

Pink-Blue Gender Labelling: An Overview of the Origins of Inequality in Women's Wrestling

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ABSTRACT The objective of this paper involves two related ideas. The first one is to provide a historical overview of women's wrestling from ancient times until the present day. The second one is to determine the influence of historical context on the development of women's wrestling and, more generally, on the position of women in a wider sports sphere. The historical overview provides an example of women's wrestling in Sparta, Rome, Antioch and China. The overview examines women's positions within the institutions that nurtured wrestling in Nubia, Japan, India, Iran, Turkey and Greece. The correlations are then drawn between women's wrestling in the ancient and the modern worlds. Women's roles in wrestling have always been closely related to the position of women within sport, as well as to their position in society in general. With the exception of women's wrestling in Antioch, all other examples presented depict varying states of sexual inequality within this sport.

INTRODUCTION

"No sport is older or more widely distributed than wrestling, often in highly local styles that have persisted to the present day" (Hoiberg and Ramchandani 2000). The evidence of the ancient sport of wrestling has been found on all continents, a small amount of which relates to women. Throughout history, the role of women in wrestling has been changing depending on religious, cultural, and social influences (Benn et al. 2010; McCrone 1988). In the rich and widespread history of wrestling, women's stories give testament to the diverse religious, cultural, and/or social contexts through which they became involved in wrestling.

Female wrestling, as we know it today, began in the early 1980s (Green and Svinth 2010). Women first competed in the wrestling World Championships in 1987. It was not until 2004 that they wrestled, for the first time in history, at the Olympic Games in Athens. The history of women's wrestling, as indicated on official websites of various wrestling clubs, indicates that women have had a longstanding presence in the sport. These documents give us the impression that women's wrestling reflects the historical posi-

tion of women in society as a whole. Continuing this line of thought, it is worth noting that men first wrestled at the Olympic Games in 708 BC (Poliakoff 1987) – a sporting event which would not be made available to women for another 2,712 years (Green and Svinth 2010). The question may therefore be framed as follows: if society considers women's role in wrestling to be equal to that of men, why they did not appear on the Olympic stage before 2004?

The history of wrestling dates back to the Mesopotamian civilization (Strommenger and Hirmer 1964). In the rich collection of artefacts from the history of wrestling in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China and India, there are almost no motifs of women wrestling, except for that of Atlanta and Peleus depicted on a Greek vase from the sixth century BC; and even this example is drawn from Greek mythology rather than real life. There are individual historical examples of women wrestling, such as Khutulun, the wrestler princess of the Mongol empire (Clements 2007; Polo et al. 1993). Also, the records of Greek, Roman and Arab philosophers and historians mention, in brief, some examples of women wrestling. An interesting question here concerns the position of women in wrestling across different civilizations, according to the historical data. In spite of significant changes that have been going on, lately, in sport (referring to a growing number of women's participation (Anorve et al. 2015), women still tend to occupy unequal position as their male colleagues in many sports (Hedenborg 2015; Tolvhed 2015). The objective of

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this paper is therefore to provide a historical overview of women's wrestling, from ancient times until the present day, as well as to determine the influence of historical context on the development of women's wrestling and, more generally, on the position of women in the wider sporting sphere.

Women in Wrestling: A Historical Overview

In Ancient Greece, women were excluded from wrestling – the most popular sport. The only place where women were allowed to practice wrestling in schools was Sparta, where attitudes towards women differed significantly from those in the rest of Greece. The reason for Spartan women being allowed to wrestle, however, was unrelated to considerations of sexual equality (Fleck and Hanssen 2007). Lycurgus of Sparta (c. 820 – 730 BC), a lawmaker and founder of Spartan society, was responsible for designating women's roles. Although women in Sparta had a much more important status than women in the rest of Greece, their right to wrestle was primarily related to reproduction. According to a Greek historian Xenophon (c. 430 – 354 BC), Lycurgus believed that motherhood was the most important female role (Lipka 2002). It was therefore believed that women should wrestle as much as men, as two strong parents would result in the desired strong offspring (Moore 1975). Many philosophers cite Lycurgus saying that:

“But Lycurgus thought the labour of slave women sufficient to supply clothing. He believed motherhood to be the most important function of freeborn woman. Therefore, in the first place, he insisted on physical training for the female no less than for the male sex: moreover, he instituted races and trials of strength for women competitors as for men, believing that if both parents are strong they produce more vigorous offspring” (Xenophon 1925: Chapter 4.6.14.).

