this history or tradition in the eastern or western colleges would affect the organizational behaviour today,

for the sake of transferability of data I argue that my sample should come from a region that shares operating processes and a similar sporting history.

## **Ethical Issues**

Bryman (2004) describes four ethical principles that should be addressed in social research including: informed consent, deception, privacy, and harm. These concerns tend to overlap, making it difficult to discuss one without the others. However, for the sake of clarity, I will address these issues in two sections discussing informed consent and deception separately from privacy and harm.

### **Informed consent**

After obtaining ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board Association (REBA) at the University of British Columbia, contact information for the selected administrators and coaches was obtained from the athletic departments' websites. Each potential interviewee was then contacted by email to provide the basic details of the research and to inquire about possible participation in the study. See Appendix C and D for the initial contact letters. Because I was a former CIS female volleyball player, I did use my contacts in the system as gatekeepers to help reassure my potential participants of the legitimacy of the study and my credibility as a graduate student-researcher. After receiving confirmation of their interest, a follow-up email with a copy of the consent form attached was sent to the participant to allow the interviewee time to review the document before setting up a time and location for our meeting. In the consent form I outlined the premise of my study and a copy is attached in Appendix E. My intention was not to deceive my subjects, but to initiate a dialogue with coaches and athletic directors about the spandex uniform practice. This approach worked for nearly all of my participants, although there were some who wanted to talk by telephone about the study prior to confirming their interview.

Because the participants were sent copies of the consent forms by email, signed consent was not obtained until the day of the interview. Prior to commencing the interview, the participants were given another copy of the consent form and time alone to re-read it when necessary. After returning to the room, I verbally reminded the participants of their rights as a research subject, that their personal information would remain confidential, and asked if they would consent to being audio recorded. After receiving signed consent and giving them an extra copy of the consent form for their records, I began the interview process. During the course of the interviews, I was asked for my opinion of the spandex uniform. I candidly replied that it was not a uniform that I had been comfortable wearing as a CIS player, though I was careful not to harshly criticize the practice to avoid leading the interviewees. The inclusion of my personal experience in the dialogue proved to be an effective way to further demonstrate the transparency of my research interests.

### **Anonymity**

Although my study can be considered minimal risk for the participants, there still exists the potential for any research to do harm. This research involved discussions of gender equity and some of the interviewees' responses showed them in an unfavourable light, particularly with regards to their responsibilities as coaches and athletic directors. Because of the potential for negative consequences to the participants, as well as the small sample size of my research group, the need for confidentiality and anonymity was a priority. To begin, I assured all of them that their names and those of their institution would not be used in any papers, publications or presentations resulting from this study. Instead participants were identified only by their title. Even the gender of the interviewees were kept out of the writing process as this could act as an 'outing agent' by revealing their identity to the reader. To ensure further confidentiality, all of

the interviews were conducted and transcribed by me, were not shared with other individuals and are being kept in a secure location.

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviewing**

Amis (2005) indicates that we make sense of the world around us based on our own individual values, experiences and beliefs; that each of us interprets events in our lives differently, even shared events. He argues that the most logical way to access these different realities is by interviewing people (Amis, 2005). Interviews provide detailed descriptions of the social and/or physical realities of the participants' lived experiences that are not always possible with other forms of data collection (Fontana & Frey, 2000; King, 2004; Amis, 2005). The goal of this method is to "see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and to understand how and why they have come to this particular perspective" (King, 2004, p.11). Feminist researchers, like Cotterill (1992), also argue that the best way to find out about an individual is to make the research process interactive. As opposed to surveys or questionnaires, the interviews allow respondents to elaborate on their interpretations that may reveal multiple or contradictory meanings (Martin, 1992; King, 2004).

### **Elite interview<sup>iv</sup> schedule**

Elite individuals are those "considered to be influential, prominent and/or well-informed in an organization or community" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 105). Although Marshall and Rossman (2006) contend that elites often respond well to open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to demonstrate their knowledge and express their expertise, I used a semi-structured qualitative interview schedule that allowed for a more natural conversation style interview, but ensured that certain themes and topics were covered (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

My interviews were conducted from early December 2008 to mid January 2009, in the respective offices of the coaches and athletic directors. I began by asking the interviewees about themselves, including their involvement in athletics and their role and history in their current athletic department. As Amis (2005) suggested, starting the interviews with these type of straight-forward and non-controversial questions helped me establish rapport with my respondents and allowed the participants to become comfortable with the interview process. My status as a former CIS volleyball athlete also helped the participants relax and speak fairly freely with me. While the athletic directors appeared to speak openly and candidly, it was the coaches who appeared to be most at ease with me and my questions. They leaned back in their chairs and assumed casual postures with feet on their desks or hands behind their heads. Amis' (2005) technique of easing into the interview as well as my insider status were useful in obtaining data.

I constructed my interview schedule to obtain information that would help to address my research questions and included probes to encourage elaboration from the coaches and athletic directors. Each individual was asked about their influences in choosing the teams' uniforms (RQ1), to reflect on the differences between CIS men's and women's uniforms (RQ2), and whether they felt that there was a need to change the current uniform practice (RQ3). While the same types of questions were used in each interview, the wording and order of the questions, as well as the probes used varied depending on the tone of the interview and the type of information provided by the participants.

As the interviews progressed new topics emerged that I had not previously considered and needed to be incorporated into future interviews. As well, I attempted to conduct my interviews in a more conversational manner, with flow being a major consideration to my style and technique. Using this style encouraged elaborate responses, helped to clarify answers and uncovered more in-depth responses from the interviewees (King, 2004; Bloom & Vallee, 2005).

This also provided me with the flexibility to add interview questions when new themes emerged over the course of the interview (Fontana & Frey 2000; Amis, 2005). To further encourage a more relaxed and casual setting, I took limited written notes, and instead opted to record post-interview thoughts to help contextualize the interview and add to the analysis process. While the interviews were mainly used to gain insight into my topic, in some cases they also gave the participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and thoughts on the uniform practice. Many of them indicated they had never thought about this subject prior to the interview and would continue to consider the implications after our meeting. For a full list of the interview athletic director's and coaches' questions, see appendix A and B respectively.

### **Challenges Encountered**

As with any research method, interviews have potential disadvantages. The first difficulty I faced dealt with gaining access to elite interviewees. While one potential interviewee refused to participate, others who had expressed interest in my study and confirmed they would be willing to participate, were 'no-shows' on the day of the interview. This was a frustrating occurrence, and meant that it took longer to complete my interviews than planned. However, after re-connecting with the interviewees to arrange new times for the interviews and sending them a reminder one or two days in advance, all eleven interviews were eventually completed.

Another challenging aspect was dealing with coaches and athletic directors who wanted to manage the interview. Hawkesworth (1994) indicates that decision makers seldom employ or enjoy evaluators who criticize their ideas, decision or policies. I found that short and choppy answers were sometimes given by the interviewees to questions that may have brought criticism upon themselves or their programs. However, having an interview guide that kept the interview on track, as well as having in-depth knowledge of the subject and a casual approach did help to

elicit detailed answers from the participants as the interviews progressed (King, 2004; Amis, 2005).

Technological difficulties also hampered my data collection processes. Above I mention that I interviewed eleven participants from BC and Alberta, though in actuality I conducted twelve interviews in total. During the interview process the name of a former female Canadian volleyball player was mentioned by five of the interviewees who suggested this individual had significant historical insight into the subject. I therefore applied for an amendment from the Ethics board to contact this individual for an interview and received approval in early January 2009. A telephone interview was conducted in mid-January but the recording device malfunctioned and the interview was not recorded. Although I contacted this individual for a re-interview, I was unable to arrange another one. While I do have notes from the interview that are summarized in the next chapter, no direct quotes were used because I was unable to record them verbatim.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Coding**

A code is a tag or label used to assign descriptive or inferential meaning to a chunk of data, like words, phrases, sentences or entire paragraphs (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Coding is the first step in analyzing and interpreting data set because it is a way of forcing yourself to understand what is still unclear by putting names on incidents and events, trying to cluster them, communicating them and trying them out (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Thomas (2006) contends data analysis is determined by both the research objectives and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data. I used a general deductive and inductive approach to the coding process as a way to manage and interpret my findings (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004; Thomas, 2006). With deductive coding the researcher inspects the different stories

found in the data for preconceived ideas (Polkinghorne, 1995), like links to the study research questions and the literature reviewed. An inductive method allows codes to emerge from the data and condenses extensive and varied raw data into brief summary format, allowing the researcher to draw some conclusions about the experiences or processes evident in the raw text they may not have anticipated (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004; Thomas, 2006).

To begin the coding process, I first transcribed all the recorded interviews and field notes into electronic documents in Microsoft Office Word. Each interview was between twenty and thirty double spaced pages in length, and in total I had 284 double spaced pages of interview data. As a means of simplifying and making my data set more manageable, I initially coded the data deductively. Any information that was related to the research questions and historical context of the uniform practice was placed it in a separate Word document. Because qualitative researchers contend that “we don’t discover conceptual categories in our data; we build them” (Sipe and Ghiso, 2004, p.474), I felt confident this was an appropriate first step to coding and one that would eventually allow me to address my research questions. Each quote was analyzed to see which research question it pertained to and was labelled accordingly (eg. RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, History). While this initial process eliminated information unrelated to my study, as Sipe and Ghiso (2004) warned I was left with too much vaguely coded data. Taking the advice of Huberman and Miles (1994), I then began to code inductively by reading and re-reading the texts to see what themes emerged in each research question dataset. I gave descriptive codes to the interviewees’ quotes that best described their meanings, allowing their transcripts to drive my coding scheme going forward (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Thomas, 2006). Using the copy and paste mechanism of the Word processing system I pooled the descriptive labels, and the quotes that fit under those headings, and noted I had over 30 codes per research question, hundreds of

pages of quotes and descriptive codes that repeated in each research question's dataset.

Therefore, I employed yet another strategy to help me further analyse the overlapping data and reveal the relationships between my codes.

