

2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on

# Sports Medicine and Fitness

April 18-20, 2016 Dubai, UAE

## Deviant! Muscularity in women who do mixed martial arts: Navigating stereotypical femininity in different social contexts as a muscular woman who does MMA

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My paper explores how deviance is constructed in relation to sport and gender. I look at female mixed martial artists and how they are stigmatized and pathologized by being categorized of having Muscle Dysmorphia which is a mental illness according to the DSM. Female athletes who are considered to have excessive muscle mass and obsessive exercise habits or doping are more readily diagnosed with this disorder than men with similar behaviours. Furthermore, I am interested in exploring the problem of gender fluidity and of women being pathologized based on body type and how women compensate or react to societal pressures to manage femininity in the North American context. My main way to explore experiences of stigmatization and pathologization is through mixed methods of discourse analysis as well as combining theories on deviance to show how various theories work together to create the experience of stigma when women participate in mixed martial arts. Deviance is constructed on multiple levels through many different mechanisms such as pathologization, gazing, and discourse and rhetoric; hence why it is crucial to combine all these tools and theories in order to fully understand why certain bodies are seen as deviant and others are not. No one discussed or no theory provides a full understanding as to how deviance is created and experienced; by applying many theories to the example of muscularity in women doing mixed martial arts it is clear that stigma, pathologization, genealogy, socialization etc., all function together to enforce and categorize deviant bodies and that deviance is felt differently by diverse individuals based on culture and their intersectional identity (race, class, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, gender, age and many more traits/characteristics). Muscular women in mixed martial arts experience societal pressures that can be construed as violent at an affective level; this type of emotional/psychological violence can be stopped when it is talked about and then women can cope with this type of discrimination.

### Biography

Alexandra Maris is currently pursuing her Master of Arts at the University of Toronto. Her research is on intersection of deviance, gender and sport with a primary focus of looking at muscle dysmorphia which is categorized under body dysmorphic disorder in the DSM. She received an Honorary Bachelor of Arts with high distinction from the University of Toronto. She has also received various scholarships such as the C.W. Burton In-Course Scholarship due to her very strong academic record. She currently holds a University of Toronto Fellowship and has received an Entrance Scholarship due to her strong graduate school application. She works as a teaching assistant in the Women and Gender Studies Department.

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