Furthermore, a Greek historian Plutarch (45 – 120 BC) states that Lycurgus advised women to run, wrestle, and throw the javelin and the discus. He also believed that women should be strong in order to bear labour more easily (Duff 2002). Women in Spartan high schools wrestled naked, just like men. Unfortunately, there are only a few records documenting this. The evidence suggests, however, that women wrestled male opponents. Since the basic idea was to toughen women up in order to help them give birth more

easily, as well as to create stronger future generations, women's wrestling had to be hard and brutal. For these reasons, women were matched against men (Plutarch, Ovid, Cicero).

“But even to the women Lycurgus paid all possible attention. He made the maidens exercise their bodies in running, wrestling, casting the discus, and hurling the javelin, in order that the fruit of their wombs might have vigorous root in vigorous bodies and come to better maturity, and that they themselves might come with vigour to the fullness of their times, and struggle successfully and easily with the pangs of child-birth” (Plutarch 2009: 107).

“So Theseus, who knew all this, deserved to be on fire, and you were seen to be a prize worthy of such a hero, when, according to your people's custom, you exercised, naked, in the gleaming gymnasium, a woman among the naked men. I praise the fact he took you: I'm amazed he ever returned you a prize so great should have been held forever” (Ovid 2001: 138 – 143).

“The Spartan women, with a manly air, Fatigues and dangers with their husbands share, They in fantastic sports have no delight, Partners with them in exercise and fight” (Cicero 1824: 97).

In Ancient Rome, *palestre*, situated in luxurious spas, were used as wrestling arenas. These spas looked very much like modern gyms. Other visitors – non-wrestlers – used them for various purposes including sauna and massage. Women had access, but wrestling was still considered inappropriate for them. There are numerous mosaics of wrestlers in spas all over the Roman Empire, but not a single one which depicts women. Women were not allowed to practise wrestling in the field of Mars, near Rome, where the first public arena was situated. However, women still had the privilege to die in the gladiatorial arena. To this end, they were allowed to practise wrestling in order to give a better performance for the bloodthirsty audience (Green and Svinth 2010). Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis (1 – 2 AD), a Roman poet known in English as Juvenal, informs us that women who wrestled in the gladiators' camps were observed with a smile, and never taken seriously as wrestlers (Lewis and Lewis 2012).

In Satire 6.246 – 267, Juvenal mentions *feminum ceroma* – women wrestling (ceroma is wrestling clay floor – wrestling ring) as oxymoron. Wrestling and other gymnastic pursuits were,

despite limited participation by women, essentially masculine activities (Watson and Watson 2014). Juvenal may also be invoking the common view of exercises as unwholesome Hellenic practice, unbecoming and indecent for a woman (Becker and Metcalfe 1873; Watson and Watson 2014).

The writings of Ioannes Malalasa, a Greek chronicler from Antioch (c. 491 – 578), tell a different story of women's wrestling. In the period from 41 AD to 521 AD, from the reign of Roman emperor Justinian I to the reign of Byzantine emperor Justinian I, the Olympic ceremonies were held in Daphne (formerly Antioch, today Syria) (Hornum 1993). Malalasa describes Syrian women wrestlers taking part in the Olympics in Daphne.