Qualitative researchers advocate grouping codes and the creation sub-codes in coherent and study-important ways to begin the data analysis process (Chase, 2003; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). Trying to find the broader categories in my data I looked for patterns, themes, similarities and differences in the sorted data and clustered these codes, assigning them to four levels of analysis. The most conceptually inclusive themes were broken down into smaller, more differentiated codes, sub-codes and topics as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.1: Analytic Framework**

Theme	Code	Sub-code	Topic
<p><b>VOLLEYBALL CULTURE:</b> Organizational customs, norms and expectations for its players.</p>	<p><b>-Volleyball Norms:</b> the accepted and expected ways of looking and behaving in volleyball</p> <p><b>- Canadian Culture/North American Culture:</b> values, beliefs, opinions, ways of acting, norms in Canada and North America</p> <p><b>-Heteronormative Sport:</b> sport guided by heteronormative gender ideals and discourse</p>	<p><b>-Accepted Practice:</b> individuals are so accustomed to the practice that it goes unnoticed or unquestioned (players, parents, fans, etc)</p> <p><b>- Social Expectations:</b> social expectations about how males and females should look and act</p> <p><b>-Femininity/Feminine Sport:</b> references made to femininity whether it be to the sport, other sports, the uniforms or the athletes themselves</p> <p><b>-Homophobia:</b> referring to a fear of lesbianism in the sport of volleyball</p> <p><b>-Sexualization:</b> the sexualization of female volleyball players because of their uniforms, bodies, or sport</p>	<p><b>-History/Tradition</b> <b>-Everybody wears it</b> <b>-No difference noted</b> <b>-No thoughts</b> <b>-blindness/numbness</b></p> <p><b>-Comparison with Men's Volleyball</b> <b>-Beach Volleyball:</b></p>

**Figure 1.1: Analytic Framework**

<p><b>PLAYER CHOICE:</b> The power that female players have over team uniform decisions</p>	<p><b>-Everybody wears it:</b> belief that every female in volleyball wears spandex to play</p> <p><b>-Functionality:</b> how functional the uniform is for women's and men's volleyball</p> <p><b>-Comfort:</b> players' physical and emotional/mental comfort while wearing the spandex shorts</p>	<p><b>-Professionals Wear Them:</b> comparisons to the uniforms worn by professional volleyball players</p> <p><b>-Used to it (players):</b> the lack of player questioning or concern with the uniforms due to their extended history wearing the spandex bottoms</p> <p><b>-How it Looks/Aesthetics:</b> references to how the men and women look in their respective uniform</p>	<p><b>-CIS Wears Them</b></p> <p>-different games -techniques used</p> <p>-history -age</p> <p>-men vs. Women -fashion -basketball trends -feminine sport -body/Physique</p>
<p><b>CONSTRAINTS TO PLAYER CHOICE:</b> the barriers to player control over uniform decisions</p>	<p><b>-Token Player Choice:</b> only certain players are given the authority to make decisions on behalf of the team with regards to uniforms</p> <p><b>-Team:</b> need to go along with what the majority of the team wants</p> <p><b>-Volleyball Rules:</b> the rules that govern the sport of indoor volleyball</p> <p><b>-Volleyball Market:</b> how volleyball is marketed to the different genders</p>	<p><b>-Individual Problems:</b> resistance or concerns expressed by individuals</p> <p><b>-Peer Pressure/Part of Team:</b> pressures to conform to the majority –</p> <p><b>-CIS Rules:</b> the rules that govern CIS volleyball (players must all be dressed identically in order to play CIS volleyball. As such, individuals cannot choose to dress differently from their teammates in games, or they will be unable to play)</p> <p><b>-Suppliers:</b> what is available from volleyball apparel and equipment suppliers</p>	<p>-captains -seniors -representatives</p> <p>-catalogues -sponsors</p>
<p><b>COACH/AD UNIFORM DECISIONS:</b> Factors influencing uniform decisions made by coaches and AD's</p>	<p><b>-CIS Equity Policy:</b> the written document that dictates how male and female athletes should be treated</p> <p><b>-Authority Figure:</b> ability to make team decision</p> <p><b>-Not Problematic:</b> do not view the practice as problematic</p>	<p><b>-Resistance:</b> player displays or verbalizations of dislike for spandex shorts or wishing there was an alternative.</p> <p><b>-Sexualization:</b> the sexualization of female volleyball players because of: their uniforms, bodies, or sport</p>	<p>-staff input -personal experience</p> <p>-school Image -wearing different shorts -voicing Opinions -comments heard</p> <p>-fans</p>

**Figure 1.1: Analytic Framework**

<p><b>CONTRADICTIONS/ AMBIGUITIES:</b> Information that opposes previous themes</p>	<p><b>-Problematic:</b> the spandex practice as problematic</p> <p><b>-No Comfort:</b> players are uncomfortable wearing spandex</p>	<p><b>-Mental Health:</b> looking at the self-esteem and confidence issues of female volleyball players</p> <p><b>-Would Change:</b> has considered changing</p> <p><b>-Not Functional:</b> uniform has no effect or inhibits performance</p>	<p>-eating disorders -body dysmorphia -lower self-esteem</p> <p>-glue -tugging -no advantage -resistance -age</p>
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As I proceeded with the analysis, a narrative on the spandex practice began to develop and I identified three dominant themes including: the idea of a volleyball culture, the players' impact on the practice, and the roles of coaches and athletic directors on team practices. Searching the codes in each main theme, I selected the quotes that best conveyed the core essence of the categories to bring the narrative to life and make it more explicit to readers (Thomas, 2006). I used six criteria for determining which passages to include in this study. The primary criterion involves how well the quote related to my research questions and thus relevance to the study. I also considered possible links to existing literature (Polkinghorn, 1995) and the gaps that this new and interesting data may fill in the work done on gender, sport and organizational practices. As well, effort was made to ensure that every participant's voice was represented in the findings by either using their own words or selecting quotes that reflected the group's responses. Additionally, I tried to anticipate which data and information could help elicit change in the uniform practice and incorporated it into the analysis as I argue this emancipatory goal is a significant part of this research.

## **Trustworthiness**

Thomas (2006) states the main reason for data analysis is to capture the key themes and processes important to the research at hand. However, one must remember that although the interview narrative is created by both the researcher and respondent, it is ultimately the researcher who tells the story (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Peshkin, 2000). Therefore, it is imperative to be reflexive in this type of qualitative research. Rubin and Rubin (2005) advocate that researchers need not drop their cultural assumptions and assume those of their participants, but must remain cautious to hear the voices of their interviewees. I contend that one need not 'bracket' (King, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) off their assumptions or world views but must recognize and make apparent to the reader their role in determining what is more or less important in the data (Thomas, 2006). Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) feel that there is value in acknowledging that the researcher is part of the data collection process as long as s/he acknowledges their positionality.

## **Reflexivity**

To be reflexive means acknowledging the lenses used to contextualize our study and our understandings of the research subject (Doucet & Mauthner, 2003). The findings of this study are inevitably shaped by my status as a white, female graduate student with former ties to CIS volleyball who is drawing on feminist critical theory. What the researcher sees in the data is inescapably selective (Miles & Huberman, 1994) because as Sipe and Ghiso (2004) point out "we are not lifeless cameras or scanners" (p.474). It is the job of the researcher to link and unite the data into a story that makes sense for the reader (Polkinghorn, 1995; Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000), and it is also their responsibility to unpack their positioning to make clear the lenses being drawn on to obtain, analyze and interpret the data.

Golombisky (2006) contends that being reflexive “means taking on the final role of critic to scrutinize our own performances” (p.166). Therefore, I must admit that because of my educational background in the social sciences and my own athletic background as a CIS athlete, I had expected to find a sport culture steeped in heteronormative gender ideologies. While the traditional concepts of femininity and masculinity were not specifically discussed during my years playing volleyball at university, upon reflection I now recognize that a gendered undertone was ever-present. During this research I have drawn on my own experiences in a CIS volleyball program and the literature that suggests that female athletes are often viewed as women first and athletes second. My feminist orientation provides the starting point of inquiry and ultimately guides my understanding and beliefs, which is to say that other meanings or interpretations of the data are possible, but I have attempted to avoid self-deception and self-delusion when presenting my findings (Peshkin, 2000). For example, I made significant effort to be open to hearing alternative discourses about the spandex uniform practice. Martin’s (1992) framework was a useful tool in my attempts to be reflexive because I had to examine the data closely looking for ties to her perspectives and this forced me to recognize alternative discourses in the data that challenged my preconceptions.

### **Soundness of Research**

Because qualitative research is fundamentally different from quantitative and positivist research it needs to be held to different measures of soundness (Bryman, 2004). Rather than looking for reliability and validity in the results, Guba and Lincoln (1985) indicate that more appropriate categories to ensure quality should include credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability.

Credible and confirmable studies are those in which the research is carried out in good practice, ensuring that the social world of those studied is accurately contextualized and

interpreted (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Efforts to be reflexive were made in collecting and analyzing the data, though misinterpretations of the data are still possible. My interpretations have been informed by previous research and attempts have been made to make the research process as transparent as possible to the reader. As Peshkin (2000) aptly concludes, qualitative research may lack the formal and internal tests that positivists often use to substantiate their interpretations, but the goal in this type of research is not to prove things right or wrong, but to create new knowledge that can be modified and critiqued by others.

Transferability parallels the quantitative measure of generalization. However, qualitative research is context and situation dependent, therefore, the data collected will likely be influenced by the researcher, the participant and the environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Qualitative data collection methods do not claim to be neutral, but the findings and/or processes can be transferrable to other similar research, in similar contexts. For example, while this study investigated CIS universities in BC and Alberta, other university and college volleyball organizations in Western Canada operate in similar manners with regards to women's volleyball. Thus, the theoretical applications and processes uncovered in this study may be transferrable and informative/illuminative to these other organizations given the nature of the processes being studied. In addition, I do provide information about the social and historical context in which the spandex practice occurs so that readers can decide if the findings are applicable to other similar situations (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

In the next chapter I describe the historical and social contexts, as well as the institutional conditions that have helped to shape the CIS volleyball organizational, along with an analysis of the findings as they relate to the research questions.

## Results and Discussion

Drawing on the work of Bordieu (1977), Burns-Ardolino (2003) contends that even the most seemingly insignificant details of dress are those through which culture can be seen and maintained. The findings will be presented in four parts. The first section provides a brief historical account of the progression of volleyball uniforms from its beginnings to the ideologically significant 1990's, to serve as a contextual backdrop for the research findings. The latter three sections discuss the main findings of the study as they relate to each research question. I will first discuss the factors that influence the rule interpretations of coaches and athletic directors, then the findings that help to explain why men's and women's teams are dressed differently. Finally, the data that sheds light on why coaches and athletic directors do not feel the need to change the women's current uniform practice is analyzed.

The three main themes that emerged from the data are broken down to into smaller components that best address each research question. The first major theme is the existence of a heteronormative volleyball culture. Under this theme, volleyball gender norms and expectations help to answer the first research question, volleyball history and traditions address the second research question, and the sexualized nature of the culture sheds light on research question three. The second major theme is the role of the player in the spandex uniform practice. The limited power female players have over the practice, comparison of men's and women's agency and the extent to which players' input is ignored help to answer the research questions in their respective order. Last, the impact that coaches and athletic directors have on the spandex uniform practice is unpacked. This includes a discussion of the responsibilities these individuals face and how that affects their interpretations of the uniform rule, the justifications and explanations they have

for the differences between the men's and women's uniforms and how their adherence to a liberal feminist equity policy contributes to the limited need to change the practice. Martin's integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives are also woven throughout the chapter and reveal how the issues are shared, contradicted and/or silenced by organizational members.

## **Herstory**

### **From Skirts to 'Bum-Huggers'**

In the early years of women's volleyball (e.g., the 1920s), women were playing a modified version of the men's volleyball game, with eight players aside and two attempts at serving the ball over the net (Reeser, 2003). Much like other women's sports in their infancy, women volleyball players were wearing different uniforms from men because they wore skirts. From the responses of my interviewees, it appeared that this uniform trend would continue in Canada well into the 1960's and 1970's. However, at this point a major change came to women's volleyball, both in the style of play and dress, as it was around this time when the culotte<sup>v</sup> style bottom was introduced to Canadian women's volleyball.

Many names have been given to this new uniform bottom. Among those heard in this study were the 'bum/butt hugger', 'grabbers' or 'diapers'. Reeser (2003) argues that influences from Cuba, the Philippines and Eastern Europe significantly altered the techniques and style of play, as these regions were among the first to play the sport outside of America when it was introduced by American soldiers stationed abroad in World War I. In fact, it was the Philippino players who first developed the offensive skill that we now know as the spike, though at the time it was referred to as the Filipino Bomb (FIVB – Chronological highlights).

