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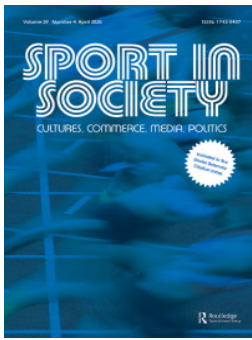
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Daniel Alsarve & Jeff Hearn

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The sport-gender-violence triad: an analysis of analyses from the 1980s until 2019

Daniel Alsarve^{a,b,c}  and Jeff Hearn^{d,e,f,g} 

^aSchool of Health Sciences, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden; ^bRF-SISU Örebro County, Örebro, Sweden; ^cJyväskylä University School of Business and Economics, Jyväskylän yliopisto, Finland; ^dHuman Geography, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden; ^eManagement and Organisation, Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland; ^fSociology, Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK; ^gWomen's and Gender Studies, University of Western Cape, South Africa

ABSTRACT

By reviewing how social science researchers have utilised the triad of sport, gender, and violence, this article identifies variations, changes, and continuities in how these elements have been understood since the 1980s. Based on searches in two databases, the ten most-cited articles from each decade were analysed. The review shows that critical perspectives on men and masculinity were foregrounded in the 1980s, while research connecting sports participation and violence has expanded since the late 1990s. The findings reveal a spectrum of approaches that either challenge or reproduce static understandings of gender and violence. The review demonstrates that the triad, developed as a structural feminist critique and later expanded into research on causal and intervention-oriented models, widens the field's analytical and political horizons and raises questions about where responsibility for violence in and around sport lies. The concluding discussion highlights the importance of normative guidance where violence occupies a grey area.

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Introduction

This article addresses the triad of sport, gender, and violence – how sport, gender, and violence interconnect, and how those connections are understood by scholars. It shows that the relationship between sport, gender, and violence is not a fixed empirical association but is constructed differently across research traditions, producing divergent understandings of what counts as violence, gender, and sport. The historical perspective reveals how shifting interpretations of the triad's boundaries reflect broader political, cultural, and epistemological struggles. Conceptualising sport, gender, and violence as a triad foregrounds their mutual co-constitution: sport is always embedded in gendered meanings and in implicit or explicit forms of violence, whether normalised, regulated or contested. For example, Sönderlund et al. (2014) find that masculinity, violent social identity and antisocial norms stand out as potential factors that may impact the association between sport and violence in athlete populations. With explanatory factors including the sports culture, social norms endorsing hegemonic masculinity, objectification of women, on-field and off-field violence, their literature review demonstrates a significant relationship between violence, sports participation and alcohol consumption. Although this might signal a somewhat clear connection between these elements, Sönderlund et al. (2014) underline the *potentiality* of these interconnections, and conclude that more research is needed to clarify the nature of that relationship. Thus, our article focuses on how researchers have approached and analysed such potential, if often somewhat vague, interrelations. More specifically, we employ an historical perspective on the connections between three main elements: gender, sport and violence.

Unravelling the interconnections of sport, gender, and violence will enhance understanding of the complexities of gender violence both within and beyond the sporting context. Unfortunately, there

CONTACT Daniel Alsarve  daniel.alsarve@oru.se

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are many possible examples, both from the past and the present, regarding sportspersons' violence, committed by both well-known, male sport stars and other less well-known sportspersons. Despite accusations and guilty verdicts, several leading sportsmen have continued their careers, often with support from federations, clubs, and managers. Previous researchers have identified how both sporting cultures and societal cultures more generally tend to treat men's sexist, abusive and diminishing behaviour with indulgence (Anderson 2008; Bryson 1983; Messner 2007; Mewett and Toffoletti 2008). The ends seem to justify the means when, for instance, a prominent football player with a hero-like status is still attractive to clubs, despite misogynistic, abusive or illegal behaviour. That abusive behaviour occurs is perhaps not surprising since comprehensive research at different levels and in different contexts has found that heterosexist, misogynistic and homophobic attitudes are common in male sports culture (Messner 1992; Norman 2010; Sotiriadou and de Haan 2019; Theberge 1997, 1998).

Although the connections between sport, gender and violence transcend national borders, and, in this way, the link between them can be interpreted as international or transnational, and increasingly so, there are, of course, also national, societal, cultural, regional, and, more specifically, intra-organisational conditions that shape the content, consequences, and perceptions of violence, gender, and sport. For a start, there are significant differences in both the level of physical violence between and within countries (Lansford et al. 2012), and in how violence, the gendering of violence, and gendered violence are constructed and understood in societal politics, culture, and public debate, according to what are sometimes called violence regimes (Hearn et al. 2022; Strid et al. 2021). Such more general conditions can, in turn, bear on violence and gender in sport, as well as clear differences in the deployment of violence across various sports. In North America, for example, we see how celebrities have been allowed to compete in MMA (Evanhoff 2021), which would be unthinkable and even prohibited in, for example, Scandinavia. Alongside various national regulations and laws, different coaches in the same sport, and even within the same club, may encourage different playing styles that may facilitate or contain violence. This exemplifies how the transnational character of the triad can shift depending on location and individual intentions, as well as variations in the relative impact of the local, the national, and the transnational across different sports and levels of professionalisation.

However, despite both national variations and transnational commonalities, men are both perpetrators and victims of sport violence (Kaufman 1987; Young 1993). The difference between being a perpetrator or a victim should also not always be overstated, especially when cultural norms might contribute to a normalising of violent practices. This is relevant in many, if not all, sports. For example, systematic abuses and physically assaults seem to have permeated Canadian junior hockey, and in June 2020 the former NHL player Daniel Carcillo filed a class action lawsuit against the Canadian Hockey League and its member teams on behalf of players subjected to abuse (CBC 2018). As well as a culture of silence that has often seemed widespread around such phenomena, there are many examples of degrading initiation rites and rituals in other sports and other countries (Manley, Roderick, and Parker 2016; Messner 2007).

Violent acts also link to what is sometimes the ambiguous issue of consent in the actual playing of some sports. By accepting the rules of certain body-contact sports, men and women agree to expose their bodies to different kinds of violence. Punches, kicks and body-checking are the most obvious, but some sports also employ more or less body-brutal training methods, such as in gymnastics (Pinheiro et al. 2014). Paralleling these normalised practices of violence, there are legal cases of rugby players suing clubs for neglecting their duty of care (Bull 2020).

The above suggests different kinds of connections between and meanings of sport, gender and violence. The dynamics, expressions, controls, and consequences of the triad vary, as do the theoretical and conceptual frames for explaining and making sense of them. This variation seems to generate different perceptions about how some element, or relation between elements, in the triad, usually focused on violence, becomes problematic in some way. For example, when violence occurs as a structural or cultural expression, as with rugby, ice hockey or gymnastics, the members of these sporting environments do not necessarily perceive the coaching ideals or training methods as

offensive, and thus as problematic. The methods are simply necessary steps to gain success (cf. Visek and Watson 2005; Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal 1995). But within some framings, what is likely to be perceived as problematic may appear to be caused or enacted by aberrant individuals, and thus seen as exceptions from the more general perception of 'healthy' sports management and leadership. This suggests that it is particular individuals who are perceived as causing the problems, not the sporting culture itself, either more broadly or more locally (cf. Hartill 2009).