“Young people of noble birth from every city and country district would come to the sacred contest of the Olympic festival to compete under a vow, and they matched themselves against each other. They conducted themselves chastely with great moderation and received no gain from any source. They were rich and had their own slaves as attendants, each according to his wealth. Many of them were girls. They used to bring much gold from their native city. But they competed because of their oath and their vow and in order to win glory in their own city. And they come in a competitive spirit and with a formidable reputation. Some wrestled, some ran, some played the trumpet, some took part in the pankration, others fought in boxing matches wearing box-wood finger-guards, others drove chariots with young horses, while others sing songs from tragedy. There are also virgin girls who practised philosophy and who are present under a vow of chastity, competing wrestling in leggings, running, declaiming and reciting various Hellenic hymns. These women fought against woman and the competition was fierce whether in the wrestling, the races or the recitation. Any one among them, as they say, whether a woman or a young man, who was crowned as victor amid the exclamations of the holy populace would remain chaste till the end of his life, for immediately after the contest he would be ordained and become priest. Equally the philosopher virgins who were crowned would become priestesses after the contest. Then they would all depart from there. Those who are owners of landed property did not pay tax from the moment of his victory, but the victor's

property remained exempt from tax from the moment of his victory but only for his lifetime. If he also owned a workshop, the workshop that competitor possessed remind immune from obligations for his lifetime only. So many come to compete that their numbers were unparalleled, but however many happened to arrive under a vow, whether young men or virgin girls, they were all allowed to take part in the spectacle. Sometimes a great number come and at other times they did not, depending on the seasons and sea winds” (Jeffreys 1990).

The tradition of women's wrestling in Daphne lasted for 480 years. Based on the aforementioned description, it is evident that the role of women in the competition was equal to that of men – a historical precedent.

The additional documents and information regarding women's wrestling in Ancient Rome are from Greek mythology (Penjak and Karnincic 2013), the most famous example being that of Atlanta. Unable to have a son, her father treated her as one, forcing her to perform hard and vigorous exercises from the earliest childhood. As an adult, she was extremely muscular. She was also known for her skilful hunting (she killed the famous Calydonian boar). In the wrestling match at the funeral games held in honour of Pelias, Atlanta defeated Achilles's father, Peleus (Crowther 2007).

Another interesting story about a woman wrestler comes from China. Khutulun was a Mongol princess, daughter of the Mongol conqueror of China, Qaeda, and Kublai Khan's cousin. Khutulun was also known as Ajaruc or Khotol Tsagaan. Khutulun was a skilful warrior; she used to accompany her father in his numerous conquests. In his “Travels”, Marco Polo describes her as a woman of great beauty, strength, and courage. Qaeda Khan believed that no man could ever equal her in strength. As she did not agree with her parents' decision to marry, she set a condition, saying: “She vowed she would never marry till she found a man who could vanquish her in every trial; him she would wed and none else” (Polo et al. 1993: Book 4, Chapter 4).

The princess spread the word throughout the kingdom that he who defeated her in a wrestling match could have her hand in marriage. Anyone who wanted to take part in the match had to pledge 100 horses, and in the event of his defeat, he would lose both the horses and the princess's hand. Over the years, the princess won 10,000

horses. In 1280, a young nobleman known for his bravery, physical strength, beauty, and heroism presented himself after hearing about her challenge. He was convinced that he would win, so he pledged 1,000 horses. The princess's parents begged her to lose the match, as the young man was a son of a wealthy king. Marco Polo informs us on this, writing the following: "But the damsel answered that never would she let herself be vanquished if she could help it; if, indeed, he should get the better of her then she would gladly be his wife, according to the wager but not otherwise" (Polo et al. 1993: Book 4, Chapter 4).

They set the day for the wrestling duel. Khaidu Khan, together with his wife and the crowd, waited for the start of the match. But the following happened: "And when all the company were assembled, for great numbers flocked to see the match, the damsel first come forth in a strait jerkin of sammet; and then come forth the young bachelor in jerkin of sendal, and a winsome sight they were to see. When both had taken post in the middle of the hall they grappled each other by the arms and wrestled this way and that, but for long time neither could get the better of the other. At last, however, it so befel that damsel threw him right valiantly on the palace pavement. And when he found himself thus thrown and her standing over him, great indeed was his shame and discomfiture" (Polo et al. 1993: Book 4, Chapter 4).