However, all the coaches in this study who commented on the uniforms changes at this time credit Asian teams, specifically the Japanese, who acted as the catalyst for this shift in women's attire from skirts to culottes, because of a new style of volleyball that brought new

defence techniques to women's game. At its debut at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo (FIVB, history), the Japanese women's team displayed a playing style previously unseen in women's volleyball. Rather than playing a mostly offensive game played primarily from a standing position, the Japanese women had moved to the floor, and were now trying to keep the ball from hitting it. The new techniques necessary for playing this defensive style were no longer compatible with the skirts being worn. As one interviewee pointed out, there was now a need for a new uniform that not only allowed the players to move freely, but one that would also stay in place. "It's not very practical to wear skirts. So the next level, I guess they went from that to what we call affectionately the bum huggers" (Coach 3).

**They were bad. They were short. They were awful.**

According to several interviewees, during the 1970s and 1980s the 'bum hugger' or 'grabber' bottom was the mandated uniform at the international level, but for a significant number of female volleyball players at the university and high school levels in Canada this was not the case. From the late 1970's to the early 1990's, many women were wearing looser, boxer-style shorts and those who were required to wear the 'bum huggers' were extremely unhappy or uncomfortable with the practice. One athletic director indicated, "They were bad, short... They were awful. Girls hated wearing those" (AD 5). Among the reasons given by interviewees for the discomfort in the 'diaper' style were issues of age, level of competition, fitness, self-consciousness, fashion and a lack of technology.

Around the same time that volleyball became an official Olympic sport, advancements were being made to aid in the training of volleyball players. Several of the coaches and athletic directors who were on the volleyball scene in the 1970's and 1980's witnessed the development of training spandex for the women's teams. Long lycra shorts with padding in the hips were being used at women's practices to help them hone their defensive techniques, which involved

stride sliding<sup>vi</sup>. However, none of the respondents had seen this type of short being worn for formal competition during this time frame, as this coach recalled:

I think that they used to call them digger pants, so they were longer but that was more for training. Like I saw them more for training than I ever did see it for competition, so that they would train in like these digger pants. I think we had them too because they had these ones with sort of hip padding that were in them. And that was more for training than it was actually for the competitions.  
(Coach 5)

### **A Sexier Uniform**

Although there were teams that continued to wear the longer, looser shorts for both practice and competition in the 1970's and 1980's, by the early 1990's and prior to the FIVB spandex uniform rule, women playing at the higher levels of competition in Canada were wearing spandex shorts to play. However, it should be noted that they were longer spandex than what we see today, with inseams around 20cm in length, reaching a few inches above the knee. The 1990's were noted to be a highly transitional time for domestic and international volleyball. This was a decade that saw beach volleyball come under the jurisdiction of the FIVB and become an official Olympic sport (Beach Volleyball Database, 2008). The use of coloured balls became a requirement for international competition, with the men playing with a blue ball and women a pink one, and the first major push was made by the FIVB to publicly promote volleyball to the masses (Gregory & Kenny, 2006; Beach Volleyball Database, 2008; Strength and power for volleyball, n.d.). After struggling to build a significant following for both indoor and beach volleyball in the early 1990's, by 1998 the FIVB had launched a massive TV campaign to promote both the men's and women's sport. Among one of their many marketing tools, was the implementation of the new volleyball uniform requirements.

Men's and women's uniforms were altered to create a sexier image, by slimming down the cut of the jersey to give it an "athletic look" (FIVB Casebook, 2003, p.3), and by

streamlining the fit and shortening the length of the players' shorts. The FIVB 2003 rulebook now specifically required the men's shorts to be fitted in the waist, they could not be loose or baggy and the inseam could not exceed 10cm. The women's rules dictated that they could wear a one piece uniform or could wear shorts that fit the bodyline, with inseams no longer than 5cm, or cut in an upwards angle towards the top of the leg (FIVB Casebook, 2003). A few of the interviewees who were players during this time, commented that the push for the sexier uniforms was an effort to keep volleyball at the forefront of media attention and to fend off competition from other sports at the upcoming Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia in 2000. While the marketing strategy appears to have been quite successful in gaining public and media attention, this new ruling was not implemented without some controversy and protest (N.A., 1998; Moos, 1999).

The coaches and athletic directors commented that although some countries' women's teams, like Brazil, conformed to the new ruling by adopting uniforms resembling one piece bathing suits to play indoor volleyball, the Canadian players protested the change implemented by the FIVB president Reuban Acosta in 1998.

There was a lot of opposition to that rule and the Acostas (FIVB president and his wife) haven't had a lot of good things to say about Canadians because of it and other things...the history of this" (Coach 6).

This animosity towards the ruling family in volleyball and the uniform rule controversy helps to account for Volleyball Canada's refusal to implement the international uniform rule on its home soil. However, despite the apparent 'neutrality' of the Canadian volleyball uniform rule requiring shoes, a jersey and shorts with no prescription about fit or length, the trend in indoor volleyball was a shorter inseam and fitted cut for women's shorts. Determining the factors behind this rule interpretation has been the goal of my research, and several reasons for this were

evident in the data including: the culture of the sport, player decisions, and administrators' decisions.

### **Factors Affecting the Interpretations and Enforcement of the Uniform Rule**

The findings demonstrate that the spandex uniform practice is influenced by several factors including the norms, traditions and expectations in the sport of volleyball. An organization founded upon and steeped in gender ideals, CIS volleyball can be seen as a heteronormative sport environment that shapes the way female volleyball players are required to dress. Pressures to conform and unequal power relations created by the gendered subtext that flows throughout the CIS volleyball organization ultimately contributes to the gendered interpretations and enforcement of the uniform rule.

#### **Heteronormative Volleyball Culture**

Martin (1992) contends that examining organizational forms, practices and content themes helps to reveal an organization's culture. However, she did not adequately take into account how the wider hegemonic culture in which an organization is situated influences its practices. As Barnett and Finnmore (1999) contend, "organizational culture, understood as the rules, rituals and beliefs that are embedded in the organization, has important consequences for the way individuals who inhabit that organization make sense of the world" (p. 719).

One of the main themes that emerged from the data was that the broader volleyball culture has a major influence on uniform practices. Every interviewee referred to this in one way or another by alluding to either the historical or traditional uniforms worn by the players and the expected gendered practices in the performance of the sport. There was a shared and consistent understanding that the CIS was part of the larger volleyball community and that the behaviour of CIS athletes, coaches and athletic directors was significantly influenced by it. In fact it appears

that dominant heteronormative discourses about how male and female players should be dressed are readily taken up by the interviewees, creating a primarily integrated sport culture (Martin, 1992). Social and volleyball clothing norms, homophobic beliefs and valuing ties to the larger volleyball community help to explain the consistent interpretations of the uniform rule and the widespread enforcement of the spandex practice, even though it is not a specific CIS rule.

**It's not outrageous to see women to wear spandex (Coach 3)**

According to Bordo (1999), men and women have different roles when it comes to the gaze of the 'Other'. She theorizes that while the idealized woman is meant to anticipate and even play to the sexualizing gaze, the heterosexual man is not supposed to enjoy being surveyed. Because clothing is a prominent way of displaying gender and sport is linked to the construction of 'proper' gender ideologies, it is not surprising that the uniforms of males and females in volleyball have been appropriated in different ways.

An athletic director indicated that the public has,

gotten used to it [women wearing spandex] and so when you get used to it, it doesn't have the shock value. People aren't upset by it or opposed to it because they are used to it (AD 2).

In fact, the prevalence of spandex shorts in women's volleyball is so common that over half the respondents indicated they had never even thought about or paid attention to the uniform rule.

This not only demonstrates an acceptance of the FIVB practice within the Canada West Volleyball Association, but also supports the acceptance of Western heteronormative gender expectations, where women's bodies are seen as objects to be displayed and sexualized (Aimar, et al., 2004; Adams, 2005; Gurung & Chrouser, 2007).

A few coaches and athletic directors acknowledge that Canadian culture is steeped in traditional views of gender and that these understandings contribute to the Canadian spandex uniform practice. However, the majority were less specific about the origins of their ideas about

what is acceptable attire. They felt women should be feminine looking and attractive and clothing plays a major role in conveying these qualities. Conversely males must generally restrict themselves from performing behaviours deemed too feminine like focusing on appearance, and instead must embody and portray masculine traits like heterosexuality and power (Connell, 1987; 1990). Sport researchers contend that the practices within sports organizations, like uniform choices, reflect the greater social expectations regarding masculinity and femininity that serves to naturalize the gendering of athletes (Burn-Ardolino, 2004; Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). As a result, this type of attire is widely socially accepted as appropriate exercise attire for females more generally and is expected in volleyball.

Because FIVB changed the uniform rules in the late 1990's, interviewees indicated the majority of them had been wearing the shorts required by the international federations for most of their volleyball careers. This coach indicated that the spandex is:

a part of the uniform wear. It's part of the culture. Like every girl that's ever come into, or every girl that's ever played here, this is what they wear. This is what they wear in high school. This is what they wear in club volleyball. And so it's kind of accepted. (Coach 2)

In fact, one athletic director felt this normative practice is so strong that "volleyball people (women) would feel weird wearing shorts" (AD 5). The data suggests that most coaches and athletic directors not only subscribe to the organizational discourse about women's volleyball uniforms, but also adhere to ways of behaving that correspond with this way of thinking (Martin, 1992). This finding provides insight into the consistency of the spandex practice on women's CIS team and becomes particularly evident in this interviewee's quote:

It's not like of the teams playing in Canada West we are one of three [athletic conferences] that wants to wear this, that's not the issue. The issue is that I can't think of any team I have ever seen at the Olympics or otherwise that are wearing anything different from what we are wearing. It's standard for world volleyball. (AD 3)

Based on these responses, I argue that coaches and athletic directors are partly basing their uniform decisions on what they believe to be normative practices of the sport. The line of reasoning is aptly stated by another athletic director who said, “They are conventional because if one team has it, almost every team has the same thing. So it’s very hard to go off the rails I think with new uniforms” (AD 1). The culture of the sport provides ideological support for the spandex practice by discouraging alternatives which creates isomorphic organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

### **A homophobic sport**

The lack of critique around the effects that these gender stereotypes have on the CIS volleyball organization, including the creation of a homophobic environment was evident. Homosexuality is widely believed to be one of the biggest fears in men’s and women’s sports. In fact, researchers contend that player uniforms have been used throughout history as a means of dispelling fears of same-sex orientation in sport and conveying a message of normative heterosexuality to both players and audiences (Cahn, 1993; Lenskjy, 1995; Adams, 2005; Travers, 2007). While only one of the participants specifically mentioned the homophobic environment of the CIS volleyball organization, s/he was unwilling to speak about this while being tape-recorded. Off the record this individual emphasized that s/he had personally witnessed prejudice towards gays, with players approaching her/him with complaints and concerns about lesbian athletes on other teams in the athletic department. This athletic director also mentioned that it was not just the players who espoused homophobic opinions, but other athletic administrators and coaches as well. In fact s/he indicated that lesbian coaches feared ‘coming out’ because of the discriminatory repercussions that could result. Although this line of dialogue was only heard from one interviewee, this finding is very much in line with many sport

and sexuality researchers who argue there are consequences for those who challenge or resist the heteronormative ideals in sports (Cahn, 1993; Kolnes, 1995; Lenskyj, 1995; Travers, 2006).

### **The CIS is part of a bigger volleyball system**

All of the coaches and half of the athletic directors indicated that uniform decisions were influenced by the volleyball governing body, the FIVB. Participants indicated there is a “carry over or trickle down” (Coach 2) effect from professional volleyball that affects how volleyball is played at the CIS level. While these international rules are not exactly those mandated by Volleyball Canada or CIS volleyball, they nevertheless impact the way the game is governed.

