

Project Statement

For my unessay, I synthesized information from the Anthropology of Sport through embroidery. I represented different ideas with individual embroidered pictures. I will briefly walk through each of them and describe how they are representative of central course ideas:

❖ Steroids

- Steroids are performance-enhancing drugs used to improve muscle mass and strength. In the NFL, there is very much a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy regarding performance-enhancing drugs. PEDs are very damaging to the body, as they carry numerous short and long-term risks, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, liver toxicity, infertility, hypogonadism, and cancer (Nuckols). Furthermore, PEDs affect athletes’ mental states in devastating ways, leading many to commit suicide (Alzado).

❖ Shoes

- Throughout the history of sport, there have been numerous technological advancements to improve athletic performance. Records in sport have changed drastically over the years; however, these faster times are due to better equipment. The International Cycling Union decreed that any new record holder for the longest distance cycled in one hour must do so with the same equipment available in 1972. Today, the record is only 883 feet further than when Eddy Merckx made it in 1972 (Epstein).

❖ Weightlifting

- Recently, Sedona Prince showed the difference between men’s and women’s facilities at the NCAA March Madness tournament. Then men had an open, state-of-the-art facility, while women had a closet-sized room with a couple of racks of arm weights (Darvin, et al.). There is an unspoken gym norm that the powerlifting equipment is for the men, while the light weights and cardio area are for the women.

❖ Plants (nature vs. nurture)

- There has been a long-held debate of whether nature or nurture is more important to athletic success. Both elements play a vital role in the development and training of athletes. Taller individuals have a distinct advantage over shorter basketball players. However, training is also necessary to produce a top-notch athlete. Ultimately, both nature and nurture play vital roles in athletic performance (Eisenmann).

❖ Lady Bears

- Sports are highly sexist, which manifests itself in biological and cultural ways. There are drastic differences between men's and women's sports from the rules to coaching representation. Also, women's sports are labeled "Women's", while it is assumed for the men. There is not a "Men's National Basketball Association", but there is a "Women's National Basketball Association". Furthermore, there is the label of women's teams as "lady", such as the Baylor "Lady Bears" (Darvin, et al.).
- ❖ Olympics
 - The Olympics have implemented several rules that are unsupported by research and are harmful to the athletes. Some of the most prominent include creating a cap on the women's testosterone levels, that is below the natural range, upholding hijab bans, and banning the Soul Cap, which was specifically designed for Black swimmers (Streeter).
- ❖ Fist
 - Athletes have an important platform for activism; however, many sports corporations are hesitant to listen to the positions of their athletes. When Colin Kaepernick kneeled in protest of police killings, he was blackballed from the NFL. In light of the killing of George Floyd, the NFL and NBA have become involved in this movement, stenciling messages such as "End Racism" and "It Takes All of Us" on fields and courts. However, this activism is purely performative, as these associations still do not support individual players and respect their rights to protest.
- ❖ ®
 - The film *A League of Their Own* takes place during World War II, so the first professional female baseball league develops in the Midwest. The ® is the logo of the Rockford Peaches, the team that the movie follows most closely. This movie examines the idea that the women in the league existed primarily to entertain men. For example, they would have to play baseball in short dresses to make the game more appealing to watch. The stark differences between men's and women's sports are glaringly apparent.
- ❖ Medal
 - The medal represents the classic idea in sports of winning. It is the quintessential part of sport, and it is interesting to think about how distinct advantages and disadvantages contribute to different individuals winning.
- ❖ Hormones
 - Both men and women have levels of testosterone and estrogen. There is a correlation between testosterone levels and some sports, but not all.

Furthermore, not enough research has been conducted to determine how strong the connection is. Rules have been made barring women with testosterone levels within the normal range from competing in track and field events, such as Caster Semenya.

- ❖ Play like a champion today
 - We also discussed Notre Dame sports, from culture and tradition to policy enacted by the administration. We also analyzed sports at Notre Dame in the context of the Seven Ways of Defining Modern Sport. (***)
- ❖ Throwing
 - We discussed the anatomy of the shoulder and the physiology behind pitches in baseball. It appears that we gained the ability to throw with power and accuracy more than two million years ago. It has been hypothesized that hunter-gatherer populations had games aimed to aid children in developing skills such as accuracy, power, and hand-eye coordination. (Goldfield)
- ❖ Hijabi
 - In sports, women's clothing is highly regulated. For example, the Norwegian handball team was fined for wearing shorts instead of bikinis. Less talked about, however, is the hijab bans that are placed on Muslim women athletes. Federations claimed to design this rule to "ensure the safety for players and opponents", but this idea has been proven untrue. These bans enrage many, but are not reported on by the mainstream media (Ahmed).
- ❖ Basketball
 - Thangaraj's "Everyday Play" describes pickup basketball among South Asian American men. This was a unifying factor for those who felt unaccepted in the United States. Even though they faced discrimination in their lives, they did not want black men to join their pickup games, often ostracizing them when they did. However, they used the "basketball cool" of black athletes (****)
- ❖ Trans Flag
 - There is a gap in the research conducted on transgender athletes. While transgender women could have certain advantages over cis-gender women, the data is not yet present to support it. Lawmakers in 27 states have proposed legislation to ban transgender youth from participating in sport, and ten states have banned trans athlete participation. Lawmakers claim that these athletes have an advantage over cis-gender athletes. However, in sport, there will always be an element of unfairness. Michael Phelps has an inherent advantage over his competitors because his body produces decreased lactic acid, stopping his muscles from quickly fatiguing. Ultimately, sporting institutions choose what

unfairness they will allow and what they will not allow, and currently, transgender athletes are feared by both competitors and institutions (Luther).