There are several ways of pursuing this problematic – in everyday life discussions, in the media, in sporting law and policy (for example, when is violence in sport legitimate or not), and in research literature. For researchers, there are thus several levels and a multitude of approaches from which to investigate, explain and understand the relationship between sport, gender and violence. Here, for the remainder of this article, we focus on how the sport-gender-violence triad has been approached in social science research on sport since the 1980s, even whilst the issues raised have great resonance and relevance in other arenas of sport, for example, sporting law, rules and regulations, policy, coaching, supporting, and practice.

Based on a semi-systematic review (cf. Snyder 2019) of social science researchers' ways of utilising sport, gender and violence in their analyses, our aim in this article is to identify variations, changes, and continuities over time in how these three elements are understood as interconnected. We analyse how researchers have interpreted interactions between sport, gender and violence from the 1980s to the present day. In the mapping and analysing of previous studies, we want to explore more precisely the following research questions: How are the elements described, and within what framings is the triad interpreted? What problems are identified and what consequences follow from these framings? And how have these framings and the associated study of sport, gender and violence evolved over time?

Defining 'violence', 'gender' and 'sport'

How then should sport, gender and violence be defined, and can they be defined in a fixed or complete way at all? These concepts are sometimes defined as 'absolute' entities with distinct external boundaries and internal qualifications, but such 'closed' definitions also meet criticism for being incomplete, insufficient, perhaps essentialist, or even irrelevant. With this indication in mind, we below briefly present our use of the terms.

Violence: The definition and conceptualisation of violence is a huge area of debate, and certainly so well beyond the world of sport. Violence can be understood in many ways, for example, in terms of: intention to harm and do damage; the use of force for that purpose; the extent of harm and damage; illegality and/or illegitimacy; and also the state of recognition of acts as violence, by the state, law, professions, social movements, public opinion, and media. Thus, violence, for example, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2002, p. 4) as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

This definition includes interpersonal violence but also contains other less directly physical acts such as psychological harm, violations in relation to health and body integrity. It can extend to violence to property and pets, friends and relatives, and economic/financial violence. WHO (2002, p. 4–7) has also initiated a typology of violence(s) that captures and makes it possible to measure violence from different perspectives. Other institutions or disciplines employ more precise definitions, and it is often the research questions and methods used that governs this definition. Messner (1990) writes that experimental studies (e.g. in psychology) are generally based on narrower definitions, while Goldstein (1983) finds that a fixed definition of violence is neither possible nor desirable. WHO (2002) also acknowledges that violence is a diffuse and complex phenomenon and that definitions also become matters of judgement and contestation. There is a further extensive activist, policy and research debate on broader understandings of, for example, structural violence, cultural violence, colonialism, imperialism, slow violence, collective trauma, and environmental violence (see Hearn et al. 2022).

Gender: Similarly, understanding and interpretations of gender and the relation of sex and gender vary considerably from biologicistic approaches to sex role theory onto more structural and structuralist, poststructuralist, constructionist, and deconstructive approaches (see, for example, Hearn and Husu 2011). Gender and gender relations are clearly about all genders, genderings and gendered processes, are not a synonym for women and girls, and include attention to boys, men, masculinities, and non-normative genders and sexualities (LGBTIQA+). Gender has often been understood as the socio-cultural construction of sex(es) and sexual difference(s), but that approach is now widely displaced by more overtly political understandings of gender (Scott 1986), and the construction of sex itself as gendered, whether in Butlerian, queer or decolonising terms. These various and contested approaches to gender all have socio-political dimensions and implications – including for violence and for sport.

Sport: As regards sport itself, the definitional task seems a little easier, in that one can reasonably include as sport those activities that call themselves sports. Sport also operates through some set of explicit rules, organisation, and ‘modernisation’ (cf. Guttman 2004), even if they are contested and open to different interpretations – this is unlike, say, going for a walk, or running on the spot or waving your arms around. A sport that, for example, is included in the Olympic programme or is continuously being ‘judged’ as of interest to the media will meet conditions other than those ‘sports’ thus excluded.

While all, or almost all, forms of both sport and violence carry gender dimensions, and can be said to be gendered, not all (gendered) sports include violence as part of their routine performance (An interesting case is horse showjumping, open to women and men to compete together, though with clear class and racialised dimension). Sønderlund et al. (2014) point out that certain sports can be seen as promoting violence more than others. In our understanding of sport, gender, and violence, we regard the meanings and locus of power as central. Specific empirical examples of such analyses are of particular interest in the research review. At the same time, the critical interrogation of the triad and its different framings raises more theoretical, indeed epistemological and ontological, questions about the interdependent and reciprocal constructions of gender, sport, and violence: What is the (analytical) problem, and how does that change over time? How can (scientific) knowledge be separated from (political and/or normative) opinions?

Methods, material and limitations

The exclusion of books, edited volumes, and monographs in the review method has specific implications for the type of knowledge produced. The function and influence of books within a research field vary considerably: while some monographs exert substantial influence and play a formative role in shaping theoretical frameworks, book-based scholarship is often characterised by pronounced thematic heterogeneity and uneven empirical focus. Although the significance of books, both qualitatively and quantitatively, differs across fields, various efforts have been made to systematise and document book publications through bibliographic catalogues and overviews. One such, and widely used, example is *The men's bibliography* (Flood, 1992–2024). Within its section on ‘Men, sport, and leisure’, a total of 319 items is listed, of which only 32 can be clearly identified, based on title keywords, as centrally addressing gender (men, masculinities) in relation to sport, comprising 24 authored monographs and 8 edited volumes. Of these, nine were contributed by two authors, Michael Messner and Eric Anderson, both from the United States. When supplemented by two further widely cited titles, this yields a relatively small corpus of 34 books. This corpus is unevenly distributed over time, with only three books published prior to 1990, followed by a modest increase in the 1990s ($n=8$), 2000s ($n=12$), and 2010s ($n=10$). Substantively, these books are highly heterogeneous: nine focus on specific sports, six centre on sexuality, four address history or nationalism, and only two explicitly foreground violence in relation to men and masculinities in their titles, with a small number of additional texts addressing violence without explicitly naming gender. This heterogeneity, across topical focus, theoretical orientation, and levels of abstraction, limits the analytical comparability of books within a semi-systematic review framework (Snyder 2019).

By contrast, peer-reviewed journal articles constitute the dominant mode of knowledge production in this field, and probably increasingly so, particularly for empirical studies of gendered violence, and are more consistently indexed, searchable and comparable across bibliographic databases. Given that the aim of a semi-systematic review is to identify patterns, dominant themes, and shifts in scholarly attention rather than to provide an exhaustive historical account (Snyder 2019), we therefore restricted the core corpus to journal articles indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. This decision inevitably shapes the knowledge produced by foregrounding more recent, article-based debates while backgrounding slower, book-centred forms of scholarship; however, we consider this trade-off to be both methodologically justified and transparent within the chosen review design.

Given our awareness of the impact of some books in the field, which is also evident in the article data, and in the interests of brevity, we have chosen a semi-systematic article review method (Snyder 2019) based on searches in two databases: Web of Science and Scopus. Systematic reviews usually employ a pre-defined search protocol to identify relevant, reliable literature. Despite its more common utilisation in, for example, medicine and the natural sciences, the main goal here is to identify and address gaps for future research (Gupta et al. 2018).

Our search protocol included the truncated words 'sport*', 'gender*' and 'violen*' and each search result was chronologically limited to a decade (1980–1989, 1990–1999, 2000–2009, and 2010–2019), and sorted from the most cited to the least. It is here important to mention that the interpretation of 'sport*', 'gender*' and 'violen*' (along with various suffixes included) was broad including, for example, various contemporary and historical outdoor activities and physical activities. Only peer-reviewed articles published in English were selected. The databases yielded slightly different numbers of texts: Web of Science yielded 670 texts, and Scopus 501 documents (search results from February 21, 2024). These two databases thus combine slightly different research data but, together, can be considered to provide a scientifically reliable corpus. However, several scientific journals, especially in the humanities and social sciences, are not published in English and are therefore excluded.