According to the coaches, the primary reason for the close adherence to the professional rules appears to be an allegiance with the Canadian governing body of volleyball. For instance, the interviewees stated CIS teams want to be seen as legitimate volleyball clubs so following the international rules puts them more in line with professional standards. This strategy is referred to by researchers who theorize that by mimicking the established patterns and standards of official governing bodies, smaller organizations are attempting to appear more legitimate in order to achieve similar successful results and attention (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Cousens & Slack, 1996; Amis & Shaw, 2001). One coach insisted that Canadian universities were playing a “truer version” of volleyball than American schools that use a “bastardized rulebook”<sup>vii</sup> to govern their sport (Coach 3). This coach went on to say that “we’ve always tried to stay true to FIVB, partly because of our relationship with the national teams. We want kids to be ready to go to that level” (Coach 3). This coach’s commitment to following the international rules appears to be beneficial for CIS schools with players who hope to play on the national teams, by acclimating their players to the standards that will be required of them at this next level of competition. This idea that professional uniform standards should be used on CIS teams provides support for Martin’s differentiation perspective, because it was mostly heard from coaches, not athletic directors.

This may not be surprising given the dual membership that coaches hold as members of both athletic departments and of the larger volleyball community, unlike the majority of the athletic directors. However, both coaches and athletic directors commented on the impact beach volleyball has on CIS uniform practices.

The revealing beach volleyball uniforms have made the sport more popular with the media and audiences, but this type of attire is seen as too revealing and inappropriate for indoor volleyball. This coach reasoned:

And to be honest, we rival our own sport, volleyball and beach volleyball, you know how they are kind of separate? And the reason beach volleyball for a large part gets more television air time, get more fan support is because of sex appeal. That has nothing to do with the sport whatsoever. I think it's gross. I think what we do should be good enough. (Coach 4)

Demonstrative of the type of cultural integration discussed by Martin (1992), this sentiment was echoed by nearly all of the interviewees who commented on beach volleyball, leading me to believe that there is common understanding among coaches and athletic directors. In comparison to using the more sexually explicit beach volleyball, the indoor uniform is more conservative though I argue both uniforms adhere to heteronormative and sexualized discourses within the organizational culture of women's volleyball.

### **Select and Limited Player Choice**

Among the other reasons given by coaches and athletic directors for the spandex uniforms in women's CIS volleyball was player input. When asked who chooses the volleyball uniforms for the women's CIS teams, nearly every interviewee indicated it was the female players who make the decision. This feeling is clearly expressed by a coach who said, "Girls always have a say in what they are wearing" (Coach 4). However, by looking closely at the uniform selection processes, we can see that only some of the athletes have input on uniform decisions. The majority of the data in the transcripts on this topic supports Martin's (1992)

fragmentation perspective of organizational culture, as the ambiguities and lack of consistency around issues of power in the spandex uniform selection was apparent. This section will discuss the players influence by examining the processes of uniform selection, the factors that affect the players' decisions like mimicry and feminine appearance, as well as the limitations on players' control over uniform decisions.

### **Privileged selection process**

I had expected that female players would have little input into the uniforms they wore. However, the data suggests that the coaches and athletic directors feel it is players who have control over this decision; though the two groups differed in their insights on this. In addition, a number of inconsistencies were apparent. For example, nearly all the coaches indicated the women's choices were based on their innate femininity and a desire to look like professional players, whereas the athletic directors were uncertain if the professional uniforms had any impact. This finding is not surprising given the different roles of the coaches and athletic directors where athletic directors indicated it was their role to oversee decisions and act as final decision makers, while coaches have more direct involvement with their teams.

All of the coaches provided similar explanations for the processes used to select the new team uniforms. In each instance, the uniform decision was assigned to a representative group of players from the team, although it should be noted that in many cases the coaches had already selected a range of spandex bottoms that could be chosen from by the group. The committee was usually comprised of the returning fourth or fifth year players and/or the team captains, as this coach articulated, "That's pretty much just saying to the captains, you pick your shorts" (Coach 1). Coaches feel these individuals act as representative voices for the team and base their decisions around creating a strong volleyball identity.

## **Factors influencing player decisions**

Similar to the data on the influence of FIVB uniform rules, coaches partially attribute the players' preferences for spandex shorts to modelling themselves after professional players.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to this as a mimetic practice where behaviour is commonly seen in organizations that model themselves after those perceived to be more legitimate and successful (Amis & Shaw, 2001; Martin, 2000). This is highlighted by an athletic director who said:

In any sport, the development level aspires to look like the top. And whatever is being worn at the top end of the sport, is going to come down to the next level below. And as you become more and more elite becomes more important for the athlete to be at that top standard. So let's just say for volleyball, the ladies are choosing to wear spandex because that is what they wear on the national team. That's what they wear in the pros. (AD 5)

Looking like a serious and legitimate volleyball team and maintaining a feminine appearance were cited as significant determinants of the players' uniform choices.

On several occasions, coaches made comparisons between female volleyball players and other female athletes, stating volleyball players were more inherently feminine. For example, when I asked why basketball players are not choosing these types of uniforms, a belief about the inherent feminine makeup of a female volleyball player surfaced.

We don't share the same mentality as basketball...they like contact. You know even a gentle little run-in (on the volleyball court) is all dramatic, so you know it is a different kind of kid who plays volleyball" (Coach 3).

These types of comments suggest that coaches believe the women's more feminine identity is reflected in their uniform choices. "If you ask them why do you wear these? They are gonna go, because it looks good" (Coach 1). Over half of the interviewees shared similar beliefs that the female players felt attractive and sexually appealing in their spandex shorts. This finding is in line with Robinson's (2002) argument that although female athletes want to be recognized

for their athletic achievements, some still place a great deal of emphasis on aesthetic appeal and physical beautification and as such, like to show off their bodies to highlight their femininity. It appears that coaches and athletic directors are ascribing to a dominant discourse that their players want to be the object of the others' gaze, that they are happy to display their athletic bodies to an audience, and the decision making players are accurately representing the wishes of their teammates.

Kihl et al. (2007) argue that this type of player representative decision making is becoming a more valued in colleges and university sport as “the implementation of athlete representation as a means to develop a more athlete-centred sport system has enabled athletes to become involved in informal and formal deliberations about issues that affect them” (p. 20). However, researchers have also found these efforts often rely on the inclusion of only select athletes and the collective voices of other teammates are rarely heard when organizational decisions are made (Kihl, et al., 2007; Benschop & Dooreward, 1998; Hoerber, 2007).

### **Constraints on player choice**

Throughout the coaches' interviews, many contradictions began to surface with regards to the power players actually had over uniform selection. Evidence of Martin's (1992) fragmentation perspective began to surface because although coaches first declared it was players who choose them, after probing the issue further, contradictory data was divulged. For example, captains, senior players and voted representatives were consistently among those given the task of acting as the voice of the team. As one coach articulated, “We use the senior's committee. So we trust them to act the voice for the team. We have a group of three people that we can talk about a lot of those things” (Coach 4). As well, some coaches also mentioned that uniform decisions for the year are generally made at the end of the previous season. These types of comments run contrary to earlier statements made about the teams' power to choose because

not every player is being included in the selection process. Returning second and third year players and new comers to the team do not appear to have a say in the uniform decisions which are predetermined by narrow selection they have to choose from.

This type of player inclusion and exclusion, as well as the coaches' authority to narrow down the uniform selection process from the start, are important because they reinforce previous research suggesting that athletes' power is secondary to that of their coaches (Kihl et al., 2007). Another example of this power imbalance was noted when coaches and athletic directors said they were sympathetic to the individuals who may not have chosen the spandex uniform had they been given the choice, but could not make changes to the team uniform decisions based on individual complaints. For instance one coach stated that, "if you have one player with a problem, that would be hard. The majority would have to rule" (Coach 4). This sentiment was seen throughout the coaches' transcripts as is evident in this coach's comment:

It would be one of those things, you know like... I hate running lines. Well that's what you have to do. If the 14 other girls are doing it, you are gonna have to do it. You know so 'I don't like wearing spandex'. Well the other 14 are so, you are gonna have to do it too. (Coach 1)

From this excerpt and others like it, we can see that the rights and decisions of individual players are often silenced or overruled in favour of team uniformity that is controlled by the coaches.

As mentioned earlier, the CIS volleyball league follows the Volleyball Canada Rulebook and these rules stipulate all the players must wear identical jerseys and shorts (Volleyball Canada, 2008). As a result, the possibility of individual uniform choice is limited. According to coaches, individual players are permitted to dress as they wish for practices and other non-game related functions, but uniformity is a requirement for game play. As one coach put it:

You don't have to wear it all the time. You don't have to wear it to practice. But when it comes to game time, you are gonna have to put them on because that is the rule. Everybody has to look the same. (Coach 1)

Thus, while most coaches and some athletic directors were aware that the rules did not require their female players to wear spandex shorts, they did, for the most part, abide by the league's stipulation about the uniformity of player appearance during competition. It should be noted that a couple of the coaches indicated they would be willing to circumvent the rules in an attempt to allow a player with a different uniform to play, like e-mailing the other coach ahead of time, or speaking to the referee prior to the match about making an exception. However, ultimately the interviewees acknowledged that those players wishing to wear something different would be very unlikely to do so because of peer pressure and the normative practices of the sport.

Because the interviewees initially claimed the players were responsible for the spandex practice, but after further probing disclosed that not all of them had a say, I argue that these contradictions provide support for the fragmentation perspective, albeit in a different way than proposed by Martin (1992). In her theory, Martin (1992) argues that ambiguous beliefs and values are often present at any moment within an organization and that the values and beliefs of organizational members are always in flux. However, I found this type of duality present in the individuals themselves and I suspect their viewpoints would be largely consistent over time unless there was a major incident (e.g., an entire team resisting the uniform practice). My findings reveal that all but one of the interviewees, who spoke about the power of player choice, also provided examples of the limitations and constraints on that agency. While I would suggest that the duality of these responses can be credited partially to mixed feelings from the interviewees, I suspect the later responses revealed a more accurate picture of the practice. In fact, the findings about players' agency become even more complex when reviewing how coaches and athletic directors described their own roles in the spandex practice.

## **Coaches' and Athletic Directors' Responsibilities**

As the interviews progressed, the interviewees began to acknowledge their power in the selection of the spandex uniforms, with several of the coaches directly admitting they were the ones with the ultimate authority. In some years, coaches indicated they alone made the decision not to buy new team uniforms, as a way of stretching the team's annual budget. While this reusing of uniforms makes sense for fiscally strapped organizations, it is an example of how much power the coaches had. As one coach put it, "I mean, they have input. But ultimately I have to make the decision. You have to make the best decision for the team" (Coach 3). This statement directly contradicts previous comments about the players' control over team uniforms decisions. For a couple male coaches who felt uncomfortable asserting this type of authority over women, they placed partial decision making authority with a female assistant coach or athletic administrator.

The findings suggest a shared understanding and belief among the interviewees that the onus is on them to make the best decision for their teams. Previous research confirms that this is a commonly felt responsibility by athletic staff, who feel they must make choices that do not compromise the school's reputation, while fostering team success and ensuring the needs of their players are met (Armstrong-Doherty, 1995; Bar, Hums & Gullion, 1999; Bloom & Vallee, 2005; Wedgewood, 2005). As one athletic director said:

If I thought that something was off the boards, I would definitely step in and say, you know... I basically have to protect the image of the university and if I thought that somebody was taking advantage of that, I would step in and do that. (AD 1)

I argue that this can be problematic when it is assumed players are comfortable in spandex bottoms. As most of the players are not consulted on this issue, there is not much of an opportunity for critical or oppositional voices to be heard.

