

**What is all the hype about height?**  
**A semiotic analysis of sports media, smaller athletes, and ideology**

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**Abstract**

This study looks at how professional male athletes—particularly undersized athletes—are represented throughout televised sport. Based on the assumption that televised sport is a gendered and predominantly masculine genre, the focus of this analysis is to demonstrate whether or not professional male athletes are evaluated differently based on physical stature, and whether or not such representations reinforce a dominant—mythic—male ideology. Grounded mainly in Gramscian hegemony and Peircean semiotics, the subsequent analysis compares broadcast commentary and visuals taken from the 2010 men’s Olympic ice hockey tournament and the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup. In both events, it was generally found that taller athletes were praised more positively than smaller athletes. These findings appear to support common sports-related stereotypes, such as, the apparent media-reinforced expectation that professional male athletes be almost inhuman, mythical representations of ordinary men, i.e., the best athletes should be large, intimidating, aggressive, and hyper-masculine symbols.

## **Résumé**

Cette étude analyse comment les athlètes professionnels masculins — notamment, les athlètes de petite stature — sont représentés dans le sport télévisé. Fondée sur l'hypothèse que dans le sport télévisé prédomine principalement le genre masculin, le but de cette analyse est de démontrer ou non : si les athlètes professionnels masculins sont différemment évalués en fonction de leur stature physique, et si de telles représentations renforcent une idéologie masculine – mythique – dominante. Basée principalement sur l'hégémonie de Gramsci et la sémiotique de Peirce, l'analyse proposée compare les commentaires et les images transmis lors d'émissions télévisées présentant le tournoi olympique de hockey sur glace masculin de 2010 et la Coupe du Monde de soccer masculin (FIFA) de 2010. Dans les deux événements, nous avons trouvé que les athlètes de grande taille ont été encensés, honorés, de manière plus positive que les athlètes de plus petite taille. Ces conclusions semblent confirmer les stéréotypes associés aux sports, comme, l'attente renforcée par les médias que les athlètes professionnels masculins sont des représentations presque inhumaines et mythiques des hommes ordinaires; c'est-à-dire que les meilleurs athlètes devraient être grands, redoutables, agressifs, et des symboles d'une hyper masculinité.

To my family, friends, and former teachers.

Thank you for helping me grow

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“In most sports, the short man is given short shrift”

— (“Heightism”, 1971, para. 4)

## **Introduction**

As an observation of professional—predominantly North American—sporting leagues, it is often found that physical characteristics of male athletes are not representative of the more general male population (Malina, 1972; Nevill, Holder, & Watts, 2009; Norton & Olds, 2001).

The typical male athlete tends to be substantially larger than the typical man.

While such findings are not necessarily shocking, given that sports are to varying degrees “Darwinian” (Norton & Olds, 2001, p. 764) where physical characteristics such as a player’s height and weight may yield significant advantages or disadvantages in athletic play, the visible underrepresentation of undersized male athletes<sup>1</sup> in modern professional sport might very well serve as an indicator of a hidden height bias within society. From my perspective at least, i.e., a self-identified short male and sports enthusiast, it appears that the near exclusion of undersized male athletes in most major professional sports is itself revealing of some form of oppression facing smaller athletes. Previous studies also note this tendency for nearly all sports to privilege the taller body (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Keyes, 1980).

Though recognizing how smaller male bodies are sometimes visible in major professional sports (e.g. football, baseball, basketball, hockey and soccer), and are even preferred over taller male bodies in less popular sports such as horse racing, i.e., jockeys, or distance running (Chase, 2008; Keyes, 1980), this thesis will examine the representation<sup>2</sup> of small and tall male athletes in media discourses of professional sport. Understanding how many sports—and even specific

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<sup>1</sup> Being aware that definitions of “small” and “undersized” can be somewhat arbitrary, i.e., they will usually vary by context and sport, I tend to operationalize the notion of “undersized male athletes” as those professional male athletes who are under six feet tall.

<sup>2</sup> By “representation”, I am referring to how meaning is generated by sign action or semiosis, i.e., the process by which a sign stands for its object and generates its interpretant or meaning effect. I offer a more thorough account of representation in the Methodology section.

positions within a given sport—tend to privilege athletes whose physical dimensions are consistent with an ideal athletic body type, this study will focus on the ways in which an athlete's physical stature might influence how they are evaluated in the media.

Culturally speaking, since male tallness is regularly associated with positive qualities (e.g. power, strength, and superiority) while its absence, i.e. shortness, usually signifies a range of negative traits (e.g. powerlessness, weakness, and inferiority) (Butera, 2008, p. 12), the aim of this thesis will be to analyze professional athletic discourses as a means of testing the possible sustenance, or denial, of heightist values within society. In light of the cultural significance generally ascribed to height in society, i.e., a supposed preference for taller male bodies, throughout this thesis I will be looking for verbal and non verbal signs that appear to promote, or challenge, the traditional heightist ideology of most North American and global societies. I will be searching for evaluative signs that are used to describe and differentiate among small and tall male athletic bodies while assessing the proper interpretations of these representations.

This thesis will concentrate on live televised coverage drawn from both the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament and the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup. These tournaments were selected for their cultural appeal, i.e., the significant media attention and fanfare associated with these major spectacles of sport, their close timing to each other, and the global popularity associated with hockey and soccer.

The medium of television was selected over alternative media for its ability to attract a mass audience, its capacity to broadcast multiple channels of communication (e.g. sound, graphics, images) as well as for the claim that sports coverage and television often go hand in hand (Kennedy, 2001; O'Connor & Boyle, 1993). Of the audiences who followed the 2010



Winter Olympic Games and/or 2010 men's FIFA World Cup, it is expected that the majority of them did so with television as their medium of choice.

A further rationale for choosing television as the central medium to study also relates to arguments that designate televised sports, a predominantly masculine genre, as being the male equivalent of the North American "soap opera", i.e., a traditionally feminine genre (Kennedy, 2000; O'Connor & Boyle, 1993). Noting this comparison, television was chosen to partially explore and possibly expound on this idea. Recognizing that a number of researchers have studied the content of soap operas for their impact on dominant interpretations of femininity (Jackson, 2006; Marx, 2008), I am interested to examine the potential role of televised sport narratives in the negotiation and construction of a hegemonic masculine identity.

In addition to analyzing specific signs pertaining to descriptions of the male athletic body, this study also seeks to investigate evidence of hyper-masculine<sup>3</sup> portrayals in sport. It aims to explore the various cultural implications associated with these portrayals by looking at how hyper-masculine representations of professional male athletes might work to reinforce dominant athletic stereotypes and normalized conceptions of manhood.

Acknowledging, however, that authoritative sports figures like managers, coaches and scouts may themselves value strong physical attributes (e.g. height, mass) and hyper-masculine qualities (e.g. strength, aggression, intimidation) in their players, this is not to say that media personnel are responsible for this perceived conceptualization of smaller male athletes as usually subordinate in most sports. Yet through their coverage, media commentators and producers often consciously, or unconsciously, reinforce and legitimize the idea that male athletes must be big—

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of "hyper-masculinity" refers to the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour (Darnell & Wilson, 2006, p. 445). In the context of media, this term often refers to exaggerated/macho/unrealistic portrayals of what it means to be a man.

or at the very least must “play big”<sup>4</sup>—in order to compete at a professional level. It is important to keep in mind that media commentators and producers are also not in the same position as any ordinary person: they have an established medium to broadcast their opinions.

As the dominant sports media can then be very influential in legitimizing ideas, the main focus of this thesis will be to provide some sort of detailed analysis of the main discourses and images surrounding physical stature as revealed during live televised broadcasts of Olympic hockey and World Cup soccer. While I had originally designed this study as a more quantitative content analysis of these tournaments, I will opt instead to employ a qualitative analysis based on a semiotic research methodology—with an emphasis on Peirce’s triadic model of the sign.

From the perspective of a content analysis, while a primary emphasis on the frequency of contents related to physical stature could yield some insightful results, I found this approach to be somewhat limiting. A semiotic analysis of selected sporting events allows me to focus more directly on the kind of functioning of relevant signs, rather than the quantity of height-related contents. So upon further research and reflection, this emphasis on the function of signs, as opposed to their frequency, is thought to be the more appropriate analytical tool for this project.

By using semiotics as the main research tool, I will be able to analyze both verbal (e.g. commentator language) and visual signs (e.g. images and graphics) communicated during live broadcasts of the 2010 Winter Olympics and FIFA World Cup. This will permit me to use a small sample of games and broadcasts from these events in order to examine the generation of meaning inherent in the domain of sport. Throughout this thesis, I will search primarily for

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<sup>4</sup> The expression to “play big” is generally used to describe a smaller athlete who may appear to be limited by his physical stature, but makes up for it by adopting a dominating or aggressive style of play.

denotative and connotative signs<sup>5</sup> that relate to the themes of ideal bodies, mediated stereotypes, and constructed masculinities. I will specifically be looking at how the meanings of height and masculinity are generated and manifested in the realms of sport and sports media.

Lastly, I will also explore a number of case studies throughout this thesis. Aware that many smaller athletes are/were indeed outstanding figures in their respective sport(s)—and have been, or continue to be, credited in media circles for their exceptional play—this is not to suggest that undersized athletes are never fully recognized for their athletic talent. Former Argentine soccer player, Diego Maradona (1.66 m), is often a prime example of how an atypically short male athlete can both excel in professional sport and consistently earn powerful praise from the dominant sports media. Another example is contemporary soccer star and Argentine/FC Barcelona striker, Lionel Messi, who at only 1.69 metres tall is rated among the best soccer players in the world.

Granted that these and other undersized athletes have consistently shown that they can effectively compete against taller bodies in sport, it is also plausible to think that these same athletes' abilities were likely to have been scrutinized and overlooked because of their smaller statures prior to the launch of their successful careers.<sup>6</sup> And as this thesis will show, the additional media scrutiny that tends to follow smaller male athletes generally does not stop once these athletes turn professional. There seems to be a habitual tendency on behalf of the dominant sports media to represent undersized male athletes in infantilizing, feminizing, and ambivalent

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<sup>5</sup> The term 'denotation' refers to the common-sense, obvious and literal meaning of a sign. 'Connotation' refers to the range of further associations that a sign carries in addition to its literal meaning (Lyons, 1977, p. 176).

<sup>6</sup> In the specific case of Messi, this is part of his legend. After being turned down by some local teams in Argentina, he was admitted in one, but they refused to pay for the expensive growth hormone treatments which he needed. So he was taken to Barcelona by his father (where they offered to pay for treatments), and the rest is history.

ways—even among professional athletes. Such techniques tend to translate into an allegorical depreciation of power for smaller male athletes and smaller men more broadly.

From that perspective at least, there seems to be something of significance to say about how the dominant sports media seemingly continue to value male body size as a reliable indicator for athletic success even despite numerous case studies which seem to compromise the validity of such claims. While size-differentials between comparable individuals and teams can certainly play a role in any athletic contest, it is suggested that because physical stature usually represents only one aspect of a sport (in addition to elements of skill, endurance, intelligence and so on), an athlete's height might not always be the decisive advantage, or handicap, that many sports media commentators and producers consider it as being. An athlete's size, big or small, might not matter as much as the dominant sports media seem to insist—if it matters at all.

So by studying how physical stature is represented throughout televised sport, I believe that this research contributes to the field of Communication Studies because it focuses on the ways in which meaning is produced, communicated, and maintained through a broadcast medium. The main purpose of this study is to look at how televised sports broadcasts, i.e., verbal and visual signs, might legitimize multiple gender-related stereotypes and shape dominant perceptions of an ideal hegemonic masculinity in sport. The goal of this thesis is to investigate how ideologies of heightism are articulated, challenged, and supported within the narrative televised coverage of men's Olympic hockey and men's World Cup soccer games. The following research questions have been used to guide this thesis:

**RQ1:** How is physical stature represented throughout televised coverage of the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup and the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament? What kinds of signs (verbal and visual) are employed to differentially account for athletic performance on the basis of an athlete's height?

**RQ2:** What are the dominant representations of atypically tall and short male athletes within televised discourses of international ice hockey and soccer?

**RQ3:** In what ways, if any, do representations of height in sport contribute to the reinforcement of heightist ideologies within society?

“The bias towards tallness and against shortness is one of society’s most blatant and forgiven prejudices”

— (John Kenneth Galbraith, 1977, p. 22)

## **Literature Review**

As this thesis aims to evaluate signs of masculinity throughout televised sport, relevant literature shall be taken from a variety of works on the concept of ideology, gender, mythology, and representation. Recognizing that televised sport, and sport in general, has often been labelled a predominantly masculine genre (Kinkema & Harris, 1998; O’Connor & Boyle, 1993; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Whannel, 1998), and acknowledging how sport can be an influential and popular site for the promotion of cultural, mostly patriarchal, ideals; the following analysis seeks out texts that might explain the underlying functions and ideologies behind sports media production. This review searches for texts that help to make sense of how deeply embedded cultural myths and stereotypes are depicted and sustained within the realm of sports media. The analytical perspective developed throughout these texts will serve as the intellectual foundation for understanding representations of physical stature in sport and popular culture.

For the purpose of this section, not only is it then important to understand how dominant myths and stereotypes reverberate throughout sports coverage and discourse, but it is equally important to be aware of the role that sports, and sports media, play in North American and global cultures. Sabo & Jansen (1998) conclude that: “Watching sports is one of the few trans-generational experiences that men and boys, fathers and sons, still share in the post-Fordian context” (p. 205). They argue that sports are a valuable site of male-bonding just as “sports talk”, i.e., regular discussion about mediated sport, remains one of the rare discursive spaces where men from all backgrounds can come together to discuss integral values (e.g., discipline, courage, fairness, and teamwork) free from any political, economical, and cultural cleavages that might

otherwise divide them (Sabo & Jansen, 1998, p. 205). Despite the fact that authors also tend to stress male viewership and readership alone, conclusions are often suggestive of sport's distinct cultural appeal among both males and females. Hogarth (2008) writes: "Sport clearly occupies a huge portion of modern North American life, garnering its own section in all the major newspapers, radio and television news" (p. 5).

Conceding sport's prominent occupation within North American life, it then seems that the institution of sport is not always a "frivolous" area of intellectual study (Lowes, 1999; Rowe, 2007; Wenner, 1998). Unlike Howard Cosell, the late American sports journalist, who when speaking about the apparent triviality of sports and sports news, once proclaimed sports as "the toy department of human life" (Lowes, 1999; Rowe, 2007), it is then reasonable to suggest that sports and sports journalism often transcend their traditional entertainment functions. Sporting culture is not the unimportant, un-intellectual sphere that it has sometimes been labelled in the past (Lowes, 1999, 2002; Rowe, 2007).

Since major sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, or even the Super Bowl, also tend to draw large global audiences along with a heightened media focus, such events epitomize the strong connection between sport and culture. These sporting events are, in many ways, themselves cultural events (Katz, 1980; Real, 1989; Whitson, 1998). As Real (1998) puts it: "televised media sports—such as the Olympics, the Super Bowl, the Oscars, the World Cup and others—play a leading role in celebrating and shaping our global culture" (p. 26). Televised media sports have thus been described as "media events" (Dayan & Katz, 1992; Katz, 1980), "super media" (Real, 1989), and "global extravaganzas" (Whitson, 1998).

Past scholarship in the field of Sport Communication is again largely revealing of the prominent influence that popular sport can have upon day-to-day North American life.

Researchers have thus used the realm of sport as a means to explore relevant social phenomena such as racial discrimination (Bruce, 2004; de B'éri & Hogarth, 2009; Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Hogarth, 2008), gender discrimination (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Whannel, 1992) and homophobia (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Sabo & Jansen, 1998)—all important cultural concerns.

On a personal note, I believe that Hogarth's (2008) claim that football, although this is probably true for most sports, "deserves the tag of culture itself, and thus, is a vital area of investigation as a microcosm of the ideologies of North American societies" (p. 5) warrants strong attention. Throughout this thesis, I will also assume that sport is a microcosm of North American life, though I will do so through an examination of World Cup soccer and Olympic ice hockey coverage—not American football. Seeing how this concept of "ideology" resonates throughout the sports media literature, this term will also be incorporated throughout this thesis. Antonio Gramsci's (1992 [1975]) conceptualization of 'ideology' (i.e., how dominant attitudes, opinions, and beliefs are constructed, resisted, and sustained within cultures) will be considered most helpful. R.W. Connell's (1990, 2008) work on the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" is also expected to help situate 'ideology' within the stereotypical masculine domain of sport.

### **On ideology**

Due in large part to the abstract nature of the term, the concept of "ideology" has historically been interpreted in a number of different ways. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels (1976 [1932]) originally defined "ideology" as: the means by which the ideas of the ruling classes, i.e.,



the bourgeoisie, are imposed upon the workers, i.e., the proletariat, of a population (Fiske, 1990; Larrain, 1991; Reiss, 1997). By presenting their ideas as natural and self-evident, Marx & Engels argued that the bourgeoisie would usually “distort” the masses into supporting their dominant way of thinking. This distortion would keep the proletariat in a state of “false consciousness”, i.e., to be unaware of the object of their oppression or exploitation (Fiske, 1990; Larrain, 1991). In time, however, Marx & Engels speculated that this majority would “eventually see through this false consciousness and change the social order that imposes it upon them” (Fiske, 1990, p. 177). After finally realizing the object of their exploitation, i.e., the interests of the ruling class, the masses would then resist the reigning ideology through some form of revolution.

As the sort of revolution that Marx & Engels had imagined did not come to fruition, i.e., the overthrow of capitalism by internal resistance, later Marxist thinkers such as Louis Althusser (1971) sought to develop a more sophisticated theory of ‘ideology’ in order to help explain this significant non-occurrence. Unlike Marx & Engels, who thought of ideology almost entirely in terms of coercion, i.e., the imposition of dominant values upon subordinates, Althusser’s (1971) argument was that “the subordinate may consent to the dominant ideology and thus participate in its propagation” (Fiske, 1990, p. 178). He believed that through “interpellation”, i.e., the process by which individuals are “hailed” or recruited by social forces to assume a specific identity (Fiske, 1990, p. 178), the proletariat would generally come to accept ideology as welcome and normal. Althusser reasons that because an individual’s social experiences are largely determined by dominant ideologies, i.e., citizens are educated through “ideological state apparatuses” (e.g. education, religion, and mass media) to behave in a specific way; people can then rarely, if ever, truly escape their grasp (Fiske, 1990; Reiss, 1997). According to this view, while it might be tempting to resist or challenge the governing interests of a society, this is made difficult by the

fact that our social experiences are always ideologically loaded, i.e., any effort to resist dominant ideology demands that we also challenge many of the same ideologies that help to shape and define who we are as individuals (Fiske, 1990, p. 177).

In light of this theory, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci also developed a comparable understanding of the concept of 'ideology'. Like Althusser, Gramsci (1992 [1975]) claims that the subordinate are not so much coerced by the ruling classes into accepting ideology, but rather they generally consent to it willingly. Through his concept of "hegemony", i.e., the dominance of one social group over another (Fiske, 1990; Santucci, 2010 [2005]; Taras, 2001), Gramsci insists that the ideas of the dominant class are frequently accepted as common, and not class-based, sense. According to this view, subordinate classes will generally come to accept ruling interests as logical and favourable to them—even when it would seem counterintuitive to do so.

Unlike Althusser's discussion of the ineffectiveness of subordinate classes to properly challenge the governing interests of a society, Gramsci's theory of ideology understood the capacity for resistance. Gramsci (1992 [1975]) believed that, "the dominant ideology constantly meets resistances that it has to overcome in order to win people's consent to the social order that it is promoting" (Fiske, 1990, p. 176). His theory suggests that 'ideology' acts as a sort of ongoing tug-of-war between dominant and subordinate classes. According to this perspective, 'ideology' is said to retain its exploitative potential, but it asserts that the masses are sometimes capable of seeing through and later challenging ideology's exploitative tactics. In Gramsci's opinion, the masses then have some leverage in ideological wars. This gives the impression that ideology functions as a continual yet sporadic process of deceiving and exposing, i.e., ideology is masked and unmasked. It is repeatedly won and lost (Fiske, 1990; Santucci, 2010 [2005]; Taras, 2001).

In summarizing these diverse interpretations of ‘ideology’, it appears that whereas “Gramsci’s theory [of ideology] makes social change possible, Marx’s makes it inevitable, and Althusser’s improbable” (Fiske, 1990, p. 178). Each theorist agrees that dominant ideologies are powerful, exploitative, and are usually governed by ruling interests, yet they tend to disagree about how visible or sustainable dominant ideologies are in everyday life. Gramsci (1992 [1975]) saw ideology as challengeable, Marx & Engels (1976 [1932]) as being inevitably destructible, and Althusser (1971) considered it as practically inescapable (Fiske, 1990, p. 178).