Giacomo Puccini used princess Khutulun as the basis for the character of Turandot in his opera of the same name. A Persian philosopher and historian, Rashid-al-Din Hamadani (1247 – 1318), also wrote on the subject of Khutulun (Weatherford 2011). Qaeda Khan's love for Khutulun was greater than the love which father usually has for a daughter. This is believed to be the reason why she never got married. According to the Rashid-al-Din-in, Khutulun was in love with the Persian king Khazan, to whom she was promised.

Ibn Battuta (1304 – 1377), a well-known Moroccan traveller and contemporary of Marco Polo, recorded a very similar story (Battuta and Gibb 2004; Battuta and Lee 2010). He states that the kingdom of Tawalisi did not allow princess Urduji to marry the one that she had chosen. As a result, she refused to marry any other man, and dealt with the issue by challenging suitors to a wrestling match.

"I heard ... that various sons of kings had sought Urduja's hand, but she always answered, 'I will marry no one but him who shall fight and conquer me'; so they all avoided the trail, for fear of the shame of being beaten by her" (Battuta and Lee 2010: IV. 253 – 254).

The assumption is that Ibn Battuta heard about the legend of Qaeda Khan's daughter, and that the rest of the story about Urduji is a fictional creation of the author (Polo and Yule 1871).

Historical documents on female wrestling rely on the story of female warriors called the Amazons. Although we are not completely sure that their wrestling falls under myths, legends or simply a part of the history, one thing is sure – many historians, writers and philosophers (such as Herodotus, Hippocrates, Plutarch, Philostratus, Stabo, etc.) write about them. Not before the digging of the Sikitian tribe graves, near the town of Pokrovka in Kazakhstan at the Russian border, did we hear stories on female warriors (David-Kimball 1997; Hinds 2009). Female warriors, who were of a very strong physique, were buried together with their weapons. On their skeletons, the anthropologists found marks of wounds that were typically found on male warriors of the time. Although their remainings were found 1,000 kilometres further from the place where the Greek historians claimed, it is assumed that these female warriors were an inspiration for the story about the Amazons.

Most of the stories about the Amazons are said to be legends about the people who killed male children and amputated their daughters' right breast so as not to trouble them in handling their weapon (sword or arch and arrow). Sauromatae and Scythians refer to them as "Oiorpata" (the killers of men). According to the legend, they weren't able to get married before they had killed three of their enemies. Among many of the enemies they fought against are: Hercules, Theseus, Achilles and Bellerophon (Alpern 1998). Although there are no records on any of these wrestling matches, it is believed that the Amazons did wrestle. As stated above, the Amazons were excellent warriors who handled their weapons successfully and skilfully. In order to be able to physically confront men, they performed very tedious exercises (Fisher 1980).

Additionally, there are documents that state that women in Sparta also performed the same tedious exercises which, among many others, included wrestling. This leads us to the conclu-

sion that even the Amazons used wrestling to develop their strength and motor abilities.

Even more, during the age of the Amazons, wrestling was of social, military, political, and cultural importance (Krist 2014). Although Herodotus did not describe the Amazons from the history of sport standing point, Eckhart (2007), as a response to his texts, writes the following: “Although Herodotus mentions the Amazons, he is primarily interested in linking them to existing peoples, the Sauromatae and Scythians, and to the existing military conflict between the Greeks and Persians” (Eckhart 2007).

There are some other, less confidential sources that indirectly connect the Amazons to the wrestling tradition. For instance, on the website <http://www.worldhistory.biz/>, we can read a text “Wrestling with a hero girls”, which says: “The ancient Greeks knew of only one ‘wrestling heroine’ Atlanta. But the epic tales and traditions of nomads from Caucasus to Mongolia abound with girls and women, such as Lady Hero/Gunda the beautiful Banu Chichak and Saikal who challenge man to wrestling contest.”