All of the athletic directors pointed out they did not personally consult with the players regarding team uniforms, leaving the responsibility for uniforms and equipment decisions up to their coaching staff. This is of particular interest because despite saying they were the ultimate authority in their departments, athletic directors admitted they had no idea what the players wanted. As one athletic director noted:

I don't know whether they are happy wearing the shorts or would rather wear what the men wear. I really don't know. I've never really talked to anybody on the team. (AD 3)

This finding may not be surprising given the large number of teams that athletic directors are responsible for overseeing. However, it is troubling that the practices of their coaching staff, including uniform selections, are not being critically evaluated.

Certainly volleyball has become a sport where the boundaries of acceptable attire for female athletes have been pushed and negotiated more than in some other sports. Yet the majority of the interviewees concluded the women's uniforms were currently well within the limits of 'good taste'. As one athletic director stated:

I don't think it will go anymore than it is. I don't see room for it. Like I think it is at the point where anything more revealing would be in bad taste. I think where the athletes are is appropriate. (AD 5)

Based on quotes like this it appears there are well understood standards where looking sexually appealing is accepted (Lenskyj, 1995; Burn-Ardolino, 2003). There is some research to suggest that although sport audiences want female athletes to look attractive and feminine, it would be inappropriate to be dressed more provocatively (Cahoon & Edmonds, 1989; Guiliano & Knight, 2001; Barnes, et al., 2004; Gurung & Chrouser, 2007). In the next section, data on the differences between men's and women's uniforms are discussed further.

## **Explanations for the Differences in Male and Female Volleyball Uniforms**

Not unlike the factors influencing the interpretation of the uniform rule, the findings demonstrate that cultural pressures, player input and coach/athletic director control explain some of the reasons for the differences. Citing standard volleyball practices as a guide for CIS uniforms, coaches and athletic directors once again credited the volleyball culture for the gendered uniform practices. As well, they said players' decisions about aesthetics and comfort also played a role, as did the functionality of the uniforms.

### **Traditional Volleyball Practices**

The coaches and athletic directors commented on the traditional and normative behaviours of the larger volleyball community as a significant determinant of male and female uniforms at the amateur level. The consistent responses, as well as the enduring nature of the gendered uniforms are reflective of Martin's (1992) integration dimension of organizational culture.

### **That's what volleyball looks like**

The interviewees noted that women have traditionally worn more feminine uniforms, like skirts or tight and short bottoms to play, unlike the men who have worn longer and looser shorts over the past decades. It was well understood that the spandex uniform has never been the accepted practice among male volleyball players, at any level of play or at any time in history, even though men wear spandex in other sports such as track, skiing and swimming (Reeser, 2003). Based on the interviewees' comments, I gather they feel it is acceptable for some male athletes to wear tight fitting clothing in other sports if it provides them with a technical advantage, like decreasing wind or water drag (Frederick, 1992). But in volleyball, spandex would offer little or no advantage and would be an aesthetic rather than functional choice.

Conversely, this type of relaxed uniform had not been seen in women's volleyball by the interviewees in over a decade. In fact some of the newer coaches and athletic directors had not known anything other than spandex shorts for the women's teams. As this coach indicated:

When I came into the CIS, they were already wearing them and so it wasn't something where I thought ooooooh, because it was something they were already wearing. (Coach 2)

This apparent willingness to take up the spandex practice without question demonstrates that a precedent has been established within the CIS volleyball system where alternative uniforms are not being considered.

The findings suggest that the broader volleyball culture encourages compliance to gender norms and fosters the belief that CIS women's teams should wear spandex and CIS men's teams should wear baggy basketball type shorts. As a result there appears to be significant coercive pressure on the CIS members to conform to gender stereotypes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and a gendered subtext is influencing the decisions of organizational members (Edwards, Skinner & Stewart, 2004; Frisby & Hoerber, 2007).

### **Male versus Female Athlete Input**

Credit for the uniform choices in both men's and women's CIS volleyball was attributed to the desires and wishes of the players due to aesthetic appeal and/or the comfort level. They felt because of differences between male and female bodies, the women looked better and were more comfortable in spandex shorts than the men would be. At the same time, most of the interviewees eventually contradicted this stance by noting discomfort and displeasure among their female players while wearing short spandex.

### **Spandex looks better on women than men**

The interviewees often commented on how the female volleyball player's build is well suited to wearing tight and revealing shorts, unlike that of the males. There was a common

attitude that “the general [female volleyball player’s] body type is tall and thin and that...those girls are happy to show off their bodies” (AD 5). While the participants shared a belief that some of women were pleased to be the objects of ‘gaze, they were quick to add that the same did not hold true for most male volleyball players. Some insisted that women “look better in spandex shorts than guys do” (Coach 1). Others stated that “...men’s physiques do not go very good with spandex, for obvious reasons” (AD 1). Admittedly, I did not pursue this line of questioning as it seemed obvious from the interviewees physical gestures, nervous laughter and facial expressions, that they were alluding to the idea that the men’s genitalia would be more visible than a woman’s in this kind of attire. They went on to indicate they did not think the men would want their bodies to be displayed in this manner. This sentiment has long been articulated by researchers who believe that while certain female forms are meant to be displayed, the hegemonic male body is not (Bordo, 1999; Adams, 2005; Reilly & Rudd, 2007).

### **Whose comfort counts?**

Witnessing some of the women wearing spandex outside of the competitive arena, like in the weight-room, and players choosing to wear even shorter spandex led some interviewees to believe the female players were comfortable wearing the spandex shorts. This same notion of comfort was also used to explain why male CIS players are not choosing to wear spandex bottoms. As one participant put it, “I think they [the male players] would feel absolutely silly in them” (Coach 2). Because tight clothing and a preoccupation with the male form is often associated with homosexuality, vigorous policing of male attire is required to disrupt notions of same-sex orientation and homoeroticism (Bordo, 1999; Pronger, 1999; Adams, 2005). While one participant was aware of a men’s professional team in Europe that had worn longer spandex shorts during the 1980s, the coach said the trend was short lived because of the high levels of discomfort expressed by male players. This finding is significant because only male discomfort

was acknowledged as a deterrent of the spandex uniform, even though female players are not always comfortable in them.

Coach 4: The interesting thing is how it has evolved, how the girls are tugging at them all the time right? They ride up or whatever and they are tugging at them half of the game. You know, play the game, tug the shorts, play the game, tug the shorts”

Kelly: So they are not comfortable?

Coach 4: Some of them... I guess not.

Another coach informed me some women spray their shorts with an adhesive product before the game to “hold them in place, if it’s moving on them” (Coach 3). I contend that having to continuously readjust their shorts or glue material to their legs is indicative of a less than comfortable garment.

The idea that women and not men enjoy and are comfortable revealing their bodies is prevalent in the findings and appears to be evidence of cultural integration. However as Martin (1992) indicates, a common mistake made by those who assume only widely shared perspectives exists, is that little attention is paid to less consistent or contradictory findings. While at first athletic directors and coaches positioned the women’s acts of discomfort as exceptions to the rule, their later acknowledgement of player discomfort demonstrates a less than consistent explanation of the practice. Furthermore, the ever-changing positions provide further evidence of a fragmented organizational culture (Martin, 1992). Indeed, the lack of consistency is important to understanding the differences between the uniforms of male and female players because it highlights the untidiness around the gendered uniforms and also hints at the coaches’ and athletic directors’ roles in reinforcing the practice.

## **Coaches' and Athletic Directors' Justifications for Gendering Uniforms**

Comparisons between the men's and women's games were frequently made by coaches and athletic directors and was used as a reason why they felt it appropriate to have different uniforms for men and women. Additionally, coaches and athletic directors saw the current uniform market choices as a reflection of the functional requirements of each game.

### **Different games have different requirements**

Although the rules of volleyball for men and women are almost identical<sup>viii</sup>, nearly all the coaches felt that the men's and women's games are not comparable in terms of the techniques used and style of play. It was articulated that women have adopted more defensive strategies into their game and are on the floor more often than the men. As well, the coaches claimed that male players are more prone to diving on their fronts and bellies, whereas female players are more likely to stride slide and layout to dig a hard driven ball. According to this coach:

The dynamics of women's and men's volleyball are different. Like internationally it's a little bit similar... but men's volleyball is more about the sideout<sup>ix</sup> game and siding out and siding out and siding out. With women you have a little more finesse because it is the digging and the passing and the longer rallies. (Coach 5)

Wachs (2005) argues that male and female performances are rarely compared on the same level to ensure that the male's place as the better athlete remains unchallenged. Interestingly in this study, the coaches indicated that the women's style was more pleasing and exciting to watch. Nevertheless, the differences between the men's and women's games were repeatedly offered as explanations for the gendered uniform preferences, as this was inevitably linked to the different functions required of the men's and women's uniform bottoms. It should be noted that only the women's coaches spoke about the differences between the women's and men's game. Because of the difference in training and ties to the volleyball sport itself, this type of information may be outside the realm of expertise of the athletic directors. Martin (1992) would explain this finding

as evidence of differentiation because the women's volleyball coaches and athletic directors could be considered different sub-groups within the CIS. However, while consensus about the different games existed within the coaching subculture, both athletic directors and coaches commented on the functionality of spandex shorts for the female players.

All but one of the interviewees felt that because volleyball was a sport involving jumping, diving to the ground and other agile movements, spandex shorts made the most sense. They argued the tight shorts are needed in order stay in place when the women dive on the floor and the short length encourages freedom of movement. As well, some argued that there is a lack of functional alternatives for the women, as articulated by this coach:

It comes back to functionality. What's the option? What are you going to put them in if not spandex? That works for the sport. If you come up with something, present it and you know it could be another option, but I really haven't seen any alternatives. (Coach 3)

### **Market availability**

From marketing studies like that of Long and Veltri (n.d) and Lucas (2000), we know that the manufacturers of sport apparel do make and market different products for the different genders. Even if the men and women did want alternative uniforms, it would be difficult to obtain their choice from volleyball suppliers. Several of the coaches showed me volleyball catalogues to illustrate that spandex were the only choice offered for women and that this choice was noticeably absent from the men's catalogues. However, coaches and athletic directors also indicated they were not obligated to choose uniforms based only on the options available in women's volleyball catalogues. They were able to provide players with other catalogues from different sports where more options are available in women's shorts (e.g., soccer or men's volleyball catalogues). However, this is not occurring because current uniform selections are in keeping with a volleyball culture that encourages uniformity resulting in a practice that goes

unchallenged by coaches and athletic directors. The rationalizations and justifications provided by coaches and athletic directors appear to be a public relations way of explaining the practice rather than an honest dialogue about the uniforms worn by male and female players.

### **Reasons for the Lack of Change to the Spandex Uniform Practice**

Initially the interviewees indicated there was no need to change the women's uniforms because they felt the uniforms did not sexualize the players and they faced little resistance to the practice because they were adhering to guidelines outlined in the CIS Equity Policy. Ultimately, I found that all but one of the coaches and athletic directors felt there was a need to change this practice. Instead, coaches and athletic directors used justifications and rationalizations to defend their lack of action.

### **Sexualized Volleyball Culture**

Social and organizational culture shapes the attitudes, values and behaviour of individuals in an organization. According to Cousens and Slack (1996), organizational members are socialized to internalize the values and beliefs of cultural leaders and will act without direct guidance from the central office in the form of written rules and formal control mechanisms. The lack of expressed need to change the uniform practice demonstrates coaches and athletic directors are adhering to the consistent messages within the broader volleyball culture that this behaviour is valued and accepted. Yet, dominant discourses about the naturalness and normality of the spandex uniform serve to silence or rationalize evidence to the contrary (Martin, 2000).