The next step involved a selective sampling (or a qualitative assessment) where we, after reading the abstracts, aimed to limit the text basis to a maximum of the 10 most cited articles from each decade and data base from journals in the social and human sciences, notably cultural studies, history, political science, social policy, social work, and sociology. Articles published in other disciplinary journals were excluded, such as in biochemistry, criminology, dentistry and oral surgery, environmental science, genetics, occupational health, medicine, molecular biology, paediatrics, and psychology. Despite this delimitation, some studies that could be classified as socio-psychological or social psychological were included in the data selection as they were published in, for example, sociology journals.

The publication rate from 1980 until 2019 increases exponentially, especially after 1998. The article base for the 1980s and 1990s was thus relatively small, as Table 1 indicates. On the other hand, given the vast number of articles produced during the 2000s and 2010s, where several were cited as many times as each other, we have included some more articles from these decades. If two or three articles had the same citation rate, all were included, which also means that the summaries become more and more condensed. After the selective sampling we had 44 articles that studied the sport-gender-violence triad from different perspectives.

According to Snyder (2019) a semi-systematic review method is characterised by its broad, qualitative and quantitative agenda, commonly adapted in historical overviews that aim to capture a state of knowledge. Thus, during the identification, sorting and review process, we have maintained a strict, systematic chronology, as set out in the findings section. We use this way of structuring the text to examine the major qualitative continuities and discontinuities (cf. Hearn 2008) over the last four decades of these studies, and the main traditions that have influenced them.

Within each decade, we have thus sought a more nuanced qualitative analysis of the variations, changes, and indeed continuities over time. This does not mean that all historical processes only lasted for a decade and indeed there are individual researchers, with similar perspectives, who publish research over several decades. The textual division into decades of course has limitations; other more thematic divisions across decades and other time periods could also be employed, with their own pros and cons.

Table 1. Results of the semi-systematic and selective article search

Data base and chronological period	Total number of articles found	Number of relevant articles to be analysed	National context
Web of Science 1980-1989	0 articles	0	
1990-1999	13 articles	6 articles (Conley, 1999; Hutchins & Mikosza, 1998; Sullivan, 1991; Weinstein, Smith, & Wiesenthal, 1995; Young, 1993)	Australia, Canada, Ireland, US
2000-2009	41 articles	10 articles (Anderson, 2008; Cherney & London, 2006; Dimitrov, 2008; Gill, 2007; Linville & Huebner, 2005; McDaniel, Lim, & Mahan, 2007; Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008; Miller, Melnick, Farrell, Sabo, & Barnes, 2006; Papaioannou, Karastogiannidou, & Theodorakis, 2004; Toffoletti, 2007)	Australia, Greece, Ireland, US,
2010-2019	187 articles	11 articles (Adams, Anderson, & McCormack, 2010; Fair, 2011; Hayhurst et al., 2014; Matthews, 2014, 2016; Palmer, 2011; Peguero & Popp, 2012; Popp & Peguero, 2011; Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012; Taliaferro, Rienzo, & Donovan, 2010; Vertommen et al., 2016)	Australia, Belgium, Netherlands, Uganda, UK, US
Scopus 1980-89	2 articles	2 articles (Bryson, 1983; Kidd, 1987/2013)	Australia, Europe, North America (no specific national context)
1990-99	19 articles	9 articles (Anderson, 1999; Conley, 1999; Dunning & Maguire, 1996; Hutchins & Mikosza, 1998; Messner, 1990; Segrave, 1997; Sullivan, 1991; Weinstein et al., 1995; Young & White, 1995)	Australia, Canada, Ireland, UK (Great Britain), US
2000-2009	67 articles	11 articles (Anderson, 2008; Andrew, Koo, Hardin, & Greenwell, 2009; Dimitrov 2008; Lorenz & Osborne, 2006; McDaniel, Lim, & Mahan, 2007; Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000; Mewett & Toffoletti, 2008; Miller et al., 2006; Papaioannou et al., 2004; Toffoletti, 2007; Williams, 2006)	Australia, Belgium, Canada, Greece, Netherlands, Uganda, UK, US
2010-2019	172 articles	12 articles (Adams et al., 2010; Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Carton & Morrell, 2012; Devis-Devis, Pereira-García, López-Cañada, Pérez-Samaniego, & Fuentes-Miguel, 2018; Green, 2016; Jaime et al., 2015; Katz, 2018; Palmer, 2011; Peguero & Popp, 2012; Steinfeldt, Rutkowski, Vaughan, & Steinfeldt, 2011; Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012; Vertommen et al., 2016)	Australia, Belgium, Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, US
In total	241/260	27/34, 44 articles in total	

As signalled above, the inclusion criteria were based on peer-reviewed articles published in English in scientific journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, which has broader implications than ‘just’ excluding non-English scholarships. First, this relates to the question of citational politics relating to the important part of the more general construction of academia through intersectional power relations, including of class, gender, and racialisation. As with citation counts in general, our use of citations certainly has limitations, as with most studies of English-language publishing (Delgado 1984; Kim 2020; Nash 2020). Second, article publishing tends to favour men, especially white Western men who are high publishers, who then tend to have higher citations, over women, Indigenous, feminist and non-Western contributions, amongst other categorisations. Third, these issues are especially but not only relevant to feminist and gender scholarship and analysis.

However, here the focus on journal articles has advantages over books, in that articles are more likely to have multiple authors, or more than one, and article publishing, though still subject to material constraints, is more accessible to excluded and marginalised groups than book publishing, which demands greater material resources and time, and also more extended access to publishers. The historiographical motif, which charts changes in social science researchers’ approaches to the sport-gender-violence triad over time, served as the primary rationale for excluding monographs and anthologies from the review. Another motive was that a semi-systematic review can reveal variations in approaches, findings, and study objects (Snyder 2019). Although the inclusion of books has its advantages, given their thorough theoretical, empirical and analytical content, the number of books

that concentrate on this issue is limited, which may result in a 'thin' basis for historical interpretation. In contrast with the comprehensiveness of the book genre, the disadvantage of articles might lie in their 'meagreness' or specificity, and what can be perceived as the limited space of developing or elaborating concepts and theories.

Finally, in this section, it might be appropriate to add some clarifications on our own positionalities, in the plural, as co-authors. We work at the intersections of feminist-informed Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities, Critical Sports Studies, and Critical Violence Studies, within broad critical historical-sociological perspectives. We approach the issues in focus here by seeking both to (initially) map the field and to advance a critique of it. We do not think these two aims are in contradiction. More specifically, while we resist fixed or essentialist definitions, we note that social constructivist, feminist and indeed Critical Theory approaches and studies are highly varied and not intrinsically superior to more mainstream approaches and studies. Rather, we consider that criticality is not fixed, so we do not consider critique to be understood as normative in a simple given sense. Indeed, normativity could be said to be at odds with thoroughgoing critique. Thus, whilst pursuing a critical and feminist-informed agenda, we do not see that as fixed, but rather would pay heed to the words of, for example, Connerton who, in his classic work on critical theory, argues that a basic thesis of critical theory is that critical theory is itself changeable: '... through an analysis of the historical conditions which inform its own categories, it seeks to adapt those categories anew to historical reality' (Connerton 1976: 22).

