

Social role theory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ascribed status is assigned to a person by society without regard for the person's unique talents or characteristics. It's based on gender, race and age. (Schaefer 2006). Many of the kids at school gave her non formal sanctions, such as making fun of her, alienating her from their subculture, and someone even spray painted her locker. The boys mostly picked on her, but some of their picking on could be considered sexual harassment. Her wrestling team however embraced her; she was one of the best, if not the best. Many of the competing teams refused to wrestle her, usually ending in a forfeit. When that would happen Marlana would display face-work.

Face work is a term used to refer to the efforts people use to maintain the proper image and avoid public embarrassment (Schaefer 2006). She would just smile, wave her hands to the crowd and take her win. Her determination and perseverance placed her 2nd in the state competition. In 2001 a longitudinal study of kindergarten, first and third graders demonstrated that young boys are more likely than young girls to believe that they are good at sports, that it is important to do well at sports, and that sports are a constructive activity. (Eccles & Harold).

This perception of traditional gender roles still influences today's society. Most sport related college activities are viewed as masculine or both masculine and feminine, but fewer women participate in sports than men. Most women who participate in sports find themselves experiencing significant conflict in association with their identities between being a women and an athlete. Female athletes have a hard time accepting their big muscular, fit bodies when the cultural ideal body type is small and feminine.

Yet they take great pride in their bodies and athletic abilities (Colker & Widom,).

Athleticism is equated with masculinity (Koivula). In the study they were trying to find out if social role theory can explain the perceived gender role orientations of male and female athletes who participate in either stereotypically feminine or masculine sports. They were also looking to prove five hypotheses. Social role theory is normally related to sex-type division of labor, inside and outside the home. Hypothesis 1: “ Is that an athlete’s gender would not significantly influence perceptions of the community. ” (Harrison 1).

This study found there was no any striking difference in the community’s views between male and female athletes. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Hypothesis 2:” That the type of sport would significantly influence the community’s views because of athletic roles. ”(Harrison 1). This study found that football and basketball players were valued higher in the community than cheerleaders. Hypothesis 2 was supported. Hypothesis 3: “ That the perceptions of the community would be would be mutually influenced by athlete gender and type of sport. ” (Harrison 1).

This study found that males that participate in cheerleading were viewed higher in society than female cheerleaders. This hypothesis was not supported because it did not matter what sports they played. Hypothesis 4: “ Deviations from gender role norms often elicit social disapproval resulting in higher rates of approval for athletes that participate in gender nontraditional sports than those that do not. ” (Harrison 1). This study showed that the type

of sport did not influence approval of male athletes. It did however give higher approval to girls that participated in masculine sports than those that did not.

This hypothesis was not supported. Hypothesis 5: That participants would be more likely to attribute athletes' motivation for sport participation to external causes, if athletes participate in gender traditional sports rather than gender non traditional sports" (Harrison 1). This study showed male football players are more motivated by pressure from their friends and families. Female cheerleaders were more motivated by the love for the sport. The hypothesis was supported. The methods used for this study were complex and time consuming.

A survey was first conducted on 66 undergraduate students to determine which sports (consisting of 10) they felt were masculine and feminine. A survey is a quantitative research study, generally in the form of a questionnaire, which provides researchers with information about how people think and act (Schaefer, 2006). A second research study was conducted that consisted of 160 students from a northern Californian University. These participants were divided and placed into groups of 20 and given the same Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) to fill out.

Participants were also randomly chosen to read and answer questions to six different newspaper articles. These articles presented an interview with a high school athlete who successfully completed an athletic event. After the initial research was concluded it was analyzed and compared against the five hypotheses above. Reviews of the results are that hypothesis one, two, and

five were right on. Hypothesis three was partially correct except that the type of sport did not significantly influence the community.

Hypothesis four was incorrect; there was a higher approval rate for girls who participated in stereotypically masculine sports than for girls that participated in stereotypically feminine sports. In this study the dependent variable was the acceptance of female's playing sports and recognizing their individual differences. The independent variable was the presence of social roles, stereotypes, motivation and dedication and feelings of entitlement. The research also fully supports the social role theory. Social role theory suggests that our gender role orientations decide what social roles we fulfill (Eagly).

The present research increased the understanding of social role theory by demonstrating that athletic social roles also influence one's view on athlete's' gender role orientations. The findings were limited because only a few sports were investigated and more research should be done to determine whether these findings can be generalized to others athletic activities. The study was lacking data on participant's athletic background, which hinders the ability to tell if the findings are consistent between athletic and non athletic people.

This study is helpful and can be used in the future to examine whether participant gender influences perceptions of athletes who participate in gender non traditional sports. It could also be used as a comparison for a study done in younger populations, such as elementary school, or non college populations. This study is considered to be ground breaking work and

more extensive research is needed for a better conclusion of how athletic roles and other social roles influence perceptions of gender role orientation.

Works Cited 1. Colker, R. , & Widom, C. (2001).