The data suggests the discourses around the exploitation and sexualisation of female athletes are not taken into account when coaches and athletic directors are determining whether or not the practice should be altered. As this athletic director indicated:

I never thought of it as a sexual connotation at all... I just think it's at the age when everybody's looking and I think that is not unhealthy. I honestly don't. Because when I was that age I was looking. (AD 1)

This interviewee appears to be ascribing to the dominant discourse that looking at the women is natural and normal. His/her quote also highlights the impact that CIS women's volleyball fans and audiences have on how coaches and athletic directors determine if the uniforms need to be changed. Because the interviewees have observed that the women's volleyball games do not attract large audiences, they contend this was an indication that the shorts were not being used as sexual lures for outsiders and thus did not necessitate further critique. However as I probed further on the subject a different story emerged.

One coach admitted "sex is definitely there. That's for sure. But that's with anything" (Coach 1). It became obvious that some of the interviewees were very much aware of the relationship between the spandex shorts and the sexualisation of the female athletes. Coaches in particular noted hearing comments from teaching staff and volleyball fans referencing the women's uniforms in sexualized ways. This coach remembered that he/she had university staff approach her personally to make comments about sexualization. "I had professors say to me in the hallways, 'the best thing to happen to women's volleyball was spandex'" (Coach 3). Some athletic directors could also recall incidents when they had heard comments about the appearances of women's bodies from fans. For example this athletic director indicated:

I would say you hear more, that, our women's volleyball team are very good looking athletes. Or from the guys, that 'I want to go watch women's volleyball because they are really pretty'. (AD 4)

Similar findings have been documented in numerous media studies, indicating that viewers often prefer to watch women in revealing clothing (Guiliano & Knight, 2001; Shuggart, 2003; Barnes, et al., 2004; Schultz, 2004). However, although the coaches and athletic directors repeatedly

talked about the sexualizing nature of the spandex uniforms, all but one coach insisted there was no need to change the practice.

This resistance to change is well documented in the literature. Researchers offer multiple and sometimes competing explanations for the lack of organizational change. However, many suggest that organizational practices go unchanged because organizational members deny the need for change, feel the change threatens their personal values and beliefs, and/or are uncertain how those changes will affect the organization (Agocs, 1997; Bovey & Hede, 2001; Ford, Ford & McNamara, 2002; Alas, 2007). From the interviewees' responses, it is apparent that one reason coaches and athletic directors are unmotivated to change is because the current gendered uniforms are in line with volleyball and broader social norms about the roles of women. Because women are seen as sexual objects (Connell, 1987; Bordo, 1999), putting the players in less sexualized uniforms would challenge gender ideals, creating a dissonance within the shared heteronormative organizational culture.

### **Ignoring Player Resistance and Problematic Behaviour**

Other reasons cited by coaches and athletic directors for maintaining the current spandex uniform was they faced little to no resistance to the practice and as a result felt that it was unproblematic. Initially, nearly all of the interviewees indicated players had *never* vocally expressed to them any disapproval, dislike or refusal to wear the spandex shorts and this provided justification for the lack of consideration of alternatives. However, as previously noted, this rationale was not as clear cut as the participants had first indicated.

What first appeared to demonstrate integration in the athletic department became more ambiguous as the interviews progressed. Similar to the findings of other volleyball studies (Barnes et al., 2004), my data reveal that all of the coaches and half of the athletic directors had encountered resistance to the uniform bottoms at some point in their careers. Examples of

aversion to the spandex uniform included wearing sweatpants or baggy shorts until game time, refusing to wear spandex shorts for practice, asking to stand in the back for team photos and openly stating they disliked the shorts to their teammates. These findings suggest that some athletes resent being sexualized in their uniforms (Collins, 2002; Burns-Ardolino, 2003; Aimar, et al., 2004; Barnes, et al., 2004; Ross & Shiness, 2004). Indeed I argue that these seemingly subtle and covert ways of constructing their own definitions of gender displays (Burns-Ardolino, 2003) are indicative of a less than total acceptance of the spandex uniforms by players.

Future research is required to determine if players do not feel comfortable openly resisting the practice because women acting within traditionally male dominated environments often do not often have the luxury of expressing oppositional view points as they may face alienation (Obenour, et al., 2002; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Ross & Shiness, 2004). However the lack of vocal opposition expressed by coaches and athletic directors may be indicative of the players' fear of expressing conflicting view points due to possible repercussions (Ross & Shiness, 2004; Hoeber, 2007), like being challenged about her sexuality, being seen as a trouble maker, losing game time or even her spot on the team.

Despite expressing concern about the well being of their players, only one coach said, "I feel sorry, very sorry for the girls at times. Just because of what we ask them to wear and how it looks" (Coach 2). This finding corroborates my previous argument that coaches only feel the responsibility to address player concerns or resistance when it becomes the voice of the majority. Coaches rationalize overlooking resistance by indicating that the opposing players had come from other sports and were not used to the practice, had self-esteem issues or the player did not personally want the coaches to change the team uniform on her behalf. As this coach recalled:

You know she wore sweatpants until she had to wear spandex. I've actually got one girl on my team right now that would probably prefer not to. I don't think she

wears spandex at practice ever, but I don't really look. I think most of the time she doesn't wear spandex. But she wears them for every game. (Coach 1)

The denial of the problematic nature of the spandex shorts provides justification for the limited action taken to change the ritualized practice (Agocs, 1997; Bovey & Hede, 2001). As indicated below, I suggest this limited consideration and action may contribute to potential mental and physical health problems of women volleyball players.

### **Beauty, braun, and brains**

While most participants felt it unnecessary to change the spandex uniform practice, more than half of the interviewees claimed it was their responsibility to build up the self-esteem of their players and enhance their self body image. As Robinson (2002) notes, the pressures on female athletes to have the 'ideal' body type are immense. Being thin and toned, but not overly muscular, are essential to this feminine ideal (Markula, 1995; Lennon & Rudd, 2000). Coaches in particular, are aware of the pressures on their female athletes to conform to feminine standards of weight and beauty, especially since volleyball uniforms are so revealing. They had developed certain strategies to help them cope with these demands. For example, coaches held team workshops where they showed the players media clips of how models' pictures are airbrushed or retouched as a way to show that these standards of beauty are unrealistic. Another common technique was to try and instil pride in their athletes about their bodies, by adopting team mottos like "Beauty. Braun. Brains" (Coach 5). As this coach indicated:

Let's be proud of our bodies by being fit and... not being ashamed of showing what you have got because you have invested in that. It's your temple. You are an athlete, so there is nothing to be ashamed of in wearing that type of bottom.  
(Coach 3)

This attitude that the women need to be strengthened or helped to fend off the pressures of unattainable beauty standards was more pronounced in the findings than a desire to change the system that put the women's bodies on display (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Alas, 2007). Of

particular concern is how this practice is allowed to continue, while potentially contributing to unhealthy behaviour on women's volleyball teams.

There are researchers who argue there is a strong connection between body image and eating disorders (Markula, 1995; Urla and Swedlund, 1995; Beals, 2002). In one study, while the occurrence of eating disorders was less common among volleyball players than more aesthetically driven sports like gymnastics or figure skating, the sport still ranked higher in incidences than other CIS sports like basketball and softball (Beals, 2002). As this coach indicated, "I think if there is a women's volleyball program out there that says they've never had an eating disorder, they're lying" (Coach 2). This finding runs contrary to the belief that sport is an environment where athletes' self-confidence and competence are expected to thrive. It is troubling that the spandex practice can be linked to the players' self-monitoring and how that behaviour can be exploited by those with power (Lennon & Rudd, 2000; Beals, 2002).

A few of the interviewees acknowledge the spandex shorts are used as a motivational tool by some coaches to "help their athletes to be in the best shape possible" (AD 2). Researchers indicate this type of exploitation does occur and unrealistic body expectations may result from unethical coaching techniques (Lennon & Rudd, 2000; Beals, 2002). This coach acknowledged the uniforms do place pressure on the athletes to have a certain body type, "Does it weigh on some athletes? For sure. But I think sometimes there are concerns that need to be met" (Coach 1). Based on comments like this, I suggest the use of revealing garments as an incentive for increased fitness levels has the potential to be damaging on the female players' bodies and self-esteem. Despite research showing women with lowered body image and larger body types show a preference for wearing baggy shorts (Chattaramn & Rudd, 2006), coaches' acknowledge known eating disorders and how spandex may contribute to unhealthy body practices, yet almost none of them expressed interest in moving away from the spandex uniform practice.

Certainly the coaches and athletic directors seemed genuinely concerned for the safety and well-being of their players, although the disconnect between this and the limited action they are willing to take seems contradictory. As Fenton, Frisby and Luke (1999) and Hoerber and Frisby (2001) found, the organizational values that are articulated by organizational members are not always enacted in the same way. Barnett and Finnmore (1999) contend that “rules and routines may come to obscure overall missions and larger social goals” (p. 718).

I argue the coaches’ and athletic directors’ understandings about the problematic and sexualizing potential of the spandex practice are anything but clear and constant across the CIS conference examined. Martin’s (1992) fragmentation perspective helps to explain why coaches and athletic directors, whose job it is to ensure the safety and health of their athletes, were able to link the practice of spandex uniforms to body-image and eating disorders, but resist the need to change the practice. This ambiguity between what is said and what is enacted, or ‘action ambiguity’ (Martin, 1992) contributes to the entrenchment of inequitable practices.

### **A Liberal Feminist Athletic Department**

Much like Hoerber’s (2004) findings on equity in CIS athletic departments, it appears that my interviewees were unfamiliar with the stipulations of the CIS Equity Policy as I needed to describe the policy to each of them. When asked if they felt this policy, which states that male and female athletes cannot be treated differently based on their gender (Canadian Interuniversity Sport, 2007), was being contradicted by the different uniforms worn, every coach and athletic director indicated the policy was not being violated because the players were given the choice to pick their own uniforms. This liberal feminist policy, which emphasizes equal opportunity for male and female athletes, does little to increase the recognition among the athletic staff that men and women do not all face the same social barriers. I argue that providing them with the same

uniform opportunities does not ensure they are receiving the same quality of treatment (Donnelly & Kidd, 2000). Comments like this one were consistently noted in the data:

I think that the policy is more like you have to provide both with uniforms. It is not like you are providing the men with uniforms and the women have to pay or something like that. (AD 3)

Alas (2007) argues individuals will resist change so long as the motivation to do so is absent. Because the interviewees felt they were adhering to the specifications outlined in the gender equity policy, they did not feel a need to deviate from the existing practice. Bovey and Hede (2001) add that individuals are unlikely to change their behaviour if they cannot anticipate the outcome of that change. Because the liberal feminist approach to gender equality is readily accepted in athletic departments (Hoerber & Frisby, 2001), coaches and athletic directors do not appear willing to consider alternative styles of governance. This shared approach provides support for Martin's (1992) integration perspective and further explains why coaches and athletic directors do not feel the need to alter the current uniform practice.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Unlike international volleyball, the wording of the CIS uniform rule appears to be gender neutral, yet its interpretation is unmistakably gendered. Canada West women's volleyball coaches and athletic directors simultaneously adhere to the CIS Rulebook and the uniform prescriptions outlined by the FIVB, demonstrating how women's teams are run in feminized and sexualized ways. While men and women need not be governed identically, the administration of these teams should ensure the same quality of treatment is received by players of both genders. Using feminist critical theory and organization culture theory, this study exposes the gendered discourses present in CIS volleyball programs and how the resulting inequitable power relations impact the way women's teams are governed.