Findings: charting change across four decades

Below, we provide a decade-by-decade summary overview complemented by qualitative analysis, revealing variations, changes, and continuities over time, elucidating the interconnected understanding of sport, gender, and violence.

1980s: openings for feminist critique of sports: recognising sports as 'male preserves'

In the early 1980s, feminist and gender approaches to sport were becoming more established academic areas of scholarship, albeit unevenly across countries and regions. For example, Bryson (1983) describes how most of the sport literature that previously had employed an explicit critical gender perspective had been interested in the conditions of females in sports. Building on such earlier work, Kidd (1987) recognised feminist critiques of sport and how they point to the exploration of 'the ways in which men have created sports to celebrate and buttress patriarchal (and class) power' (p. 250). Rather than studying sports producing emancipatory possibilities for women, both Bryson (1983) and Kidd (1987) focus on the issue of male dominance in sport, sport as male preserves, and the oppressive potential of sport, a focus that was previously perceived as relatively neglected.

For Bryson (1983), inspired by Émile Durkheim and Steven Lukes's works on power, sport is understood as containing ritual aspects that reinforce male domination not only in sport but also in society. What can be described as the (often heavily) distorted media coverage of male and female sportspeople is interpreted as forming ways of both seeing and *not* seeing among the wider population, which ultimately serves as a ritual that supports patriarchal interests in society. This distorted media coverage constitutes a 'mobilisation of bias'; a bias 'in favour of male interests at the expense of female interests' (Bryson 1983, p. 421).

Kidd (1987) concludes that it is an important but difficult task to persuade men that sports can be harmful to them. Placing specific attention to men-to-men-relations in sports, Kidd (1987) argues, with acknowledgement to Connell (1983), that sports are providing men with two relational attitudes: the development of force and the employment of skill. That is, sports teach men to occupy a space (with force if need be) with the adequate and required abilities (skills) to dominate that space. Bryson (1983) reaches similar conclusions and points out two consequences of the mobilisation of bias. Firstly, it has the effect that femaleness and female activities become constructed as inferior to maleness and males' activities. Secondly, the celebration of aggressive behaviour in sport becomes a virtual

monopoly for men that boys adopt and mimic, sometimes from an early age. Therefore, Bryson (1983) concludes that:

[S]port must be analysed along with rape, pornography and wife battering. ... We need to clearly turn the spotlight back on to those male issues from whence the problems arise. Otherwise, in the case of sport, we are operating precisely within the mobilisation of bias supported by the ritual element and this of course effectively reinforces the existing patterns of domination. (Bryson 1983, p. 425)

Taken together, the studies from the 1980s mark a paradigmatic 'opening' in the analysis of sport, gender, and violence. A feminist perspective foregrounded sport as a male preserve and conceptualised violence, not merely as individual behaviour, but as cultural and institutional, embedded in broader patriarchal power relations. At the same time, alternative approaches, for example, quantitative or individual-level analyses, as well as perspectives originating outside Anglophone and Western contexts, remained absent or marginal. A tension thus emerged that would continue to shape subsequent research: whether sport should be understood primarily as a site for the reproduction of patriarchal domination or as a potentially transformative arena in which gendered power relations and violence(s) might be contested and reconfigured.

1990s: establishing feminist understandings: challenging and changing male preserves

In this decade, three strands of work are analysed. Firstly, a cultural-historical theme is described in which, not least, the discontinuity of violence, as well as its perceived problematic aspects, becomes evident. Secondly, following in Bryson's and Kidd's footsteps, another strand developed a critical feminist analysis with a specific aim of problematising male privileges. Thirdly, masculinity and violence as measurable factors are examined. With some exceptions, a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the triad was being constructed.

The triad as part of historical rationalisation and civilisation processes

First, several historically oriented articles explain how contextual factors, such as financial, media, and official (re)actions (beyond the individual level), drive changes in sports (Hutchins and Mikosza 1998). For example, by studying Irish police records produced between 1866 and 1892, Conley (1999) shows how the judiciary sought to prohibit so-called faction fights. Citing Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, violence or fighting is described as the 'most energetic form of play and at the same time the most palpable and primitive' (cited in Conley 1999, p. 57). The study thus describes how different social groups can perceive sports-related violence differently. To its practitioners, the faction's fights were guided by high moral values and rules that participants were expected to follow; if these rules were observed, the combatants remained friends both before and after the fights. Conley (1999) shows how '[d]eaths and injuries were the totally unintended results of an acceptable form of recreation' (p. 68). Although men are in the majority in the records, both women and men were involved in these activities, and Conley (1999) discusses how honour culture and other broad (economic, political and demographic) factors for achieving status can help explain these phenomena.

These activities were perceived as normal by sports practitioners but brutal by prosecutors. The banning and channelling into 'acceptable' games have been interpreted as an expression of a process of rationalisation and civilisation (Guttman 2004). Both Conley (1999) and Dunning and Maguire (1996) set out their findings in relation to Elias's thesis of the civilising process and discuss changes of sports as a rationalisation. Although Conley (1999) argues that historians should pay more attention to the phenomenon of violence *as* sport, Dunning and Maguire (1996) understand sports in general as rationalised forms of violence. In short, it is the 'degree' of primitivity that is under negotiation, which means that the development and change in and of sports inevitably are linked to class and gender connotations (Dunning and Maguire 1996).

Dunning and Maguire (1996) state, more clearly than Conley (1999), that the civilisation process also involved a changing of the gender order, arguing that men's right to publicly use violence against women was taken away from them, and the institution of sport became a compensation for this. The

perceived 'risk' was namely that the civilisation process would feminise or emasculate men/boys and simultaneously empower women. In this way, sport became an 'enclave for the legitimate expression of masculine aggression and for the development and expression of more traditional masculine habits [sic] involving the use and display of physical prowess and power' (Dunning and Maguire 1996, p. 308). Paralleling this point, Hutchins and Mikosza (1998) show how Australian male rugby, interpreted as a flag-carrier of masculinity, creates an arena where violence is made visible and valued as a way of doing masculinity.

Dunning and Maguire (1996) use rationalisation and the civilisation process to explain why women were often socialised into (perceived) 'feminine' sports in which beauty and aesthetics were emphasised. Not surprisingly, the feminist (suffragist) movement responded to this and challenged men's monopolies over certain sports, with the overall aim of changing the idea of sports as a male preserve (Dunning and Maguire 1996). This exemplifies that protests and challenges can be sources of change in sporting conditions, and that stereotypical male and female sports are the products of political strategies and actions.

Continuing of critique of gender-associated issues

Second, Bryson's (normative political) call was responded to by Young, Messner and others and during the 1990s, the triad of sport, gender and violence was more fully established as a clear critical and feminist direction and corpus of work (Hutchins and Mikosza 1998; Messner 1990; Young 1993; Young and White 1995). In short, this meant that these analyses positioned sports in a more fluid socio-cultural context, constantly in the making and remaking, and adding critical reflections on the consequences for both women and men to the discussions (see also Dunning and Maguire 1996). Most importantly, the social category of 'men' and the constructing of what was perceived and promoted as 'masculine' in sports was more clearly problematised (see also, e.g. Pronger 1999).

A variety of theoretical inspirations were now employed, for example, men were seen as both winners *and* losers, as both perpetrators and victims of power dynamics in sport. Here, the research data primarily stemmed from male-dominated sports in the Anglo-Saxon context that allowed (hard) physical contact, but connections between sport, gender and violence were also found in studies that appear to lack physical contact (like snowboarding), in linguistic analyses of sport commentators' use of language, and in studies of how metaphors were used (Anderson 1999; Segrave 1997; Sullivan 1991).

Since professional sport promised both privileges (such as the star system, high profitability) and problems (such as injuries), it provided close-grained dynamics for sports practitioners (Hutchins and Mikosza 1998; Young 1993). Messner (1990) stated that sport institutionalises actions and regulations and that this 'suppresses natural (sex) similarities, constructs differences, and then, largely through the media, weaves a structure of symbol and interpretation around these differences which naturalizes them' (p. 214). This naturalisation *genders* the dynamic and, through sport-related structures and regulations, men are, to a greater extent, afforded opportunities to embody risk-taking or hard-hitting, which in turn relates to (gendered) conditions for privileging as well as for valuing and evaluating performances (Hutchins and Mikosza 1998). By describing risk-taking as voluntary (*volenti non fit injuria*) and desirable, played out in a culture where some sports club owners perceived players as chattels, Young (1993) describes how rewards dialectically co-existed with subjugation. Utilising the concept of hegemony, as developed by Raymond Williams (1980) following Gramsci, the exploitation of male professionals is interpreted as a process in which dominance and consent interact.

What Messner (1990) and Hutchins and Mikosza (1998) show, building on Connell (1987) and Hargreaves (1986) and their concepts of the gender order and hegemonic masculinity, is how gender binary regulations in sport, to a great extent, enable men to appear as tough, risk-taking and violent. The regulations and the institutions that uphold them thus help support the ideas of (some) males as superior to other males and females. To make this constructionist perspective even clearer, Young and White (1995) show that female sports practitioners also experience and overcome physical injuries and pains, thus disconnecting 'toughness' from a 'natural' or essential masculinity.

Measuring masculinity as a score on a scale

With regards to the previous studies in this decade, the third approach, taken up by Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal (1995) in their investigation of the role of masculinity in the generation of hockey violence, is a bit different, and it echoes an essentialist understanding of gender. The work aims to contribute to an understanding of how men and masculinity can be part of solutions that aim to reduce violence in hockey. A cultural and structural understanding of violence, which in the ice hockey environment is interpreted in terms of body-contacts, fighting, stick infractions and so on, is combined with a measurement of how players score on the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS). The study shows that players with a high BMS score were more likely to exhibit violent behaviour in ice hockey games, and these players were also more favourably evaluated by coaches and management. Violence in ice hockey was thus identified as both a skill and a source of approval. Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal (1995) conclude with a discussion on the importance for coaches to stress alternative playing styles, thus placing the source for changing *outside* the players but still at an individual level.

Taken together, the 1990s can be understood as a period of paradigmatic consolidation accompanied by selective diversification in research on sport, gender, and violence. Critical feminist and masculinity studies perspectives, particularly those informed by theories of the gender order, hegemony, hegemonic masculinity and civilisation processes, came to structure much of the field, reinforcing structural and relational explanations of how sport organises gendered power and legitimises particular forms of violence. At the same time, explicitly policy-oriented or intervention-focused research, as well as analyses attentive to non-binary, queer, or non-heteronormative perspectives, remained marginal. A tension also became increasingly visible between constructionist accounts of masculinity and violence and emerging approaches that sought to operationalise masculinity as an individual, measurable disposition. In this respect, Weinstein et al.'s study is analytically instructive as a paradigmatically divergent contribution, a tension that would become more pronounced in the increasingly heterogeneous research of the 2000s.

2000s: expanding and diversifying the content of the triad: establishing multi-dimensional and causal studies

In the 2000s, it is now noticeable, for instance, in the increased number of references, that the studies on sports, gender, and violence have increased significantly. The study objects are more diversified resulting in, amongst other things, an exposé of how (patriarchal) power structures operate at and permeate different levels of sport, from individuals' interests, *via* club brands to structural regulations and guidelines (Anderson 2008; Andrew et al. 2009; Cherney and London 2006; Gill 2007; Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000; Mewett and Toffoletti 2008; Williams 2006). In this way, two strands of research can be identified: one that shows and examines causal relationships between the parts of the triad, and one that discusses and problematises the content and construction of the triad's parts. Lorenz and Osborne (2006) historical study of ice hockey, masculinity, and violence is an exception from this description and they rather, in line with Dunning and Maguire (1996), discuss how different social classes perceived violence in different ways.

Diversified theoretical framing

Although both hegemony and the male preserve act as background theoretical influences for many studies, other theoretical inspirations are also used. Of particular interest are also those findings that indicate causality between sports participation, gender, and an inclination of being violent/aggressive outside sports (Miller et al. 2006; Papaioannou, Karastogiannidou, and Theodorakis 2004).

Men's power as something (re)constructed and institutionalised takes a partly new direction in Eric Anderson's (2008) work. Inspired by Acker (1990) and West and Zimmerman (1987), the study utilises a feminist framework where gender is understood as something being produced through a complex web of institutional power, organisational culture and individual agency. By interviewing male cheerleaders about their involvement in a gender-integrated activity, Anderson (2008) finds that this engagement changed their views on women/femininity and on their own masculinity. To discuss

this change, Anderson (2008) launches 'orthodox masculinity' as an analytical tool. Anderson (2008) emphasises that this is not a fixed archetype but something all men can attempt to approximate and describes it as social dominance that includes 'risk taking, homophobia, self-sacrifice, the marginalizing of others, a willingness to inflict bodily damage, and the acceptance of pain and injury' (p. 261). Institutionally, this 'orthodox masculinity' is built on four processes or steps that Anderson (2008) calls 'Socialize Them Young', 'Separate the Sexes', 'Control the Environment', and 'Selectively Recruit Coaches'. Although the articulating of masculinity as meeting certain criteria echoes Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal (1995) way of understanding masculinity, there are severe theoretical differences that distinguish Anderson (2008) from the previous works. In addition, Anderson (2008) does not perceive orthodox masculinity as measurable on a scale.

For Anderson (2008), violence is constructed as a matter of discipline, and the study puts emphasis on the importance of the environment. He argues, drawing on Goffmann and Foucault, that sport should be understood as a near-total institution because 'much like the military, sport uses myths of glory, patriotism, and masculine idolatry, along with corporeal discipline and structures of rank, division, uniform, rules, and punishment, to subordinate individual agency and construct a fortified ethos of orthodox masculinity' (Anderson 2008, p. 266; see also Mewett and Toffoletti 2008; Miller et al. 2006). Since the results indicate that gender-integrated sports may disrupt the reproduction of orthodox masculinity, Anderson (2008) concludes that even if gender segregation in sport is only partially responsible for men's violence against women, this should call for further academic inquiry.

Violence as socially problematic and financially profitable

As illustrated above, research, on one hand, identifies causal connections between sports participation, gender, and aggressive behaviour; on the other hand, different conclusions are drawn from this recognition of causality. To clarify our point, Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) and Andrew et al. (2009) can be compared. Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) study televised sports and present and problematise the results as containing a master (hegemonic), ideological narrative, a so-called 'manhood formula'. Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) question what men/boys (as males constitute the majority of television viewers) learn from watching these programmes and, more specifically, what values televised sports teach regarding gender, race, aggression, violence, and consumerism. One result is a narrow and stereotypical message where sport becomes a man's world in which women are sexualised props or prizes for men's successes. This further illustrates how white males are the voices of authority, how aggression pays off and that individuals ideally should be willing to sacrifice their body for the team's best, not least because sport can be described as a war-like practice. The sacrifices and costs that this formula entails are presented as well worth the price and '... men who are willing to pay the price always seem to get the glory, the championships, the best consumer products, and the beautiful women' (Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000, p. 392). In this way, it is argued that sport, *via* television, becomes an institution that maintains the prevailing (patriarchal) gender regime. In parallel with this conclusion, Toffoletti (2007) also calls for further research to deepen the analysis of the media's role in shaping social attitudes toward sport and gender-based violence.

Andrew et al. (2009) also identify how violence figures in sport. Their study examines how ice hockey violence serves as an attractive spectator motive, which ultimately has significant implications for clubs' economies (especially in leagues without lucrative TV agreements) since it increases clubs' ticket revenues. Andrew et al. (2009) find that male spectators ranked violence as important, and the enjoyment of games was perceived as increased with an increased level of violence.

One conclusion could thus be that marketers indeed use the potential of violence to attract more audiences to ice hockey matches, but here, Andrew et al. (2009) raise some concerns. By referring to a recent 'controversy' (i.e. a fight) in the NHL (between Todd Bertuzzi and Marty McSorley), Andrew et al. (2009) argue that it has 'become increasingly difficult to market the violent aspects of sport' (p. 84). In comparison with Messner, Toffoletti and others, Andrew et al. (2009) thus take a less critical position presuming that '[w]hile the findings support the inclusion of violence as a spectator motive in the sport of ice hockey, other aggressive sports should also be explored to determine if violence is a significant motivational factor for spectators' (p. 86). In a similar way, Cherney and

London (2006), rather than identifying ways to challenge gender stereotypes or other power structures, conclude that '[f]uture researchers should focus on developing a quantitative measure to compare boys' and girls' cognitive abilities in relation to their preferences for gender-stereotyped toy play' (p. 723). What thus distinguishes these analyses of the triad's content and scope is that men and masculinities in the former cases become socially constructed and changeable variables.

Some studies from the 2000s portray gender and gender relations as relatively unchanging but nevertheless indicate a correlation between (what is defined as) boys/masculinity, sports, and increased benignity for violence/aggression. For example, Linville and Huebner (2005) show that boys' participation in non-school clubs increases the likelihood of physical fighting (see also Cherney and London 2006). Contrasting these, other studies in which gender is interpreted as constructed, draw more normative conclusions that, on one hand, clarify the importance of understanding sports cultures' connections to men's violence against women and, on the other hand, argue for a change of this gender inequality (see e.g. Anderson 2008; Gill 2007; Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000; Mewett and Toffoletti 2008; Miller et al. 2006; Toffoletti 2007). In parallel to this, the distinction that Bryson (1983) identified is evident, with some studies taking a critical, feminist (or normative) departure point, while other studies rather reproducing a (mobilisation of) bias between women/girls and boys/men.

The research published during the 2000s can be characterised as a period of paradigmatic fragmentation. Rather than a single dominant framework, the field became marked by the coexistence of critical feminist and cultural approaches alongside increasingly influential 'positivist' models that sought to establish measurable links between sport participation, gender, and violent or aggressive behaviour. While this diversification expanded the empirical and methodological scope, intersectional, postcolonial, and non-Anglophone analyses largely remained marginal, thereby limiting the field's capacity to address the global conditions under which sport-related violence is produced. A tension in this period thus concerns the analytical and political implications of explanations; whether the search for causal connections between sports participation and violence enhances efforts to interrogate and transform gendered power relations or, alternatively, if focusing more on individual behaviours and risk factors, might risk downplaying structural, cultural, and institutional issues. This tension would continue to shape debates in subsequent research, particularly as the field moved toward more applied and preventive orientations in the following decade.

2010s: putting the triad to work: from problem via causality to prevention

In short, in the 2010s the triad now contains three strands of work. First, some studies continue to describe, nuance and problematise the constructions of men and masculinities and the eventual connection to violence inside as well as outside the sports arena. Secondly, and partly as a contrast to the first cluster of research, there are several (quantitative) studies that examine and confirm the connections between sport participation, sex/gender and the risk of being exposed to different forms of violence(s). Thirdly, there is research on two gender-sensitive, violence prevention models, which describe and discuss the interventions' content and effectiveness. It is noteworthy that the empirical data now also derive from contexts beyond the Anglophone language area (such as Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands) and that the theoretical interpretations continue to expand.

Critical perspectives on men and masculinities: discourse, 'biology ideology' and methodological chameleons

In this period, articles highlight sports as a platform for men to demonstrate dominance, often at the expense of female participation, reinforcing norms that contribute to men distancing themselves from perceived weakness, femininity, and fostering issues such as homophobia, sexism, and violence (Adams, Anderson, and McCormack 2010; Carton and Morrell 2012; Green 2016). Inspired by works from Messner and Pascoe, Fair (2011), for instance, introduces the term 'penetration discourse' to theoretically explain male wrestlers' way of establishing a heterosexual act in a sport that, for many viewers, appears as homoerotic (cf. Pronger 1999; Wood 1987). That is, wrestlers' (more or less)

constant hold of each other in sometimes sexually suggestive ways complicate, according to Fair (2011), the construction of a normative masculinity and wrestlers therefore explicitly explain or defend their heterosexuality.

Matthews (2014) also shows the perceived importance of gender distinction and argues, drawing on Lorber (1993), that biology becomes an ideology that (re)establishes a female/male binarism at a boxing gym. In addition, Matthews (2014) also discusses how a new, self-reflexive gender order (Connell 2005), and its associated biological narratives, is eroding both discursively and through embodied practices. To conceptualise this change, Matthews (2014) uses Atkinson's (2011) concept 'pastiche hegemony' explaining that a person's power may be maintained through a chameleon-like practice that realises and aligns to marginalised identities. That is, in some situations, men may act as culturally progressive as a technique for achieving and maintaining (hegemonic) power.

In another article, Matthews (2016) returns to and nuance the male preserve orthodoxy (the term was first used by Dunning and Sheard 1973). The starting point is that there is nothing *inherently* male about the male preserve, and, with references to Lefebvre and Butler, the relationship between space, bodies, and the maintenance of social power is discussed. In this way, Matthews (2016), understands male-dominated sporting spaces as symbolically associated with patriarchy and that such spaces are increasingly more and more restricted outside the sport context.

Despite describing changing gender constructions in sport, these results can be read as an expression of the strong heteronormativity in sports. Based on the difficulties of making gender without simultaneously maintaining heteronormativity, Devís-Devís et al. (2018) examine transgender people's retrospective experiences of physical activity and PE classes. The main results show that '[t]rans girls, read as boys in school, were considered to not be male enough while trans boys were accused of being too male to be girls' (Devís-Devís et al. 2018, p. 113). The transgression and challenging of heteronormativity and gender binarism made these individuals more likely to become targets for violence, and Devís-Devís et al. (2018) understand heteronormative gender binarism as violence in itself. Using Butler, the authors argue that sport and other physical activities have strong potential, suggesting multiple ways of performing and constructing desired genders. However, heteronormative discourses permeate and reduce such possibilities into (in)abilities to reproduce hegemonic gendered performances. This causes frustration and anxiety and hinders, for example, trans people's personal development.

The use of biological or normative narratives of (ideal) masculinity by sport in general and coaches in particular is also examined by Adams, Anderson, and McCormack (2010). By alluding to war, homosexuality, and femininity, (heteronormative) masculinities are established and challenged with an overall aim to maximise competitive performances. If anyone fails to conform to these (hyper) masculine gender norms, they will be considered as letting the team down. What Adams, Anderson, and McCormack (2010) find, however, is that this conformity, which fosters aggression and an inclination for violence, is increasingly just a sporting technique. Players' willingness to act in ways that are homophobic, misogynic and violent thus has narrower relevance outside the sport context. That is, discourses of players' 'violent behaviours are predominantly situated in the realm of sport rather than in gender per se' (Adams, Anderson, and McCormack 2010, p. 293).

This finding weakens the argument around the transferring potential of sports violence. But some results and conclusions also point in the opposite direction, and Palmer (2011), for instance, shows the link between gender, alcohol and violence and argues, on the one hand, that sport can be a place where alcohol-fuelled issues of violence(s) are played out. On the other hand, sport is also used as an intervention site for such (crime) prevention and rehabilitation (Palmer 2011).

Is there a correlation between sport participation and violence?

The relationship between sports participation and increased risk (as in experiences of violence, victimisation, and health risk behaviours) is examined in several studies. In contrast to Adams, Anderson, and McCormack (2010), Steinfeldt et al. (2011) conclude that it is important that coaches understand their impact and that encouragements of on-field aggression and violence should be combined with

support for helping players to compartmentalise these behaviours so that they do not transfer these actions to off-field situations. In Steinfeldt et al. (2012), these results are further developed, and the study examines how football players compartmentalise instrumental aggression on and off the field. Their results show that football players were more likely to endorse the acceptability of bullying, especially when they perceived that the most influential male in their lives accepted it.

Taliaferro, Rienzo, and Donovan (2010) find that sport participation constitutes a risk factor for interpersonal violence and that male athletes, for example, were more likely to get into a fight at school than non-athletes. Specifically, certain sports like football, basketball, soccer, or wrestling may increase the likelihood of violence-associated behaviour. Popp and Peguero (2011) also find that gender 'remains statistically significant with female students having a decreased likelihood of violent victimisation in comparison to male students' (p. 2428). Popp and Peguero (2011) argue that future research should focus on these causal relations in more detail to nuance the link between activities and victimisation (see also Peguero and Popp 2012).

Analysing data from an online questionnaire in Dutch and Flemish sports (targeting over 4,000 adults about their earlier sporting experiences), Vertommen et al. (2016) find that 14% of the adults had experienced sexual violence and 11% had experienced physical violence in sports. Males were in the majority of the reported physical violence, while females were in the majority of the reported sexual violence. Together with Bjørnseth and Szabo (2018) study, this *clearly* demonstrates that violence against children is a problem in sports and that various forms of violence(s) often become a grey area between, for example, proper and abusive coach behaviour.

Violence prevention models

The fact that violence is a problem in sports, and that sports can function as a vehicle for violent behaviour outside sport, speaks for a need for preventative interventions. However, violence prevention programs that incorporate a changing of gender norms in sports are limited. Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM) and Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) are two exceptions, and Jaime et al. (2015) and Katz (2018) provide insights and experiences from these evidence-based, social-justice-oriented models. At the broadest level, the models aim to promote health among sports practitioners with a specific ambition to engage men and boys in gender-equitable, nonviolent attitudes and behaviours that ultimately reduce violence against women and girls. While CBIM uses cards with topics that coaches regularly raise and discuss with players, MVP's pedagogical approach is to encourage open dialogue, exercises, and small-group work that position young men and women as bystanders in situations that span a continuum of abuse. In this way, MVP aims to open up dialogues not only regarding men's violence against women but also of men's violence against each other and themselves (see Kaufman 1987 and the 'triad of men's violence'). Evaluations of the models' impacts are key, and CBIM, for example, has reduced abuse perpetration among high school athletes, and the coaches acknowledge how they had previously underestimated their own influence on athletes' language, attitudes and behaviours (Jaime et al. 2015). Katz (2018) describes how MVP began as a dialogue between college men and how they could challenge misogynistic gender norms and men's violence against women.

Research in the 2010s marks an obvious shift from primarily 'diagnosing' the gendered dynamics of sport-related violence toward the development, evaluation, and implementation of intervention and prevention frameworks. Alongside the continued influence of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities, applied and practice-oriented paradigms, particularly gender-sensitive violence prevention models such as Coaching Boys into Men and Mentors in Violence Prevention, gained increasing prominence. This turn toward intervention foregrounded sport as a potential site not only of harm but also of social change, positioning coaches and peers as key agents in challenging violent and inequitable gender norms. At the same time, perspectives from the Global South remained marginal, limiting critical engagement with how broader institutional, commercial, and geopolitical forces shape violence in sport. An unresolved tension thus characterises this period: whether prevention efforts centred on individual norm change and bystander intervention are sufficient, or whether more transformative change addressing the institutional, organisational, and regulatory structures is required.

Concluding discussion

In this article, we have examined how previous research has approached, analysed, framed and identified interconnections between sport, gender, and violence. Different studies clearly reflect and embody distinct traditions in the representation of the triad. They include those that are clearly feminist and thoroughly gendered, as well as those that derive from non-feminist or non-gendered traditions onto which gender relations are grafted. Other traditions are based on disciplinary differences in how studies are situated within, or influenced by, for example, history, psychology, or sociology, and use different methods and methodologies, such as quantitative, qualitative or discursive. Studies can, to varying degrees, be multidimensional or multilevel in their analysis, even if strong disciplinary framings may tend to inhibit this.

The analysis also confirms that the sport–gender–violence triad is not a stable empirical relationship but a historically contingent and contested configuration. The variations identified across research traditions demonstrate that what counts as sport, as gender, and as violence is continuously constructed through shifting cultural norms, moral values, and legal frameworks. The triad thus operates not as a fixed analytical object but as a shifting configuration in which certain forms of violence, or potential violence, are normalised as legitimate sporting practice, while others are problematised or even criminalised. These shifting boundaries are closely tied to broader political and epistemological struggles, including questions of where responsibility for violence lies (whether in individual actors, sporting cultures, or institutional arrangements). These findings also foreground the epistemological and ontological questions raised above. What is recognised as the ‘problem’ within the triad, and how it is defined, measured, or contested, shifts across time and research traditions, reflecting changing boundaries between scientific knowledge and normative or political positioning. Rather than being external to the analysis, such tensions are constitutive of the production of the sport–gender–violence triad as an object of knowledge.

The results presented thus cover a variety of content, and in this concluding discussion, we turn attention to the most central strands of continuity and discontinuity in the shifting shape of the triad. Before this, however, it should be repeated that the results are based on a limited selection of articles (rather than, for example, books or chapters), and that in some cases point to different and somewhat contradictory interconnections between sport, gender and violence. Another demarcation is that, methodologically, different choices could have been made, opening the way, for example, to greater consideration of different sports, contexts, and so on. Further empirical studies on sports, violence, and gender likely exist in languages other than English—a methodological necessity that, in this instance, is also a limitation. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that sports-related violence may not be regarded as problematic, or problematic to the same extent, in certain national contexts, and thus has not garnered significant research interest. One consequence of sorting the findings by 10-year historical intervals is that the review now explicitly shows how the research, containing the three key search words, grows and diversifies from 1980 to 2019 and that such changes clearly indicate how the knowledge of the intercorrelations between sport, gender and violence become more multi-dimensional, nuanced and complex over time: one could say, more profound and even ‘mature’. With these considerations in mind, we discuss three strands in more detail below.

Firstly, a critical perspective on gender, sport, and violence is initiated in the early 1980s through a focus on men and masculinity, and research in this ‘area’ have continuously been published since then (Anderson 2008; Bryson 1983; Green 2016; Kidd 1987; Matthews 2016; Messner 1990; Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000). Here, a continuity is established between theoretical deepening and empirical nuancing, which consequently problematises practices related to men/masculinities, violence, and sports, as well as the triad’s consequences beyond sport. In short, it is thus possible to identify a strand that stretches from an increased visibility of men/masculinities as a problematic to preventative change work targeting this social category or grouping.

The review shows that the social category of ‘men’ has increasingly been regarded as fluid, but some research still treats female/femininity and men/masculinity as quite stable or relatively unchangeable entities. That is, while some social science perspectives (such as social psychology) measure masculinities as levels on a scale, other researchers would reject this premise. In part, the same

pattern parallels the notion of violence, where some regard it as measurable and others as more contradictory with meaning-making, playfulness and destructiveness interacting in difficult-to-measure ways. Instead, the critical research points to how sports are an arena in which different forms, ideals, and consequences of gender are created, established, challenged and maintained (Adams, Anderson, and McCormack 2010; Carton and Morrell 2012; Green 2016; Hutchins and Mikosza 1998).

From the 1980s and onwards, increased attention is paid to men/masculinities as problematic in sports and, to paraphrase Bryson (1983), the range of vision has broadened and become more multi-dimensional. What became more visible during 1990s was, for example, how gender binarism and sports' institutional and prevailing power structures effected and helped maintain a gendered order in sports (Hutchins and Mikosza 1998; Messner 1990). It can then be argued that, from a longer-term perspective, this type of research affects how stakeholders and others perceive the problem, leading to preventive methods being initiated and evaluated, with men and sports coaches becoming key target groups (Jaime et al. 2015; Katz 2018).

Secondly, however, what research recognises and identifies as 'problematic' varies, as do the conditions for solving this problem (Palmer 2011). Several contrasts or discontinuities are identified here in terms of whether, for example, the problem is to be placed internally, within individuals, or more externally as institutional, legal or more discursive 'structures' (see, for example, Adams, Anderson, and McCormack 2010; Conley 1999; Devis-Devis et al. 2018; Dunning and Maguire 1996; Peguero and Popp 2012; Williams 2006). Different disciplinary emphases also overlap with variations in, first, the attribution of responsibility for violence, second, whether violence is framed as rule- or law-breaking, and, third, whether violence is seen as located in individuals, within the doing of the sporting activity itself, in the effects of sport activity after the event, in the organisation of sport, beyond sport in society more broadly, in cultural representations.

These different interpretations of sport violence, whether regarded as play or as problematic, construct the operation of power in the triad in quite distinctive ways. Not least, different research studies scrutinise the question of the 'origin' of the original cause, of the locus of concern, of sporting men's violence: is it to be found within the sport, or in the constructing of genders, or is it other factors that generate violence, or is violence channelled in all these as well as additional variables or dimensions? Here, the historical articles make clear that notions of sport and violence as problematic have been differently defined and experienced by different social classes over time, i.e. the question of what is perceived as problematic is connected to and has political, legal and other social consequences (Conley 1999; Dunning and Maguire 1996; Lorenz and Osborne 2006).

Thirdly, another aspect of power concerns the conclusions drawn by different researchers, where some are more multi-dimensional and problem-oriented, others more individual-oriented; some are more normative and pro-change, while others are less normative and change-oriented. In this way, researchers can take different (normative) 'neutral' or (normative) critical positions in their research and publication, positionings that in turn can be linked to both what is *perceived* (and thus constructed) as violence, and the maintenance or challenge of current power relations, especially gender power relations. Despite methodological differences, both quantitative and qualitative research show how sports risk functioning as a vehicle enabling men to exercise power and violence over women and indeed children (Bjørnseth and Szabo 2018; Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt 2000; Miller et al. 2006; Papaioannou, Karastogiannidou, and Theodorakis 2004; Steinfeldt et al. 2011; Vertommen et al. 2016).

The text discusses the relationship between sports, gender, and violence within different sociopolitical contexts. It points out that how these issues are understood can vary significantly depending on local and national factors related to feminism, equality, and children's rights (Bjørnseth and Szabo 2018; Gill 2007; Hartill 2009; Pinheiro et al., 2014; Vertommen et al. 2016). For instance, areas like North America, Europe, and Scandinavia might have different perspectives on equality and justice in sports. It would therefore be interesting to compare how sports are perceived across different locations and continents in the future. Commercialisation and ethical issues could serve as focal points here, as well as the identification and comparison of gender ideals and norms of violence. In this way, we can achieve a deeper understanding of the expressions and consequences of the sports-gender-violence triad and the various local, national, cultural or political, and indeed transnational factors that influence it. Expanding

the geographical, cultural and linguistic scope of research could uncover more variability and diversity in understanding the relationship between sport (both what counts as and is included in sport, and differences between different sports), gender, and violence. The empirical base (comprising citation-driven articles published in Anglophone journals) is inherently limited and limiting, and risks producing a (misleading) impression of stability and continuity in the triad, at the expense of recognising its broader variability and diversity. This concerns neglect of both non-Anglophone research literatures and of activities that many not fit dominant models of organised global Northern sports, as with, say, Zulu stick fighting (Carton and Morrell 2012) or Central Asian *buzkashi*. It can also be assumed that the predominance of men or male-identified authors introduces a bias, potentially contributing to the relative absence of, for instance, critical feminist analyses of violence or of non-male-dominated sports.

What seems to make violence so resilient, both within and after sport, is that it can sometimes be difficult to assess 'either-or' *qua violence*, since the violent actions are played out as a grey area, obscuring proper (law- and rule-following) from improper (law- and rule-breaking) behaviour. Differences in how the violence of individual sport stars is handled, and different institutional decisions exemplify this and show that norms remain important in such grey areas, regardless of individual decisions. Both media coverage and the research literature reviewed here have focused on sportsmen's misogynistic and violent behaviour. This emphasis foregrounds the need for further analytical and practical developments that extend beyond individual conduct, including strengthening regulatory frameworks, institutionalising ethical standards, and implementing safeguarding measures to protect children and young people. A more comprehensive approach requires shifting attention toward the structural, organisational, and cultural conditions through which violence is produced, normalised and contested within sport.

Taken together, these findings have important implications for future research, policy, and practice that extend beyond Anglophone contexts. For research, the review underscores the need for comparative and cross-national studies that examine how sport-gender-violence relations are shaped by different gender regimes and violence regimes, and that move beyond the dominance of English-language publishing (and the entrenched citation hierarchies). Such work is particularly needed in underexplored contexts, including Global South sport systems, informal and non-elite sporting settings, and contexts shaped by colonial and postcolonial legacies. In terms of policy, the analysis highlights how responses to sport-related violence are closely tied to underlying paradigmatic framings: individualised approaches tend to prioritise education and behaviour change, whereas structural framings point toward governance reform, safeguarding regimes, and institutional accountability. Finally, for practice, the findings emphasise that coaches, clubs, and sport organisations should not be understood merely as delivery mechanisms for interventions, but as key sites of power in which gendered norms and violences are produced, contested and potentially transformed. This calls for context-sensitive safeguarding and violence-prevention strategies, particularly in youth sport, that attend not only to individual attitudes but also to the organisational and institutional conditions under which sport is organised and governed.

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ORCID

Daniel Alsarve  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4985-3595>

Jeff Hearn  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9808-1413>

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