

**Thinking the unthinkable: Imagining an ‘un-American,’ Girl-friendly, Women- and Trans-
Inclusive Alternative for Baseball**

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Acknowledgements:

I wish to acknowledge Gwen Bird and Robert Menzies for comments on earlier drafts and enthusiasm about my intentions for this article. I owe a debt of gratitude to *Team Canada* softball great, Lauren Bay Regula, for agreeing to correspond with me and to Olivia Hornstein, former member of *Team Canada*, for sharing her insider knowledge of the world of girls and women’s softball.

Abstract

The purpose of this article is twofold: to capture the injustice inherent in the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball (Cohen, 2009) via the prism of critical feminist sport studies; and to begin to imagine a girl-friendly/women-and trans-inclusive future for baseball that is less fertile for cooptation into post-911 USA security state discourses (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Mohanty, 2012). In this article I link the ‘unthinkability’ (Lemert, 2007) of the occupational segregation of baseball in North America to the dominance of the ideology of the two sex system and European diasporic morality (Lemert, 2002). To illustrate the extent of this occupational

segregation via the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball (Cohen, 2009), I draw on feminist sport studies to examine the exemplars or 'texts' (McDonald and Birell, 1999) of three Canadian brother/sister baseball softball duos: Jason Bay and Lauren Bay Regula; Brett and Danielle Lawrie; and Mathew and Katie Reyes.

Thinking the unthinkable: Imagining an ‘un-American’ Girl-friendly, Women- and Trans-Inclusive Alternative for Baseball

Anyone who knows me will tell you that I am more or less obsessed with Major League Baseball (MLB). I cancelled my subscription to the *Globe and Mail*, ‘Canada’s national newspaper,’ when its sports editor decided – because of ‘space constraints’ -- to stop publishing the boxscores from the previous day’s games! My passion for the game of baseball is tempered by anger and resentment, however: I felt the sting of sexism and misogyny as a child during the 60s and early 70s and such discrimination continues to be mirrored by the male-only character of professional baseball and most elite professional sports in North America. There have been many great women baseball players, as Ring (2008; 2012) ably documents, but none have ever been eligible to compete for a job at the Major League level. I am also offended by MLB’s obvious and over-the-top role in normalizing dominant codes of wealth, whiteness and heterosexual masculinity coupled with its ongoing neocolonial practice of “mining” and then mostly discarding cheap baseball talent from several poor Latin American countries (Alexander, 2006; Klein, 1991). And yet, one of my dreams before I die is to see a woman play Major League Baseball. As this year marks my half-centennial, I am feeling an increasing sense of urgency – and despair – about the realization of this dream. The anti-sexist overhaul of the sport – from Little League Baseball (LLB) right on up to the big leagues –necessary for a woman to be drafted by an MLB team appears to be a non-starter at present. The injustice of this does not appear to register with either the general public or the many governors of the game: it appears to be "unthinkable" (Lemert, 2007).

The purpose of this article is twofold: to capture the occupational injustice inherent in the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball (Cohen, 2009) via the prism of critical feminist

sport studies; and to begin to imagine a girl-friendly/women-and trans-inclusive future for baseball that is less fertile for cooptation into post-911 USA security state discourses (Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Mohanty, 2012). Lemert invokes a method of analysis that focuses on the “unthinkable”: “aspects of a group’s culture that are systematically excluded from consciousness and public discussion” (2007: 5). This practice of engaging the “ineffable” is a long-standing one throughout the social sciences and humanities (Kukla, 2005) and works well with the method for “reading sport critically” articulated by McDonald and Birell. They advocate for “Focusing on a particular incident or celebrity as the site for exploring the complex interrelated and fluid character of power relations as they are constituted along the axes of ability, class, gender and nationality” (1999: 284). This method encourages scholars to treat particular sporting events or personalities *as cultural texts*. The cultural texts I examine in this article are the sporting trajectories of three Canadian brother/sister duos who are playing or have played baseball/softball respectively. These duos are Jason Bay/Lauren Bay Regula; Brett Lawrie/Danielle Lawrie; and Mathew Reyes/Katie Reyes. The Bays and the Lawries are MLB brother/college softball and Olympic star sister duos; the Reyes are still in their early teens, just embarking upon a gender bifurcated course of athletic development. I focus on these duos to very partially represent MLB men and their excluded women counterparts.

I draw facts about these duos from news articles obtained via internet searches, via published news accounts and, I confess, even from Wikipedia! I am also able to draw on the generous personal communication of Lauren Bay Regula.¹ It is very likely that other MLB players, Canadian and otherwise, have sisters who have played or play softball and inevitable

¹Footnote: I had emailed Softball Canada and asked what Lauren Bay Regula and Danielle Lawrie were doing now and, much to my surprise, Bay Regula send me a personal email and agreed to answer questions via that medium.

that many brother/sister duos have been bifurcated by baseball and softball at the Little League Baseball (LLB) and youth levels. I make no claim to be comprehensive here. It was a newspaper article in one of my local papers that grouped the Reyes siblings together with the Bays and Lawries and suggested the focus of this article. In “Diamonds are a kid’s best friend; Katie and Matthew Reyes are the first brother/sister to play in World Series,” Terry Bell of the Vancouver *Province* writes:

Katie switched to softball this year. Her Burnaby team won the provincial title and, although it’s a little early to predict, the Reyes kids might someday turn out like the Bays and the Lawries. Trail’s Jason Bay played on the 1990 team that went to Williamsport. He’s an outfielder now with the New York Mets. His sister Lauren led Canada’s women’s softball team to the 2004 and 2008 Olympics. Then there’s Langley’s Brett and Danielle Lawrie. Brett was a 2008 first-round draft pick of the Milwaukee Brewers. He’s working his way up to the majors while Danielle, also a 2008 Canadian softball Olympian, is turning into one of the finest pitchers on the planet (22 Aug 2010, A.10).

The author of this cheerful piece completely takes for granted the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball and the unequal athletic and professional/occupational opportunities associated with each sport. This is as sexist as it is unsurprising. Applying the method of reading sport critically to the cultural texts of the three brother/sister duos enables us to ‘see the strange in the familiar’ (Macionis & Gerber, 2011) – indeed, the *unthinkability* – of gender bifurcated baseball and softball.

Theoretical Framework

My analysis of brother/sister baseball/softball duos is grounded in critical feminist sport studies, critical race theorizing, and Lemert’s theorizing about the relationship between the status

quo of power relations and the unthinkability that maintains them. Critical feminist sport scholars focus on the role of sport in contributing to gender inequality by reinforcing orthodox masculinity and perpetuating sexism (Pronger, 1990, 1999; Cahn, 1994; Theberge, 2000; Messner at all, 2000; Messner, 2007; Kane, 1995; Lenskyj, 2003; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). Within this field of critical feminist sport studies is an emergent subset of research that views the sex segregation of amateur, elite and professional sport as deeply problematic (see, for example, Pronger, 1990; Kane, 1995; Rothblatt, 1995; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Dowling, 2000; Heywood and Dworkin, 2003; McDonagh and Pappano, 2008; Travers, 2008; 2009; Cohen, 2009). McDonagh and Pappano (2008) identify ‘coercive’ as opposed to ‘voluntary’ sex segregation for girls and women as the cornerstone of sports’ contribution to gender inequality.

As McDonagh and Pappano (2008) maintain, Title IX, while contributing to gender equality by guaranteeing a fair share of government resources for women in organized sport, not accidentally reinforces the basis of gender inequality in sport by maintaining separate spheres for men and women, reinforcing assumptions about the “unfair advantage” (Sykes, 2006) of men over women. This is in spite of (suppressed) evidence that there is no scientific basis for clearly separating people into to sex categories at all (Sykes, 2006; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Rather, as Kane pointed out some time ago (1995), sport performance is better understood in terms of a continuum among men and women where the differences between the average ‘man’ and average ‘woman’ are less statistically salient than are the differences among men as a group and women as a group. The unthinkability of gendered overlap in sport performance is a key component of the binary normative structure of most contemporary Western sport. In this article I link the "frailty myth" (Dowling, 2000) underpinning and normalized by sex segregated sport among other institutions to the interlocking ideologies of the two sex system and masculine

protection that justifies European diasporic morality (Lemert, 2002) and neoliberal policies and actions targeting internal and external racialized others (Mohanty, 2012).

Baseball/Softball and the Binary-Normative Gender Order

In most countries that feature and foster elite professional team sports, the most popular and celebrated sports tend to conflate nationalism with hegemonic masculinity (Hargreaves, 2001; Pelak, 2005). Baseball in the United States developed hand-in-hand with American imperialism and expansionism and is heralded as the “national pastime” (Ring, 2008) and enjoys symbolic centrality in American culture (Fine, 1987). As Grasmuck, remarks, “the quasi-religious status of baseball in America is an idea well established among scholars of the sport” (2005: 42). Baseball’s role in defining American masculinity has meant that the participation of girls and women in the sport has been strongly and systematically resisted (Ring, 2008; Cohen, 2009) and that the European diasporic morality (Lemert, 2002) of North American white, heterosexual and masculine cultural norms are invoked when baseball insiders – media analysts, players, coaches, managers, owners - talk about “playing the game the right way” (Alexander, 2006). As such it provides ideological support for gender injustice in a broad sense (against women, queer and transgendered folk) that intersects with the racialization of ‘non-white’ others within and outside national borders.

Hill Collins (2005) identifies the interlocking ‘othering’ that results from the western ‘ideal’ of white, heterosexual masculinity. From this perspective, baseball does not simply exclude women but it plays a complex role in celebrating and normalizing dominant codes of white heterosexual masculinity and wealth. Dworkin & Wachs (2009) observe the post-911 cultural emphasis on the fit white male body in the USA as a model for citizenship and as purported protection against internal and external terrorist threats.

Cohen (2009), Ring (2008; 2012) , McDonagh & Pappano (2008) and Dowling (2000) among others claim that male domination of baseball at amateur and professional levels can be attributed to cultural rather than biological imperatives. Feminist science studies (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Jordan-Young, 2010; Haraway, 1991, 1997) reveal the ideological rather than natural basis for the two sex system and assumptions of male superiority that support segregation. While the peak of the recent steroid era saw grotesquely muscular men excel at hitting home runs, many of MLB's most heralded athletes have been and are relatively small. This makes baseball a particularly fertile site for challenging the "unfair advantage discourse" (Sykes, 2006) that crystallizes male biology as inevitably and always athletically superior.

The exclusion of girls and women from baseball and the concomitant gendered 'bifurcation' (Cohen, 2009) of 'baseball for boys' and 'softball for girls' has been the subject of recent feminist scholarship. (See, for example, Downing, 2000; Berlage, 2005; Ardell, 2005; Ring, 2008, 2012; McDonagh & Pappano 2008; Cohen, 2009). The unequal cultural relationship between baseball and softball is rich terrain for critical feminist sport studies, specifically because there are no compelling (dyadic) sex differences that stand in the way of female participation in baseball or that justify the maintenance of male-only baseball teams and leagues. The legendary Hank Aaron, whose Major League Baseball home run total is second only to Barry Bonds, explains:

“baseball is not a game of strength; hitting is not strength. The game needs a special kind of talent, thinking and timing. Some women as well as some men qualify in that respect...a ball going 90 miles an hour can be knocked over the fence by anyone sticking a bat out and making perfect contact” (in Cohen, 2009: 93).

Indeed, many of the top women athletes in college and professional basketball, for example, are considerably bigger overall than a lot of the men who have had successful, even storied careers in MLB. And there is nothing more or less innately interesting about the sport of baseball over softball that explains the cultural hegemony of baseball; baseball was developed (or appropriated, see Ring, 2008) and championed virtually from its onset as a vehicle for white masculine American national ideological consolidation and imperial expansionism (Ring, 2008; Cohen, 2009).

Writing in 2005, Jean Ardell proclaimed that “There has never been a better time to be a woman in baseball” (214). I find this claim odd given that opportunities for girls and women to play baseball in the United States and Canada are scant in comparison to those available to boys and men (although somewhat better in Canada as Ring, 2012 and Cohen, 2009 document). In fairness, it used to be worse. It was not until 1974 that LLB’s longstanding ‘boys only’ policy was overturned, as a result of a Supreme Court challenge by the National Organization of Women on behalf of an 11-year-old girl – Maria Pepe of Hoboken, New Jersey. As a direct consequence of this ruling, the numbers of girls participating in LLB swelled to their highest ever in that first year (Cohen, 2009). LLB responded to its legal defeat and the groundswell of female participation by creating Little League Softball and streaming girls away from baseball and into it (Ring, 2008; McDonagh & Pappano, 2008). Some girls continue to play LLB but most drop out or switch to softball by age 7 or 8; of those who stick it out, very few continue to play baseball beyond LLB. Of the girls and women continue to play baseball, they mostly do so in isolation from other girls and women, against fierce resistance, and without the prospect – however remote given that only 2% of minor league players ever make it to the Majors – of making a living at the sport. As Cohen points out, “the “choice” made by most girls to play

softball, a sport that is less culturally and materially privileged than baseball in every respect, is spurious since real choices are premised on real options" (2009: 168) .

An ironic and unintended consequence of the consignment of girls and women to softball has been the creation of an often countercultural/transgressive space for the expression of working-class femininities, female masculinities (Halberstam, 1998) and lesbianism. Softball somewhat deservedly has a reputation as a lesbian haven, however much mainstream leagues and college programs strive to instill and police heteronormative performances and boundaries (Lenskyj, 2003; Travers, 2006; Travers and Deri, 2010). Since the early 1980s, literally hundreds of explicit and proud lesbian softball leagues have flourished in North America and in some cases have been, as I have argued elsewhere, at the forefront of negotiating binary resistant forms of transgender inclusion (Travers, 2006; Travers and Deri, 2010). I find it challenging to problematize the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball and push for gendered inclusion in baseball without falling into the sexist trap of devaluing softball over baseball and erasing the vibrant sporting and cultural spaces of resistance for working-class, queer and gender variant women and trans folk.

Softball lacks the (masculinist) cultural capital of baseball or 'hardball' as it is referred to metaphorically so often, but offers girls and women an opportunity to play both recreational and highly competitive ball without making waves. Softball's opportunity structure includes U.S. and Canadian college/university scholarships for elite women players. Up until 2008, women softball players had the opportunity to compete in the Olympics where star players like the USA's Jennie Finch (who conforms to western beauty norms) were able to gain mainstream exposure, endorsement deals and offers to appear in the *Sports Illustrated* 'swimsuit edition' and pose

naked for Playboy.² Softball, along with baseball, however, was removed from the Olympic program as of the 2012 games by the International Olympic Committee, effectively eliminating a significant opportunity structure for women softball players. The National Pro Fastpitch League (NPF) is the only professional women's [softball](#) league in the United States and the amount of money most players earn is well below the cost of living. Superstar players can earn six digit salaries playing professional softball in Japan but positions for foreigners are few in number and play is far from home. Elite women basketball players in the United States used to be in the same boat: college championships and Olympic participation marked the culmination of their careers, not potential stepping-stones to further athletic development and financial reward – unless they were extraordinarily talented and willing to play in Europe. With the emergence of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in 1996, this has changed. Still, the average salary of a WNBA player is one tenth of the average salary of an (always male) National Basketball Association player (Travers, 2008).

The decision by the International Olympic Committee to remove softball and baseball from the Olympic Program has a far more profound effect on opportunity structures for women in sport than it does for men. For women ball players, the Olympics represented the highest level of play, ambition and opportunity (including for obtaining endorsement contracts). Opportunity structures for men in baseball differ starkly in that they include the ability to compete for a spot on a minor or even a major league team and/or on the national team that competes in the relatively new World Baseball Classic (WBC) every four years.

What research exists in the potentially important area of *occupational* segregation in baseball is lacking in that it tends to explore either the phenomenon of racial stacking whereby

² when I conducted a Google search to determine Jennie Finch's weight, the first site I was directed to was a soft porn site featuring photos of Jennie Finch in a bikini and a picture of a blonde woman, not Jennie, licking an erect penis in a sidebar (<http://www.mostbeautifulwoman.com/athletes/jenniefinch/bio.shtml>).

white men are disproportionately streamed towards ‘thinking positions’ in team sports and black men to ‘physical’ or ‘speed’ positions” (Abdel-Shehid, 2005) or to focus on visible minority men and white women in managerial and administrative positions. Renowned for his work in documenting racial inequality in MLB, Lapchick and his co-authors are oddly silent regarding the absence of women *as players* in Major League Baseball in the 2011 “Racial and Gender Report Card.” Reflecting the “invisibility of bias” (Ring, 2008) in baseball, Lapchick et al document gender inequity in management and administration but not among actual players of the game, the coaching staff or the all-male fraternity of major league umpires. The all-male-ness of professional baseball is, in its entirety, unthinkable. To draw attention to this cultural blind spot I pay critical attention to three Canadian brother/sister baseball/softball duos in terms of their career opportunities and trajectories to date.

Canadian brother/sister baseball/softball Duos

Jason Bay and Lauren Bay Regula

Jason Bay was born in Trail, B.C. in 1978. He started out playing LLB, his team making it to the 1990 Little League World Series. Bay attended college on a baseball scholarship and was drafted as an outfielder by the [now defunct] Montreal Expos in 2000 when he was 22. He played in the minor leagues for several organizations until 2003 when he was called up to “the show,” to play for MLB’s Pittsburgh Pirates. He quickly established himself as a star outfielder; his stellar play when traded to the Boston Red Sox in the middle of a pennant race in 2008 established him as a premier player in MLB. He signed with the New York Mets in 2009 as a free agent. His pay package? \$66 million over 4 years.

Lauren Bay Regula was born in Trail, B.C. in 1981 and is Jason Bay’s younger sister. Bay Regula never played LLB. As she explains, “I did go to a practice by the Little League

coach in Trail with my brother once and never again. I was the only girl and, being a girl, I didn't like the harshness of what was going on" (Bay Regula, Feb 7, 2012). JockBio.com (undated) reports that "For Bay Regula, interest in softball began when she would sit in the stands and watch brother Jason play in Little League." And, "Jason's little sister, Lauren, was almost as good a ballplayer as he was." Bay Regula started playing softball at age eleven and attended Oklahoma State on a softball scholarship where she was a star pitcher. As a member of Team Canada at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics, she "became known simply as 'unhittable.' pitching underhand, her pitches were clocked at 70 plus miles per hour" (JockBio.com). After graduating from college, Bay Regula played for the *Chicago Bandits* of NPF in 2005 and with the expansion *Philadelphia Force* in 2006. Her earnings from playing softball during this period are not likely to have been more than a few thousand dollars a year at most. The highlights of her career? "Beating Japan in the 2004 Olympic Games as we were HUGE underdogs and beating China in the 2008 Olympics Games to keep our medal hopes alive" (Bay Regula, Feb 7, 2012). Bay Regula is now using her formidable energy and focus to raise a young family and hopes to become involved in softball again in the future. She reports, "Once I stop diapers, potty training, sleepless nights etc. then I would love to focus back on softball a bit. I do miss it. I miss my teammates, I miss the competition and I miss the game"(Bay Regula, Feb 7, 2012).

Danielle and Brett Lawrie

Danielle Lawrie was born in Burnaby, B.C. in 1987. Like most high level women softball players, she played "rep" softball beginning at age 7. From age 13 to 17 she played summer softball for the White Rock Renegades. After high school, she accepted a softball scholarship from the University of Washington. She went on to attain heroic status in Washington State as a result of her superlative play there during her college years, as both a pitcher and clean-up hitter.

Lawrie led the University of Washington State Huskies to the 2009 Women's College World Series title and was the winner of the NCAA Player of the Year award in 2009 and 2010. She was also named the 2009 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the year. Lawrie is celebrated as the athlete who most dominated her/his sport, amateur *and* professional, in Washington state - ever! Former Seattle Mariners MLB player Jay Buhner describes her, admiringly, as "an absolute stud" (Brewer, 2010a). Lawrie was named Most Valuable Player of the Canadian National Softball Team in 2005 and was a member of Team Canada at the 2008 Olympics.

In 2010 as her stellar college career and very possibly the high point of her athletic career was coming to a close, Lawrie spoke to a Seattle Times Columnist:

I don't want to rush anything...I don't want to press the fast-forward button. There are so many times when I wish I could pause the moment. I want to just soak this up longer because, before I know it, it's all going to be done. (Brewer, 2010a)

Upon graduating from college in 2010, Lawrie joined the *USSSA Florida Pride* in the NPF. In addition to continuing to pitch for the *Florida Pride*, she recently signed with the *Toyota Shokki* of Japan and her combined earnings are projected to in the range of six figures this year. She has also obtained an endorsement deal for softball equipment with *Baden Sports* (ESPN 2012).

Brett Lawrie was born in Langley, B.C. in 1990 and is Danielle Lawrie's younger brother. He was coached by his father in Little League as a child and then played with the Langley Blaze, a top tier high school traveling team. "Lawrie dreamed about being a pro baseball player from the time he was about six years old" (Gillis, 2011). At age 18 Lawrie was added to the Canadian National Men's Baseball team that competed in the 2008 Olympics. When he was drafted out of high school by the Milwaukee Brewers in 2008, Lawrie was the highest Canadian

position player ever drafted. His signing bonus was reportedly \$1,700,000. Lawrie was acquired by the *Toronto Blue Jays* in late 2010 and started off in the Jays AAA farm team. He was called up to the majors in August of 2011 where his stellar offensive performance and defensive play at third base electrified the fan base. Age 22 at the time of this writing, Lawrie's current annual salary is \$482,500 (USA today), barely over the league minimum of \$480,000. Barring sudden and career-ending injury or unexpected and radical decline in playing ability, multi-million dollar career earnings are safe to project.

The irony is that while his sister Danielle, when at age 23 and in her final year of college, wanted to slow everything down, to totally enjoy it, because it would likely never be this good again, Brett Lawrie *has* wanted to rush everything. From the moment he was signed by the Milwaukee Brewers he was pushing for promotion up the ranks, wanting to get to the Majors as quickly as possible, saying, “Triple-A's not bad. But my ultimate goal is to play Major League Baseball. I just want the best opportunity to show my stuff” (Gillis, 2011: 82). In 2012 Lawrie has established himself as a fixture at third base for the *Toronto Blue Jays*.

Katie and Matthew Reyes

Katie Reyes was born in Vancouver in 1996 and made headlines for her stellar play at first base and as clean-up hitter for the Hastings (Vancouver, BC) team at the Little League World Series in 2009. Victoria Roche, representing Brussels (Belgium Little League) was the first girl to play in the LLB World Series in 1984. Since then, fifteen girls have followed in her footsteps. Remarking at the time of her participation in the World Series, Duk explains that Reyes “began playing baseball about six years ago after watching her [younger] brother and she’s never played softball” (2009). “Reyes marked her place in the history books by being the first female to record a game winning hit in a World Series game (a two run single to be exact)”

(Lee, 2011). In 2009, Katie Reyes was one of two girls participating in the 2009 LLB World Series. Katie is the first girl in Little League history to be involved in finishing a game winning play. After starring for her team and graduating from LLB, Katie switched to softball and is now playing shortstop for the provincial champions, while the other (male) top players on her LLB team moved on to the Junior League level of baseball.

When asked if Katie would like to participate in a friendly tournament with the California Women's Baseball League, following her time in Little League Baseball, her mother made it clear that her sights were now focused on Softball, no doubt as an avenue to future, scholarship opportunities, as is the norm across America, as well, no doubt, Canada. (girlsplaybaseball.wordpress.com)

Katie's prospects of landing a softball scholarship to a U.S. school appear to be very good.

Matthew Reyes was born in 1997 in Vancouver. He is the younger brother of Katie Reyes and resides in Vancouver with his family. Matthew followed in his sister's footsteps by appearing in the LLB World Series in 2010. A clip of him holding onto the ball to record the out during a collision at home plate can be seen on YouTube (see "Canada double play 532, Matthew Reyes"). It is impossible to predict his athletic and occupational trajectory in baseball but the one thing we do know is that he will not be dissuaded from nor ruled ineligible for opportunities to develop as a baseball player and compete for amateur and professional opportunities in the game because of his sex.

Analysis

Jerry Brewer, a sports columnist from the *Seattle Times Colonist*, captures the emotional poignancy of college graduation for megastars like Regula Bay and Danielle Lawrie. In an article

published at the end of Lawrie's senior year at the University of Washington, he (2010a) muses that

Sadly, Lawrie may never have it this good again. She's only 23, at least five years from her prime, but because softball is no longer an Olympic sport and offers lackluster professional opportunities, this might be the last grand stage of her career... In a fairer sports world, she would be able to ask for more. She would be like her male [University of Washington athlete] peers. Brandon Roy has become a multimillionaire and one of the faces of the NBA since he left Washington. Next April, Huskies quarterback Jake Locker will be a top pick in the NFL draft and walk into the league with first-round money, expectations and global appeal. Soon, Huskies golfer Nick Taylor will be seen regularly at the Masters, U.S. Open, British Open and PGA Championship. Lawrie has accomplished more than anyone in that incredible trio, but her options are limited. It's the sober reality for most female athletes who participate in team sports.

The Lawrie siblings are known to be highly competitive against each other (and everyone else) and the barriers that prevent her from obtaining the level of success available to her brother obviously sting for Danielle:

"It's brutal. It's tough being a woman [in sports], especially when you see guys like Matt Kemp signing contracts for \$160 million. One day, hopefully, my brother will sign a contract like that. And we're struggling to make even \$100,000 in our sport... There have been moments where I was bitter about it and felt it just sucks... But at the end of the day, it's a no-win. There's nothing I can do. I want to be as successful as I can, and as I was in college. And I want to grow the sport as much as I can and play for as long as I can. Am I going to make that kind of money? No. But can I help grow it, can I get my name out

there, can I maybe build a path to get into sports broadcasting and potentially make big money in camps? Yes. ... (ESPN 2012).

Her brother acknowledges the inequity: "The sky is the limit for me. I just have to go out there and have fun," Brett says. "As for her, there's only so far you can go in the game and the time can go quick" (ESPN 2012). The game of baseball reigns supreme while remaining securely in masculine hands.

Viewing these brother/sister duos as cultural texts, as exemplars of sex-based hierarchies, places the occupational segregation and subsequent inequity of the baseball/softball divide in stark relief. The many intersecting institutions of amateur and professional baseball and softball co-create a structure of inequitable occupational segregation via wildly different career tracks: boys and men are entitled to play baseball while girls and women are streamed into softball and denied participation in many amateur and most professional baseball settings. As Cohen reminds us, "baseball is not a people's game. It is still a no-woman's land where only young prepubescent girls can transgress the gender boundary, temporarily" (2009: 186).

Had the gendered occupational barriers to amateur and professional success in North American baseball been absent, might Lauren Bay Regula and/or Danielle Lawrie, like their brothers both so stunningly talented and dedicated, been encouraged to play baseball instead of softball and, again, like their brothers been drafted by an MLB franchise? Under the same circumstances would Katie Reyes still be playing baseball? We cannot know and any way, the road to the Major Leagues is littered with the career busts of too many 'can't miss' prospects. The majority of *drafted* players do not make it to the major league level at all; 98% in fact, fail to do so. But Lauren Bay Regula, Danielle Lawrie and Katie Reyes have been handed a bigger and

less culturally valuable 'soft' ball than their brothers and categorically excluded from this equation. Via softball they can at best make relatively modest (and insecure) incomes.

The unthinkability of male domination in baseball means that sexist exclusion remains unremarkable even when very clearly marked. For example, Pat Chaba, coach of Matthew Reyes' Little Mountain (Vancouver, B.C.) team, shows how pervasive sexism is as he champions his 'fun first' approach: "In the end it's just a game...It's still a game for *little boys* (my italics) (*Vancouver Province*, 2010). The interplay of social forces and individual agency captured so aptly in Mills' sociological imagination (1959) allows us to see that the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball created through sexist cultural expectations and inequitable opportunity structures results in the 'decision' of most girls to play softball rather than baseball.

At the upper echelons of professional baseball, there are simply no women: no opportunity structures, no admission. Sexist and racist patterns of educational streaming, although still persistent, have long been identified and denounced (Wotherspoon, 1998: 88). But the streaming of girls and young women into softball, away from baseball with its male-only elite opportunity structures, goes on mostly unnoticed; indeed, if it is noticed at all it is presented as evidence of essential sex differences.

Size Matters?

Significant differences in size and weight between the two adult brother/sister duos I focus on in this article are documented. At 6'2"/210 lbs, Jason Bay is 6 inches taller and 75 pounds heavier than his sister, Lauren, who stands at 5'8", 135 lbs. Brett Lawrie, at 6'/200lbs, is 4 inches taller and 40 pounds heavier than his 5'8"/160 lb sister, Danielle. These frequently occurring discrepancies between male and female siblings, likely to be at least partially attributable to cultural factors dictating gender differences in diet and physical development

(Dworkin and Wachs, 2009), feed into assumptions about overall male athletic superiority. But these differences fail to account for both the significant overlap in height and weight between men and women as aggregates and the actual variation between people that defies simplistic binary sex categorization (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Furthermore, the extent to which size matters in terms of overall baseball success is negligible.

In the inaugural and subsequent World Baseball Classic tournaments, 2006 and 2009 respectively, it was not Team USA with its line-up of big sluggers that came away victorious on both occasions but rather the Japanese teams which were staffed by smaller – on average - and highly skilled players. Consider this: 2004 and 2008 Olympic Team USA softball star Jennie Finch stands at 6 feet two inches and 174 pounds. She created quite a stir on episodes of *This Week in Baseball* when she pitched (underhanded) to several major league players (including Albert Pujols and Mike Piazza) who were unable to hit her. If height and weight were restrictive factors in the game of baseball rather than sex, David Eckstein, the 2006 World Series Most Valuable Player, who stands generously at 5 foot 7, would have been ineligible to play MLB and Jennie Finch would be eligible for shot at it. And Jose Altuve, the 22 year old rookie from Venezuela who, at 5'5" and 170 pounds is the smallest MLB player on record, would not be in possession of a highly respectable batting average of .318 (as of May 21, 2012), putting himself into consideration for National League *Rookie of the Year*.

Many girls and women, including some elite softball players, have no desire to play with and against men. Some players express concern for their safety, fearing the power that some men bring to the game (Bay Regula, 2012). And then there is the social cost. As Danielle Lawrie says about pitching to her brother, "I will never throw against him... As competitive as I am -- and I would want to beat him -- I would prefer not to even let that happen. Because it's a lose-lose. Do

I think I could strike him out? Yes, but do I want to face the consequences of his attitude? Not even close. But that's what makes him so good" (ESPN, 2012). And girl-only and women-only environments have cultural benefits for many participants. For many girls and women, playing with and against boys and men is often not worth the cost of increased exposure to sexism and misogyny, regardless of where their athletic abilities stack up against him.

Making Baseball Girl-friendly and Women- and Trans-Inclusive

Feminist critics and men who have attempted to reverse baseball's sexist discrimination uniformly point to the lack of infrastructure for girls and women to develop baseball skills as the reason for the lack of competitiveness of women's professional teams, evidenced by 'experiments' with the Florida Sun Sox in 1984 and the Colorado Silver Bullets from 1994 to 1997 (Wulf, 2006; Ring, 2008, 2012; Cohen, 2009). Streaming girls away from baseball and into softball produces the very differences in skill that are then used to justify the exclusion of girls and women from professional baseball. This is a powerful example of the *Thomas Theorem* at play: "Situations that are defined as real become real in their consequences" (Macionis & Gerber, 2011:332).

The argument that early opportunities for skill development are crucial corresponds with recent advances in the field of interpersonal neurobiology or 'brain science.' This is the field responsible for both the truism that 'neurons that fire together wire together' and that indicates that there is a ceiling to ability, in certain skill sets, music and sports among them, if exposure and intense practice fails to occur before the age of 12 (Siegel, lecture, November 2011). As Downing explains (2000: 71), "The activities children pursue etch themselves on the neural pathways of the brain." Skill increases with practice!

To eradicate the gendered bifurcation of baseball and softball, we must not only make baseball gender inclusive but also reverse the cultural denigration of softball. At minimum, the following are required:

- the sex integration of all male-only baseball teams and organizations;
- a complete overhaul of the discriminatory structure and culture of baseball from LLB all the way up to the Majors (including practices of development, hiring and retention in professional umpiring) with special (trans-inclusive) development, training and coaching programs to encourage the participation of girls and women;
- the reinstatement of softball on the Olympic Program; and
- gender equal content requirements for state-licensed sports media (with sanctions for sexist framing and remarks).
- Adopting zero tolerance policies for racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia at all levels of baseball and softball is essential if a culture of inclusion is to be established (Travers, 2008).

Abolishing male-only baseball while both maintaining existing softball programs and developing specific (trans-inclusive) baseball programs for girls and women accomplishes three things. First, it brings the sport up to date with occupational human rights legislation applicable in the world of work. Second, it provides girls and women with the option of playing with and against boys and men or of developing and honing their skills in non-male environments. There are going to be many girls and women who do not want to play with boys and men whether because they fear for their safety or because of the distaste for masculine norms of aggression, stoicism, misogyny and homophobia. Pronger (1999) insists that women are just as capable of performing orthodox masculinity in sport settings as men are, but many may not wish to do so. Third, by destabilizing

assumptions of essential difference between men and women and eliminating binary normative sporting structures, it opens the door to cultures of overlapping ability, more fluid understandings of sex and gender identity and greater opportunities for transgender inclusion (Travers, 2006).

The racism of the ideologies of the two sex system and masculine protection

Given the intractability of gender exclusion in MLB, it is difficult to believe that we may be on the cusp of change. But while MLB is an enormous and powerful cultural force for normalizing both masculine superiority and the obscene wealth of team owners (Alexander, 2006), there are pro-girl/pro-women allies working to break through the unthinkability barrier of this culture of injustice. Downing (2000: 99) reminds us that we should never forget the “Dad factor.” Cohen (2009: 69) concurs, explaining that “Angry dads have themselves already experienced the benefits of men’s high school athletic programs and when they have daughters who are not treated equally, they become angry and file title IX suits.” Whether it be the ‘Dad factor,’ the ‘Mom factor’ (witness the scholarly support work of Jennifer Ring (2008; 2012) on behalf of her daughter and girls’ and women’s baseball), the male baseball ally factor or the just pissed off factor among those of us who could not or cannot play the game we love, the relationship between baseball, exclusion and orthodox American masculine power is being re-thought and made visible. John Kovach, manager of the South Bend Blue Sox and organizer of the Can-Am Spirit of Sportsmanship Women’s International Baseball Tournament states, “It’s really the males who kind of redirected the females into softball... So, I take it as this is a burden on my shoulders to re-correct a part of history that is vastly unfair” (Cohen, 2009: 169).

In envisioning momentous change, it is possible that, much as has happened for disproportionately white and middle-class women in the professions (Newman, 1999), girls and women could be incorporated into the game of baseball at all levels without disrupting the

overall status quo of social oppression. According to this logic, anti-sexist work aimed at making MLB girl- and women-friendly could be narrowly constructed to install women in the game without unsettling the dominant codes of white European diasporic masculinity that have been and continue to be baseball's calling card, nationally and globally. This is a justified concern, given the way in which the commercialization and sexual objectification of successful women athletes is being accomplished in North America and beyond. An intersectional conception of gender justice, however, requires disrupting the silences about the interlocking codes of whiteness, economic privilege and and binary normative heterosexuality that shape the structures and practices of MLB and North American society more broadly.

Without an anti-racist and trans-inclusive foundation, anti-sexist reform of baseball could indeed be limited. After all, the racial re-integration of MLB occurred without unsettling white masculine ideological supremacy within its institutions and the wider society (Hoberman, 1997; Alexander, 2006). Baseball, however, is a potentially powerful site for anti-racist and critical feminist scholarship and activism because the cultural shift required to make gender justice in baseball 'thinkable' targets the myths associated with the ideology of the two sex system. This ideology, as Hill Collins and other critical race theorists (Ware, 1992; Alexander, 2006; Mohanty, 2012) emphasize, has an historic and current role in the racialization of people of colour.

Sex segregated and neo-colonial sports such as baseball are worthy targets of resistance as the racialized and socioeconomically positioned 'frailty myth' upheld by the exclusion of women is key to the maintenance of a protective masculinity that justifies the "security actions of imperial democracies like the United States" (Mohanty, 2012). As Mohanty observes, the ideological and material actions of the USA and many of its western allies demonize racialized

peoples inside the state (so-called ‘illegals’) and outside its borders (the war on terror). And the sport of baseball and the sport media that brands it as pro-America and patriotic contributes to a climate of acceptance with regard to such repression. For a powerful example, one has only to witness the April 2012 five game suspension, amid calls for his job, handed down by MLB to Florida Marlins manager Ozzie Guillen for expressing his admiration for Fidel Castro!

Conclusion

My analysis of the three Canadian brother/sister duos clearly reveals the unthinkability of sex segregation in baseball and the way in which this is legally accomplished through formal and informal processes that stream girls and young women into softball and away from baseball and that imbue baseball with cultural centrality within a European diasporic narrative of supremacy (Alexander, 2006). That no legal challenge to the sex segregation of professional baseball has been mounted indicates the extent to which this unthinkability, this ideological silencing mechanism, has been achieved by professional and amateur sport in the United States and Canada.

When I feel faint-hearted in my hope to see an end to the “apartheid of sex” (Rothblatt, 1995) in baseball, I turn to youtube. In a video entitled “AWESOME Catch by Ball Girl....Must See,” I see a spectacular, wall-climbing catch of a foul ball down the left field line by a ball girl at a AAA baseball game. Her athleticism and skill are on display in stunning glory. She helps me to imagine a de-mythologized baseball space where baseball is just a game, albeit a good one, and players of her caliber demonstrate impossible levels of skill and grace – and nothing more. Instead of being in on the game, however, she is paid a modest wage to sit outside the field of play and catch and corral foul balls. This one time, however, she stole “the show.”

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