The erotic component depicts the legend on the Amazons; many authors, for instance Herodotus, picture their sexual habits (Blundell 1995; Haggerty 2013; Munson 2001; Salisbury 2001), which can be seen in the following paragraph from the aforementioned website: “Evenly matched competitors might be locked together for hours. The erotic nature of man and woman wrestling was obvious in ancient Greek vase paintings of Atlanta, and this aspect of wrestling as foreplay comes through in many of love-contests in traditional nomad tales.”

Munson, on the other hand, sees the legend of the Amazons not as the one which describes them in a sport context, but more as a sociological aspect which describes a woman’s position within the society. Munson writes: “In the tradition of heroic myths, marriage to an Amazon means primarily conquering her in war, subjecting her in a social as well as in a sexual sense and taking away her Amazon identity by integrating her into a patriarchal order” (Munson 2001).

Wrestling and the legend of the Amazons represent a story in which women present themselves as vigorous women who contradict a patriarchal stereotype of female figure in society (a wife, a mother, a caretaker, etc.) despite the fact they are depicted as beautiful and attractive women.

Wrestling Training Ground or Male Fraternities?

The history of wrestling in ancient Nubia (Highlands of Kardofan, Sudan) is 5,000 years old. At the age of 13, boys went unaccompanied to training camps where they tended livestock and learned wrestling skills from the farm wrestling champions. Women, on the other hand, had no access to these camps. It was believed that the contact between women and men could have a negative influence on the development of wrestling skills in men/boys. At the age of 20, the good wrestlers could obtain an approval from the local village elders to get married (Carroll 1988). Wrestling camps in Nubia were a part of the process in which boys became men. It is hence logical that women were not allowed to access these camps.

One of the most popular sports in Japan – professional sumo – has a 2,500-year-old tradition and even longer, according to certain myths and legends. There are no women in professional sumo. Sumo was founded on the basis of the ancient Japanese religion of Shinto and its rituals, and these form a part of every sumo match. Since it is forbidden for women to enter the Shinto temple, they are also not allowed to enter the *douyou* – the Sumo arena (Takemaru 2010). If a woman set foot in the *douyou*, it was believed that the area became contaminated.

Iranian wrestling houses (Zorkaneh), ancient Indian ancient wrestling houses (Akhara), and dervish wrestling houses from the Ottoman Empire all had one thing in common: they were run in accordance with Sufism, an ancient Islamic philosophy (Alter 1992; Luijendijk 2006). Women had no access to these institutions for religious reasons. These ‘houses’, based on Islamic beliefs, were organised according to the ideas concerning male brotherhood.

While Spartan women were encouraged to take part in high school wrestling for the aforementioned reasons, in the rest of ancient Greece women were not even allowed to attend high school. Boys were educated by a slave teacher from the age of seven. By the age of 17 – 18, boys attended high school where, as a part of their general education, they learned the basic wrestling skills. Upon acquiring those skills, they went to join the army. The boys’ education was hence carefully planned, including the compulsory wrestling lessons. However, no importance

was given to the education of girls (Jajcevic 2010).

The above examples serve to highlight the fact that, due to a combination of religious and cultural reasons, women were not welcome in any of the places in which wrestling was taught.

Contemporary Women's Wrestling

Today, women's wrestling functions on a similar level to that of men's. All member countries of the International Wrestling Federation (FILA) organize national championships, so that their women representatives can participate in the World Championships and the Olympic Games. But the number of women engaged in this sport is still significantly lower than the number of men. The following passage from the FILA official website outlines the recent history of women's wrestling.

A hundred years after the introduction of freestyle wrestling in the Olympic program, worldwide wrestling entered a new era with the acknowledgement of female wrestling as an Olympic discipline on the occasion of the Athens Games in 2004. This decision is part of the policy of the IOC that aims at establishing equality in sport, and legitimized the efforts made by FILA to sustain the development of female wrestling since the end of the 80s (Official WebSite of International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles, FILA 2013).

Finally, in 2014, FILA launched a campaign "Super 8" to promote women in wrestling. The "Super 8" campaign got its name due to a number of women ambassadors leading the worldwide initiative. "We plan to be a leader in developing wrestling opportunities for women around the world", said United World Wrestling president Nenad Lalovic. "Our sport will be active and successful in supporting women of all ages who want to participate in wrestling. We are making this one of our organization's top commitments moving forward." That same year, female wrestling got the same number of weight categories as men's (the new International Wrestling Rules from July 2014). This can be an initiative to correct historical injustice.

Since the 1980s, women and men engaged in sports have operated on an equal footing. A woman participating in the Olympics or in any other sporting event is not an unusual sight. Women's wrestling, however, took longer to gath-

er support from the International Olympic Committee. For example, at the 1980 Olympics, 1,125 women took part in summer games, and 233 women took part in the winter games. At the same time, the issue of gender equality in wrestling was in its early stages. The first women's freestyle wrestling world championship took place in 1987, in Norway. At the Paris Olympics in 1900, women participated for the first time in golf and tennis. Their first participation in wrestling was in 2004, in Athens. Men's judo (Japanese wrestling) was introduced as an Olympic sport 28 years earlier than women's judo. In Olympic handball and volleyball, women and men have always participated equally.

DISCUSSION

The reasons for this historical inequality in the world of wrestling can be seen as a reflection of the position of women in society in general. In ancient Greece, attitudes towards physical exercise in women were different than those of today. We know that the Greeks did not allow women to compete in sporting events. There are only a few documented examples of women being involved in sport, who are generally depicted in a negative manner. For example, Kyniska, the daughter of Archidamus, the king of Sparta, was the first woman to compete and win at the Olympics (396 BC and 392 BC). Although a monument was built in her honour, the legend says that the prize for winning was not given to her in person, but to the owner of the horse. The inscription on her monument reads: "I Kyniska, winner of the two-horse team race raise this monument and declare that I am the only woman to win this title." It clearly suggests that the result was an exception, and that women had no chance when competing against men. Kallipateira, also known as Pherenike, is the second such example. Kallipateira came from a family whose exploits at the Olympics were well-known. Her father was Diagoras of Rhodes, and her brothers were Olympic winners. When her husband died, she had to prepare her son for the Olympic boxing competition. With women not being allowed as coaches, Kallipateira decided to disguise herself as a man in order to take her son to the competition. When her son won the match, she was so thrilled that she jumped into the ring to celebrate the victory. In so doing, she lost a part of clothing, revealing her true gender. The punishment for women ap-

pearing at the Olympics was being thrown from a cliff, although Kallipateira was not prosecuted as she came from a prominent family. To avoid such instances of a fraud, the Olympic Council passed a law stating that all coaches and athletes should compete naked. The historians cannot agree whether this law applied equally to unmarried women. The hypothesis is that the only part of the arena to which they had access was the racecourse, and that their role was mainly erotic, for the entertainment of the teams and individuals who competed at the Olympics (Crowther 2007).

In ancient times, Atlanta was a symbol of athleticism. Her victory over Peleus is often linked to the history of wrestling (Crowther 2007). But all other circumstances related to the story of Atlanta suggest that the sport was not for women. She was raised as a man because her father wanted a son, and her muscularity equalled that of men. Atlanta was also known for her decision not to marry, as well as for being a top runner. She vowed that she would marry anyone who could defeat her in running, all of which calls her sexually into question. Another example, from Homer's "Odyssey", demonstrates the role of women with regard to wrestling. Ajax and Odysseus wrestled at the funeral games. The award for the winner was a tripod worth 12 oxen, while the award for the loser was a woman whose value was estimated at four oxen (Gardiner 2002). The woman was thus merely a consolation prize for the defeated fighter.

It can be concluded that female sporting achievements in ancient times, with Kyniska and Atlanta serving as examples, were few and far between. Although the monument says that Kyniska was the only woman to have won the competition twice, other women are also known to have won it. Bilistiche, for instance, won the same title 264 times without any of the controversies that constantly haunted women in sport (Kosmetatou 2004). Pausanias, Plutarch, and other historians of the time wrote that Bilistiche was a prostitute whose origin is uncertain. It has been recorded that she was Ptolemy's mistress, to whom she bore a child, and who buried her in the Temple of Serapis in Alexandria (McKechnie and Guillaume 2008). But there are many more examples proving that women were excluded from sport in general, and wrestling in particular. Khutulun, Urduja, Kyniska, Kallipateira, and Bilistiche are all unfortunate examples of attitudes

towards women in sport. Even in myths and legends, there are examples like that of Atlanta, the Arcadian princess, who was taught to be like a man, and therefore a good wrestler. The only bright example in the history of women's wrestling at the Olympics is the one from Daphne (Syria, 41 – 521 AD), as recorded by the Byzantine chronicler, Malalas. In his description, there are no examples of gender inequality in wrestling.

Women competed in wrestling arenas until 1500 AD. From 1500 AD onwards, wrestling arenas turned into male religious brotherhoods, with women being denied access. Women 're-emerged' in wrestling at the beginning of the 1980s. Despite this re-appearance, women still had to struggle with stereotypes defining them as wives and mothers whose roles were governed by the ideas of homemaking and domesticity (Green and Svinth 2010). In 1987, a Belgian wrestler Bridget Weigert went down in history as the first woman to win the World Championships. In 2006, a Canadian wrestler Christine Nordhagen Vierling was given her place in the Wrestling Hall of Fame. She won eight medals at the World Championships, six of which were gold.

The position of women in wrestling is related to the position of women in wider sports sphere. In spite of the fact that the participation of women in sporting events has increased significantly during the last thirty years, it still lags far behind that of men (Anorve et al. 2015). Female fairness perceptions are significantly lower than male sport students (Yilmaz 2014). The statistics regarding sport in the media are devastating: 95 percent of all coverage refers to men, and only 5 percent to women (Bishop 2003; Engleman et al. 2009; Weber and Carini 2013). When newspapers do opt to cover women's sport, they often focus more on physical appearance than on the achievement itself, with the paper generally featuring the athlete's photograph (Daniels 2009; Gurrieri et al. 2013; Thomsen et al. 2004). Such treatment further trivializes the role of women in sport. Although the main reason why people get engaged in sport is not just the esthetical one, there are also those people who get engaged into sport as to underline their gender differences. In keeping with this, an award was given to the prettiest wrestler at the women's wrestling World Championships in 2000, in Bulgaria (Green and Svinth 2010). The idea came from its male

organizers, despite the fact that such an award has never been given at any men's competition. These problems are not new. They date back to ancient Greece, where unmarried women were allowed to attend the Olympics as entertainment for the competitors; or to Rome, where women wrestled for the amusement of the crowds; or to Homer's "Odyssey", which says that a woman was the consolation prize for the defeated wrestler. The struggle for equality in women's wrestling has a long way to go.

CONCLUSION

Women's struggle for equality in sport has been a long and difficult process. In wrestling, this struggle began at the end of the 1980s. Throughout the 5,000-year-old history of the sport, women have been marginalized, with a notable exception being in ancient Syria under Roman rule. Everything else related to the history of women in wrestling exemplifies a long history of suppression and exclusion. Modern wrestling is slowly beginning to rectify these 'mistakes', but there is still a long way to go in the continuing battle for gender equality.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The lack of literature is the greatest limitation of this study. The reasons for lack of literature are as follows: paper reaches far into the past, the position of women in society, the popularity of the sport. Due to the lack of literature, the part on women wrestling history was omitted (women wrestling in circuses during the 19th and early 20th century). Future studies should be dealing with the period that was dropped but with special emphasis on gender equality.

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