But despite any dissimilarities in how ideology is defined (e.g. Gramscian, Althusserian, and Marxian interpretations) the concept of ‘ideology’ is almost always used in the context of investigating the role of contemporary power relations within society. Ideology helps us to explain how privileged individuals and groups of society are seemingly able to exert power and control over less-privileged ones, i.e., subordinates, without having to use brute force. And since most the literature that I encountered tended to frame ideology within sport, i.e., mediated portrayals of athletic power, in the context of race, gender, or sexual relations, some discussion of each of these topics is set to follow. Having been recently introduced to the concept of “heightism”, i.e., a prejudice or discrimination based on height (Allen & Fost, 1990; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Miller, 1986), the issue of a height bias is also explored throughout this section.

### ***Media, sport, and race***

Of the studies that examine ‘ideology’ in a sporting context, many of them look at how racial issues, e.g., racial discrimination, are manifested in the dominant sports media (Denham et al., 2002; Hogarth, 2008). Edwards (1969), for example, had originally suggested that white broadcasters do not sufficiently credit black athletes for their athletic achievements. He claimed

that because of a history of racism, black athletes are then consistently denied power by white commentators (as cited in Denham et al., 2002, p. 316). Researchers now argue that dominant sports media continue to discriminate racially though it is now suggested that these prejudicial tactics tend to take on more of a covert or subtle form, as opposed to the overt or blatant racism of the past (Davis & Harris, 1998; de B'éri & Hogarth, 2009; Kinkema & Harris, 1998). This suggests that a racial bias in sport still endures, but it is more hidden today.

To elaborate on such contemporary techniques of covert racism, de B'éri and Hogarth (2009) use the case study of Ron Artest,<sup>7</sup> a black National Basketball Association (NBA) player, to illustrate how racist ideologies are perpetuated through modern sport. These authors analyze reactions from the infamous “Ron Artest brawl” of 2004, i.e., an in-game fight that broke out after Artest was struck by a drink from the stands and escalated into a massive brawl between players and fans, to highlight how covert racial ideology functions within the NBA’s popular discourse. de B'éri & Hogarth (2009) contend that amidst the discourses surrounding the event, including Artest’s suspension, the dominant reaction to the brawl revealed “the systemic racist ideology that shapes the [NBA] and its marketing system” (p. 104). They found that the accompanying discourse of this event was largely subservient of dominant white interests (e.g. the white league administrators, the large white fan base, and so on), which worked to perpetuate traditional stereotypes of black males, i.e., the black man as either exceptional athlete or violent criminal (de B'éri & Hogarth, 2009, p. 101).

Based on such findings, it does then appear that the dominant sports media are sometimes culpable of misrepresenting black athletes; a tendency that could be partially explained by the fact that most sports media commentators tend to be ‘white’ (Bruce, 2004; Messner et al., 2000;

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<sup>7</sup> Ron Artest has since legally changed his name to “Metta World Peace”.

Rada, 1996). On the other hand, this white commentator argument does not appear to provide a sufficient explanation for the prevalence of racism in sports media. It does not account for those white commentators who regularly challenge the negative opinions of black athletes, nor does it always seem fair to accuse white sportscasters as being “racist” for their sometimes unintentional use of racially-biased language. As de B’béri & Hogarth (2009) state: “the ideological statements voiced by reporters or other sports personalities are not the product of individual awareness, but rather are influenced by the inescapable framework of the ideological foundations in which they were articulated” (p. 92). In order to truly make sense of racially biased language in sports discourse, this would demand that we look beyond individual speakers and focus more on the dominant cultural institutions that guide, but do not determine, the traditional beliefs, opinions, and behaviours of society. This way of thinking then diverges from the notion of “determinism”, i.e., the theory that every event is causally necessitated by antecedent events and conditions (Klein, 1990, p. 190), as it presupposes that people have “free will”, i.e., an ability that enables us to make decisions free from certain kinds of constraints (Klein, 1990, p. 121).

Finally, while it might seem hard to ignore the number of studies claiming to demonstrate evidence of racism in sports coverage, some researchers insist that there has been an observable reduction over the years (Denham et al., 2002; Sabo et al., 1996). Sabo et al. (1996) attribute these changes, i.e., a reduction of racism, to the success of new sensitivity training initiatives designed to curb racial commentary in sport. Meanwhile, in their content analysis of the 2000 NCAA men’s and women’s Final Four basketball tournaments, Denham et al. (2002) noted similar findings. They found that “while black athletes continue to be praised for their athleticism and physicality, they are also receiving a greater number of comments about their

intelligence and ability to lead” (p. 315). This new emphasis on the intelligence of black athletes suggests a welcome inversion or correction to society’s traditional racial values.

Because it seems that—all too often—non-white athletes remain the target of undesirable media attention whereas white athletes frequently enjoy the luxuries of favourable commentary and a supportive media system (Bruce, 2004; Carrington, 2008; de B’béri & Hogarth, 2009; Hogarth, 2008), many of the dominant racial ideologies appear to be intact. The literature on this topic reveals that the dominant sports media tends to represent white athletes as superior and non-white athletes as inferior. Representations of white athletes tend to characterize them as being endowed with considerable power whereas non-white athletes tend to be denied equitable praise (Hogarth, 2008; Hoose, 1989; Sabo et al., 1996).

### ***Media, sport, and gender***

Apart from the various works that explore the pervasiveness of racial ideologies in sports discourse, another primary area of research within Sport Communication has been a focus on the extent of gender and sexual discrimination. Here, research has been devoted to topics such as the underrepresentation of sportswomen in all forms of media (Denham, et al., 2002), media biases towards female athletes (Christopherson, Janning, & McConnell, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998), and media treatment of homosexual athletes (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Sabo & Jansen, 1998). While the majority of these studies have looked at gender relations from the perspective of female versus male athletes, a growing body of scholarship is also beginning to evaluate how male athletes are distinguished from other male athletes, i.e., how some male athletes are represented as more “macho” than others (Connell, 1990, 2008; Darnell & Wilson, 2006; Pringle, 2001).

In fact, emerging scholarship in this field has even led to the identification of a sort of macho—or gender—order that is routinely celebrated throughout sports media discourse. Connell (1990, 2008) defines this “gender order” as a socially-influenced hierarchical structure that correlates gender and power. According to this structure, it has been found that sports media consistently accord heterosexual male athletes the most cultural power and privilege whereas Othered athletes, e.g., women and homosexual men, are usually denied the same representational power: they tend to be shown as inferior, thus situating them decisively lower on the scale of society’s gender order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gee, 2009; Sabo & Jansen, 1998). This subordinate position of female and weaker male athletes normally legitimizes and naturalizes dominant ideologies of governing North American society, e.g., heterosexuality and patriarchy, through sports media celebrations of an ideal masculine type (Connell, 1990; Gee, 2009; Sabo & Jansen, 1998). Connell (1990, 2008) refers to this celebration of only one specific type as ideological support for a “hegemonic masculinity”.

Having largely pioneered the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, Connell’s (2008) contention is that, like many female athletes, male athletes also sometimes face discrimination. She believes that because the idea of a hegemonic masculinity only privileges or empowers a certain kind of man, i.e., an ideal male archetype, alternative masculinities will often lose some credibility (p. 133). This loss of credibility is often embedded in mass culture and in institutions that promote hyper-masculine male traits, e.g., commercial sport (Allain, 2008; Gee, 2009; Trujillo, 1991, 1995).

Trujillo’s (1991) analysis of Nolan Ryan (i.e. a white, heterosexual, former Major League Baseball pitcher) does an admirable job in capturing the essence of hegemonic masculinity as a concept. In his article, Trujillo (1991) identifies media representations of Ryan as support for an

exemplary model of normative masculinity. He writes that sports media commodified Ryan “as the embodiment of male athletic power, as an ideal image of the capitalist worker, as a family patriarch, as a white rural cowboy, and as a phallic symbol” (p. 290). He also suggests that “the media functioned hegemonically by personifying Ryan as an archetypal male athletic hero” (Trujillo, 1991, p. 290). Through such representations, Trujillo’s (1991) point is that mass media are a very important source of images of masculinity. The case of Nolan Ryan shows that mass media, specifically sports media, tend to reinforce an ideal semblance of masculinity, i.e., a hegemonic masculinity, and reject all other alternative kinds of masculinities (p. 303).

Gee (2009) offers further support of a media-reinforced hegemonic masculinity conveyed through sport, when, in her analysis of the National Hockey League’s (NHL) ‘Inside the warrior’ advertising campaign, she notes that these ads were designed to “create, produce, and (re)present a mythical form of hegemonic masculinity, a contemporary hockey warrior hero, for public consumption” (p. 578). By promoting this preferred form of masculinity, i.e., a mythical warrior theme based on the “suppression of fear, muscularity, aggression, heterosexuality...and the subordination of women” (p. 594), Gee (2009) argues that the NHL engaged in constructions of a hegemonic masculinity. Using this warrior theme and its hyper-masculine message, Gee (2009) asserts that NHL media consciously sought to eliminate any potential threats associated with alternative masculinities and the overarching crisis of masculinity evident in some contemporary social environments. This warrior image functioned as a way to reinforce male privilege by attempting to clear up any confusion or uncertainty about what it means to “be a man” (p. 579).

From that perspective, if we are to understand ‘ideology’ as “the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination” (Lowes, 1999, p. 99), then the notion of a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and the identification of a media-reinforced ‘gender order’ in sport



are revealing of ideology's presence. By representing hyper-masculine male athletes as powerful, but often misrepresenting female and weaker male athletes as relatively powerless, such tendencies typically accord hyper-masculine men a more authoritative status than women and Othered men. These traditional representations of men and women are a reinforcement of institutionalized opinions of male superiority, i.e., systemic patriarchy (Denham, et al., 2002; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Messner, Duncan, & Jensen, 1993).

As an illustration of this gender bias in mediated sport, Duncan & Messner (1998) thus conclude: “when power descriptors were used to characterize female athletes, they were often neutralized by the pairing with weakness descriptors (e.g. ‘she’s tiny, she’s small, but so effective under the boards’)” (p. 175). These authors found that while representations of female athletes were sometimes imbued with power, the frequent ambivalent nature of these statements, i.e., their coupling with weakness descriptors, often functioned to deny female athletes the full effect of this power and privilege. From that perspective, if Duncan & Messner’s (1998) summary is still relevant today, this leads me to question where undersized male athletes might figure into this media-reinforced gender order outlined above—particularly given that these authors classify words such as “tiny” and “small” as weakness descriptors.

### ***Too small to make it: Heightism and sport***

Having briefly looked at sports media portrayals of racism and sexism, I focus now on another –ism located in sports discourse and popular culture: “heightism”. Coined by Feldman (1975 [1971]), this term generally refers to any prejudice or discrimination based on height. It can, in theory, apply to treatment of either unusually tall or short people, yet it is most commonly associated with short males (p. 437). According to Feldman (1975 [1971]), it is this segment of

the population, i.e., short males, who are the most disadvantaged in relation to heightist ideology. It has been claimed that short men, especially, are discriminated against in political, economical, cultural and romantic situations, i.e., most areas of everyday life, by virtue of their less-than-ideal physical statures (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008; Frankel, 2006; Hall, 2006; Martel & Biller, 1987; Shukla, 2008).

Prior to analyzing how unusually short individuals can be discriminated against in everyday life vis-à-vis height, it is useful to explain why short males, in particular, seem to be the most adversely affected by “systemic heightism” in society. According to Butera (2008), since men and boys are usually expected to be ‘big’ and ‘strong’ whereas women and girls are not, it is because short males do not match this normative expectation of male height that they tend to assume the identity of a weak or subordinate ‘Other’ (p. 50). Butera (2008) argues that the short male body is then consistently and culturally pathologized for its deviation from the established norm: its difference often translates into a disempowered position in which the short man is stigmatized (p. 51). This stigmatization of the short male body fulfills Feldman’s (1975 [1971]) notion of a “heightist premise” in American society where according to this premise: “to be tall is to be good and to be short is to be stigmatized” (p. 437).

If that is the case, as the available evidence seems to support, some discussion of the term “stigma” as it is used by Feldman (1975 [1971]) should help to make sense of society’s heightist premise; namely, a culturally innate bias towards tallness and against shortness. Goffman (1969), for example, defines a ‘social stigma’ as an “undesired differentness” (p. 5). He calls it “a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap” (p. 3), which implies a sort of deviant condition or attribute that sets a stigmatized person apart from the “normals” of everyday society. This definition upholds then the idea that stigmatized people, i.e., deviants, will normally wish to become “normal”. And

though Goffman's (1969) text does not make any explicit references to "idiopathic", i.e., normal, short stature as a stigmatized condition, his framework suggests that idiopathic short stature can also be considered to be stigmatized.

As one potential indicator of a social stigma, Goffman (1969) asserts that deviants will normally try to conceal or correct their condition as a way to develop more social acceptance from others. He writes:

How does the stigmatized person respond to his situation? In some cases it will be possible for him to make a direct attempt to correct what he sees as the objective basis for his failing, as when a physically deformed person undergoes plastic surgery, a blind person eye treatment, an illiterate remedial education, a homosexual psychotherapy (p. 9).

This statement is thus revealing of the "social stigma" associated with idiopathic short stature, particularly among short men. By informing us of the extent to which other deviants may go in order to help deal with their situations, this helps to understand how short people respond to their own circumstances. Goffman's (1969) quote explains why a short man might choose to be injected with growth hormones, might wear elevator shoes in public, or might even option for leg-lengthening surgery to correct an otherwise healthy body (Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008; Shukla, 2008).

Clearly, a short person's decision to opt for such controlling or corrective measures must be partially explained by the ostracizing effect of short stature. Considering that this third option, i.e., leg-lengthening surgery, is also seen as a very painful remedy (Shukla, 2008), this reinforces Goffman's (1969) claim that: "[treatment] provides a special indication of the extremes to which the stigmatized can be willing to go, and hence the painfulness of the situation that leads them to these extremes" (p. 9). Stigmatized people are regularly willing to forego momentary pain for what they perceive as long-term results, normalcy and happiness.

To underscore the painfulness of the short person's untreated situation, Feldman (1975 [1971]) discusses a number of everyday hardships suffered by short people in North American society. In romantic life, Feldman (1975 [1971]) argues that because heightist ideology usually dictates that the man ought to be taller than the woman, in romantic male-female relationships, many women are pressured into accepting this ideal. Some women even refuse to date any man shorter than they are simply because of social convention (p. 438). As Fichman & Goldberg's (2008) documentary reveals, many women actually seem to prefer physical stature over social status. In the documentary, when asked to choose between a tall man (with a mediocre job) and a short man (with an exceptional job), the female participants almost always indicated a more desirable attraction to the taller man.

In addition to describing how short men can be discriminated against in their own personal lives, Feldman (1975 [1971]) also uncovers a hidden height bias within the realms of American politics and business. In politics, he notes that the taller of the two major presidential candidates in the United States has won almost every presidential election.<sup>8</sup> In business, it is speculated that a person's height affects their likelihood of getting hired, their income, and professional status (Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Miller, 1986; Rauch, 1995). In a study by Kurtz (1980), it was found that when faced with a hypothetical hiring choice between two equally qualified applicants, one 6'1" tall and the other 5'5" tall, recruiters expressed an overwhelming preference towards hiring the taller applicant (as cited in Feldman, 1975 [1971], p. 440). In another study by Boxer & Benham (1968), it was revealed that shorter military cadets earned significantly less income than taller cadets (as cited in Keyes, 1979, p. 33). These findings demonstrate that physical stature can be a major advantage or deterrent

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<sup>8</sup> Some more recent exceptions to this rule include George W. Bush's (5 ft. 11 in.) defeat of Al Gore (6 ft. 1 in.) in 2000, and again, Bush's defeat of John Kerry (6 ft. 4 in.) in 2004.

towards one's professional status in North American society; they also expose traces of a culturally innate height bias.

Outside the industries of politics and business, examples of heightism are also considered to be widespread in popular culture. Researchers claim that a height bias is most visible in terms of the representation and underrepresentation of short statured males in popular film and professional sport (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Hall, 2006; Keyes, 1980). Feldman (1975 [1971]) states:

Perhaps nowhere is America's obsession with height more evident than in the area of popular culture. Games such as basketball glorify height. Few baseball or football players are short. Boxing interest is not among flyweights or bantam weights but among taller middleweights and heavyweights (p. 441).

This statement authenticates the conclusion that undersized athletes, particularly undersized men, tend to be given "short shrift" by our athletic system ("Heightism", 1971, para. 4). Due to their height, or lack thereof, they are virtually excluded from high-paying professional sports leagues (Miller, 1986, p. 60).

There are, of course, always exceptions to this norm, e.g., some short statured male athletes are privileged enough to compete in professional sports and are often quite successful. Miller (1986) cites the now retired professional football player, Doug Flutie (1.75 m), as a classic example. Having played seasons in both the National Football League (NFL) and Canadian Football League (CFL), the diminutive Flutie defied the critics en route to establishing himself as a standout quarterback (Miller, 1986, p. 60). Initially considered "too short" to play the position (Flutie & Lefko, 1999; Miller, 1986), Flutie demonstrated a remarkable ability to compete at a high level and was not deterred by the prejudice against his height.

Hockey player Martin St. Louis (1.75 m) is exhibitivive of a comparable case. Generously listed at five foot nine, St. Louis initially went undrafted by National Hockey League (NHL) teams. He was considered “too small” (Habib, 2002). After then playing a number of years of college hockey, St. Louis was eventually offered a professional contract and has since developed into a premier NHL player.

A specific Nike Bauer commercial (2006) that features St. Louis as its spokesperson does well to remind us exactly how St. Louis’ talent had been, and sometimes still is, questioned because of his short stature. This commercial consists of a series of locker room images that focus on St. Louis as he prepares to take to the ice for Team Canada. He is captured putting on his equipment with the following voice-over, i.e., his voice, heard in the background: “Before the game, some guys get psyched up listening to music, while others get it from the chanting of the crowd... There’s only one sound that gets me fired up: the voice of every person who said I was ‘too small to make it’” (Nike Bauer, 2006). This advertisement is thus seen as an eloquent expression of an inherent height bias in sport. While its message is comforting in the sense that it promotes the attitude that an athlete’s size should not matter, it simultaneously transmits the idea that height in fact matters a whole lot. This commercial affirms the reality of heightism through the narrative of St. Louis’ personal story: it tells us that heightist ideology in sport is challengeable but does not necessarily insist that it should be changed.

Other industries of popular culture are also hesitant to change these traditional views of physical stature. Society’s height bias also manifests itself in the area of popular film, and thus the short actor, like the short athlete, is often subject to heightism. Feldman (1975 [1971]) writes:

In the movies the short actor is rarely the romantic lead. The average American cannot identify with the hero unless he rides ‘tall in the saddle.’ Thus, the short actor is reduced

to playing the buffoon (e.g. Mickey Rooney), the arch villain (e.g. Peter Lorre), or the small tough guy with the big Napoleon complex (e.g. Edward G. Robinson) (p. 441).

This statement then summarizes some of the habitual and uncomplimentary representations of short male actors. Feldman (1975 [1971]) asserts that the short male actor tends to be represented as clown-like, as villainous, and as Napoleonic (p. 441). As Butera (2008) explains it, the short man is consistently punished and vilified for his location outside the bounds of normative masculinity (p. 60). The notion of a “Napoleon complex” exemplifies this process of vilification.

Often linked to Austrian psychotherapist Alfred Adler (1929), the ‘Napoleon complex’, named after the notoriously short and former French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, is said to constitute a form of inferiority complex whereby short people, men in particular, are believed to adopt aggressive behaviour in order to compensate for their lack of height (Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008; Hall, 2006). As Stephen Hall (2006) puts it, “The idea of the Napoleon complex has come to encompass the broader notion of a small male overcompensating for his stature with wildly aggressive and reckless ambitions” (p. 182). By linking this theory to the likes of Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Joseph Goebbels, i.e., all historically malicious and relatively short men, this is also seen as a strategic attempt to blend the idea of a Napoleon complex with reality: it tries to authenticate the vilified and stereotyped image of the short man (Kirby, 2007). While it is true that these historical figures, e.g., Napoleon or Hitler, could possibly serve as bona fide examples of such an inferiority complex today, it is not logical to use these few infamous examples as a generalization for all short males. It is fallacious to accept the idea that most, or all, short males develop ‘Napoleon complexes’.

Despite its apparent fallaciousness, Fichman & Goldberg's (2008) documentary, *S & M: Short and male*, did reveal a continuation of this negative, i.e., aggressive, stereotype. In the film, ordinary people expressed the following opinions about short men:

Female respondent A: "I feel like they [short men] have to be more macho, more manly. They have to overcompensate because they're short".

Female respondent B: "[Short men] feel as though they're inferior to taller men".

Male respondent A: "Yes [short men are more aggressive]. They want to prove they're big".