The following section will summarize the conclusions and highlights my contributions to the literature on organizational culture and gender equity in sport. I then present some practical recommendations for CIS volleyball coaches and administrators to encourage and promote change. Finally, as this study is only a first step to understanding the spandex uniform practice, I offer suggestions for future research.

### Conclusions

The findings reveal that hegemonic gender ideals affect organizational practices and provide support for Martin's (1992) organizational culture approach. This section discusses how hegemonic influences impact team uniforms and illustrate evidence of organizational integration, differentiation and fragmentation. Additionally, I will demonstrate how this study builds on Martin's (1992) framework to add further analytical depth to her theory.

## **Hegemony**

Hegemonic theorists contend that social order is maintained because those in subordinate individuals comply with existing norms, believing them to be right and natural (Ross & Shiness, 2004). Because some discourses are encouraged while others are strongly resisted by powerful groups, the availability of options to choose from is limited (Ross & Shiness, 2004). Complicity results from adhering to strategically manipulated understandings of what behaviours are socially acceptable. This study reveals that although select players are given some input over uniform decisions, these individuals are only given certain options to pick from. Whether their choices are limited by a coach's pre-selection or market availability, the players really only have spandex bottoms as a uniform choice. While the selection process may appear to give the players decision-making power, they are constrained from the outset to ensure that their choice conforms to existing standards of acceptable attire for women. In this way, the women are persuaded rather than coerced into choosing gendered uniforms (Hargreaves, 1990).

The ideological pressure from the larger volleyball culture and society on the women to comply with traditional gender ideologies also discourages the players from forcefully resisting the normative spandex practice. Professional uniforms standards, limited market choices and a lack of recognition and support for alternative uniforms by coaches and athletic directors simultaneously encourages the spandex choice while discouraging alternatives (Connell, 1987; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Hargreaves, 1990). The extent to which the spandex uniform is exemplified, supported and pushed on the players makes the choice seem normal. Arguments about the functionality of the uniform further strengthens the players' common sense attitude about selecting spandex uniforms.

Strategies, like gender uniform rules, help to remove comparisons between male and female athletes and maintain the ideological differences between genders (Wachs, 2005; Travers,

2006). Through these types of practices, the CIS women's volleyball players are covertly discouraged from overstepping their feminine boundaries and to accept hegemonic ways of behaving in a way that reproduces an oppressive system that privileges maleness over femaleness (Hargreaves, 1990; Ross & Shiness, 2004). Additionally, the spandex uniform practice also provides insights into how hegemonic values, beliefs and understanding of gender help to shape decisions by organizational members.

### **Three Perspectives**

According to Martin (1992) cultural practices refer to the organizational structures, rules and unwritten norms within an organization and are part of a larger matrix that makes up organizational culture. The spandex rule is one such practice and provides an avenue to explore the CIS women's volleyball organization. Martin's (1992) three perspectives are useful for critically analyzing the spandex uniform practice because they shed light on the complexity of interpretations and allow researchers to examine multiple and shifting view points about organizational activities.

#### **Integration**

Integration accounted for the majority of the findings as there were values, beliefs and understandings that were shared and consistent. Most evident were the depictions of the volleyball culture (Martin, 1992). The norms and social gender expectations within this sport culture were noted to be significant in influencing how coaches and athletic directors interpreted the CIS uniform rule, helping to account for the differences between the men's and women's uniforms and partially explaining the enduring nature of the practice. Armstrong-Doherty (1995) argues in order to "understand the behaviour of an organization one must examine the context or environment within which it operates" (p. 76). As such, it is not surprising that the heteronormative 'volleyball culture' encouraged and supported gendered practices. The

organizational values affecting the spandex uniform practice are premised on socially constructed gender ideals which reinforce behaviour and delineate the boundaries about what is normal or expected in organizations (Hoerber, 2007). Indeed, nearly every participant indicated they felt the women's teams were acting in accordance not only with volleyball norms but with social norms as well. Wright and Clarke (1999) explain that where discourses accord with mainstream beliefs and social practices, ways of knowing are taken-for-granted and other ways are marginalized or regarded as deviant.

Both coaches and athletic directors referred to the natural differences between male and female bodies and felt women looked better in spandex shorts than men's bodies. Similar to previous research, the interviewees felt gendered clothing practices were not only acceptable, but also expected in volleyball (Pronger, 1990; Adams, 2005; Reilly & Rudd, 2007). References were often made to the norms of the sport where coaches and athletic directors were not only following CIS trends but those of professional leagues as well. These choices were then reinforced by the market selections available, where spandex shorts are only offered to women's teams with little options for anything else. Hall (2002) argues that sport marketing is more than ever focusing on women's bodies, depicting an ideal of normal womanliness which highlights their sexuality and this seems to be readily taken up by the coaches and athletic directors.

While every individual said it was their responsibility to ensure a respectable image of their school was upheld, nearly every interviewee advised me the uniforms did not move beyond what was considered acceptable attire in the sport of volleyball or in contemporary fashion. Because behaviours are partially driven by what society feels is appropriate or acceptable (Sankaran & Volkwein-Caplan, 2002), the women's spandex uniform was not a practice they considered moving away from. The group was using heteronormative gender cues from their

social surroundings to understand and explain the spandex uniform practice. However, not every participant shared the same understandings, with coaches adding a different layer to the analysis in comparison to the athletic directors.

### **Differentiation**

This study revealed limited differentiation, perhaps because unlike Martin (1992) who looked within one organization, my sample included individuals with similar positions across six organizations in the Canada West Athletic Conference. However, evidence of this perspective became apparent when questions were asked about processes of uniform selection, specifics about the sport itself and potential consequences of the practice. Perhaps predictably, coaches were significantly more informed as each were able to provide a detailed account of how spandex shorts are selected and to comment on what influenced the women's decisions, including the way the uniforms looked on the players and a desire to look like the professionals. Coaches also offered an additional explanation for the differences between the men's and women's shorts not voiced by athletic directors when they claimed men's and women's volleyball were two different games and the uniform requirements were a reflection of dissimilarities in playing style. The coaches are subscribing to highly motivated ideological discourses which maintain traditional gender ideals by preventing challenges to the gender binaries so crucial to their construction (Connell, 1987; Wachs, 2005).

As well, coaches reported that allegiances to governing bodies of volleyball, like Volleyball Canada and the FIVB, also contribute to the spandex uniform practice. Donaldson (1993) argues that this hegemonic influence is demonstrative of how certain social groups are able to establish and maintain social domination without coercion or formal control. Not unlike previous research that indicates smaller organizations mimic larger successful organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Cousens & Slack, 1996; Amis & Shaw, 2001), the coaches claimed

adherence to the professional rulebook was a way of legitimizing their teams and connecting them to the global sport. As further evidence of differentiation, coaches were the only ones who discussed the problem of eating disorders on women's volleyball teams and the relationship between them and spandex uniforms. This is related to the literature indicating coaches may actually contribute to eating disorders of their players (Lennon & Rudd, 2000; Beals, 2002). Support for this type of sub-group consensus may not be surprising given that most of the coaches have significantly more personal contact with the players than the athletic directors (Armstrong-Doherty, 1995), as well as a more intimate knowledge of the game itself. While this is significant, I argue that the most interesting findings are those which revealed the inconsistencies and ambiguities around the spandex uniform practice.

### **Fragmentation**

While Martin (1992) conceptualized the fragmentation perspective by analyzing the lack of clarity and dissensus around issues in an organization, my findings suggest that there is a lack of clarity about the spandex practice within individuals themselves. Initially, in the interviews responses from coaches and athletic directors seemed to be solely providing evidence of integration. However, after probing the uniform selection process, the sexualizing nature of the shorts and possible player resistance were acknowledged and support for Martin's (1992) fragmentation perspective became clear. Similarly, although at first nearly every coach and athletic director indicated the female players were choosing the spandex shorts, the findings reveal this was not necessarily the case. While some players' input was influential in team uniform decisions, individual agency was limited and constrained by factors like coaches and athletic directors' standards of acceptability and market choices. This 'action ambiguity' demonstrates there often is inconsistency between what is said and what is actually enacted (Martin, 1992).

Further ambiguities were revealed when the interviewees were questioned about possible resistance to the spandex bottoms. For instance, at some point in each interview the participants indicated players were choosing to wear the tight fitting shorts, however, stories were later told about players deciding to wear alternative bottoms and even vocally expressing their displeasure with them. Additionally, coaches and athletic directors repeatedly indicated the feelings and health of their players was their primary responsibility and acknowledged the spandex uniform practice conflicted with these values at times.

These ideological contradictions were also noted in comments about the sexualizing affect of the shorts. In the beginning, each interviewee advised me that there was little sexual connotation to the spandex shorts. However, as the interviews progressed, the same participants divulged that they had heard audience members make sexual comments about the players that were tied to the uniforms. Ultimately, I concur with Martin (1992) that dominant organizational ideologies can be seen most in these types of contradictions.

However, Martin's (1992) theory fails to recognize the impact of the social environment on organizational culture. This study demonstrates that a heteronormative environment significantly influences organizational practices. Because "gender is a dynamic that is deeply embedded in the structure of and meaning assigned to sport...its governance is strongly gender skewed" (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2007, p. 496). This notion that the broader context in which uniform rules are read and interpreted is extremely important to understanding the multitude of reasons behind organizational practices (Anderson, 1999, Edwards, Skinner, & Stewart, 2004), is under developed in Martin's (1992) three perspective approach. Exposing the gendered subtext that impacts organizational decisions is a necessary first step to creating alternative practices.

## **Recommendations for Change**

This study demonstrates traditional gender ideals and stereotypes are present in CIS women's volleyball and that 'gender neutral' rules are not enough to ensure gender equitable programs. Through this type of critical examination changes can be made to the culture of an organization, although it can be difficult in the face of historically entrenched gendered norms and practices (Hargreaves, 1990; Marshall, 1999; Hoerber, 2004). Therefore, I argue that in addition to changing league uniform rules, key sport leaders like coaches and athletic directors need to engage in dialogues with athletes to expose the discourses behind practices as a first step in re-envisioning them.

### **Critiquing Spandex**

It would be inappropriate for me to suggest what CIS volleyball uniforms should look like. Rather, it is my responsibility to provide recommendations to coaches and athletic directors that will help make the CIS women's volleyball organization more equitable. Most importantly, I would encourage coaches and athletic directors to start thinking more critically about the spandex practice and its implications. Special attention should be paid to the resistance and opposition towards the practice, as well as to the potentially dangerous relationship between revealing uniforms, sexualisation, and eating disorders. Because hegemonic practices, such as dressing men and women differently, require consent it makes sense that the way it is, is not the way it has to be (Ross & Shiner, 2004). As such, a closer analysis of the normative practice by key individuals like coaches and athletic directors, in consultation with all players, could make clear the problematic nature of the practice and could be a starting place for change (Shaw & Slack, 2002; Shaw, 2007).

## **Changing the Rules**

Rao and Kelleher (2000) argue that “in order to make lasting changes to what an organization does, both formal rules and informal norms need to change” (p. 75). I recommend that the league loosen its rule on uniformity. The bottoms can remain the same colour, but the exact shorts need not be worn by every player. This would allow those who want to wear shorter, tighter shorts to do so, while permitting others the option of wearing longer and/or looser shorts. Arguably allowing for greater variation in the fit and length of women’s shorts in amateur volleyball would be an admirable first step in making the sport more equitable. This may also permit those players, coaches or administrators the freedom to choose shorts of other team sports as an alternative to those offered by volleyball equipment companies, which could in turn place greater demand on those companies to carry a wider selection of volleyball shorts.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

This research on gendered practices in organizational cultures reveals several potential directions for future research. Although I found Martin’s (1992) three perspective approach to studying organizational culture to be a productive theory, like previous researchers (Fenton et. al, 1999), I do not feel each perspective has the same explanatory potential. My findings indicate that inconsistencies exist both in organizations and within organizational members themselves. Future research could expand the current fragmentation perspective by further unpacking the ambiguities and contradictions uncovered in this study. By investigating the contradictory findings like the sexualizing nature of the spandex shorts, researchers could add further depth to Martin’s theory and contribute to the larger body of literature on organizational culture.