❖ Pay gap

- There is a huge disparity between men's and women's sports. Men's sports have always been the priority of sporting associations. Additionally, men have higher wages and access to better training equipment than women. While some might argue that this is because men's sports produce more revenue and men have better teams, there is a clear example in the United States where this is not the case. The US Women's soccer team consistently outperforms the men's team yet makes less than them. This pay gap is glaringly apparent in sports and is inherently sexist.

Sources

- Ahmed, Shireen. "Forcing Women out of Clothing Is Just as Violent as Forcing Them into It." *TRT World*, TRT World, 23 July 2021, <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/forcing-women-out-of-clothing-is-just-as-violent-as-forcing-them-into-it-48605>.
- Alzado, Lyle. "'I'm Sick and I'm Scared' - Sports Illustrated Vault." *SI.com*, Sports Illustrated Vault | SI.com, 8 July 1991, <https://vault.si.com/vault/1991/07/08/im-sick-and-im-scared-the-author-a-former-nfl-star-has-a-dread-disease-that-he-blames-on-his-use-of-performance-enhancing-drugs>.
- Darvin, Lindsey, et al. "Unequal Treatment for College Women's Basketball Players Has Deep Historical Roots." *The Conversation*, 8 Apr. 2021, <https://theconversation.com/unequal-treatment-for-college-womens-basketball-players-has-deep-historical-roots-157555>.
- Eisenmann, Joe. "The Nature-Nurture Debate in Sports." *Human Performance Blog · Volt Athletics*, Human Performance Blog · Volt Athletics, 18 Nov. 2019, <https://blog.voltathletics.com/home/2019/11/7/the-nature-nurture-debate-in-sports-are-athletes-born-or-built>.
- Epstein, David. "Are Athletes Really Getting Faster, Better, Stronger?" *TED*, Mar. 2014, https://www.ted.com/talks/david_epstein_are_athletes_really_getting_faster_better_stronger?language=en.
- Luther, Jessica W. "The Playing Field." *Vox*, Vox, 10 May 2021, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/22423132/anti-transgender-bills-women-sports-fairness>.
- Marshall, Penny, director. *A League of Their Own*. Accessed 7 Dec. 2021.
- Nuckols, Greg. "The Science of Steroids: The Physiology and Psychology of How Steroids Make You Stronger." *Stronger by Science*, 4 Nov. 2020, <https://www.strongerbyscience.com/the-science-of-steroids/>.
- Streeter, Kurt. "The Olympics Rely on, but Don't Support, Black Girl Magic ..." *NY Times*, 24 July 2021,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/23/sports/olympics/olympics-naomi-osaka-simone-biles.html>.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What did you learn?

Through this project, I was able to synthesize what I've learned this semester. I represented a variety of topics from improvements in sports technology to athletes' right to protest to hormones and performance enhancing drugs to issues surrounding transgender athletes.

2. What challenges did you face while completing this assignment?

The main challenge I faced while completing this assignment was timing. I started this project pretty far in advance; however, this project took a lot longer than I initially anticipated. In addition, I had a lot of work due this week. It was also difficult to plan out the project to ensure that certain areas weren't too crowded. Furthermore, I wanted to make sure that I represented a wide range of topics we had covered in class. I also tried to choose images that would not be too difficult to embroider.

3. How did you overcome these challenges?

To overcome the issue of time, I did have a few late nights embroidering. I thought beginning early would help mitigate some of the common time management issues, but ultimately this was not the case. So, I had to be very deliberate about the amount of time I spent on the project to ensure I was able to complete everything. In terms of planning out the project, I asked for second opinions as I planned out the embroidery hoop. I asked if there were areas that looked too crowded and presented different options and asked which looked better. To choose which images to use, I looked over the syllabus to refresh my memory on which topics we covered in class this semester. I also reviewed my notes and reflections to narrow down specific things I wanted to focus on.

4. How successful do you think you were with your final project?

I wanted to show everything I've learned in a visually appealing way, and I think I did that very well. I put a lot of time into this project, and I think that is evident in the way it turned out. I think although this project was incredibly time consuming, it is the assignment that I am the most proud of. I definitely think this is the best work I have produced for this class and overall, I am very proud of it.

5. What do you think you could have done better?

I think overall, I did a pretty good job with this project, and there isn't much I would change. I think I could have done better if time wasn't such a big factor. I originally planned for my title to look more visually appealing, but I ran out of time so I rushed through the title more than I would have liked. Another thing I would have liked to do better was have more representation of different skin tones in my illustrations. I did the pitcher and the hijabi images with light skin, and then I realized that I was creating a

very white-centered project. However, the only image of a person left to complete was the steroid user, and it felt wrong to have the only black individual in my project be using drugs, so I used light thread for that image as well.

As I shopped for my embroidery floss over thanksgiving break, I asked my six year old sister to pick out a color that was skin colored. She picked out a very light color of embroidery floss, which I thought was interesting. At the age of six, she has already begun to think of skin color as the color of her skin. I picked out a darker skin color to use also, but did not end up using it, as I previously mentioned. At the store, I recognized the interesting nature of her choice. However, I ended up doing the exact same thing as I worked on my project. I think this helped me realize that there is definitely a long way to go in representation and diversity.

Originally, I was going to include images of Simone Biles and/or Colin Kaepernick in my project to synthesize information on the arbitrariness of rules in sports and athletes' rights to protest. I thought those images would be too difficult to execute, so I did not end up including them. But, this would have been a good way to increase the diversity of my project.

6. If you worked in a group, who were your partners?

N/A