Such responses are thus seen as an exacerbation of heightist ideology through illogical reasoning. By defending the notion of a Napoleon complex as a factual theory without insufficient cause, these respondents demonstrated an uncritical acceptance of hegemonic thought. As Hackett and colleagues (1996) state: "when hegemony is more or less successful, ordinary people themselves accept hegemonic ideology: it becomes enmeshed with the 'common sense' through which people make their lives and their worlds intelligible" (as cited in Taras, 2001, p. 44). From this perspective, though ordinary people are occasionally active enough to resist hegemonic ideology, we can probably attribute the firm grip of heightist ideology on society's beliefs, as evident in Fichman & Goldberg's (2008) documentary, to its pervasiveness in everyday society and its general acceptance by everyday people. Heightist stereotypes are often so deeply embedded in culture that it is usually difficult, though not impossible, for ordinary people to think otherwise. The unfounded belief that short men have Napoleonic tendencies is a good example of how people may tend to mistakenly confuse and associate heightist ideology with 'common sense' (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008).

In summation, it is appropriate to conclude by saying that: "[heightism] is a form of prejudice that, like racism and sexism, is well established in American society" ("Heightism",



1971, para. 1). Unlike these other socially and culturally indoctrinated forms of oppression and discrimination, however, heightism is generally not regarded in a comparable sense. Very little research exists on the topic of height discrimination while the term “heightism” is still relatively unknown and rarely used in society. When accusations of height discrimination are made, such claims also tend to be cast aside as silly, nonsensical, or unfortunate yet unchallengeable: they are rarely taken seriously by policymakers and the general public, and thus the legitimacy of a height prejudice is frequently attacked (Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008; Hall, 2006). As John Kenneth Galbraith (1977) states: “The bias towards tallness and against shortness is one of society’s most blatant and forgiven prejudices” (as cited in Keyes, 1980, p. 25).

### **On myth: The mythology of tallness**

Related to the concept of ‘ideology’ is the equally abstract concept of ‘myth’. As it is discussed by Barthes (2009 [1957]), myths are understood as a collection of invented stories, ideas, or concepts that are frequently cited as a means to establish, make sense of, and sometimes justify naturalized cultural beliefs (p. 154). They are, in essence, “socially constructed realities” whose goal is mainly to perpetuate dominant opinions and norms (Butera, 2008, p. 11). Though according to Liszka (1985), myths can also serve subordinate interests, i.e., while most myths work to defend dominant cultural hierarchies others aim to challenge the traditional social order (p. 231). Liszka (1989) refers to this dual function of myth and ideology as “strain theory”, i.e., a theory that does not restrict the notions of myth and ideology to the strong (p. 165). Strain theory recognizes the varied uses of myths and is supportive of an equilibrium model of ideology (Geertz, 1973; Liszka, 1985, 1989). It considers myth to be usable by both the socially weak and the socially strong.

In spite of Liskza's (1985) assertion that myth "is—if need be—readily usable as a transvaluative process" (p. 231), i.e., myths can be used by the socially weak to challenge or invert the dominant social order, Butera (2008) defines "myth" almost exclusively in terms of reinforcing the ruling order. Her position is thus rooted in the "interest theory" of ideology and myth, i.e., an approach that is in direct conflict with strain theory as it restricts the notions of ideology and myth to the dominant class (Geertz, 1973; Liskza, 1985, 1989). In her opinion, myths are then considered to function as a sort of legitimization of ruling interests only, and not subordinate interests. As support for this approach, Butera (2008) identifies one such myth as the "mythology of tallness" (p. 11).

According to Butera (2008), the "mythology of tallness" is basically the perpetuation and acceptance of everyday cultural norms to praise tallness and to devalue shortness. The myth of tallness asserts that "tall equals good and short equals bad" (Butera, 2008, p. 13). In accordance with this myth, Butera (2008) has found that the tall body traditionally functions as a signifier of positively-valued traits, e.g., success and leadership, whereas the short body tends to function as a signifier of negatively-valued traits, e.g., weakness and powerlessness (pp. 11-13).

But in exploring this myth of tallness, Butera (2008) is also wise to point out that being tall does not always equate to goodness. Tall women are usually considered to be an exception to this myth (p. 28).<sup>9</sup> Since the mythology of tallness is largely borne out of and legitimated by patriarchal interests, i.e., the construction and sustenance of this myth is principally due to the fact that men have historically been taller than women, the tall female body then threatens these

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<sup>9</sup> Butera (2008) defines a "tall woman" as any woman who is about 5'9" or taller (p. 28). My own references to "tall women" shall conform to this same definition and measurements.

interests by virtue of its height. The tall woman is frequently ostracized for this perceived threat.

Butera (2008) writes:

While the tall woman does have some power and privilege by virtue of the myth of tallness, because of the threat she poses to patriarchy, she is recuperated into a non-threatening feminine embodiment. This is accomplished both literally—in the treatment of the tall girl with estrogen to make her a shorter adult—and representationally through the objectified, vilified and feminized image of the tall woman and the giantess in popular culture texts (p. 4).

This statement reaffirms how recuperative strategies are often used to suppress the tall woman's threat to the hegemonic social order. To ensure that patriarchy remains intact, the tall female is consistently denied the same power and privilege afforded to the tall male: she is stigmatized on a regular basis (Butera, 2008, p. 30).

Following up on the claim that tall women are frequently stigmatized for their difference, Butera (2008) cites numerous examples from popular culture to illustrate how the tall female body is traditionally represented as grotesque, freakish and carnivalesque (pp. 36-42). Applying Bakhtin's (1984 [1965]) concept of "carnival" to the tall female body, Butera (2008) argues that tall women are seen as "carnivalesque" in the sense that the visibility of their bodies suggests an "inversion of hierarchical binary oppositions" (p. 31). The tall woman threatens to flip the gendered hierarchy of male dominance by virtue of her height, for which she is again vilified as freakish and grotesque. Butera (2008) writes: "The monstrous tall woman is both a manifestation of patriarchal fear as well as a technique to symbolically decrease her menace to the system of male domination" (p. 45). By representing the tall female body as both freakish and grotesque, the dominant ideology is able to resist the tall woman's threat to male superiority and thus re-establish consent to the dominant social order.

In addition to representing tall women as monstrous and freakish, other recuperative strategies used to minimize the threat of tall women to patriarchy include “hyper-feminization”, i.e., a technique which downplays a woman’s power by exaggerating her femininity, or to deny the tall woman any representation at all (Butera, 2008). In terms of this denial of representation, Butera (2008) argues that “the tall woman (at least in a way that she can be recognized as such) is denied adequate representation, and therefore her threatening body appears simply not to exist” (p. 49). By denying the tall woman adequate representation in popular culture, e.g., in popular film, the dominant media often function to conceal the threat of the tall female body to systemic patriarchy entirely. The tall woman is practically wiped out completely (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Keyes, 1980), i.e., she is “symbolically erased” (Butera, 2008, p. 48).

On the other hand, just as Butera (2008) argues that the tall woman is regularly oppressed due to her towering physical stature; it is also mentionable how she declares that the short man<sup>10</sup> is equally oppressed for his dwarfed height. She writes:

Because the short man intrinsically does not match the patriarchal masculine body, he is read as feminine. This male femininity—as well as the short man’s carnivalesque potential—causes patriarchal anxiety and fear. Thus, in representation, the short man is vilified, feminized, and denigrated, reflecting his cultural status and simultaneously punishing him for his transgression (p. 4).

This statement confirms that the short male body, like the tall female body, is seen as a threat to the patriarchal interests underlying the myth of tallness. The short male body is then consistently “tamed” for its location outside the bounds of normative masculinity (p. 45).

Actually, despite the fact that all short people, i.e., males and females, are believed to be habitually oppressed in relation to the mythology of tallness, Butera (2008) argues that the short

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<sup>10</sup> For the sake of efficiency, Butera (2008) defines the “short man” as any man who is 5’5” or shorter. Considering that the average American man is approximately 5’9” tall, I would also tend to quantify those men 5’6” to 5’8” as being short. Professional male athletes, however, are generally not held to this same standard (e.g. depending on the sport, an athlete may exceed 5’9” and yet will still be labelled as “short”).

male faces a uniquely difficult situation. Since the myth of tallness intersects with patriarchy, e.g., males are expected to be taller than females, the short male is considered to embody the biggest challenge, or contradiction, to dominant male interests located within ideologies of systemic heightism and patriarchy (p. 51). As he is shown to mark the most obvious challenge to the patriarchal interests located in the myth of tallness, the short male tends to be represented much more harshly than the short female. He is often victimized by the very patriarchal system that is designed to privilege him (Butera, 2008, p. 73).

In terms of these harsh representations, Butera (2008) insists that the short male body is continually “discredited” and denied adequate representation in popular culture texts (p. 50). When the short male body is represented in popular culture, it is also usually portrayed as infantile, carnivalesque, non-normative, and feminine. Butera (2008) writes: “Like a woman, the short male (boy or man) is perceived as childish, closer to nature, and most importantly, he signifies a lack of the phallus” (p. 52). By consistently representing the short male as childish, feminine and non-normative, the perceived aim is to convince ordinary people into accepting the false ‘common sense’ logic behind these representations. These representations attempt to neutralize the short man’s threat to masculine hegemony and reinforce the dominant social order.

### ***Mythologies and sport***

In connection to Butera’s (2008) use of ‘myth’ to popular culture, one might also note its specific application to the institution of sport. For this purpose, Sabo & Jansen (1998) and Gee (2009) have each used the concept of ‘myth’ to explore how “sport can be imagined as an arena for sustaining hegemonic masculinity, resisting shifting gender relations, and a pivotal setting through which to explore any related crisis of masculinity” (Gee, 2009, p. 581). Similar to how

Butera (2008) views “tall women” and “short men” as threats to patriarchy by virtue of their carnivalesque bodies, authors such as Gee (2009) and Sabo & Jansen (1998) contend that the institution of sport, i.e., the ideals of a hegemonic masculinity celebrated through sport, also copes with a variety of resistances and threats on a regular basis. Among these threats are female and homosexual male athletes.

According to Gee (2009), since most sports-related myths aim to secure “sport and its status as a [macho] male preserve” (p. 579), it is apparent how these athletes, i.e. female and gay male athletes, could be interpreted as diverging from sport’s celebrated hegemonic norms. The simple visibility of female and/or gay male athletes in professional sport is perhaps enough to cause much patriarchal anxiety and fear. These Othered athletes are considered to threaten the masculinity and power of men (Gee, 2009; Messner et al., 1993; Sabo & Jansen, 1998).

Based on these observations, it then appears that most myths in sport, like ideology, are designed to discredit those people who fall outside the bounds of normativity. They also tend to offer support for those who epitomize what is considered to be “normal” (Sabo & Jansen, 1998). As female and gay male athletes are then considered to present a critical challenge to sport’s endangered masculinity, it makes sense that the habitual repetition of hyper-masculine myths in sport, e.g., a warrior myth, would attempt to discredit these Othered athletes for their threats to patriarchy. Female athletes thus tend to be trivialized and sexualized while homosexual male athletes are frequently feminized, stigmatized and denied adequate representation (Gee, 2009; Messner et al., 1993; Sabo & Jansen, 1998).

Finally, as this concept of ‘myth’ has been advanced to explain how female athletes and homosexual male athletes are consistently denied some power in the domain of sport (Gee, 2009;

Messner et al., 1993; Sabo & Jansen, 1998) or how ‘short men’ and ‘tall women’ lose power in the realm of popular culture (Butera, 2008), I think it is worthwhile to explore how undersized male athletes are represented in relation to the dominant sports myths. Since undersized male athletes are unlikely to be associated with the usual hyper-masculine representations of male athletes (i.e., men as aggressive, muscular, and warrior-like), I am interested to explore where smaller male hockey and soccer players are situated in terms of the myths and ideologies that are articulated and defended throughout major professional sports. The following sections are intended to provide a more thorough analysis of this aim.

“There is one thing even more vital to science than intelligent methods; and that is, the sincere desire to find out the truth, whatever it may be”  
 — (Charles Sanders Peirce, CP 5.84)<sup>11</sup>

## **Methodology**

The current study will employ a semiotic analysis research design to analyze televised broadcast commentary and visuals communicated throughout the 2010 men’s Olympic ice hockey tournament and the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup. These specific texts were chosen as Olympic hockey and the FIFA World Cup represent the pinnacle of international men’s hockey and soccer respectively (Katz, 1980; Real, 1989; Whitson, 1998). The medium of television was selected for its capacity to broadcast multiple channels of communication, e.g., picture and sound, and for its mass appeal. These tournaments were expected to draw millions upon millions of television viewers in North America and worldwide.

Though, since analyzing each of these tournaments in their entirety—a total of thirty hockey matches and sixty-four soccer matches—would have been excessive, I will restrict my analysis of the 2010 men’s Olympic hockey tournament and the 2010 FIFA World Cup to a limited number of broadcasts and networks. To ensure that the project is feasible, I will confine my study to the coverage of semi-final, final, and third-place matches for each sport (n=8).<sup>12</sup> The rationale being that these games would be the most immediately relevant to the tournament and would most likely generate the most interest among viewers. The decision also mirrors the design of Denham, Billings, & Halone (2002), who chose to restrict their content analysis of the

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<sup>11</sup> The abbreviation “CP” refers to the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* published from 1931 to 1958. The numbers “5.84” indicate that this specific entry was taken from the eighty-seventh paragraph in the fifth volume of Peirce’s *Collected Papers*.

<sup>12</sup> To make this project manageable, I will restrict my analysis of chosen Olympic hockey games (n=4) to televised CTV English-language broadcasts. All selected World Cup matches (n=4) will be restricted to CBC’s English-language television coverage. These networks, i.e., CTV and CBC, were the official English-language broadcasters of the 2010 Winter Olympics and the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup respectively.



2000 NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments to semi-final, final and third-place games exclusively.

In continuing to emulate past studies (e.g. Denham et al., 2002; Eastman & Billings, 2001), when analyzing the selected Olympic hockey and FIFA World Cup matches for evidence of heightist discourses, I will only look at games from their beginnings to their conclusions. I will exclude all pre-game, intermission/half-time, and post-game commentaries. Commercials will also be ignored as they will not be taken into consideration. Accounting for the duration of periods/halves, stoppages in play, injury time, possible extra time, and so forth, this guarantees that the level of analysis for each soccer game will involve a total of 90+ minutes (i.e. two, forty-five minute halves) of coverage while each hockey match will consist of a total of 60+ minutes (i.e. three, twenty minute periods) of recording.

### **Semiotics: Comparing dyadic and triadic models**

In deciding to implement a semiotic research design to televised coverage of the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup and the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament, a major step was to determine which semiotic model would be the best suited for this type of study. More importantly, it was to determine which semiotic model is believed to offer the most thorough and systematic interpretation of the "study of signs", i.e., semiotics. Since Saussure's "semiology" and Peirce's "semiotic" are frequently cited as the two accepted—yet different—models, I shall offer a brief description of both and indicate why I will be applying Peirce's triadic model to the specific texts under investigation.

As Liszka (1993) explains it, the differences between the Saussurean and Peircean traditions of semiotics can be summarized in the following three ways: "(1) in terms of the sort

of discipline semiotic or semiology is; (2) in terms of the nature of signs or semiosis as either triadic or dyadic; and (3) in terms of the character of communication and interpretation” (p. 141). Concerning the first difference, we can infer that whereas Saussure is reported to have thought of ‘semiology’ mostly in relation to social psychology, Peirce defined ‘semiotic’ primarily as logic (Liszka, 1993, p. 142). According to this interpretation, Saussure’s definition of semiology was much more restrictive than Peirce’s more abstract and general account of semiotics. Whereas Saussure tended to envision semiology as more of an intra-disciplinary science, Peirce imagined semiotic as containing an interdisciplinary scope. Peirce believed that semiotics could be applied to a range of academic disciplines and subjects (Liszka, 1993, p. 143).

Apart from the competing intra-disciplinary and interdisciplinary construal of semiotics, a second contention between Peircean and Saussurean traditions is the difference between the triadic and dyadic views of the sign. Whereas for Peirce, “a sign is a sign by virtue of establishing a triadic relation between itself, its referent, and what Peirce called its interpretant” (Liszka, 1993, p. 147); Saussure believed that a sign consisted of only a dyadic relationship between signifier and signified (Chandler, 2002; Fiske, 1990; Liszka, 1993).

Saussure, who was a linguist, tended to envision signs mainly as words.<sup>13</sup> He believed that every sign was comprised of a signifier, i.e., a sign’s acoustic or graphic form, and a signified, i.e., a sign’s generated concept. The correlation between these two components was referred to as “signification” (Chandler, 2002; Fiske, 1990). Saussure also maintained that signs are arbitrary, i.e., words and their meanings are generally randomly assigned, and suggested that signs could only be formally understood in relation to other signs of the same system—a system of purely oppositional values (Chandler, 2002). Put differently:

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<sup>13</sup> Though, he also mentions religious rites, nautical signals, and so forth (Saussure, 1959 [1916], p.73).

Saussure argued that signs only make sense as part of a formal, generalized and abstract system. His conception of meaning was purely *structural* and *relational* rather than referential: primacy is given to relationships rather than to things (Chandler, 2002, p. 22; emphasis in original).

On the other hand, Peirce's interpretation of meaning is generally considered both relational and referential (Liszka, 1993, p. 147). His triadic model "coordinates, on the one hand, the sign's ability to refer to an object (that is, its extension) with the sign's intension (that is, as constituted by its relation to other signs which form a system with it)" (Liszka, 1993, p. 147).

Through the logician's identification of a sign's "referent" or "object"—or more specifically its "dynamical object", i.e., the Object as it really is outside of the Sign (Nöth, 1990; Ransdell, 1986), Peirce was keenly aware of a sign's potential referential ability. His triadic model (i.e. the tri-relation between object, representamen,<sup>14</sup> and interpretant) also demands that each of these three elements of the triad operate synchronically for sign action to work and is therefore seen as relational in this sense (Liszka, 1993, p. 147).

Back to Liszka's (1993) discussion of the three major differences between the Saussurean and Peircean traditions of semiotics, the third difference is evident in terms of their respective theories of communication and interpretation. Whereas Saussure's theory of communication is claimed to be a "theory of the code" (Liszka, 1993, p. 150); Peirce's theory of semiotics has been defined as more of an interpretive model (Deledalle, 1990; Liszka, 1993). Unlike Saussure's code model which tends to yield a very static view of communication; Peirce's interpretive model implies an ever-changing, evolving, and progressive nature of signs and meaning: it is more dynamic than Saussure's theory of communication (Deledalle, 1990; Liszka, 1993).

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<sup>14</sup> A "representamen" is the technical name given for Peirce's expressive component in the sign triad. It is basically that medium which represents the denoted Object, i.e., its form or expression (Greenlee, 1973; Ransdell, 1986).

In summary, Peirce's semiotic theory seems to provide a more satisfactory understanding of the functioning of signs than Saussure's semiology on account of the temporal dimension as well as the referential component of the semiotic object. Saussure limits the study of signs by consigning it to a branch of psychology whilst Peirce's semiotic is far more inclusionary. Peirce writes: "the need of a systematic doctrine of logic will best appear by considering its relation to the different sciences, which are the different departments of the endeavor to attain the truth" (EP2: 115). Lastly, Saussure's semiology is again limited by its static and code-like model, while Peirce's interpretive model allows us to consider in great detail the process whereby signs generate further signs of reality as part of the mediation mechanism.

### **On icons, indices, and symbols**

Peirce's various classifications of signs constitute a very useful methodological tool. As this study is an analysis of televised sport, and television being the complex medium that it is, i.e., television can involve the simultaneous transmission of sound, image, speech and graphics, Peirce's second trichotomy—his "icon-index-symbol" trichotomy—will prove to be an invaluable analytical instrument when evaluating coverage of the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup and the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament.

Regarding the 'icon-index-symbol' trichotomy, Peirce divided signs according to the relation of the representamen—also called the 'sign'—to their dynamical objects. He argued that the sign-object relation could be either: iconic (i.e. qualitative), indexical (i.e. factual), or symbolic (i.e. general).<sup>15</sup> An iconic sign is defined as representing its object mainly by its

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<sup>15</sup> Be aware that these different modes (i.e. icons, indices, and symbols) are not mutually exclusive. A given sign in fact functions according to the three modes. It is our analytical interest that privileges one or the other, e.g., a traffic sign can be iconic in that it bears a possible resemblance on account of its intrinsic, qualitative properties; indexical,

similarity, such as a map or diagram (Chandler, 2002; Fiske, 1990; Greenlee, 1973). An index is said to represent its object through a direct connection or causal relationship, e.g., a weathercock (Chandler, 2002; Greenlee, 1973). And finally, a symbol represents its object by virtue of some established habit or rule, e.g., words of a language or a flag (Chandler, 2002; Greenlee, 1973).

In applying Peirce's second trichotomy to the texts at hand, i.e., CBC coverage of the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup and CTV coverage of the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament, I will begin by searching these texts for evidence of heightist discourses and portrayals.<sup>16</sup> I intend to focus primarily on the various linguistic descriptors used by individual commentators to differentiate among small and tall soccer/hockey players.<sup>17</sup> I will be looking for evaluative language that could be seen as supportive, or critical, of commonsense heightism.

After finding examples of heightist language communicated during the World Cup and Olympic hockey broadcasts, including both explicit and implicit speech, I will attempt to classify these articulations into categories: iconic signs, symbolic signs, and indexical signs. It is expected that most explicit references to an athlete's physical stature, e.g., "he's a tall man", will tend to qualify as mostly 'symbolic' and 'indexical' whereas implicit discourses of height, e.g., metaphors, will tend to fall under the categories of 'iconic' and 'indexical' signs. In either case, by cataloguing these discourses as either symbolic, iconic, and/or indexical it is anticipated that these unique classifications will make it easier to assess the proper representational effects derived from such commentaries (i.e. signs) and the objects they stand in for.

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in that it might tell us something about the road ahead; and symbolic, in that we have to know the rules of traffic in order to fully comprehend the sign's meaning (Fiske, 1990, p. 48).

<sup>16</sup> By "texts", I am referring to the entire sample of mediated World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey games used for this study. The notion of "discourse" will generally refer to those material elements considered from an analytical perspective.

<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this project, I tend to operationalize "small" as those soccer and hockey players who are below six feet tall. Though, I will generally leave distinctions between 'tall' and 'small' to the commentator's discretion.

## On representation

In Sut Jhally's (1997) film, *Stuart Hall: Representation and the media*, Hall distinguishes among two views of representation: an "old view" and a "new view". According to Hall (1997), this old view sees representation as the literal "re-presentation" of some object: it upholds the idea that every object carries with it a true fixed meaning, and that representations are always vulnerable to distortion—or "gaps of representation" (Jhally, 1997, p. 6).<sup>18</sup> Defined in this way, it is thought that people must continually decipher whether the depiction, or representation, of something, e.g., an event, is an accurate or distorted reflection of its one true meaning (Jhally, 1997, p. 6).

In contrast to this old view, Hall's (1997) new view of representation insists that objects, e.g., events in the world, do not contain one true fixed meaning; rather, they are open to a range of possible meanings and interpretations. Hall also states very clearly that no matter how many meanings are attached to an object; the meanings of said object are always dependent upon its representation, i.e., the meaning of an object does not exist outside of representation or before representation (Jhally, 1997, p. 7). As Hall (1997) describes it, "representation doesn't occur after the event; representation is constitutive of the event. It enters into the constitution of the object we are talking about. It is part of the object itself; it is constitutive of it" (as cited in Jhally, 1997, p. 7). Unlike the old view of representation, which sees an event and its representation as separate entities, this new constitutive view supposes that events and their representations are indivisible: they become one together.

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<sup>18</sup> This page number corresponds to the Media Education Foundation (MEF) transcript of Jhally's (1997) film, *Stuart Hall: Representation & the media*. Additional references to Jhally's (1997) work will also correspond to this same MEF transcript, available at [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org).

Interestingly enough, while Hall's account of these two views of representation (the old view and the new view) implies that they are irreconcilable as theories, i.e., they are seen as adversarial to one another and thus resistant to overlap, it has been suggested that C.S. Peirce's theory of representation unites these 'extrinsic' and 'constitutive' conceptions of representation (Andacht & Michel, 2005; Litzka, 1998). Litzka (1998) writes:

I believe, in part, Peirce's aim is to give us a metaphysical picture which makes sense of two contradictory claims: that there is a reality that exists independently of our representations of it—that is, the principal thesis of realism—and that the real is that which is dependent upon our representations of it—the classical thesis of idealism (para. 1).

This statement asserts that Peirce construed reality, i.e., some true meaning of an object, as both independent of representation and yet dependent on representation. This seemingly antagonistic interpretation of Peirce's semiotic—which Litzka (1998) calls Peirce's "discursive realism"—upholds the idea that reality exists external to representation though it is incomplete: reality is only considered complete once an object is represented (Litzka, 1998, para. 2). This notion of 'discursive realism' then postulates that "reality" exists independently of representation in the sense that reality exists autonomously outside of the human condition, yet dependently, in that, we can only uncover this objective reality through logical inquiry and reasoning, i.e., scientific discourse which involves signs (Andacht & Michel, 2005; Litzka, 1998).

In relating Peirce's 'discursive realism' back to Hall's (1997) overview of old and new notions of representation, we might say that Peirce's theory of representation functions as a sort of hybridization of extrinsic and constitutive perspectives. Peirce's theory of representation appears to be 'extrinsic' in the sense that he defines a sign, or representamen, as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity... The sign stands for something, its object" (CP 2.228 as cited in Buchler, 1955, p. 99). Thus, through his articulation

that a sign “stands for” its object, he seems to be promoting a central tenet of Hall’s old view of representation: the premise that something can exist external to the process of representation. Peirce’s description of a “final interpretant”, defined as, “that which *would* finally be decided to be the true interpretation if consideration of the matter were carried so far that an ultimate opinion were reached” (CP 8.184 as cited in Nöth, 1990, p. 44), could also be seen as another way that Peirce’s theory of representation is partially related to Hall’s (1997) account of an extrinsic view. It upholds the idea that objects can possess a finally settled, fixed meaning in the form of a Final Interpretant, one which only comes about in the long run. Albeit, Peirce’s theory of representation can never be completely separate from sign activity, in that, the conception of an ultimate opinion, or objective reality, presupposes the notion a community of inquiry (Liszka, 1998, para. 2). This community must first avail itself of signs and of representations, before any ultimate opinion can be knowable.

In spite of its relationship to the extrinsic view of representation, Peirce’s ‘semiotic’ contains elements of a constitutive view as well. Just as Hall (1997) argues that events, meanings and representations are all related, i.e., Hall supposes that the meanings people make of events will depend on how these events are represented in the media, Peirce also stresses the interdependency of these three subjects through his concept of “semiosis”, i.e., the tri-relative influence of object, sign and interpretant (Ransdell, 1986; Story, 2009). Similar to Hall’s (1997) account of representation, Peirce’s framework carries with it the same notion that there is a non-reducible relationship between an event (i.e. the “object”), its representation (i.e. the “sign”), and the meaning we make of it (i.e. the “interpretant”)—all parts are synchronic. His descriptions of



“immediate” and “dynamical” interpretants<sup>19</sup> are also seen as promotional of a constitutive view of representation in the sense that they acknowledge the plausibility of multiple interpretations: an object can mean different things to different people depending on experience, time and place (Nöth, 1990; Ransdell, 1986).

Accepting these various conceptualizations of ‘representation’ (e.g. an extrinsic view, a constitutive view, and Peirce’s discursive realism), I will attempt to navigate my way through these diverse understandings of representation and arrive at an appropriate theoretical framework to explore World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey texts. Accordingly, I consider Peirce’s theory of representation, i.e., Peirce’s semiotic, to be a suitable method to apply to this project. His scientific approach to the study of signs should exhibit promising insight into the complex and subtle ways that heightist ideology manifests itself in the worlds of soccer and hockey—and the entire sports universe more broadly. By using Peirce’s semiotic as a tool to analyze evaluative discourses of ‘tall’ and ‘small’ athletes, this should generate a better understanding of the ways in which power and bodies become mobilized through the institution of sports, i.e., how taller male bodies tend to be institutionally and discursively imbued with power whereas smaller male bodies tend to be oppressed (Butera, 2008, p. iii).

## **Application**

In order to illustrate larger trends in representation during men’s Olympic hockey and World Cup soccer broadcasts I will employ Laura Butera’s (2008) “mythology of tallness” onto the evaluations of small and tall athletes. In particular, I will be searching for representational evidence of what Butera (2008) describes as hegemonic or recuperative strategies used in

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<sup>19</sup> An “immediate interpretant” refers to the range of possible meanings of a given sign at a given time; a “dynamical interpretant” refers to a sign’s actual meaning effect at some point in time and place (Nöth, 1990; Ransdell, 1986).

popular culture to alleviate the short man's threat to patriarchy. With the assistance of Butera's analysis of heightism and her tropes of heightist representation in popular film,<sup>20</sup> I aim to explore how smaller male hockey and soccer players are depicted through images and evaluative discourse. This project will investigate how undersized male athletes are stigmatized and thus differentiated from the normative tall players through the recuperative strategies, i.e., tropes of representation, established to maintain patriarchy in popular culture. Butera (2008) defines these heightist strategies in the following way:

1. Feminization: Short men tend to signify passivity, powerlessness, and a lack of the phallus, because of their stereotypically 'un-masculine' bodies.
2. Infantilization: Short men are consistently portrayed as childish and closer to nature.
3. Villainization: The role of villain is one commonly assigned to short men.
4. Napoleonization: Short men are often seen as having Napoleonic tendencies; they are thought to compensate for their height by using aggressive behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

For purposes of analysis, the third and fourth strategies of heightist representation will not be included in this research as they are not likely to figure prominently in World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey discourses. I will also be looking for equally expressive tendencies to represent taller soccer and hockey players in aggrandizing and hyper-masculine ways: they too can be revealing of society's heightist premise.

In addition to Butera's (2008) four recuperative and representational strategies used to minimize the threat of the short man to systemic heightism and patriarchy (see above), a fifth recuperative strategy will also be critical to this thesis: "symbolic erasure" (Butera, 2008, p. 48). As Butera (2008) describes it, 'symbolic erasure' is marked by the near-invisibility of Othered bodies, e.g., the short male body, in popular culture texts (p. 48). This type of strategy attempts to control the threats of Othered bodies by denying them adequate representation. Their bodies

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<sup>20</sup> Butera (2008) looks at films such as *Shrek* (2001) and *Twins* (1988).

<sup>21</sup> Butera (2008) does not make explicit use of the terms "infantilization" and "Napoleonization" in her text. These are my own contributions to, and understanding of, her work.

are simply portrayed as non-existent. From this perspective, I believe that the remarkable under-representation of smaller male bodies in most professional sports (Albergotti, 2009; Keyes, 1980) constitutes a highly visible form of symbolic erasure. Because smaller male athletes tend to be represented as “physical misfits” (Albergotti, 2009), their presence is then rarely detectable in the top sports leagues. In addition to exploring how smaller soccer and hockey players were “represented” throughout televised coverage of World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey, I believe that it is therefore just as meaningful and appropriate to investigate how these athletes were often “under-represented” as well. As Stuart Hall’s (1997) evaluation of Cultural Studies declares: “absence means something and signifies just as much as presence” (as cited in Jhally, 1997, p. 15).

“It’s not the size of the dog in the fight, it’s the size of the fight in the dog”  
 — (Mark Twain, as cited in Keyes, 1980, p. 258)

## **Results and analysis**

In Ralph Keyes’ (1980) book, *The height of your life*, Keyes asserts that most sports legitimize height discrimination by more often than not favouring taller bodies at the expense of shorter ones. He writes:

The beauty of sports is the accuracy with which they reflect their host culture. As five minutes in any locker room will confirm, sports are just society without manners. They let us know where we stand without equivocation. One drawback about American sports in particular is that they’re set up in such a way that smaller bodies are left standing outside the locker room (p. 257).

Rosters from the 2010 men’s Olympic ice hockey tournament were supportive of this statement. Of the final four hockey teams competing in the 2010 men’s Olympic tournament (i.e. Canada, Finland, Slovakia, and the United States), only eighteen of the ninety-two selected players, or roughly twenty per cent, were officially listed as under six feet tall (or under 182 centimetres).<sup>22</sup> None of these players were listed to measure below five foot ten inches tall.

According to average measurements, this means that none of the athletes from the final four men’s Olympic hockey teams fell below what is considered to be the average male height in most North American and European societies. The average American man is five foot nine (Butera, 2008; Keyes, 1980). This begs the following question: does the fact that each of these hockey players exceeded, or equalled, the average male height of most North American and European societies serve as an indication of the superior athletic skills specific to taller men? Or, if we assume that some smaller athletes had been overlooked because of their size, e.g., Martin St. Louis, is it more likely attributed to a sort of “symbolic erasure” (Butera, 2008) of undersized male bodies? This latter option is considered to be a more appropriate explanation.

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<sup>22</sup> Please refer to Appendix 1 for a complete list of these athletes (Olympic hockey) and their listed heights.

Granted if it can be said that there was simply “no room in the locker room” for many undersized athletes during the 2010 men’s Olympic hockey finals, the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup was much more inviting. Of the final four soccer teams left standing in the 2010 World Cup (i.e. Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Uruguay), thirty-nine of the ninety-two selected players, or about forty-two per cent, were officially listed as under six feet tall (or below 182 centimetres).<sup>23</sup> The smallest player was Uruguay’s Sebastián Fernández who measured 1.67 metres tall, which is equivalent to about five foot six.

But even though men’s World Cup soccer players were smaller on average than men’s Olympic hockey players in 2010—a fact that is not necessarily surprising, given that, “In theory, soccer is the most size-neutral of major sports...As played in most parts in the world, smaller bodies even have something of an advantage owing to their greater dexterity and speed” (Keyes, 1980, p. 254)—physical stature remained an issue during soccer coverage. While the initial expectation was that size should matter less—if at all—in soccer, compared to hockey, results of this study revealed that some sports media value ‘physical stature’ among soccer players just as much, if not more, than it is valued among hockey players.

While I found that hockey commentators, for example, frequently praised ‘size’ during televised men’s Olympic hockey coverage (e.g. expressions like, “He’s a big body at six foot four, 220 pounds. He’s got speed and an excellent shot”), no explicit comments were found to be critical of an athlete’s *lack* of size. I did not come across any comments that were directly critical of smaller hockey players. During the 2010 World Cup, soccer commentators were also shown to consistently mark tall stature (e.g., “Robben went up for it...he’s a tall man”; “It’s hit towards Villa but Mertesacker, the big fellow, in the way”), though they tended to mark short stature as

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<sup>23</sup> Please refer to Appendix 2 for a complete list of athletes (World Cup) and their listed heights.

well (e.g., “He’s only five foot five”; “And that one lifted miles over the top by this little fellow here: Egidio Arévalo of Peñarol”). This additional tendency to mark short stature during World Cup broadcasts was not evident throughout Olympic hockey coverage. These explicit references to short stature employed during World Cup soccer coverage also tended to be groundless in their articulation and were therefore liable to produce a pejorative meaning effect, i.e., an interpretant, concerning short male bodies. An example of this occurred in the gold medal match between the Netherlands and Spain, when Cesc Fàbregas (1.75 m) was able to run through four Dutch defenders only to have such an impressive feat described as: a “super little run by a super little player”. No actual recorded or observed type of study, i.e., effects-based research, was used to affirm the perceived uncomplimentary nature of marked references to short stature. The notion of a pejorative “meaning effect” is only being used in the context of a proposed possible interpretation based primarily on the plausible meaning of such terms even before they are actually understood by a concrete interpreter, in this case, the public to whom such remarks were addressed.

Compounding the fact that, during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, explicit references to short stature tended to be groundless in their articulation, i.e., they were often stated out of context, Keyes (1980) also notes the habitually offensive nature of such comments. He writes: “smaller [sports] stars must pay a tax beyond the physical toll. This tax is their first name. In the mouths of sportscasters, especially, the given name of a smaller athlete invariably becomes his middle name as ‘Little’ takes over the first spot” (p. 258). This apparently biased naming pattern was used on multiple occasions throughout the World Cup. In the tournament’s final match between the Netherlands and Spain, English commentator John Helm once referred to Spanish soccer players, Pedro (1.69 m) and Xavi (1.70 m), as “Little Pedro” and “Little Xavi” respectively. By

introducing these players in this manner, Helm—knowingly or not—charged these smaller athletes with that all too familiar tax: their first name (Keyes, 1980).

Further to the point, while the insertion of the word “little”, or any comparable word, before a smaller athlete’s name could be seen as an innocent gesture and perhaps even a sign of endearment to that player, it is also conceivable how most undersized athletes would tend to see it differently—preferring instead to detach themselves from size-related descriptors at all costs.

Keyes (1980) states:

Don’t think such linguistic indignity doesn’t bother the smaller athlete. Joe Morgan said he originally signed with the Houston Astros because their scout was the only one to call him a ‘good player,’ not a ‘good little player.’ Portland Trailblazer guard Dave Twardzik said his goal as a professional basketball player is to erase the ‘little’ always stuck in front of his name (p. 258).

This quote indicates how undersized athletes can take offence to heightist language. It tells us that smaller athletes will generally object to being called “little” as this use of language tends to portray them as delicate and childlike. By reinforcing how smaller athletes continue to be described in this way, in spite of their openly stated resistances to this pattern of naming, this quote also demonstrates a critical lack of awareness or negligence to the sensitivities of smaller athletes.

Or better yet, since it is probably not fair to accuse individual commentators entirely for the perpetuation of a perceived height bias in sport, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that any type of linguistic indignity following smaller athletes may actually be a fine example of heightist ideology in action. Through the importance of hegemonic myths in sport, this can make media people oblivious to the personal harm or the indignity inflicted upon those who receive their heavy ideological blow, i.e., undersized male athletes. According to this perspective, this is not to say that sports commentators are always necessarily prejudicial or cruel towards smaller male

athletes, but rather they are simply normal denizens of the sporting world and its mythology or hegemonic masculinity. Sports commentators tend to be influenced by heightist ideology and come to accept it as ‘common sense’. But at the very least, this type of heightist commentary, e.g., a biased naming pattern, does reveal some disregard for the notion of a height bias: it tends to downplay the legitimacy of heightism as a prejudice.

Here, in addition to the aforementioned references to “Little Pedro” and “Little Xavi” in the 2010 World Cup final, other examples of heightist commentary were also evident. Not only was Spanish forward, Pedro (1.69 m), referred to as “Little Pedro” in the gold medal game but he was also, at one point, called “the little Canary Islander”.<sup>24</sup> In the same game, Pedro’s Spanish teammate, Cesc Fàbregas (1.75 m), was once named “the little midfielder from Arsenal”<sup>25</sup> and “a super little player”. In each of these scenarios, references to short stature appeared groundless in their articulation, i.e., these allusions to short stature were not considered to be integral to the overall narrative and thus could have easily been avoided. In place of saying, “the *little* Canary Islander”, “the *little* midfielder” or “a super *little* player”, a simpler version, i.e., “the Canary Islander”, “the midfielder” and “a super player” would have sufficed. Considering that this last comment whereby Fàbregas was referred to as a super little player is also reminiscent of Keyes’ (1980) quote above—where he mentions how former baseball player, Joe Morgan (1.70 m), objected to being called a “good little player” preferring instead to be named just a “good player” (p. 258)—this revelation, i.e., the harm inflicted by height-sensitive language on smaller athletes, is all the more reason why it is better to drop the adjective “little” from these statements.

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<sup>24</sup> The phrase “Canary Islander” is simply a reference to Pedro’s birthplace, i.e., the Canary Islands of Spain.

<sup>25</sup> For those unfamiliar, Arsenal is a professional soccer team based in England; it was Fàbregas’ club team at the time of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. He now currently plays for FC Barcelona, in Spain.



Besides, even if a smaller athlete did not take offence to this linguistic indignity, e.g., to have one's name consistently preceded by the term 'Little', it is worth mentioning how allusions to short stature will generally amount to a decrease in praise. In sport, addresses to an athlete's short physical stature, verbal or otherwise, are almost always interpreted critically. Messner et al. (1993) discuss this veritable linguistic effect in their analysis of the 1989 NCAA basketball and 1989 U.S. Open tennis tournaments. They noticed that when female athletes were favourably recognized for their strength, skill, or all around athletic ability, the accompanying language employed by sports commentators tended to minimize such praise. Attributions of strength were often accompanied by weakness descriptors, e.g., words such as "tiny" and "small" (Messner et al., 1993, p. 129). Their research also revealed little ambivalence in the descriptions of men: male athletes were usually represented as "big" guys playing in "big" games (Messner et al., 1993, p. 130).

Current findings are then partly supportive of these results. According to my research, tendencies to acknowledge, and praise, male strength and "bigness" were also uncovered. During Olympic hockey action, this meant that players such as Michal Handzus (1.93 m) and Rick Nash (1.93 m) were often described as possessing a "big body". Other players, e.g., Ryan Getzlaf (1.93 m) and Ryan Malone (1.93 m), were once characterized as being "simply too strong". In soccer, similar tendencies to mark tallness manifest themselves. Carlos Marchena (1.82 m) was referred to as a "big defender", Per Mertesacker (1.96 m) was called a "big fellow", and Arjen Robben (1.80 m) was described as a "tall man". Such comments are thus reinforcing of Messner et al.'s (1993) finding that male athletes tend to be represented in non-ambivalent terms, i.e., they are habitually framed as 'big' and 'powerful' (p. 130).

Though this tendency to represent male athletes in non-ambivalent terms was supported, such comments were not evenly distributed across all male participants. These praiseworthy comments pertaining to manly size and macho strength, e.g. “He’s a big body”, were usually reserved for those physically larger athletes who personify the commonsensical cultural ideals linked to hegemonic masculinity. Soccer and hockey players who did not personify this ideal, e.g., undersized athletes, tended to be framed differently by sports commentators. It was found that even excellent performances by smaller athletes were commonly framed ambivalently, e.g., “super little run by a super little player”. This finding reveals some departure from Messner et al.’s (1993) previous findings.

Whereas Messner et al.’s (1993) study revealed little “ambivalence” in the descriptions of male athletes, i.e., men were almost always referred to as ‘big’ guys competing in ‘big’ games, present findings show that male athletes are recurrently framed ambivalently as well. In the 2010 World Cup final match, play-by-play commentator John Helm talked about Spanish players, Pedro (1.69 m), Xavi (1.70 m), and Cesc Fàbregas (1.75 m), in the following ways: “Sprightly start here from Pedro, the little Canary Islander”; “Little Xavi, what a star he is”; and “super little run from a super little player”. Each of these examples is therefore consistent with Messner et al.’s (1993) definition of ambivalent language. They write:

In basketball, verbal attributions of strength to women were often stated in ambivalent language that undermined or neutralized the words conveying power and strength: ‘big girl,’ ‘she’s tiny, she’s small, but so effective under the boards,’ ‘her little jump hook,’ and so on (p. 129).

Thus, similar to this conclusion that sports commentators tend to trivialize the efforts of female athletes by framing them ambivalently, Helm’s comments of these three Spanish players are indicative of how undersized male athletes, especially, can also be linguistically and culturally undermined. By combining verbal attributions of strength to undersized soccer players, e.g.,

“what a star he is”, with verbal attributions of weakness, e.g., “Little Xavi”, such ambiguity often minimized the achievements of these smaller men. It functioned as a way of denying them adequate power. This ambiguity tended to act as a kind of inadvertent back-handed compliment towards smaller male athletes whereby compliments of superior skill were consistently overshadowed by descriptions of short stature.

Recognizing this all too familiar tendency for commentators to trivialize the efforts of smaller male athletes through the articulation of ambivalent language, Keyes (1980) ascertains the idea of a “short-but syndrome” that affects most undersized athletes. He writes: “A ‘short-but’ syndrome confronts all smaller people, though no one more than the smaller athlete. (‘He’s short, but he’s strong’; ‘He may be small, but he’s got the heart of a lion’; ‘The guy’s little, but he’s got exceptional speed’)” (p. 259). This notion then reinforces how smaller male athletes are often talked about in ambivalent terms. It also communicates a perpetual failure or perhaps unwillingness for people, e.g., sports commentators, to look past a person’s physical stature.

To explain this phenomenon a little further, the idea of a ‘short-but syndrome’, as Keyes (1980) defines it, upholds essentially the same premise as a “concessive clause” in grammar, i.e., a clause that denotes a tension or contradiction between two clauses thus joined. In borrowing one of Keyes’ (1980) examples, “He’s short, but he’s strong”, it is clear that the first part of this sentence (“He’s short”) constitutes the main clause while the latter part of the statement (“but he’s strong”) forms the concessive clause. The commentator’s use of the concessive conjunction “but”, e.g., “He’s short, *but* he’s strong”, would thus imply that shortness and strength are seen as contradictory to one another, i.e., one would not normally expect a short person to be strong. In essence, this persistent ‘short-but syndrome’ associated with smaller male athletes subtly hints at a height bias in sport without going so far as to state it outright. This condition exemplifies

how society can leave unsaid or implicit the prejudice of heightism, which is both strengthened and dissimulated through concessive language.

As one specific example of how the performances of smaller male athletes were often framed ambivalently, or concessively, by sports commentators throughout either the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament or the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup, we might consider the following statement uttered during the World Cup's first semi-final [on Uruguayan forward, Sebastián Fernández (1.67 m)]: "He's only five foot five, but with the height of Abreu on, now they're going for someone a little bit smaller—with a bit of dash". We can see from this example how the efforts of smaller male athletes were sometimes neutralized or trivialized in relation to the conflicting statements used to describe them. This statement of Fernández replicates the very principle of a 'short-but syndrome' by virtue of its contradictory message. It implies that Fernández is little *but* has exceptional speed and thus it correlates a positive with a negative suggestion. More importantly, this type of ambivalent language in sport reinforces many already existing negative attitudes and uncertainties about smaller male athletes and smaller men more generally. It gives us a glimpse of "where small people stand on the American scale of things" (Keyes, 1980, p. 259). Such tendencies for sports commentators to call smaller male athletes as "Little *x*"<sup>26</sup> and their predisposition to frame the efforts of undersized athletes ambivalently all function to communicate the lower status of smaller male athletes in sport.

As past studies have revealed a profound ambivalence in the reporting of women's sports and not men's sports, i.e., conflicting messages of female athletes that were seldom present in the reporting of men's sports and male athletes (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Messner et al., 1993), it is reasonable to speculate that by neutralizing the accomplishments of smaller soccer players

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<sup>26</sup> The letter "x" is being used to denote an individual athlete's first and/or last name.

during portions of the 2010 FIFA World Cup this also had the effect of portraying these shorter men in a sort of feminine way. Like many female athletes, undersized male soccer players were sometimes equally infantilized and trivialized for their threat to the patriarchal masculine body during the 2010 World Cup. They were consistently denied adequate power in terms of their representations and were thenceforth reduced to a subordinate athletic status.

### **Feminization or remasculinization?**

Though this tendency to frame smaller soccer players ambivalently during the 2010 World Cup (e.g. “Little Xavi, what a star he is”) could theoretically be interpreted as a sign of feminization towards the short male body, Butera’s (2008) analysis suggests a sort of inverted perspective. In her opinion, this type of ambivalent language is perhaps better understood as a sort of textual “remasculinization”—not feminization—of the short man’s body (p. 60). As she explains it, one of the key hegemonic strategies for dealing with the short man is to have him “dragged from his femininity and masculinized” (Butera, 2008, p. 60). According to this view, dominant representations of smaller men will often emphasize a short man’s virtuous qualities, e.g., his superior determination, while simultaneously deemphasizing his non-normative height. This technique ensures that cultural systems of heightism and patriarchy are preserved by alleviating the threat of the short man’s feminine body: it produces the appearance of a kind of heroification of the short male and a temporary challenge to the stigmatization of shortness.

As one example of this strategy in action, Butera (2008) cites a line from the television show *Miami Ink*, a program documenting everyday events that unfold at a tattoo shop in Miami, Florida. This line had been communicated in the show’s introduction when the voice-over narrator describes one of the shop’s employees, Darren Brass, as “the five foot wonder. He may

be small but he's got a lot of heart" (as cited in Butera, 2008, p. 60). Not only is this statement again indicative of a 'short-but syndrome' that confronts all smaller people (Keyes, 1980, p. 259), but Butera (2008) also sees it as "a representational attempt to reinscribe masculinity onto the body of the short man in popular culture" (Butera, 2008, p. 61). By drawing attention to Brass's "large heart" this comment manages to take some of the focus away from, or compensate for, his feminine body and thus his lack of power. These words depict Brass as metaphorically larger than five feet (Butera, 2008, p. 60).

Comparably, we might also interpret World Cup phrases such as "Little Xavi, what a star he is" or "a super little run from a super little player" [on Cesc Fàbregas] as exemplars of this hegemonic strategy to culturally remasculinize the smaller male body through its representations. As in the *Miami Ink* example, i.e., its description of Darren Brass, should an interpreter read the bodies of these smaller soccer players, i.e., Xavi and Fàbregas, as inherently feminine then favourable references to Xavi's 'star quality' and Fàbregas's 'superb skill' during the World Cup may have functioned to quell their so-called femininity. Such references could have been seen as attempts to re-inscribe masculinity onto the non-normative, i.e., smaller and effeminate, bodies of Xavi and Fàbregas by trying to frame them as figuratively larger than five foot seven and five foot nine respectively.

Contextually speaking, because the atypical statures of both Xavi and Fàbregas were barely noticeable when these ambivalent articulations were spoken, i.e., we only witnessed long shots (not close-ups) of these selected plays which thus failed to communicate just how small these athletes are, such descriptions are then more likely exhibitiv of a 'demasculinizing' hegemonic strategy rather than a 'remasculinizing' one. It is unlikely that one would interpret descriptions of Xavi as a 'little star' and Fàbregas as a "super little player" as ways to re- or

hyper-masculinize the short male body. Instead, as these statements tend to draw unnecessary attention to these players' short statures, they are perhaps more plausibly interpreted as a demasculinizing attempt to textually degrade the smaller male athlete by reinforcing his femininity, i.e., his petiteness. This strategy of demasculinizing or feminizing the smaller male athlete vilifies him for his threat to the myth of tallness and other patriarchal systems: he is discursively stripped of his masculinity and denied adequate power (Butera, 2008, p. 60).

### **Not-so-nice nicknames**

Another way that smaller male athletes are denied a certain amount of power is through the regularity of media created and reinforced nicknames in sport. Given that many nicknames of smaller athletes tend to be directly associated with the player's height, it is clear how some of these nicknames could be interpreted as deeply infantilizing, e.g., former baseball player Harold Henry "Pee Wee" Reese (1.75 m) or current baseball star "Tiny" Tim Lincecum (1.80 m). Other nicknames could also be seen as borderline derogatory, e.g., former hockey players Wilfred "Shorty" Green (1.78 m) and Roy "Shrimp" Worters (1.60 m) (Keyes, 1980, p. 266). In either case, by reducing these grown men to such infantile traits, i.e., littleness, some power is often stripped from these athletes when they are referred to in this manner. This remains true whether these athletes are comfortable with, i.e., accepting of, these monikers or not.

The case of Uruguayan soccer player Sebastián Fernández (1.67 m) thus demonstrates a fitting example of how a familiar nickname given to an undersized athlete is considered to be somewhat insensitive. As it was revealed during CBC's televised broadcast of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, we learn that because of his slight stature, Fernández is commonly known in the game of soccer as "Papelito" (Spanish for a "little piece of paper"). And though this nickname is

not necessarily offensive on its own, i.e., it is not meant to be insulting, it showcases how a smaller athlete's size can be repeatedly accentuated, even exaggerated, in the dominant sports media. By depreciating Fernández's physical build through comparisons to a tiny piece of paper, it is also evident how this distorted image of Fernández, i.e., as a small piece of paper, could be interpreted as a sign of weakness and fragility. In relation to this image, an interpreter might think of Fernández as being no match for a gentle wind let alone an oppositional team replete with taller bodies, and thus the nickname "Papelito" is not very imposing at all.

In recognition of Fernández's "Papelito" moniker, this also affords a nice comparison with the nickname of yet another famous soccer star: current Argentine/FC Barcelona striker, Lionel Messi (1.69 m). At five foot seven, and having received treatments for a growth hormone deficiency when he was younger, Messi is commonly referred to as "La Pulga" (Spanish for "The Flea") by the media and soccer fans. Although there is some debate about the meaning of this nickname, e.g., some attribute it to Messi's ability to frustrate the opposition with his exceptional skills, it is more probable that this moniker intends to denote an iconic resemblance to Messi's physical stature. In Spanish, "La Pulga" is typically used as a hyperbole for small size—something almost invisible to the human eye.

Despite the fact that Messi did not participate in any of the selected 2010 World Cup soccer matches used for this study, i.e., Argentina was eliminated by Germany just prior to the start of the World Cup's semi-final stage,<sup>27</sup> he is still considered to be relevant for the present study. This nickname, The Flea, provides further evidence of the crucial role of physical stature in sport. Not only are Messi's nickname ("La Pulga") and his physical stature inextricably linked, but the distorted image derived from this nickname, i.e., Messi's little flea-like body, is

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<sup>27</sup> It is therefore uncertain whether or not Messi was actually called "La Pulga" during World Cup telecasts.



also considered to be somewhat uncomplimentary, in that, this iconic sign operates as a kind of “meiosis”, i.e., a deliberate understatement used for rhetorical effect. This way of naming understates the size of Messi’s already marked short stature and, in doing so, it effectively pushes his deviant body even further from the accepted cultural norm.

In order to then illustrate the sometimes uncomplimentary or condescending capacity of athletic nicknames such as “La Pulga” or “Papelito”, i.e., nicknames that draw attention to and usually understate an athlete’s physical stature, some analysis of Spanish forward Pedro (1.69 m) is again worthwhile. Having already stated how Pedro was once referred to as “the little Canary Islander” and “Little Pedro” in the 2010 men’s World Cup final, it was also discovered that among the favourite nicknames given to Pedro, there is “Pedrito” (Spanish for “Little Pedro”), i.e., a blatant yet not surprising reference to his smaller stature.

More surprisingly, it was also learned that this nickname has become almost obsolete in relation to Pedro’s recently outstanding performances as an athlete. Pedro’s “Player Profile” on FIFA’s official website reads: “Known up to [his breakout 2009/2010 season] as *Pedrito* (‘Little Pedro’), the scale of his achievement saw the nickname consigned to history, as his team-mates now tipped their hats to *Don Pedro*” (2010, para. 2). This evaluation is then seen as constitutive of the belittling and less dignified qualities associated with the traditional nicknames given to undersized athletes, i.e., names such as “Pedrito” that emphasize and exaggerate an athlete’s smaller stature. This quote indicates how Pedro’s impressive play enabled him to “outgrow” this seemingly infantile nickname, *Pedrito*, in favour of the now more respected and dignified name, *Don Pedro*. Through this new nickname, Pedro is then linguistically granted the adult stature which his previous title “Pedrito”—Little Pedro—lacks.

On the other hand, acknowledging how a smaller player such as Lionel Messi (1.69 m) is still sometimes referred to as ‘The Flea’, an allusion to his small size, this does not imply that a smaller athlete’s improved performance will always lead to a more honourable nickname. Nor is it suggestive that these typically height-marked, i.e., belittling, appellations assigned to smaller athletes will necessarily have a negative impact on a player’s reputation. It would be hard to imagine, for example, that a fan’s admiration, even worship, of a player such as Messi would be in any way diminished by either this way of calling him (“La Pulga”) or his short stature. In fact, given the popularity of this athlete, and his nickname, it is also plausible to interpret the use of this familiar moniker, i.e., La Pulga, as an ironic expression of endearment towards Messi and as an enhancement of his status as a premier soccer player. Then again, as such marked nicknames, or linguistic conventions, tend to isolate some aspect of an athlete’s image based on their height, they are still assumed to be “heightist” in this manner. They tend to de-athleticize smaller male athletes by implying their shortness and fragility (Eitzen & Baca Zinn, 1989). They also tend to represent smaller male athletes as weaker, more childlike, and as subordinate to taller players.

### **Infantilization**

In light of this tendency for sports commentators to frame smaller male athletes as more childlike than taller athletes, it is worthy to compare this representational practice with the habitual naming patterns used to identify black athletes (Davis & Harris, 1998; Denham et al., 2002) and female athletes (Duncan, 2006; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Messner et al., 1993) respectively. Just as many researchers have found media discourses describing black athletes and female athletes to be observably infantilizing,<sup>28</sup> the same might also be said of smaller male athletes—of all races. Research suggests that smaller male athletes are also regularly associated

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<sup>28</sup> To “infantilize” means to reduce someone to infantile or childlike characteristics, i.e., treating a person as a child.

with childishness and are therefore often reduced to a subordinate status (Butera, 2008; Keyes, 1980). Though prior to indicating how smaller male athletes were infantilized during the 2010 FIFA World Cup or the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament, some discussion of the discursive strategies that are typically used to infantilize black athletes and female athletes should be addressed.

Duncan & Messner (1998), for example, found that most sports commentators adhere to gendered naming practices that work to augment the dominance associated with male athletes and reduce female athletes to a subordinate status. They define these linguistic tendencies as support for “hierarchies of naming” within sport (p. 180). In terms of this naming hierarchy, Duncan & Messner (1998) discovered that, “women were ‘infantilized’ by being called by their first name at a rate much greater than men were, the last name being considered the more serious representation of the athlete” (as cited in Denham et al., 2002, p. 316). Davis & Harris (1998) also noted comparable findings in their study of racial discourses in sport. These researchers found that, “black athletes have been called by their first name at a greater rate than white athletes, a practice that conceivably portrays them as child-like or ‘clown-like’” (as cited in Denham et al., 2002, p. 316). If as these studies describe, referring to an athlete by their first name tends to situate them as lower on the hierarchy of naming, one can then only imagine where this practice positions those smaller athletes who may have their first names substituted entirely by the word “little”, e.g., “Little Xavi” and “Little Pedro”.<sup>29</sup>

It is therefore reasonable to speculate that when commentators used the term “little” to identify a smaller player (e.g. “Little Xavi”; “Little Pedro”; “this little fellow”; “super little

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<sup>29</sup> Spanish players, Xavi and Pedro, are commonly referred to by their first names only. This is a cultural matter and not a sign of infantilization. In fact, bearing in mind how different cultures often use different ways of naming (e.g. the use of first names, full names, nicknames, etc.), Duncan & Messner's (1998) ‘hierarchy of naming’ can be problematic in this sense: it is not a foolproof measure of infantilization.

player”; “the little midfielder” etc.), such references had the linguistic effect of infantilizing and subordinating these undersized athletes: they were denied full adult status through this way of naming. In addition, similar to how Duncan & Messner (1998) claim that ‘infantilization’ represents a kind of dominance that “emphasizes the difference between men and women, where men represent the standard and women represent the Other” (p. 180), we might also say that the overt infantilization of smaller male athletes during the 2010 World Cup, e.g., “Little Xavi”, positioned them in an equally subordinate position. They were portrayed as another “Other”.

In contrast, it was revealed throughout televised coverage of World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey that the tallest male athletes were almost always linguistically raised to full adult status. These athletes were usually portrayed as superior to their smaller brethren and were rarely—if ever—infantilized. As a matter of fact, it was found that taller male athletes were more likely to be “aggrandized” than infantilized during coverage of the 2010 World Cup and Winter Olympic Games, i.e., sports commentators were more prone to overstate rather than understate a taller athlete’s physical stature and dominance.

### **Aggrandization**

At six foot nine (2.05 m), 254 pounds (115 kg), Olympic hockey player and Slovakian defenceman, Zdeno Chara, was handily the largest male athlete participating in either the 2010 men’s Olympic ice hockey tournament or the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup—a fact that was rarely neglected by Olympic commentators. In comparison to many of the other athletes present, verbal references to Chara’s physical stature were seen as disproportionately customary during live televised coverage of Olympic hockey, i.e., Chara’s size was cited at a more frequent rate than other athletes. I counted at least nine explicit references to the player’s atypical size in the

two games he played (e.g. “the human eclipse blocks another”; “Look for the big man to play a ton”). These references included a mix of literal (or symbolic) and metaphorical (or iconic) statements which had the effect of drawing attention to and usually offering praise for Chara’s physical stature.

In a more literal, symbolic sense, it was found that when commentators would typically identify Chara and/or his height, they would usually utter an adjective such as “big”<sup>30</sup> to express and reinforce this player’s tallness, e.g., “the big man”. While it is plausible to suggest that such statements are to be interpreted neutrally as the mere acknowledgment of Chara’s size, i.e., the denotative or literal usage of the word “big”, it is also conceivable how such comments might be further interpreted as signs of praise for Chara’s stature specifically and of tallness more generally. Similar to how researchers posit that the term ‘little’ tends to act as a signifier for weakness and infantilization (Duncan, 2006; Messner et al., 1993), then it is also reasonable to speculate that its oppositional term, i.e., ‘big’, will tend to signify strength, power, and aggrandization.

To put it differently using semiotic terms, while the “immediate interpretant”, i.e., the basic sense of something even before it is concretely and historically interpreted by anyone, of a statement such as “the big man” might be to think of this sign as simply an indication of Chara’s tallness; the “dynamical interpretant”, i.e., the actual meaning effect of a sign at some point in time and place (Greenlee, 1973; Nöth, 1990; Ransdell, 1986), suggests that this statement can be more than just a literal reference to Chara’s stature. It can also act as a signifier of praise and

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<sup>30</sup> In this context, ‘big’ refers to being tall and/or muscular, i.e., positively-valued traits among men. It is not referring to being overweight, for example, which would generate a very different meaning.

admiration for Chara's physical aspect. Such aggrandizing statements appear to reinforce the allegorical dominance associated with taller male athletes in sport.

In addition to these symbolic statements and their likelihood to be interpreted as signs of admiration and praise for taller stature, the articulation of iconic signs, e.g., verbal metaphors, throughout Olympic hockey coverage offers a further example of how tallness is routinely and favourably valued in our society. As one example of a verbal metaphor that glorified tallness throughout the 2010 Winter Olympics, an enthusiastic Gord Miller, play-by-play announcer for CTV/TSN, stated the following just moments after Slovakian defenceman, Chara (2.05 m), intercepted a soft pass with his skate: "Tough to get a pass by Chara...I think you can canoe in those skates, never mind try to get a puck by them". In relation to this specific metaphor, or hyperbole, that exaggerates the size of Chara's skates to canoe-like proportions, it is clear that this distorted image of the larger player and his gear acts as a kind of aggrandizing strategy used to celebrate taller male bodies in sport, i.e., Miller's statement makes Chara appear great or greater than he really is by linguistically enhancing his physical prowess.

As this particular play in question also appears to have been a rather ordinary event, i.e., hockey players block shots all the time, it is reasonable to speculate that the commentator's overstated appreciation for this action is further evidence of a height bias in sport. It is assumed that had most other players made a comparable play, i.e., to have intercepted a pass with their skate, their performances would have likely drawn little, if any, additional commentary. Meanwhile, Chara's executions of even minor achievements, e.g., a blocked shot or a hit on an opposing player, were often celebrated as "game-changing"—no doubt because of his towering physical stature.

In addition to this one metaphor that emphasizes Chara's canoe-like skates, a comparable metaphor was also stated by the same commentator in the following game, i.e., the bronze-medal match between Team Finland and Team Slovakia. This related metaphor was used in the context of a perceived problem with Chara's skate(s), prompting the commentator to quip: "It's hard to miss that left skate, or the right. I'm not sure if those are the skates, or the boxes they came in?"

By once again overstating and exaggerating Chara's skates by comparing them to objects much larger in size, e.g., boxes, this offers further justification for how taller male athletes are consistently aggrandized by the dominant sports media. Beneath its humorous undertone, this 'boxes metaphor' is therefore demonstrative of yet another example of the consistently positive portrayals of Chara's height and of tallness more generally. Through its exaggeration, this hyperbole attracts considerable attention to Chara's size while reinforcing a powerful sense of appreciation for, and amazement of, his physical stature. It elevates Chara to an almost giant-like status.

## **Giants**

As commentator descriptions of Chara (2.05 m) tended to frame him as a giant figure, e.g., suggestions that his feet are the size of "boxes" or "canoes", it is worthy to analyze the potential significance, or meaning, associated with these depictions. A return to Butera's (2008) account of the mythology of tallness is helpful. Whereas Mikhail Bakhtin (1984 [1965]) initially suggested that the image of a 'giant' can be characteristic of the grotesque body (p. 392), Butera (2008) asserts that this image has almost entirely lost its grotesque character over time (p. 45). She argues that giants are no longer viewed with the same sort of earlier derision. Though in her

opinion, “giantesses”—or female giants—often retain this traditional grotesque character. She writes:

The tallest tall women—giantesses—are also villainous and monstrous. Nearly every female giantess is a monster, while a quick survey of well-known male giants reveal characters often culturally viewed with affection: folk hero Paul Bunyan, vegetable company mascot The Jolly Green Giant, and Hagrid from the *Harry Potter* series, to name just a few (p. 45).

In accordance with this statement, it is maintained that the hyperbolic metaphors used to describe Chara during the 2010 men’s Olympic ice hockey tournament, i.e., canoe and boxes references, were probably meant to be positively interpreted as a sign of admiration and affection of Chara’s stature. They were not likely intended to represent Chara in a freakish, monstrous or grotesque manner, nor would most people tend to interpret them in such a negative way.

Complementary to Butera’s (2008) point, it is also notable how whereas most people are unlikely to interpret these hyperbolic metaphors of Chara in any negative sense, e.g., the Slovakian captain as freak, the same could not be said had similar comments been directed at a tall female. Had the object been a female hockey player, instead of male one, and had the commentators used the same exaggerated expressions to describe her, e.g., “I think you can canoe in *her* skates” or “I’m not sure if those are *her* skates or the boxes they came in?”, then it is supposed that the dynamical interpretant, or meaning effect, would have been drastically different. Lehrer (1985) makes it known that we live “in a culture which values small feet on women” (p. 401), and thus any comments directed at the largeness of a woman’s feet risks the likelihood of negative interpretation, i.e., tendencies to view such a woman as unnatural and grotesque.

F. Andacht (2011) also notes that outside the universe of athletic values, it is not impossible to imagine a “giant” depicted in a somewhat negative manner, i.e., closer to a freak



than to a champion (personal communication, August 10, 2011). He asserts that representations of unusually tall people, e.g., giants, can vary from positive to negative. According to this perspective, it is considered to be more practical to assess how taller individuals are framed on a contextual, i.e., case-by-case, basis. It is incorrect to suppose that tallness, including atypical tallness, will always correspond with positively-valued traits. In spite of this assertion, it is still maintained that, in sport, references to an athlete's tall—even giant—physical stature will almost always be interpreted as utterances of praise: this is perhaps because most American sports are geared towards tall (Keyes, 1980, p. 260).

### **Growth**

In addition to the verbal metaphors that aggrandized Chara's physical stature to almost giant proportions, a related group of verbal metaphors were also articulated during live televised coverage of World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey. These additional expressions were not so much communicative of an athlete's height but tended to be indicative of a commentator's own subjective appraisals of a player's performance. They were also usually marked by explicit references to "growth". Used in this context, articulations of 'growth' were generally not spoken in any literal sense, i.e., as a vertical increase in physical height, but rather in a metaphorical way, i.e., as a sign of progression or improvement over time. It was found that when sports commentators alluded to growth during Olympic hockey and FIFA World Cup broadcasts, their comments were habitually indicative of a celebration of height, i.e., tallness.

As one example, during the first semi-final of the men's 2010 FIFA World Cup (Uruguay versus the Netherlands), the commentator, John Helm, described Uruguay's performance in the following way: "Well there's no denying Uruguay have worked hard, and they've sort of *grown*

*in stature* in this World Cup”. We see from this comment an example of a discourse in which growth can be described as an indicator of praise. The phrase “grown in stature” is clearly meant to serve as complimentary. It implies that Uruguay’s play had improved as opposed to having worsened, or remained static. In contrast, had the commentator uttered that Uruguay’s performance had “shrunk” or “diminished” in stature throughout the World Cup, then we would normally interpret this hypothetical articulation as a clear sign of criticism, not praise, towards the Uruguayan players. It would signify that the performance of Uruguay’s soccer team had regressed in the speaker’s opinion.

In addition to the Uruguay example, play-by-play announcer Chris Cuthbert used a very similar expression to describe the performance of Canadian hockey forward, Jonathan Toews, in Olympic hockey’s gold-medal game (Team Canada versus Team USA). He stated: “Every day [Team Canada’s Executive Director] Steve Yzerman meets with Jonathan Toews, and Toews has *grown continually* in this tournament”. These words provide further evidence of how the term ‘growth’ is often synonymous with praise. In the same game, Canadian forward Rick Nash was also accredited to have “grown” throughout the 2010 Olympic hockey tournament and was therefore linguistically praised. This occurred when commentator Pierre McGuire identified Nash as: “One of the guys that have *really grown* as this tournament’s gone along”.

While the suggestion of ‘growth’ is again not to be taken literally for each of these statements, i.e., it is absurd to think that these full grown players actually grew physically throughout the course of these short tournaments, these tropes are demonstrative of how growth, and by extension tallness, is frequently celebrated in everyday life and through conventional language. Butera (2008) writes:

The investment of power in the tall body is also linguistically reified in that certain figures of speech in the English language work to reinforce the way power is structured in terms of height. For example, the phrase ‘to look up to someone’ means to admire the individual... To ‘stand tall’ means to be proud and courageous... To ‘come up short’ is to fail; a ‘shortcoming’ is a flaw in one’s character (pp. 14-15).

Judging from the commentary employed during the 2010 men’s FIFA World Cup and the 2010 men’s Olympic ice hockey tournament, Butera’s (2008) statement is then further justified in how commentators generally used these ‘metaphors of growth’ as signifiers of praise. These figures of speech tended to reinforce how growth—and tallness—are typically invested with power.

### **Height marking**

From their analysis of televised women’s and men’s 1989 NCAA basketball tournaments, Messner et al. (1993) generally found that female athletes and women’s sport were “marked” at a rate much greater than male athletes and men’s sport. During women’s games, audiences were continually reminded by commentators that that they were watching the “*Women’s* final four”, “this *women’s* semi-final”, the “NCAA *Women’s* National Championship Game”, and so on (p. 125). Gender was also sometimes marked through the use of graphics in the women’s basketball games when, for example, the CBS logo marked the women’s championship game: “NCAA *Women’s* National Championship” (Messner et al., 1993, p. 125).

In contrast, Messner et al. (1993) observed no instances of gender marking, verbal or graphic, during coverage of the 1989 *men’s* NCAA basketball tournament. They found that: “Men’s games were always referred to as universal, both verbally and in on-screen graphic logos” (p. 126). Instead of referring to the “NCAA *Men’s* National Championship” or the “*men’s* Final Four”, commentator speech and graphics were more likely to employ universal, or neutral, language during men’s broadcasts, e.g., the “NCAA National Championship”, the “Final Four”,

and so on. Messner et al. (1993) basically found that coverage of women's basketball games tended to include some form of gender marking while men's games and athletes were rarely, if ever, gender marked, i.e., they were usually left "unmarked".

Noting these overall trends to 'mark' female athletes and women's sport, and to 'unmark' male athletes and men's sport—in the sense of Liszka's (1989) transvaluation theory (p. 71)—it is worthy to explore how such findings might be applicable to the present study and how they are relatable to the larger concept of "markedness" (Andrews, 1990; Battistella, 1990; Liszka, 1985). First attributed to the Prague School linguistic theories of Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trebetzkoy, the notion of 'markedness' basically upholds that "terms of polar opposites at any level of language are not mere opposites, but rather they show an evaluative nonequivalence that is imposed on all oppositions" (Battistella, 1990, p. 1). It is usually found that one term of an opposition pair tends to be construed as simpler, more general, and by consequence it becomes more dominant in its usage than its polar opposite term. This dominant term of an opposition is then commonly referred to as the "unmarked" term while its polar, yet subordinate, opposite tends to be categorized as "marked" (Andrews, 1990; Battistella, 1990). In essence, 'markedness theory' is used to study the asymmetrical relationship between oppositional terms and signs: it enables linguists to analyze the different meanings, and cultural significance, associated with 'marked' and 'unmarked' pairs of a language.

Therefore, in light of this tendency for media commentators and producers to verbally and graphically mark the women's games while not gender marking the men's games, Messner et al. (1993) tend to interpret this finding as a demonstration of 'markedness theory'. They argue that this strategy enabled the men's games and tournament to be "presented as the norm, the universal, whereas the women's were continually marked as the other, derivative, and, by

implication, inferior to the men's" (p. 127). This asymmetrical form of 'gender marking' tended to represent woman athletes, and women's sport, as second class and trivial (Eitzen & Baca Zinn, 1989; Messner et al., 1993; Stanley, 1977).

As part of another, more thorough, explanation of 'markedness theory', Litzka (1989) uses the notion of 'markedness' to help explain the pragmatic function of caricature, namely, satirical representations of the human face. He asserts that because caricature is based on satire, the icon, i.e., the representation or imitation of an object's likeness, is then usually meant to be uncomplimentary (p. 86). According to Litzka (1989), the basis of caricature is thus "created by the intensification or exaggeration of the most perceptually prominent parts of the face. In this case, the features of highest perceptual rank are generally overemphasized or exaggerated, that is to say, doubly marked" (p. 86). In the language of markedness, this means that the perceptually prominent parts of a person's face, i.e., the features that differ most from the average face, are considered to be the marked features: they tend to stand out because of their difference. Double marking, on the other hand, is generally constituted by any additional emphasis that is placed on these already marked facial features, i.e., an intensification or exaggeration of these distinctive parts (Litzka, 1989, p. 86). Examples of 'double marking' include tendencies for caricaturists to have exaggerated Jimmy Carter's smile, Ronald Reagan's hair, and so on (Litzka, 1989, p. 86).

But as this thesis is only concerned with mediated representations of men's sport, and not women's sport, a study of "gender marking" (Messner et al., 1993) at the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup and Olympic hockey tournaments is not relevant to the present study. Litzka's (1989) work on caricature, on the other hand, is quite significant. Related to his description of how the most perceptually prominent parts of the face are marked, it is then reasonable to extend this way of thinking onto the entire body, i.e., facial features are not the only physical markers

that distinguish us. A person's physical stature, for example, is also considered to be a prominent bodily feature of high perceptual rank, and it should therefore fit neatly with Liszka's (1989) analysis of markedness.

As Liszka's (1989) theory predicts, this bodily feature of high perceptual rank, i.e., physical stature, was indeed found to be consistently marked during Olympic hockey and World Cup soccer broadcasts. We were repeatedly told during World Cup soccer coverage, for example, that Sebastián Fernández is "only five foot five", that, Per Mertesacker stands "six foot five inches tall", and that, Cesz Fàbregas is "the little midfielder from Arsenal". Throughout Olympic hockey games, we were also frequently informed that Michal Handzus has a "big body presence", that, Zdeno Chara is a "big man", and that, Rick Nash is "a big body at six foot four". These statements are indicative of how athletes were sometimes verbally "height-marked" during relevant hockey and soccer coverage. But considering that such marked comments were normally directed at atypically tall and short players alone, i.e., the heights of the more typically-sized hockey and soccer players<sup>31</sup> were rarely communicated verbally during broadcasts, this seems another way to show that such findings are consistent with Liszka's (1989) account of markedness theory. Through the tendency for sports commentators to mark taller and smaller athletes and to unmark those players of more average height, this had the effect of representing marked players, i.e., atypically small and tall athletes, as deviant, while depicting unmarked players, i.e., mid-sized athletes, as the quintessential norm.

Despite the fact that many oversized and undersized male athletes, particularly World Cup soccer players, were symmetrically marked by sports commentators during broadcasts, i.e.,

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<sup>31</sup> By "typically-sized", I am referring to those players who were considered to be of more standard athletic height, i.e., roughly 5'10" to 6'2" tall.

taller and smaller athletes tended to be ‘height-marked’ in a roughly equitable manner, this does not necessarily mean that taller and shorter athletes were devoted symmetrical status. While tallness and shortness were fairly evenly marked during soccer broadcasts, not all references to physical stature were found to be linguistically imbued with, or drained of, the same power. In fact, since tallness is usually seen as a desirable physical attribute among men, whereas shortness signifies a lack of this trait (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008), it is reasonable to speculate that when height was marked, the taller male athlete was portrayed as superior and the smaller male athlete was represented as inferior. Verbal markings of tall stature, e.g., “the big fellow”, were therefore considered to be more complimentary than verbal markings of short stature, e.g., “this little fellow”.

To put this point differently, i.e., the different meanings associated with signs of tall and short male stature, we might refer back to some of the iconic representations discussed earlier, and place them in the context of Liszka’s (1989) analysis of markedness. Let us first reconsider the iconic sign of Sebastián Fernández (1.67 m), i.e., his popular nickname “Papelito” which translates to a “small piece of paper”. Accepting that this way of calling Fernández is entirely based on his slight stature, i.e., the dynamical object of this player’s short stature determines the use of such a nickname or sign, it is then evident how this representation of Fernández’s body is consistent with Liszka’s (1989) notion of markedness. Just as Liszka (1989) argues that the prominent parts of a subject’s face become ‘doubly marked’ once a caricaturist exaggerates them, this distorted iconic representation of Fernández reveals that the prominent features of a person’s body, e.g., height, can be doubly marked as well. As in Liszka’s (1989) account of markedness and caricature, the intensification or exaggeration of Fernández’s short stature, i.e.,

his little paper-like body, brought more attention to his already marked body, pushed his body even further from the norm, and had the effect of an uncomplimentary appearance (p. 86).

In contrast, iconic representations of tall stature, as opposed to short stature, were found to elicit a wholly different sort of meaning. Let us reconsider one of the iconic signs used to represent Zdeno Chara's (2.05 m) very large size, e.g., the time his skates were likened to canoes. With the help of Liszka's (1989) account of markedness, this example is revealing of how the intensification or exaggeration of a marked feature, i.e., Chara's canoe-like skates, increases its distance from the average or unmarked norm (p. 86). The double marking of Chara's giant stature tended to represent him as deviant on the basis of his atypical or abnormal physique. But despite the likelihood to interpret such an exaggeration of Chara's body as a marker or sign of deviance, this iconic sign is not considered to be "uncomplimentary" in the Liszkian sense. It is in fact considered to be a complimentary representation of Chara's body in that it magnifies his remarkable size and associated with it his hyper-masculine strength, i.e., virtuous qualities of a male athlete. Because such exaggerated comments pertaining to Chara's large stature also tended to be spoken in an enthusiastic and animated tone of voice, this was often shown to reinforce their complimentary effect.

In conclusion, examples of "height marking" during World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey games once again tended to aggrandize taller athletic bodies and frame smaller male athletes in a clearly infantilizing manner. By rarely marking the heights of the more typical-sized athletes, i.e., those hockey and soccer players who tended to fall somewhere between what is considered to be unusually tall and atypically small, this unmarked silence, or zero sign,<sup>32</sup> also tended to represent these mid-sized players as the standard or norm in sport (Messner et al.,

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<sup>32</sup> In semiotics, a 'zero sign' is the principle that "even silence can have a semiotic function" (Nöth, 1990, p. 81).



1993, p. 127). These athletes were generally depicted in a verbally indifferent manner by sports commentators and were thus seldom aggrandized, nor infantilized, according to their physical statures.

## **Discussion**

Noting this observed tendency for sports media to verbally represent some tall, but not atypically tall, male athletes in an indifferent manner, this affords a nice comparison with Keyes' (1980) statement on the potential advantages of being a smaller athlete. He writes:

A surprise for me has been discovering that real frustrations are felt among those supposedly favored by our society's athletic values. A 6-foot friend, for example, who was tall as a child, told me that he always envied the 'Phil Rizzutos' and 'Peewee Reeses' among his playmates, who seemed to get extra recognition if they did well on the ball field because less was expected of them. But if he dove successfully for a fly or snared a hot grounder or hit the ball for distance—well that's what big kids are supposed to do. At least that's the way it seemed to him (p. 266).

This statement indicates that in spite of tendencies to privilege male tallness, systemic heightism may actually work against taller individuals under some circumstances, e.g., taller athletes who are consistently expected to perform at a higher level. According to this statement, the inverse is also possible for undersized male athletes. Because smaller athletes are rarely expected to excel in sports, their achievements and strong efforts might be overstated and magnified (Keyes, 1980, p. 266).

Though this sometimes under-appreciation of taller athletic bodies and over-appreciation of smaller bodies is a plausible argument and as such it could have some merit, it still does very little to counteract, or invert, society's already pre-established heightist premise. Any over-appreciation of a smaller athlete's athletic achievements would not necessarily change how physical stature is evaluated in sport, and in fact, it may only serve to subtly reinforce how

smalls and tall are represented differently and are thenceforth divided. What this argument does appear to indicate, however, is that smaller male athletes can be successfully resistant to heightist ideologies. When undersized soccer players such as Xavi (1.70 m), Pedro (1.69 m), or Lionel Messi (1.69) take to the field for their respective clubs and are able to dominate in spite of their less than ideal statures, their successes communicate the message that ordinary people are not always correct to assume the apparently commonsense logic of tallness myths in sport. Bigger is not necessarily better (Keyes, 1980, p. 267).

Nevertheless, just as Gramsci argued that the dominant ideology constantly meets challenges and resistances that it is forced to overcome (Fiske, 1990; Taras, 2001), it appeared that undersized soccer players presented one such circumstance to reigning heightist ideology during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Although the presence of smaller bodies such as Xavi, Pedro, and Cesc Fàbregas (1.75 m) at the 2010 World Cup would normally suggest that there is room for every size in soccer, sports commentators expressed an overwhelming willingness to praise taller soccer players over smaller soccer players during selected World Cup action. In hockey, the tallest players also tended to enjoy the benefits of heightist commentary and its favourable representations. Whereas taller soccer and hockey players tended to be described as big, strong, and thus hyper-masculine, it was revealed that smaller soccer players were habitually framed as overmatched, were routinely called “little”, and were thus represented in a traditionally feminine or hypo-masculine<sup>33</sup> manner. These inferior depictions of smaller male soccer players often tended to vilify these shorter men for threatening the established heightist ideology and

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<sup>33</sup> The concept of “hypo-masculinity” is generally understood as the opposite of hyper-masculinity. Instead of the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour, hypo-masculinity refers to the minimization, or an absence, of stereotypically masculine traits.

hegemonic norms within sport. It was revealed that these smaller male athletes were regularly stigmatized on account of their deviant bodies.

Despite the fact that media commentators tended to evaluate taller and smaller players differently during selected Olympic and FIFA World Cup action, i.e., the tallest athletes were habitually seen as more powerful and praiseworthy than the smallest athletes were, I do not always attribute such representational differences to any sort of cruel prejudice or bias towards undersized athletes. These impulses to classify smaller male athletes in a subordinate manner are partly derived from society's unequal system of power based on height, i.e., systemic heightism (Butera, 2008, p. 3). From that perspective, when media commentators and producers seemed to be unjustly critical of undersized soccer players or unduly complimentary of taller soccer players during the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup, such tendencies would not necessarily define them as unapologetic heightists. These seemingly unfair depictions of height can be partially explained by the internalization of commonsense heightism, i.e., the success of tallness myths.

On the other hand, although this internalization, or unconscious support, of tallness myths might help to explain the prevalence of heightist attitudes in sport and among the rest of society, it is a mistake to blame these myths entirely. Ordinary people should also take some responsibility for the perpetuation of heightist ideology. Otherwise, if we fail to account for how personally-held subjective beliefs about height relations can function to promote, or challenge, traditional tallness myths, then, our definition of 'ideology' becomes Althusserian in its application. It would presuppose that people are passive recipients of ideological thought and would reinforce elements of Althusser's (1971) determinant, almost fatalistic, concept of ideology, i.e., the assumption that ideology is practically inescapable. For that reason, a Gramscian approach to the concept of 'ideology' is considered to be more favourable. Gramsci's

(1992 [1975]) theory of hegemony, or ideology as struggle, lays a far greater emphasis on resistance. It presupposes that people are active recipients of ideological thought and that hegemonic ideology is alterable. His work suggests that though tallness myths can influence our everyday perceptions of physical stature, they do not completely determine them. Ordinary people are free to accept, or resist, the commonsense cultural ideals communicated by tallness myths.

But considering how difficult it can be to think outside, or against, a given hegemonic ideology, e.g., heightist ideology, ideological resistance is rarely an easy option. To demonstrate such a difficulty, it is worth mentioning how I myself, a short male, have also internalized some features of heightist logic. At one point in my viewing of the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup, it was noticed that Egidio Arévalo (1.68 m), of Uruguay, was visibly shorter than the other players. This discovery was made when the television camera focused-in on Arévalo and his teammates as they lined up side-by-side for the national anthems. Upon seeing this, even I could not help but almost cringe at the sight of Arévalo who seemed oddly out of place among his taller peers. He stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb. Some years earlier, I also remember watching a televised hockey game with my sister<sup>34</sup> and having listened to her describe an undersized male athlete, I do not recall who exactly, as "cute"—no doubt because of his smaller stature. Certainly, the fact that I nearly cringed at the sight of an atypically small athlete such as Arévalo during the 2010 World Cup or my noticing that my sister has in the past recognized such players only for their childlike cuteness serve as evidence of there being something amiss. These responses may be construed as both disparaging to smaller male athletes and serve as the

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<sup>34</sup> Admittedly, my sister is not—nor has she ever been—much of a sports fanatic.

reproduction of oppressive heightist discourses: they fail to challenge and are thus accepting of the oppressive hegemonic ideologies surrounding physical stature.

Compounding such difficulties to think outside or to properly resist heightist ideology is the extent to which society's height bias is culturally entrenched (Butera, 2008; Feldman, 1975 [1971]). Not only are features of 'heightism' evident in the everyday language we use, e.g., expressions like "to stand tall", "to look up [or down] to someone", and "to come up short" (Butera, 2008, p. 15), but as it was brought to my attention during the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament, heightist ideology is regularly embedded within everyday cultural symbols as well.

A remark by hockey commentator Ray Ferraro during Olympic hockey's bronze-medal game is considered to reinforce this embedded nature of heightist ideology and signs. He states: "Very few teams are happy with their silver medal because they were that close to standing on a podium of a different height"—a taller height. Without having stated it explicitly, it is then believed that Ferraro's words are exhibitiv of how Olympic podia can be seen as an ideological reinforcement of society's heightist premise. Considering that most sports podia are designed in such a way that the first place finishers always stand higher than those who finished second and third,<sup>35</sup> these designs tend to semiotically dwarf the accomplishments of second and third-place finishers by quite literally dwarfing how these "subordinates" are forced to stand in relation to the first place finisher(s).

Interestingly enough, Liszka (1989) uses this exact notion of the winner's podium to discuss the value of markedness theory. Using an experimental design, he looks at how different

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<sup>35</sup> In many cases, the second-place podium is also designed to be higher than the third-place podium. Other times, the second and third-place finishers will stand on podia of identical height—depending on architectural design.

bodily positions (e.g. left/right, front/back, elevated/non-elevated) and a person's sex can affect perceptions of social dominance. His data reveal that perceived social dominance is most likely to be associated with elevation, foreground, position on the right, and the male body (Liszka, 1989, p. 78). The elevated position, in particular, was found to hold relatively high rank among these associations, i.e., the elevated feature was consistently shown to represent dominance no matter what the variations of the other. According to Liszka (1989), this means that "A distinct representation of dominance can be obtained by [elevated position] alone" (p. 78). This is precisely the effect of an elevated winner's podium. Through its elevation, the winner's podium confers power onto the winning athlete(s) and reinforces their athletic superiority. To the victor go the spoils and the desirable position of social dominance, i.e., the tallest podium.

In summation, since the designs of most sports podia require that second and third-place finishers stand lower than first-place finishers, it is reasonable to assume that this requirement reinforces the way power is structured in terms of height. This notion communicates the idea, i.e., myth, that tallness is equivalent to excellence, power, strength, and success (Butera, 2008; Fichman & Goldberg, 2008). This 'sports podia' example is also revealing of how familiar symbols, e.g., a podium, can work to reify the ways in which physical stature and height are evaluated within society. As a symbol, the winner's podium can be interpreted as a surrogate for systemic or commonsense heightism: its elevation and the meaning derived from this elevation provide heightist ideology with a sort of tangible reality.

“I was told I would never make it because I’m too short. Well, I’m still too short...It doesn’t matter what your height is, it’s what’s in your heart”  
 — (Kirby Puckett, 1996, retirement speech)

## Conclusion

Having never really had the opportunity to play competitive sport as a young child, for a variety of reasons unrelated to my short physical stature, I personally cannot relate to most of the struggles expressed by smaller male athletes who play sports professionally. Many undersized professionals feel as though they have to work harder than most other athletes in order to be taken seriously, and almost all share stories of someone, e.g., a coach, scout, fellow player, or journalist, who has told them that they were “too small” (Keyes, 1980, p. 250).

Although I cannot personally relate to the extra adversity that most undersized male athletes claim to endure, i.e., I have never really experienced this oppression firsthand. Still I can say that as an avid sports fan, I have observed and continue to observe how easily some smaller players are stigmatized on a day-to-day basis. This stigmatizing effect is evident in how the dominant sports media repeatedly use ambivalent language (e.g. “He’s short, but he’s strong”) to trivialize or undercut the efforts of smaller athletes. It is also visible in how the dominant sports media continually infantilize smaller players by calling them “little” (Keyes, 1980). Such tendencies are liable to depict smaller athletic bodies as inferior, as deviant, as inadequate, etc.

This research has therefore been a way to explore a phenomenon that I have perceived for some time. It has appeared to me that in sports, as in other parts of Western societies, taller male bodies are consistently evaluated more highly than smaller ones. In my daily readings of the *Ottawa Citizen*’s ‘sports pages’ and routine viewing of TSN’s *SportsCentre*, I would regularly find that these spaces were almost entirely filled with news of men’s bodies far larger than my own—rarely was a professional male athlete of below-average height mentioned or seen. When

news of smaller male athletes was apparent, I also found that this news tended to emphasize the undersized player's atypical stature just as much, if not more, than their athletic achievements.<sup>36</sup> It seemed as if a smaller male athlete's physical stature and athletic status were almost always communicated inseparably.

What became clear from my research is that my initial impressions of how smaller hockey and soccer players are represented by the dominant sports media were confirmed. Not only did there appear to be a limited crop of smaller athletes selected to participate in either the 2010 men's Olympic ice hockey tournament or the 2010 men's FIFA World Cup,<sup>37</sup> but those undersized athletes who were invited tended to be represented as physically inferior, childlike and feminine. The tallest athletes were consistently represented as physically superior, larger than life and hyper-masculine. These depictions contribute to and reinforce evidence of commonsense heightism in the worlds of men's hockey and soccer respectively. They are revealing of normalized tendencies to privilege taller male bodies at the short man's expense, i.e., the promotion of heightist ideologies through sport.

Though the media discourse typically positions smaller male athletes in a subordinate manner, I did find examples of how undersized soccer players were sometimes praised during the 2010 World Cup. Sebastián Fernández (1.67 m) was praised for his "dash" (i.e. speed), Xavi (1.70 m) was called a "star", and Cesc Fàbregas (1.75 m) was once described as a "super little player". Yet as this Fàbregas example reveals, these casual references to smaller stature which

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<sup>36</sup> As an example of how a smaller player's physical stature and achievements can sometimes become inseparable, in gathering my research, I stumbled upon an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* entitled "Little man, big moments" (Traikos, 2011). While this article is mostly a positive story of an undersized hockey player's (i.e. Daniel Brière's) success, the author's multiple references to Brière's height demonstrate how a smaller athlete's ability and height are rarely separated. By referencing height, an implicit division between tall and smalls is also strengthened.

<sup>37</sup> Of the total 184 athletes studied, 127 of them (or roughly 70 per cent) measured at or above six feet tall. None of the 92 hockey players were listed as measuring below 5'10".



tended to accompany these suggestively positive statements (e.g. “super *little* player”) had the effect of diminishing or neutralizing the words conveying strength. While it is true that smaller soccer players did receive some verbal praise during World Cup coverage, I also found that such articulations of power and praise were usually tempered by the commentator’s use of ambivalent language. These conflicting messages about smaller athletes functioned as a way to deny these athletes adequate power. Undersized soccer players were also regularly disempowered during World Cup broadcasts through tendencies to be called “little” as in “Little Pedro” and “Little Xavi”—portraying them as delicate and childlike.

My research also revealed that depictions of the tallest soccer and hockey players tended to be loaded with considerable, even hyperbolic, praise. These taller athletes were constantly portrayed as big men with powerful bodies, i.e., there was little ambivalence in terms of how they were represented. Instead of being shown as delicate and childlike, taller hockey and soccer players were typically represented as strong and were thus linguistically granted adult status. During live World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey broadcasts, taller bodies were often glorified while smaller bodies were usually pathologized.

By framing physical stature in this manner, these views were consistent with society’s heightist premise. They functioned as a sort of endorsement of heightist ideology, even though it would be difficult to charge these sports commentators as being overtly or consciously heightist. But considering that even ‘unconscious support’ for an ideological world view, e.g., heightism, is still a form of “support” in its very essence, i.e., it demonstrates a failure to think outside and to challenge the traditional bounds of normativity, representations of physical stature were seen as heightist in this capacity.

Recognizing that there is this normalized tendency for people to discriminate against short people in sport and within society, it is felt that such a problem warrants attention and ought to be challenged. The fact alone that there are a number of smaller athletes who have been successful (e.g. soccer stars Diego Maradona (1.66 m), Lionel Messi (1.69 m), and Pelé (1.73 m)) does not mean that smaller players do not suffer discrimination by our athletic system. Many smaller athletes continue to be overlooked, underappreciated, and mocked because of their size. They are still frequently given short shrift (Keyes, 1980). Instead of unthinkingly absorbing this “myth of tallness”, i.e., a commonsense social bias towards tallness and against shortness, it is therefore important that sports commentators and producers—and society in general—take a step back and examine this heightist premise in a more critical manner. Only then can this hegemonic knowledge of taller and smaller athletes be redressed, and these imbalances of power in the sporting world be rectified.

In doing so, I would recommend that future research in this area should include studies of how male height is represented in different sports other than hockey and soccer. It may be advantageous, for example, to compare how heavyweight boxing champions are differentiated from lightweight boxing champions—where the distinctions between physical statures are more objectively clear. As I approached this study from a strictly unilingual basis, i.e., as an Anglophone, I would encourage future studies to compare how different cultures and speakers evaluate physical stature in the context of sport, e.g., Spanish-speaking or French-speaking professionals. This type of comparative research is then likely to reveal subtle linguistic nuances and important cultural findings. Lastly, as this study is only an interpretive textual analysis of World Cup soccer and Olympic hockey broadcasts, we cannot fully comprehend the extent to which sports media producers, commentators, coaches and players, can be influenced by

heightist ideology on a day-to-day basis. It is proposed that future research on this subject include interviews with people involved in the industries of hockey and soccer, e.g., interviews with smaller players, as a way to gather more information about their own personal experiences and exposure to governing heightist ideologies.

Finally, in writing this thesis I have learned that I myself, a self-identified short male, am not immune to the ideologies of systemic heightism, i.e., I too have internalized the myth of tallness. Growing up small, I was often dissatisfied with my own short stature and wished to be taller. For a time, I was a “self-hating shrimp” (Fichman & Goldberg, 2008). I now realize that in order to properly challenge society’s heightist premise and prevent heightism, short people must take pride in being small and stop being ashamed. Smaller athletes are no different. Should such a ‘transvaluation’ (Liszka, 1985, 1989) occur among all short people and undersized athletes, it is then theorized that others might also begin to see height differently. Contrary to Randy Newman’s (1977) controversial song, “Short People”, wherein he sings that “Short people got no reason to live”, it is hoped that a new perspective on height relations would give short people plenty of reasons to live—and enjoy playing sports—without fear of discrimination.

**Appendix 1**<sup>38</sup>Team Roster—Slovakia

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
7	<u>Ivan BARANKA</u>	19/05/1985	D	Spartak Moscow (KHL)	188/ 6'2"
8	<u>Martin CIBAK</u>	17/05/1980	F	Spartak Moscow (KHL)	185/ 6'1"
10	<u>Marian GABORIK</u>	14/02/1982	F	New York Rangers (NHL)	186/ 6'1"
14	<u>Andrej MESZAROS</u>	13/10/1985	D	Tampa Bay (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
15	<u>Jozef STUMPEL</u>	20/ 07/1972	F	Barys Astana (KHL)	190/ 6'3"
17	<u>Lubomir VISNOVSKY</u>	11/08/1976	D	Edmonton (NHL)	177/ 5'10"
18	<u>Miroslav SATAN</u>	22/10/1974	F	Boston (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
20	<u>Richard ZEDNIK</u>	06/01/1976	F	Lokomotiv Yaroslavl (KHL)	186/ 6'1"
23	<u>Lubos BARTECKO</u>	14/07/1976	F	Farjestads BK Karlstad (SEL)	183/ 6'0"
24	<u>Zigmund PALFFY</u>	05/05/1972	F	HK 36 Skalica (SE)	179/ 5'10"
26	<u>Michal HANDZUS</u>	11/03/1977	F	Los Angeles (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
31	<u>Peter BUDAJ</u>	18/09/1982	GK	Colorado (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
33	<u>Zdeno CHARA</u>	18/03/1977	D	Boston (NHL)	205/ 6'9"
35	<u>Rastislav STANA</u>	10/01/1980	GK	Severstal Cherepovets (KHL)	186/ 6'1"
38	<u>Pavol DEMITRA</u>	29/11/1974	F	Vancouver (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
41	<u>Jaroslav HALAK</u>	13/05/1985	GK	Montreal (NHL)	182/ 6'0"
44	<u>Andrej SEKERA</u>	08/06/1986	D	Buffalo (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
68	<u>Milan JURCINA</u>	07/06/1983	D	Columbus (NHL)	195/ 6'5"
77	<u>Martin STRBAK</u>	15/01/1975	D	HK MVD Balashikha (KHL)	191/ 6'3"
81	<u>Marian HOSSA</u>	12/01/1979	F	Chicago (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
82	<u>Tomas KOPECKY</u>	05/02/1982	F	Chicago (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
91	<u>Marcel HOSSA</u>	12/10/1981	F	Dinamo Riga (KHL)	187/ 6'2"
92	<u>Branko RADIVOJEVIC</u>	24/11/1980	F	Spartak Moscow (KHL)	187/ 6'1"

**Coach:** Jan Filc (SVK)

Team Roster—Finland

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
5	<u>Lasse KUKKONEN</u>	18/09/1981	D	Avangard Omsk (KHL)	184/ 6'0"
6	<u>Sami SALO</u>	02/09/1974	D	Vancouver (NHL)	192/ 6'4"
8	<u>Teemu SELANNE</u>	03/07/1970	F	Anaheim (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
9	<u>Mikko KOIVU</u>	12/03/1983	F	Minnesota (NHL)	189/ 6'2"

<sup>38</sup> Statistics taken from the publicly accessible International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) website at: <http://www.iihf.com/channels10/olympics-2010/teams.html>

10	<u>Niklas HAGMAN</u>	05/12/1979	F	Calgary (NHL)	184/ 6'0"
11	<u>Saku KOIVU</u>	23/11/1974	F	Anaheim (NHL)	179/ 5'10"
12	<u>Olli JOKINEN</u>	05/12/1978	F	New York Rangers (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
15	<u>Tuomo RUUTU</u>	16/02/1983	F	Carolina (NHL)	184/ 6'0"
16	<u>Ville PELTONEN</u>	24/05/1973	F	Dynamo Minsk (KHL)	180/ 5'11"
18	<u>Sami LEPISTO</u>	17/10/1984	D	Phoenix (NHL)	178/ 5'10"
20	<u>Antti MIETTINEN</u>	03/07/1980	F	Minnesota (NHL)	182/ 6'0"
21	<u>Janne NISKALA</u>	22/09/1981	D	Frolunda (SEL)	183/ 6'0"
25	<u>Joni PITKANEN</u>	19/09/1983	D	Carolina (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
26	<u>Jere LEHTINEN</u>	24/06/1973	F	Dallas (NHL)	182/ 6'0"
30	<u>Antero NIITTYMAKI</u>	18/06/1980	GK	Tampa Bay (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
32	<u>Toni LYDMAN</u>	25/09/1977	D	Buffalo (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
33	<u>Niklas BACKSTROM</u>	13/02/1978	GK	Minnesota (NHL)	184/ 6'0"
34	<u>Miikka KIPRUSOFF</u>	26/10/1976	GK	Calgary (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
37	<u>Jarkko RUUTU</u>	23/08/1975	F	Ottawa (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
39	<u>Niko KAPANEN</u>	29/04/1978	F	AK Bars Kazan (KHL)	177/ 5'10"
44	<u>Kimmo TIMONEN</u>	18/03/1975	D	Philadelphia (NHL)	178/ 5'10"
51	<u>Valtteri FILPPULA</u>	20/03/1984	F	Detroit (NHL)	182/ 6'0"
62	<u>Jarkko IMMONEN</u>	19/04/1982	F	AK Bars Kazan (KHL)	183/ 6'0"

**Coach:** Jukka Jalonen (FIN)

#### Team Roster—United States

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
3	<u>Jack JOHNSON</u>	13/01/1987	D	Los Angeles (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
4	<u>Tim GLEASON</u>	29/01/1983	D	Carolina (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
6	<u>Erik JOHNSON</u>	21/03/1988	D	St. Louis (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
9	<u>Zach PARISE</u>	28/07/1984	F	New Jersey (NHL)	180/ 5'11"
12	<u>Ryan MALONE</u>	01/12/1979	F	Tampa Bay (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
15	<u>Jamie LANGENBRUNNER</u>	24/07/1975	F	New Jersey (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
16	<u>Joe PAVELSKI</u>	11/07/1984	F	San Jose (NHL)	180/ 5'11"
17	<u>Ryan KESLER</u>	31/08/1984	F	Vancouver (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
19	<u>Ryan WHITNEY</u>	19/02/1983	D	Anaheim (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
20	<u>Ryan SUTER</u>	21/01/1985	D	Nashville (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
23	<u>Chris DRURY</u>	20/08/1976	F	New York Rangers (NHL)	178/ 5'10"
24	<u>Ryan CALLAHAN</u>	21/03/1985	F	New York Rangers (NHL)	180/ 5'11"
26	<u>Paul STASTNY</u>	27/12/1985	F	Colorado (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
28	<u>Brian RAFALSKI</u>	28/09/1973	D	Detroit (NHL)	178/ 5'10"

29	<u>Jonathan QUICK</u>	21/01/1986	GK	Los Angeles (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
30	<u>Tim THOMAS</u>	15/04/1974	GK	Boston (NHL)	180/ 5'11"
32	<u>Dustin BROWN</u>	04/11/1984	F	Los Angeles (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
39	<u>Ryan MILLER</u>	17/07/1980	GK	Buffalo (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
42	<u>David BACKES</u>	01/05/1984	F	St. Louis (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
44	<u>Brooks ORPIK</u>	26/09/1980	D	Pittsburgh (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
54	<u>Bobby RYAN</u>	17/03/1987	F	Anaheim (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
81	<u>Phil KESSEL</u>	02/10/1987	F	Toronto (NHL)	180/ 5'11"
88	<u>Patrick KANE</u>	19/11/1988	F	Chicago (NHL)	178/ 5'10"

**Coach:** Ron Wilson (USA)

#### Team Roster—Canada

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
1	<u>Roberto LUONGO</u>	04/04/1979	GK	Vancouver (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
2	<u>Duncan KEITH</u>	16/07/1983	D	Chicago (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
6	<u>Shea WEBER</u>	14/08/1985	D	Nashville (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
7	<u>Brent SEABROOK</u>	20/04/1985	D	Chicago (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
8	<u>Drew DOUGHTY</u>	08/12/1989	D	Los Angeles (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
10	<u>Brenden MORROW</u>	16/01/1979	F	Dallas (NHL)	183/ 6'0"
11	<u>Patrick MARLEAU</u>	15/09/1979	F	San Jose (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
12	<u>Jarome IGINLA</u>	01/07/1977	F	Calgary (NHL)	186/ 6'1"
15	<u>Dany HEATLEY</u>	21/01/1981	F	San Jose (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
16	<u>Jonathan TOEWS</u>	19/05/1979	F	Chicago (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
18	<u>Mike RICHARDS</u>	11/02/1985	F	Philadelphia (NHL)	181/ 5'11"
19	<u>Joe THORNTON</u>	02/07/1979	F	San Jose (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
20	<u>Chris PRONGER</u>	10/10/1974	D	Philadelphia (NHL)	198/ 6'6"
21	<u>Eric STAAL</u>	29/10/1984	F	Carolina (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
22	<u>Dan BOYLE</u>	12/07/1976	D	San Jose (NHL)	181/ 5'11"
24	<u>Corey PERRY</u>	16/05/1985	F	Anaheim (NHL)	191/ 6'3"
27	<u>Scott NIEDERMAYER</u>	31/08/1973	D	Anaheim (NHL)	185/ 6'1"
29	<u>Marc-Andre FLEURY</u>	28/11/1984	GK	Pittsburgh (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
30	<u>Martin BRODEUR</u>	06/05/1972	GK	New Jersey (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
37	<u>Patrice BERGERON</u>	24/07/1985	F	Boston (NHL)	188/ 6'2"
51	<u>Ryan GETZLAF</u>	10/05/1985	F	Anaheim (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
61	<u>Rick NASH</u>	16/06/1984	F	Columbus (NHL)	193/ 6'4"
87	<u>Sidney CROSBY</u>	07/08/1987	F	Pittsburgh (NHL)	181/ 5'11"

**Coach:** Mike Babcock (CAN)

**Appendix 2**<sup>39</sup>**Squad List—Uruguay**

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
1	<u>Fernando MUSLERA</u>	16/06/1986	GK	Lazio (ITA)	190/ 6'3"
2	<u>Diego LUGANO</u>	02/11/1980	DF	Fenerbahce (TUR)	188/ 6'2"
3	<u>Diego GODIN</u>	16/02/1986	DF	Villarreal (ESP)	185/ 6'1"
4	<u>Jorge FUCILE</u>	19/11/1984	DF	Porto (POR)	177/ 5'11"
5	<u>Walter GARGANO</u>	23/07/1984	MF	Napoli (ITA)	168/ 5'6"
6	<u>Mauricio VICTORINO</u>	11/10/1982	DF	Univ. de Chile (CHI)	182/ 6'0"
7	<u>Edinson CAVANI</u>	14/02/1987	FW	Palermo (ITA)	188/ 6'2"
8	<u>Sebastian EGUREN</u>	08/01/1981	MF	AIK Stockholm (SWE)	186/ 6'1"
9	<u>Luis SUAREZ</u>	24/01/1987	FW	Ajax (NED)	181/ 5'11"
10	<u>Diego FORLAN</u>	19/05/1979	FW	Atletico Madrid (ESP)	181/ 5'11"
11	<u>Alvaro PEREIRA</u>	28/11/1985	MF	Porto (POR)	182/ 6'0"
12	<u>Juan CASTILLO</u>	17/04/1978	GK	Deportivo Cali (COL)	181/ 5'11"
13	<u>Sebastian ABREU</u>	17/10/1976	FW	Botafogo (BRA)	193/ 6'4"
14	<u>Nicolas LODEIRO</u>	21/03/1989	MF	Ajax (NED)	173/ 5'8"
15	<u>Diego PEREZ</u>	18/05/1980	MF	Monaco (FRA)	176/ 5'9"
16	<u>Maximiliano PEREIRA</u>	08/06/1984	DF	Benfica (POR)	173/ 5'8"
17	<u>Egidio AREVALO</u>	01/01/1982	MF	Penarol (URU)	168/ 5'6"
18	<u>Ignacio GONZALEZ</u>	14/05/1982	MF	Valencia (ESP)	180/ 5'11"
19	<u>Andres SCOTTI</u>	14/12/1975	DF	Colo Colo (CHI)	183/ 6'0"
20	<u>Alvaro FERNANDEZ</u>	11/10/1985	MF	Univ. de Chile (CHI)	185/ 6'1"
21	<u>Sebastian FERNANDEZ</u>	23/05/1985	FW	Banfield (ARG)	167/ 5'6"
22	<u>Martin CACERES</u>	07/04/1987	DF	Juventus (ITA)	178/ 5'10"
23	<u>Martin SILVA</u>	25/03/1983	GK	Defensor Sporting (URU)	187/ 6'2"

**Coach:** Oscar Tabarez (URU)

**Squad List—Germany**

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
1	<u>Manuel NEUER</u>	27/03/1986	GK	Schalke 04 (GER)	190/ 6'3"
2	<u>Marcell JANSEN</u>	04/11/1985	MF	Hamburger SV (GER)	190/ 6'3"
3	<u>Arne FRIEDRICH</u>	29/05/1979	DF	Hertha Berlin (GER)	185/ 6'1"
4	<u>Dennis AOGO</u>	14/01/1987	DF	Hamburger SV (GER)	184/ 6'0"

<sup>39</sup> Statistics taken from the publicly accessible 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa website at: <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/archive/southafrica2010/teams/index.html>

5	<u>Serdar TASCI</u>	24/04/1987	DF	VfB Stuttgart (GER)	186/ 6'1"
6	<u>Sami KHEDIRA</u>	04/04/1987	MF	VfB Stuttgart (GER)	189/ 6'2"
7	<u>Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER</u>	01/08/1984	MF	Bayern Munich (GER)	180/ 5'11"
8	<u>Mesut OEZIL</u>	15/10/1988	MF	Werder Bremen (GER)	182/ 6'0"
9	<u>Stefan KIESSLING</u>	25/01/1984	FW	Bayer Leverkusen (GER)	191/ 6'3"
10	<u>Lukas PODOLSKI</u>	04/06/1985	FW	FC Cologne (GER)	180/ 5'11"
11	<u>Miroslav KLOSE</u>	09/06/1978	FW	Bayern Munich (GER)	182/ 6'0"
12	<u>Tim WIESE</u>	17/12/1981	GK	Werder Bremen (GER)	193/ 6'4"
13	<u>Thomas MUELLER</u>	13/09/1989	MF	Bayern Munich (GER)	186/ 6'1"
14	<u>Holger BADSTUBER</u>	13/03/1989	DF	Bayern Munich (GER)	190/ 6'3"
15	<u>Piotr TROCHOWSKI</u>	22/03/1984	MF	Hamburger SV (GER)	168/ 5'6"
16	<u>Philipp LAHM</u>	11/11/1983	DF	Bayern Munich (GER)	170/ 5'7"
17	<u>Per MERTESACKER</u>	29/09/1984	DF	Werder Bremen (GER)	196/ 6'5"
18	<u>Toni KROOS</u>	04/01/1990	MF	Bayer Leverkusen (GER)	180/ 5'11"
19	<u>CACAU</u>	27/03/1981	FW	VfB Stuttgart (GER)	180/ 5'11"
20	<u>Jerome BOATENG</u>	03/09/1988	DF	Hamburger SV (GER)	192/ 6'3"
21	<u>Marko MARIN</u>	13/03/1989	MF	Werder Bremen (GER)	169/ 5'7"
22	<u>Hans Joerg BUTT</u>	28/05/1974	GK	Bayern Munich (GER)	191/ 6'3"
23	<u>Mario GOMEZ</u>	10/07/1985	FW	Bayern Munich (GER)	189/ 6'2"

**Coach:** Joachim LOEW (GER)

#### Squad List—Netherlands

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
1	<u>Maarten STEKELENBURG</u>	22/09/1982	GK	Ajax (NED)	197/ 6'5"
2	<u>Gregory VAN DER WIEL</u>	03/02/1988	DF	Ajax (NED)	180/5'11"
3	<u>John HEITINGA</u>	15/11/1983	DF	Everton (ENG)	182/ 6'0"
4	<u>Joris MATHIJSEN</u>	05/04/1980	DF	Hamburger SV (GER)	182/ 6'0"
5	<u>Giovanni VAN BRONCKHORST</u>	05/02/1975	DF	Feyenoord (NED)	176/ 5'9"
6	<u>Mark VAN BOMMEL</u>	22/04/1977	MF	Bayern Munich (GER)	187/ 6'2"
7	<u>Dirk KUYT</u>	22/07/1980	FW	Liverpool (ENG)	183/ 6'0"
8	<u>Nigel DE JONG</u>	30/11/1984	MF	Manchester City (ENG)	174/ 5'9"
9	<u>Robin VAN PERSIE</u>	06/08/1983	FW	Arsenal (ENG)	184/ 6'0"
10	<u>Wesley SNEIJDER</u>	09/06/1984	MF	Inter (ITA)	170/ 5'7"
11	<u>Arjen ROBBEN</u>	23/01/1984	FW	Bayern Munich (GER)	180/5'11"
12	<u>Khalid BOULAHROUZ</u>	28/12/1981	DF	VfB Stuttgart (GER)	184/ 6'0"
13	<u>Andre OOIJER</u>	11/07/1974	DF	PSV Eindhoven (NED)	184/ 6'0"



14	<u>Demy DE ZEEUW</u>	26/05/1983	MF	Ajax (NED)	174/ 5'9"
15	<u>Edson BRAAFHEID</u>	08/04/1983	DF	Celtic (SCO)	174/ 5'9"
16	<u>Michel VORM</u>	20/10/1983	GK	Utrecht (NED)	182/ 6'0"
17	<u>Eljero ELIA</u>	13/02/1987	FW	Hamburger SV (GER)	177/5'10"
18	<u>Stijn SCHAARS</u>	11/01/1984	MF	AZ Alkmaar (NED)	178/5'10"
19	<u>Ryan BABEL</u>	19/12/1986	FW	Liverpool (ENG)	185/ 6'1"
20	<u>Ibrahim AFELLAY</u>	02/04/1986	MF	PSV Eindhoven (NED)	184/ 6'0"
21	<u>Klaas Jan HUNTELAAR</u>	12/08/1983	FW	AC Milan (ITA)	185/ 6'1"
22	<u>Sander BOSCHKER</u>	20/10/1970	GK	Twente Enschede	185/ 6'1"
23	<u>Rafael VAN DER VAART</u>	11/02/1983	MF	Real Madrid (ESP)	178/5'10"

**Coach:** Bert VAN MARWIJK (NED)

### Squad List—Spain

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Height</b>
1	<u>Iker CASILLAS</u>	20/05/1981	GK	Real Madrid (ESP)	184/ 6'0"
2	<u>Raul ALBIOL</u>	04/09/1985	DF	Real Madrid (ESP)	187/ 6'2"
3	<u>Gerard PIQUE</u>	02/02/1987	DF	Barcelona (ESP)	192/ 6'3"
4	<u>Carlos MARCHENA</u>	31/07/1979	DF	Valencia (ESP)	182/ 6'0"
5	<u>Carles PUYOL</u>	13/04/1978	DF	Barcelona (ESP)	178/ 5'10"
6	<u>Andres INIESTA</u>	11/05/1984	MF	Barcelona (ESP)	170/ 5'7"
7	<u>David VILLA</u>	03/12/1981	FW	Valencia (ESP)	175/ 5'9"
8	<u>XAVI</u>	25/01/1980	MF	Barcelona (ESP)	170/ 5'7"
9	<u>Fernando TORRES</u>	20/03/1984	FW	Liverpool (ENG)	181/ 5'11"
10	<u>Cesc FABREGAS</u>	04/05/1987	MF	Arsenal (ENG)	175/ 5'9"
11	<u>Joan CAPDEVILA</u>	03/02/1978	DF	Villarreal (ESP)	182/ 6'0"
12	<u>Victor VALDES</u>	14/01/1982	GK	Barcelona (ESP)	183/ 6'0"
13	<u>Juan Manuel MATA</u>	28/04/1988	FW	Valencia (ESP)	174/ 5'9"
14	<u>XABI ALONSO</u>	25/11/1981	MF	Real Madrid (ESP)	183/ 6'0"
15	<u>SERGIO RAMOS</u>	30/03/1986	DF	Real Madrid (ESP)	183/ 6'0"
16	<u>Sergio BUSQUETS</u>	16/07/1988	MF	Barcelona (ESP)	189/ 6'2"
17	<u>Alvaro ARBELOA</u>	17/01/1983	DF	Real Madrid (ESP)	184/ 6'0"
18	<u>PEDRO</u>	28/07/1987	FW	Barcelona (ESP)	169/ 5'7"
19	<u>Fernando LLORENTE</u>	26/02/1985	FW	Athletic Bilbao (ESP)	194/ 6'4"
20	<u>Javier MARTINEZ</u>	02/09/1988	MF	Athletic Bilbao (ESP)	190/ 6'3"
21	<u>DAVID SILVA</u>	08/01/1986	MF	Valencia (ESP)	177/ 5'10"
22	<u>Jesus NAVAS</u>	21/11/1985	FW	Sevilla FC (ESP)	172/ 5'8"
23	<u>Pepe REINA</u>	31/08/1982	GK	Liverpool (ENG)	187/ 6'2"

**Coach:** Vicente DEL BOSQUE (ESP)

## **Glossary of terms**

**Aggrandization-** the act or process of aggrandizing, i.e., to treat someone as greater or bigger than they really are.

**Carnavalesque-** a term adapted from Mikhail Bakhtin's (1965) concept of "carnival"; the term carnivalesque implies an inversion of hierarchical binary oppositions.

**Concessive clause-** it is a subordinate clause in grammar that denotes a tension or contradiction between two clauses thus joined, e.g. "Although he was tired, he could not get to sleep".

**Connotation-** refers to the range of further associations that a sign carries in addition to its literal meaning; it is the sign's intension.

**Denotation-** refers to the common-sense, obvious and explicit meaning of a sign; it is the sign's extension.

**Deviant-** refers to a person or thing that deviates markedly from an accepted cultural norm.

**Discursive realism-** refers to Peirce's idea that reality exists independent of anyone's individual or specific opinion of it, yet dependent on, representation in general.

**Dynamical interpretant-** a concept from Peirce's semiotic theory. It refers to the actually occurring interpretant, i.e., the actual meaning effect at some point in time and place.

**Dynamical object-** a concept from Peirce's semiotic theory. It is the Object outside of the Sign, i.e., the Object as it really is or the thing itself.

**False consciousness-** in Marxist theory, this concept usually refers to a failure to recognize the object of one's oppression or exploitation. This is usually marked by oppressed individuals and groups who are unknowingly supportive of the interests of the oppressor class.

**Feminization-** the act or process of feminizing, i.e., treating someone or something in a feminine way. When applied to men, e.g., short men, the term "feminization" is practically synonymous with the concept of "emasculatation", i.e., a deprivation of manly strength and power.

**Gender order-** refers to a socially-influenced hierarchical structure that correlates gender with power, or its lack. This concept investigates how dominant notions of masculinity and femininity are shaped through power relations.

**Hegemonic masculinity-** the most respected, desired, and dominant form of masculine identity within a given culture. In sport, hegemonic masculinity is usually linked with male aggression, power, muscularity, suppression of fear, and heterosexuality.

**Hegemony-** usually refers to the power of established institutions to impose a set of values, or a way of thinking, on those below: it is 'ideology as struggle'.

**Heightism-** a prejudice or discrimination based on human height.

**Heightist premise-** refers to a culturally innate height bias in American society. According to this premise, to be tall is to be good and to be short is to be stigmatized.

**Hierarchy of naming-** refers to a supposed linguistic hierarchy of naming patterns in sport. Within this hierarchy, (white) male athletes are thought to be the most privileged while female athletes are the least privileged group, i.e., they are often linguistically denied power.

**Hyperbole-** a figure of speech, or rhetorical device, that uses exaggeration in order to create a strong emotional response.

**Hyper-femininity-** refers to the exaggeration of female stereotypical behaviour. In the context of media, exaggeration of one's femininity often translates into a symbolic depreciation of power.

**Hyper-masculinity-** refers to the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour. In the context of media, this term often alludes to exaggerated/macho/unrealistic portrayals of what it means to be a man.

**Hypo-masculinity-** refers to the minimization or absence of male stereotypical behaviour.

**Icon-** part of Peirce's semiotic; an icon is a sign whose connection with its object is a matter of similarity, or likeness (e.g. a map or diagram).

**Ideological state apparatuses-** coined by Louis Althusser (1971); it usually refers to the ways in which institutions of the state (e.g. education, religion, mass media) work to perpetuate and manufacture consent for dominant ideologies.

**Ideology-** a body of ideas that reflect the beliefs and interests of a society; successful ideologies present themselves as natural and unchallengeable.

**Immediate interpretant-** a concept of Peirce's semiotic theory that refers to a range of possible interpretants of a given sign at a given time, i.e., the basic sense of something even before it is concretely and historically interpreted by anyone.

**Immediate object-** refers to a concept from Peirce's semiotic theory. It is the Object within the Sign, i.e., the Object as it represented or its mental representation.

**Index-** part of Peirce's semiotic; an index is a sign whose connection with its object is a matter of direct causation (e.g. a weathercock or a symptom of an illness).

**Infantilization-** the act or process of infantilizing, i.e., treating a person as a child.

**Inferiority complex-** refers to a feeling that one is inferior to others in some way.

**Interest theory-** a main approach to the study of ideology; according to this theory, ideology is restricted to the strong and only serves the interests of the socially powerful.

**Interpellation-** a term coined by Louis Althusser (1971); it refers to the process by which individuals are “hailed” or recruited by social forces to assume a specific identity.

**Interpretant-** refers to an element of Peirce’s triadic theory of the sign. The interpretant is the proper significate—or meaning—effect generated by a sign.

**Markedness-** a linguistic term that refers to a specific kind of asymmetry relationship between oppositional pairs (i.e. marked and unmarked terms).

**Meiosis-** refers to an expressive and deliberate understatement used for rhetorical effect; it is the opposite of “hyperbole”.

**Myth-** refers to a specific type of speech that aims to transform history into nature through processes of naturalization. Myths are continually told and retold.

**Mythology of tallness-** a term used by Laura Butera (2008) which refers to the unequal system of power based on height. The mythology of tallness usually privileges the tall body and oppresses the short one.

**Napoleon complex-** a type of inferiority complex named after Napoleon Bonaparte. A Napoleon complex is usually marked by a tendency for a short man to compensate for his height by using aggressive behaviour.

**Normal-** refers to a person or thing that conforms to the accepted cultural norm.

**Object-** refers to an element of Peirce’s triadic theory of the sign. It is that which the sign represents and it is sometimes called the “referent”.

**“Play big”-** a sports cliché that generally applies to smaller athletes. It is usually used in the context of an undersized athlete who appears to impress beyond their unassuming physical stature (e.g. “He’s not a big man, but he sure plays like one”).

**Referent-** see “Object”.

**Representamen-** refers to an element of Peirce’s triadic theory of the sign. A representamen is understood as that which represents the denoted object. It is also sometimes called the “sign”.

**Representation-** refers to the technical name for Peirce’s triadic ‘sign-object-interpretant’ relation. It is the process by which a sign denotes its object and generates its interpretant (i.e. its meaning effect).

**Semiology-** usually refers to Ferdinand de Saussure’s classical term for semiotics, i.e., the study of signs within society.

**Semiosis-** a term introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce; it refers to sign action which stems from the tri-relation between sign, object and interpretant. It is the process whereby mediately an object determines an interpretant.

**“Short-but” syndrome-** a term used to describe how bigger people sometimes use ambivalent language when referring to smaller people (e.g. “He’s short but he’s strong”; “He may be small, but he’s got the heart of a lion”). It is a linguistic condition that affects short-statured individuals.

**Sign-** in Saussure’s semiology, a sign is an association between signifier and signified (see “signifier” and “signified”). In Peirce’s semiotic, a sign may refer to the tri-relation between object, representamen, and interpretant, or it might simply refer to a representamen—as “sign” and “representamen” are sometimes used interchangeably. (See “representamen”).

**Signifier-** refers to a sign’s form in Saussure’s semiology (e.g. alphabetical letters and words).

**Signified-** refers to a sign’s concept in Saussure’s semiology (e.g. mental images associated with words).

**Stereotype-** a popular held belief about a specific social group or individual. Stereotypes sometimes carry a fraction of truth but are usually inaccurate generalizations.

**Stigma-** refers to an attribute that is deeply discrediting. A stigma is sometimes referred to as failing, a shortcoming, or a handicap.

**Strain theory-** a main approach to the study of ideology; according to this theory, ideology is able to serve the interests of both the socially weak and socially powerful. It is an equilibrium model in this sense.

**Symbol-** part of Peirce’s semiotic; a symbol is a sign whose connection with its object is a matter of convention, agreement, or rule (e.g. a word in the English language or a flag).

**Symbolic erasure-** refers to a recuperative strategy used in popular culture; it attempts to control the threats of Othered bodies by denying them adequate representation.

**Transvaluation-** a semiotic term proposed by Litzka (1985, 1989); it refers to an inversion, or re-evaluation, of traditional hierarchical values and norms. Litzka’s use of the term is distinguished from Nietzsche’s (1895) earlier concept of the “transvaluation of all values”.

**Value-** part of Saussure’s semiology; it refers to the idea that signs have some kind of worth. This worth is usually determined by a sign’s relation to its oppositional signs.

**Villainization-** the act or process of vilifying, i.e., treating a person as a villain.

**Zero sign-** refers to the semiotic principle that even silence can have a communicative function, i.e., a person’s silence can sometimes act as a very powerful sign.

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