Second, I would recommend similar research to that presented here be conducted using samples from more of the regional bodies of the CIS. This extended research would draw from organizations with diverse sport histories and offer insights into how the broader sporting culture

affects each of these governing bodies. This would provide a more diverse sample population and make the results more transferrable across the CIS organization.

Hoerber (2004) notes “opening up the discussions to include athletes may also facilitate the uncovering of hidden discourses or competing positions” (p. 220). I recommend future research should also include the voices of the female volleyball players as this could yield important comparative data to that offered by coaches and athletic directors. This type of research would also offer insights into how the female players feel about the practice and give the women the opportunity to offer potential alternatives. As well, an investigation of the players could better analyse the relationship between the spandex uniforms and the players’ body monitoring behaviours. Perhaps most significantly, this approach would provide the normally silenced voices of female athletes the opportunity to be heard.

Similarly I suggest that female players of varying ages, not just university-aged players could be interviewed as it would be interesting to see how these types of practices are taken up by younger players coming up in the sport. Youth sport is an avenue that could offer researchers the opportunity to expose the discourses and stereotypes that impact the way children’s sport programs are run (Messner, 2009) and could disrupt inequitable dialogues early enough to make an impact in higher level and more elite sport.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, policy and rule are not terms used interchangeably. Policy refers to the guidelines and mandates set by a governing body to ensure the standardization behaviour within an organization. Rules refer specifically to how a sport will be officiated according to approved sport rulebooks. For the purposes of this paper, rules and regulations will be used synonymously.

<sup>2</sup> The libero is a defensive player on the volleyball court. The player must not attack the volleyball above the height of the net. S/he is not required to rotate through the various positions on the court like the other positions. The libero player may enter and exit the game to replace a player in the back row. This replacement does not count as a substitution.

<sup>3</sup> A skort is a piece of clothing consisting of a pair of shorts covered by a flap of fabric that makes that garment look like a skirt.

<sup>4</sup> Elite interviewing is term coined by Marshall and Rossman (2006) and refers to the interviewing of individuals with influence and knowledge within an organization. For this study coaches and athletic directors would be considered elite in the CIS volleyball organization. The term 'elite' is not used to imply that coaches or athletic directors are superior or higher class than any other in the organization but merely to remain consistent with Marshall and Rossman's concept of interviewing knowledgeable and influential individuals.

<sup>5</sup> Culottes: shorts that resemble women's underwear. They are fitted and cut high on the leg, hugging the woman's buttocks.

<sup>6</sup> Stride sliding refers to a defensive technique used by female players where she lunges to the side and dives onto her hip or side to pass or play a ball that is out of reach from a standing position.

<sup>7</sup> While volleyball in Canada closely follows the international volleyball rules, the American game differs significantly with regards to scoring, substitution and serving rules; though notably shares the same uniform requirements consisting simply of a jersey, socks and shoes (Lenberg, 2008)

<sup>8</sup> The only difference between the rules for the men's and women's games is the height of the net. Senior men play 2.43 m and Senior women at 2.24m.

<sup>9</sup> A sideout refers to winning a point through an offensive attack.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Schedule for Athletic Directors

Rapport:

1. How did you become an athletic director?

#### **RQ1: What considerations are made by coaches and athletic director's when implementing the uniform rule for their team?**

1. How do you think it came to be that men's and women's volleyball players wear different shorts to play?
2. What role do you play in your school's uniform decisions?
3. How does the CIS gender equity policy influence the decisions made about the treatment of male and female athletes?
4. What kind of response do these uniforms get from players, fans, yourself...?

#### **RQ2: What explanations do the coaches and athletic directors cite for the differences in the uniforms worn by male and female CIS volleyball players?**

1. How do you think this practice of male and female volleyball uniforms has become so wide spread?
2. Why do you think other men's and women's sports like soccer or basketball haven't adopted this type of uniform difference for their men's and women's teams?

#### **RQ3: Do coaches and/or athletic directors feel that there is a need to change the spandex uniform practice? Why or Why not?**

1. How would you like to see the females and males dressed to play?
2. How did you or how would you deal with negative responses or resistance?
3. Would you like to see other women's sports like basketball or soccer, use this type of uniform?
4. What would you like to see happen to women's uniforms in the future?
5. Do you have any questions for me?

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Schedule for Athletic Directors

Rapport:

1. How did you become an athletic director?

#### **RQ1: What considerations are made by coaches and athletic director's when implementing the uniform rule for their team?**

2. How do you think it came to be that men's and women's volleyball players wear different shorts to play?
3. What role do you play in your school's uniform decisions?
4. How does the CIS gender equity policy influence the decisions made about the treatment of male and female athletes
5. What kind of response do these uniforms get from players, fans, yourself...?

#### **RQ2: What explanations do the coaches and athletic directors cite for the differences in the uniforms worn by male and female CIS volleyball players?**

1. How do you think this practice of male and female volleyball uniforms has become so wide spread?
2. Why do you think other men's and women's sports like soccer or basketball haven't adopted this type of uniform difference for their men's and women's teams?

#### **RQ3: Do coaches and/or athletic directors feel that there is a need to change the spandex uniform practice? Why or Why not?**

1. How would you like to see the females and males dressed to play?
2. How did you or how would you deal with negative responses or resistance?
3. Would you like to see other women's sports like basketball or soccer, use this type of uniform?
4. What would you like to see happen to women's uniforms in the future?
5. Do you have any questions for me?

**APPENDIX C**  
**Contact Letter**

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA   
**Faculty of Education**

School of Human Kinetics  
210 War Memorial Gym  
6081 University Boulevard  
Vancouver, BC, Canada  
V6T 1Z1

October 2, 2008

Dear (Participant),

I am a Masters of Arts student in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of British Columbia working on a study dealing with the rules of Canadian Interuniversity sport (CIS), specifically women's volleyball. The study is titled "Bump, Set, Spike...Spandex?: Examining the Interpretations of coaches and athletic directors on the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Volleyball uniform rule". The project is designed to better understand how individual interpretations of the CIS volleyball rulebook can impact the how women's CIS volleyball teams are governed.

The purpose of this letter is to request an interview with you because of your association with a CIS women's volleyball team. Your participation would be most helpful in my attempts to understand how the CIS volleyball rules are interpreted by coaches and athletic directors.

The research portion of the study would involve your voluntary participation in a one to two hour, audio-taped, personal or telephone interview with me.

I have attached an information letter and consent form to provide a more detailed description of the study. Once you have had time to review the information letter and consent form, please advise me if you are interested in participating in this study. You may reach me by email at [kpmac10@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:kpmac10@interchange.ubc.ca), by telephone at (778) 238-1606 or by fax at (604) 822-5884. If you are interested in participating, we can then arrange a time and place to meet for an interview at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Kelly MacDonald

## APPENDIX D Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
Faculty of Education 

School of Human Kinetics  
210 War Memorial Gym  
6081 University Boulevard  
Vancouver, BC, Canada  
V6T 1Z1

Telephone: 604-822-3838 Fax: 604-822-6842  
[www.hkin.educ.ubc.ca/school](http://www.hkin.educ.ubc.ca/school)

### **INFORMATION AND CONSENT SHEET: FOR A STUDY OF CANADIAN INTERUNIVERSITY SPORT (CIS) VOLLEYBALL COACHES AND ATHLETIC DIRECTORS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CIS VOLLEYBALL RULING ON PLAYER UNIFORMS.**

**Brief Description of the Study:** The goal of my research is to investigate the how CIS women's volleyball athletic directors and coaches interpret the CIS rulebook and how they govern their women's volleyball teams accordingly. Specifically, I am interested in examining how the uniform rule is interpreted. As well, I am interested in exploring if gender equity policies and the culture of an organization can impact a coach's or athletic directors understanding of the volleyball rules.

The hope of this study is to uncover information regarding the how sport rules are interpreted by key stakeholders in women's sport. The goal is to address a gap in the academic literature regarding amateur sport rules.

The study will be conducted through the School of Human Kinetics in the Faculty of Arts at the University of British Columbia (UBC). This study is part of a graduate degree and will be carried out by Kelly MacDonald, a Master of Arts student, under the supervision of Professor Wendy Frisby.

**The Interview and Your Participation:** Personal or telephone interviews with individual CIS coaches and athletic directors will be conducted by Kelly MacDonald and will last between 1 and 2 hours. The interviews will discuss your role in interpreting the CIS women's volleyball rules and what factors contributed to your understandings of the rules. The interviews will be audio-recorded.

**Confidentiality:** You have been chosen because of your association with a CIS women's volleyball team. Your demographic information, like your age and gender, will be taken from

online information provided by your university. However, your name and that of your school will not be referred to in any documents emerging from the completed study. The transcripts from your data will be secured by a password on computer and any hard copy transcripts and audio-tapes will be secured in a locked cabinet. All data will be kept at a UBC facility.

**Voluntary Participation:** There are no personal benefits to your participation in the study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to refrain from answering any question(s) during the interview process or to withdraw from the interview at any time. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line (RSIL) in the University of British Columbia (UBC) Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598 or by email at [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

**Additional Contact Information:** Should you have questions or require additional information regarding the research project, please contact the Student-Investigator Kelly MacDonald at (778)238-1606 or the Principal Investigator Dr. Wendy Frisby at (604) 822-6445.

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### Consent

I have read the above information and understand the nature of the study.

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

I hereby agree to the above stated conditions and consent to participate in this study.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form and agree to participate in this study.

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Name (please print)

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*Signature*

---

*Date*

## APPENDIX E



The University of British Columbia  
Office of Research Services  
**Behavioural Research Ethics Board**  
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road,  
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

### CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</b> Wendy Frisby	<b>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</b> UBC/Education/Human Kinetics	<b>UBC BREB NUMBER:</b> H08-02170
<b>INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:</b>		
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Site</b>	
UBC	Vancouver (excludes UBC Hospital)	
<b>Other locations where the research will be conducted:</b> The location will be determined by the subject (the goal is for the subject to be comfortable in the location, and to be in a location that is convenient to both the participant and researcher). Sites will include a university classroom, university office, and a public location of the subject's choice.		
<b>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</b> N/A		
<b>SPONSORING AGENCIES:</b> N/A		
<b>PROJECT TITLE:</b> BUMP, SET, SPIKE...SPANDEX: EXAMINING THE INTERPRETATIONS OF COACHES AND ATHLETIC DIRECTORS ON THE CANADIAN INTERUNIVERSITY SPORT WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL UNIFORM RULE		

**CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: November 7, 2009**

<b>DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:</b>	<b>DATE APPROVED:</b> November 7, 2008	
<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Consent Forms:</b>		
Consent Form	1.3	November 30, 2008
<b>Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:</b>		
Sample Interview schedules	1.1	October 30, 2008
<b>Letter of Initial Contact:</b>		
Contact Letter	1.1	October 30, 2008

The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

*Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
and signed electronically by one of the following:*

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Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair  
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair  
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair  
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair  
Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair  
Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair