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Women's experiences of gender-based barriers and stereotypes in bodybuilding as a masculine sport in Poland

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to study gender-based barriers and stereotypes that influence women in masculine sports taking bodybuilding as an example and analyzing four interviews by using a feminism perspective and professional discourse analysis. In terms of methodology it applies narrative writing, interviews, analysis and professional discourse analysis from female bodybuilding athletes and autoethnography. I choose this topic because it is related to my nowadays life - work and hobby. I am a personal trainer from Poland, who live and study in Sweden and I've become a polish elite athlete two years ago by getting accepted to the Polish national team of fitness athletes. I will focus on Donna Haraway's theory about "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988) and Butler (1990) critical thinking about "gender as a performance". Furthermore, I will present scholars about gender equality in sport. Even though sport provides opportunities, it also reinforces dangerous and damaging social patterns such as gender inequity, racism or homophobia. In my thesis I will present different gender barriers women have to overcome in their sports career. First of all, I will discuss how parenthood influence both female and male athletes. Secondly, I will explain why women's sport is marginalized in social media. According to my interviews and experience, despite all the strides made by women's participation in sport, media and society still provide limited attention to female athletes and there is also a strong emphasis on heterosexuality when promoting women's sport. Third, I will examine how "beauty" standards influence judging in bodybuilding, where social and cultural norms about gender are stereotyped in the contest by highlighting a "female" and "male" appearance in every possible way. At the end I will also compare economy support and expenses in sport according to gender. I will prove, that when it comes to money in bodybuilding, women invest more in this sport and achieve less in return. In conclusion, while everyone cares about making things easier for men, women still need to fight for equal rights in sports.

Keywords: gender, stereotypes, women bodybuilding, Poland

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I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to examine women's experience of gender-based barriers and stereotypes in bodybuilding. The idea showed up in my head when I competed in the Polish Championships and the afterwards World Fitness Championships in 2016, where I had the opportunity to talk with famous athletes about equality and diversity in many aspects of this sport. However, for this thesis I have decided to focus on Poland, which is my country of origin, and on Polish bodybuilding. In that case I have interviewed four famous Polish female bodybuilders. The main question I had in mind and therefore it became the question of my thesis was: "are there any gender barriers and inequalities in masculine sport like bodybuilding"?

I believe, that it would be hard to present a thesis about gender equality in bodybuilding without attending in this specific and closed subculture. From the other hand, while writing about the minority someone is part of it is important to find a balance between own research interest and issues of ethic. According to Goran Hermerén it means a theory on the area of morals (Hermerén, 2011:15). Hermen explained how important it is to choose the best method for a good research to answer the aim question and fulfill the ethical considerations. I am sure that without interviews and my own experience I would not be able to do this. In addition, I would only produce or duplicate a knowledge from the already existed academic scholars and do not answer my research question. I have a theory, that all encounters from our life matters when it comes to producing knowledge and "if students are not able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing" (Paolo Freire, 2000:19).

Researchers use a lot of different techniques to conduct their research. These techniques divide into two categories, which are: quantitative and qualitative methodologies. I choose interviews as a data collection method. It involves at least two people - an interviewer (who ask the questions) and an interviewee (who answer the questions). However, there are no specific rules and no specific style, that single interview should contain and fit in every occasion and for all respondents. In this research a semi-structured interview was used, which means that it contains the components of both structured and unstructured interviews. I have prepared a set of same questions to be answered by all interviewees and at the same time additional questions were added, which might be asked during my interviews to clarify certain issues. My main goal was

to present important issues my interviewers brought up and combine it with my own experience and knowledge. The questions of the interview aim to gain knowledge how to be a female athlete in typical, masculine sport like bodybuilding and are there any differences at the competitions according to sex. I have asked my interviewees about their experience during the competitions and the preparation process. Seidman (1998) wrote, that interviewing covers a wide range of practices (including face-to-face, focus group interviews and telephonic interviews) and some of my interviews I did face-to-face, while some of them I did by skype, when I was in Sweden and my respondents were in Poland.

Moreover, my interviewees are from Poland and my master thesis is held in English, therefore I had to prepare translations. Translations, according to Walter Benjamin, are an afterlife of an original text (Benjamin, 2012). Benjamin stated that original has to be conveyed as accurately as possible, but translation doesn't have to be a perfect copy to be a good translation. "Although interviews have various forms and styles (...) the interviewer must work diligently to ensure the validity and reliability of the interview data otherwise, interviewers themselves, can turn out to be weaknesses due to their own bias, subjectivities and lack of interviewing skills. It is also important to note that interviewers themselves become part of the "interviewing picture" by asking questions and responding to the respondent and sometimes even sharing their experiences with interviewees; working with the interview data, selecting from it, interpreting, describing and analyzing it regardless of their discipline and dedication in keeping the interview data as the product of the respondent (Costa Hofisi, 2014). Weaknesses of that kind of research method have been discussed and critiqued from a lot of different, theoretical perspectives like feminist, conversation analytic, sociolinguistic and even data analysis, but I could not imagine any better methodology in this case.

1.1 Professional discourse in research

Since there is a female and male version of almost any sport - gender discrimination was an issue. There are, indeed, differences in male and female sport careers that are important. I want to write about serious problems which are stereotypes in feminine bodybuilding, differences between gender in bodybuilding, gender-based barriers in bodybuilding and society expectations addressed to female and male bodybuilding athletes.

My discussion and interviews with female athletes was analyzed as inter-professional discourse. Professional discourse, according to Gunnarson (2008) includes written texts that are

produced by professionals and intended for professionals (with the same, but also different expertise), semi-professionals or even non-professionals. It also includes talk involving at least one professional (Gunnarsson, 2008). In my paper I have decided to use a term “professionals” as a synonymous of a “paid-workers” in both skilled and unskilled paid jobs. As a salary I consider prizes that are given to the athletes during the competitions or the benefits that are coming for them afterwards, like cooperation with famous brands. Professional discourse is divided into three categories: intra-professional discourse (communication among academicians), inter-professional discourse (communication among professionals) and professional-lay discourse (communication between professionals and laypeople) (Kong, 2014). I am an active athlete right now and therefore this discussion with other athletes is a inter-professional discourse, which is “based on certain beliefs and concepts that are unique to a profession” (Kenneth Kong, 2014:55). People from different professions develop their very own ways to perceive some things and their jargon helps them to talk about their ideas in more precise manner and they have their own way of construing reality. That is why, I had no problems to understand my interviewees and provide a fluent discussion with them. I assume that it would be harder for someone outside this closed group. Gunnarson’s (2009:18) also stated that “profession has a certain way of viewing reality and certain way of highlighting different aspects of the surrounding world” and having this perception makes it easier to understand people from the specific group. It is similar to the subculture definition. According to Gunnarson’s theory every profession, like any other social group with group identity, attitudes and norms, has a need for an identity and separation from the other groups. In the same time, socialization into a group also means establishing distance from people outside the group and “furthermore, every professional group stands in a certain relationship to the surrounding society: it exerts certain functions and is assigned a certain place within society” (Gunnarson’s, 2009:18). What distinguish one from another is that a term professional, according to Kong (2014), is used as a synonymous of a “paid-workers” in both skilled and unskilled paid jobs and subcultures are distinguish only in terms of values and morals they share.

Analyzing of the professional discourse might be taken on the micro, macro and meso level and it typically refers to the location of a unit of analysis though communicative units of analysis defy orthodox distinctions. In organizational communication macro level of analysis is referred to phenomena encompassing multiple organizations, which means inter-organizational communication. Micro level of analysis is referred to the communication between organizational members within the organization. Meso level of analysis is referred to the

interaction between micro and macro phenomena's and "multilevel analysis involves modelling that decomposes the variability into at least two levels of aggregation. It addresses levels of analysis issues by assigning particular variables to particular levels" and therefore that kind of discourse is "based on certain beliefs and concepts that are unique to a profession – that is, professions have their own ways of construing reality" (Barbour & Lammers, 2015). In a conclusion, analyzing of the professional discourse in bodybuilding at a micro level should include social and cognitive dimensions and take into consideration conditions of a particular situation. Analysis of professional discourse at macro level should include organizational and social dimension and consider interdependence and interrelationship between environmental framework that influence this discourse. In my thesis I would like to focus on both of them and present my findings in both levels of this analysis.

1.2 An autoethnography of sport and my life

Before I moved to Sweden I was doing some courses about diet and exercising in Poland and a teacher asked me in front of the whole class "Have you ever thought about competing in Bikini Fitness?". We were at the gym that time, learning about exercise's technique and he noticed that, according to him, I had perfect proportions for this sport (arms, shoulders, legs and waist). He was a famous polish bodybuilder (multiple world champion), so I took his words seriously. That time I didn't know what it was and I wasn't even interested about that, but when I moved to Sweden I was alone and bored at the beginning - I didn't know anyone and had a lot of free time before I have started my studies, so I googled "bikini fitness competition". I loved the way those girls look like and I thought that I would like to be one of them.

"The physician who treats himself has a fool for a patient" said Sir William Osler and therefore I decided to look for a well-educated and objective trainer. During my research I have heard about Polish Elite Athletes Group called „Fenix Team” - one trainer who started this, one make-up artist and only a few girls and a few boys from Poland, which are chosen from plenty of good competitors. I knew they usually win at the competitions and they usually look the best from all of the athletes. They have their own clothes and the best make ups, their body are like statues and they look so shiny on the stage, you just know they will win before the show even starts for good. But I also knew it will be hard to get there! I mailed their trainer, send him some of my photos and a movie, and tell him a little bit about myself. I worked hard a half a year until he accepts me to the team, but finally he did. I was the youngest from our group and he said he was worried whether I really want to do this sport or was it just a "teenage dream" I

would give up quickly. Let's say now, that I had to work even harder than other girls to prove him wrong. My family didn't like the idea of this sport at the beginning, but after they watch me doing my diet, going to bed early, waking up for morning cardio, counting every day till the competitions - they accepted my new lifestyle and even my relations with my father improved. Finally, we settle a date for my first competition after some time. When I heard there were 35 other girls in my category I felt a little bit nervous, but well - let's have some fun and hit the stage, I thought, and walk in. The lights shined right into my eyes, a big crowd I barely see, my parents and friends in the corner screaming something I did not understand, judges looked so scary. And my trainer, where is my trainer? I couldn't see him. I stopped thinking, put the smile on my face and I started to walk with other girls, trying to catch the judge's eyes. The first round finished and we had to take off from the scene. I took my cell phone from the backstage and call my mom "Well, I guess that's it - are we going to eat something in town? I dream about pizza! Let's forget about that whole show" and before she even answered I saw my trainer, running to me. "Come on, Kaja, we need to hurry" he said "Let's check everything and put some oil on, you've made it, you get to the second round!". I just hang out. Didn't say anything to my mother, but I think she heard that, because after a few minutes, when I hit the scene again - with the top 15 of the girls, I saw her smiling to me from the same corner she used to be. So here we are, I thought, I am on the top 15 in Poland, that is how it feels like. My father with his camera and a backpack looked really funny around all these big guys out there and he waved me and show his weak biceps - I smiled even more wide and just do my thing. And then I got to the top 6, I went to the final round and finished it at the third place. I got a 3rd place in Poland at my first competition ever. I was really happy about that. My trainer and my family were proud, because they knew how much effort it took me to achieve that.

Right now, I am a Polish National Team Athlete in Bikini Fitness up to 169cm. It's been two and a half a year now after my first competition. I have a few competitions done. In all of them (excluding World Fitness Championships) I was in the final which means either top 3 or top 6. I love bodybuilding and I work as a personal trainer in Sweden, so it gives me a lot of joy and happiness. While competing in Bikini Fitness I had a chance to attend in Bodybuilding Competitions and to compare bodybuilding with women's equivalents like fitness or bikini fitness. I know a lot of competitors - female and male athletes - judges and trainers. I had a chance to compete in the Polish Grand Prix or global competitions like World Fitness Championships. It gave me quite a good and broad view on this sport which I would like to share in this thesis.

Among this subject - a lot of ethical dilemmas showed up in my mind. Writing about the topic close to my heart I worried that I could not be objective in my paper. From the other side it gave me a passion for writing and exploring it in the most possible way. I knew, that there must be some researchers that thought the same as me, and that is how I get to know about auto-ethnography. "Auto-ethnography is an emerging qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding about a societal phenomenon" (Wall, 2006:). I definitely want to situate myself in my writing and relay on my experience to improve - not to weaken – the bodybuilding field.

II. METHODOLOGY

It is needless to say, that a research method in social science research is an essential part of a project. It determines a success, reliability and validity of a research. Zoltan Dörnyei (2007:140) assumes that qualitative interview has two key features: "(a) it flows naturally, and (b) it is rich in detail". It is important for a researcher to listen carefully, not only speak and give questions. Interviews are interesting and interactive, because interviewers might press for a clear and complete answers in emerging topics. "Hence, interviewing is expected to broaden the scope of understanding investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool" (Hamza Alshenqeeti, 2014:2). Dörnyei (2007) argues, that interviewing is a natural and socially acceptable way of collecting data and it can be used in different situations, which covers a variety of topics. Qualitative analyzing process involves collecting and managing the data (which in this case are the interviewers' answers) and afterwards organizing, coding, prescribing and preparing them. Then, it is good to pick up themes or differences from the interviews and connect or interrelate them with each other. At the end it is necessary to interpret the findings and provide a meaning. The main task for interviewer is to understand the meaning of what the subjects say. Scholars warn us, that "in conducting an interview, the interviewer should attempt to create a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere. Much as one does with a cover letter, the interviewer should give a brief, casual introduction to the study; stress the importance of the person's participation; and assure anonymity, or at least confidentiality, when possible" (Connaway, 2010) and that was my goal which I hope I achieved.

I choose four people from the bodybuilding area - bikini fitness competitors - to talk about the problems I carry on in the thesis. I am really happy that my situation helped me to do this. Some

of my interviews has been done face to face, while some of them was held online. I have decided to use evaluated and open questions, instead of the “yes or no” type, to ensure freedom for my interviewees. An ethical challenge for me, as a researcher, was to maintain an intimacy in this openness, so my interviewees would not regret disclosing their private. Furthermore, to protect my participants integrity I kept the collected data confidential and anonymous - I told interviewees that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw at any time. Interviews divide into three groups of structured, unstructured and semi-structured (which is a combination of the first two). Structured interviews include pre-determined questions and all interviewees answer them in the same order. It allows to analyse the data in the way of contrasting and comparing different answers given by the respondents to the same questions. Unstructured interviews consist of questions prepared prior to the interview. Data analysis and collection is conducted in an informal way and comparison of answers tends to be difficult because of the differences in formulation each question.

Reviews will be implemented by my own experience so far, therefore, it will make it a full and complete autoethnography, which “is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:1). Otherwise, it would be just a story, which people make every day. What makes this story more valid, is that I have a set of methodological tools (interviews) and theoretical research (literature) to use as an advantage. According to Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011:4) „autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience, but also must consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders”. To accomplish this assignment I will compare and contrast my personal experience against interviewing cultural members and analyzing existing research or examining other relevant cultural artifacts.

I choose Donna Haraway’s “Situated knowledge” as a main literature method in my thesis. The main concept of this paper is about situated (or partial) knowledge which is always linked to the contexts in which this knowledge is created and it made a major influence on the whole feminist debates. According to author, “objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility” (Haraway, 1988:582) and her moral is that “only partial perspective promises

objective vision” (Haraway, 1988:583). Haraway wrote the same about translations, that they are “always interpretive, critical and partial” (Haraway, 1988:589) and translations are a strong theme in my thesis in accordance to the fact that my interviews were taken in polish language. My feminist studies in gender-based barriers and stereotypes in bodybuilding in Poland rely on her vision of the feminist objectivity, which is “not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object” (Haraway, 1988:583), but about situated knowledge and limited location. This theory allows me to become answerable for what I learn, how I see it and how do I want to present it and that is why I decided to focus on that.

2.1 The role of the researcher

Right now, I am actively involved in female bodybuilding as a competitor and I am socially and culturally located in the bodybuilding community, so it is impossible for me to be located outside of my subject matter. I planned my questions after reading the whole literature, and so who I wanted to speak with. I choose to talk with four totally different bodybuilders in different age and with different experience. I listened carefully and let them speak openly - at least I hope it was like that. I wasn't stressed at all, because I knew these people - some of them I have met somewhere during the competitions and some of them I know well from the internet. All of the interviewees involved in the talk were enthusiastic about the interview and the topic of my thesis. I had to combine following tasks a) find interviewees suitable for my master thesis and topic, b) prepare good questions and make a good interview, c) observe quality of responses from interviewees. To prepare a good interview I equipped myself in a special “interviewer's kit” like notebook, laptop and printed copy of my questions. I talked with my interviewees before we started. I told them that interviews will be anonymous. I explained them the purpose of the interviews and how important for me is that they have agreed for that.

For the researcher, an interview is the whole process, filled with full of nuances and interpretations, that sometimes are not immediately visible. Even if every interview contains some common components (opening, then questions and answers and at the end a closure established by both interviewee and interviewer), it is always different and you won't make two exactly the same interviews even if you prepare the same questions etc. The main task for interviewer is to understand the meaning of what the subjects say. Interviews are far more personal than questionnaires, but questionnaires might bring answers easy to compare. Interviews are more time consuming than questionnaires, both in making and analysing them. Scholars warn us, that “in conducting an interview the interviewer should attempt to create a

friendly, non-threatening atmosphere. Much as one does with a cover letter, the interviewer should give a brief, casual introduction to the study; stress the importance of the person's participation; and assure anonymity, or at least confidentiality, when possible" (Lynn Connaway, 2010).

2.2 Interviews, questions and ethical dilemmas

All off my interviewers are heterosexual, female bodybuilding athletes between 25-45 years old. I choose athletes who competed more than once and therefore has an experience in this sport. Most of them live with their families (kids and/or partners) and work.

1. E. S.

She is a well-known athlete in Poland and a girlfriend of a famous coach of female bodybuilders. She is around 35 years old. She has competed plenty of times and now she works as a personal and posing trainer. Frequently, she made a license and now she is judging competitions in Poland. She is 34 years old, but she doesn't have any kids.

2. J. R.

She was a Bikini Fitness competitor, but recently she has changed to the brand-new Wellness Fitness, which allows women to have bigger legs and glutes since it was her problem before. She has a kid and husband, who is also a competitor in Men's Physique, which is an alternative, men version of Bikini Fitness and she works as a personal trainer. She is around 30 years old.

3. J. N.

She is a Bikini fitness athlete with two kids and a husband, who is not a competitor. She is the only girl on polish stage with short hair. She is a personal trainer and she works at the gym. She is almost 40 years old.

4. M. B.

She is only 27 years old, doesn't have any kids or husband. She used to have a boyfriend who was a well-known competitor in Poland, but they broke up this year. She focused on a career now, though she is not competing. She is a successful personal trainer.

At the beginning I have asked the same questions all of my interviewers, because I wanted to compare the answers easily and find the similarities or differences. I asked my interviewees

have they ever noticed unequal treatment of the athletes on the backstage based on a gender and have they ever noticed unequal competition prizes for the athletes based on a gender? Furthermore, I was interested if they ever experienced gender discrimination as athletes and how it looks like to be a female athlete? Especially, I was interested how it differs from being a male athlete in their opinion. Because most of the interviews somehow follow the topic of motherhood and most of the participants mention it in the interviews, I have added additional questions about managing roles of mother/wife and a professional athlete. The last question was about social-media and I have asked my participants how it looks like to be a sportswoman in social media and some additional questions in that field.

This methodology implements a few limitations. First of all, the number of interviewees is low, and the interviews were short. However, bodybuilding is still an elite sport, so I wasn't easy to find so many people. I hope that in future studies more athletes will join that kind of research process. Second, the language of the interviews was Polish and the language of my master thesis is English. Therefore, I had to translate the interviews. I have relied on the seminars about translations we had during our studies and a literature in this area, so I think I was prepared to manage this.

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The main purpose of this chapter is to present my research area. My goal is to fill in some important, unexplored and interesting gap in the scholars about female bodybuilding. This chapter guides through what to look for when collecting data to my interviews and afterwards helped me to analyze and interpret the findings.

3.1 Literature review

The first article I have read was by Knetta (2014) who reviewed and critically discussed three domains of importance and relevance for the psychological health of female athletes who competed in the elite level. It mentions such important topics as parenthood, coach-competitor relationship and in general their public life. I struggle with that kind of problems all the time. For example, it was always hard for me to combine my studies and private life with my career. Knetta mentioned another important problem of dangerous combination between striving to perfection and physical wellbeing - two that are hard to combine and achieve in the same time and described perfectionism as an unremitting and compulsive pursuit of impossible goals

(Knetta, 2014). I asked my interviewees how they managed to keep their private life and compete, is it possible to be a good partner or parent during preparation for a competition and how do they deal with society and family in that times.

M. Messner (1988) explored the historical and ideological meanings of organized sports for the politics of gender relations. It focused on the physiological differences between the sexes, the present “male” structure of organized sports and media framing of the female athletes. Messner argued that women’s movement into sport represents a genuine quest by women for equality, control for their own bodies and self-definition. Therefore, it is representing a challenge and faltering ideology of male domination. Certainly, the image of a muscular woman runs counter to traditional prescriptions for female passivity and weakness. In the film “Pumping Iron: The Women” the tension between traditional prescriptions for femininity and the new muscularity of female bodybuilders is also the major story line. Another line in the article focus on the differences in judging female and male athletes – the problem I will bring in the methodology section of my thesis. Messner wonder if woman bodybuilders should be judged simply according to how well-muscled they are, as well as male bodybuilders are judged, or also by a separate and traditionally feminine aesthetics. At the end, Messner focused at the image of femine sport in social media and public life. Popular sentence “strong is the new sexy” often occurring in media with an accompanying of a skinny, slightly-muscled girl wearing a full make-up and a small kettlebell is a really annoying. It seems like it wasn’t allowed for women to sweat or work out hard. Male magazines are totally different, showing sweaty and muscle boys with heavy weight and a six pack.

Royce, Gebelt & Duff (2003) made a good implementation of the one above. It was like an “interview examination” about femininity of women athletes. It provides a support for the hypothesis that collegiate female athletes are respected and are seen as feminine in general. Not surprisingly, athletes accorded more respect for female athletes, than non-athletes did, but even though, on average, the feedback from all of the participants was positive. However, inequalities in this perception suggest that traditional stereotypes about women bodybuilders are stronger in the non-athlete’s population and that female athletes still struggle with stereotypes.

Additionally, Gertrud Pfister (2010) mention gender stereotypes in relation to sport and strength. In this paper, female athletic stereotypes were presented and discussed in relation to

the impact female gender stereotypes have on girls and women who participate in traditional and non-traditional sports. Pfister discussed female athletes stereotypes in addition to a traditional female stereotypes in past and present. Moreover, Pfister mentions women's sensitivity to gender issues in sports and personal experiences of an author. I liked to ask my interviewers about what stereotypes of female bodybuilder they experience in their everyday life, what their family and friends think about their hobby and how other people react on female bodybuilding.

The article by Mark Suffolk (2015) had a purpose to answer a question why women commit to bodybuilding and highly muscled bodies determined with a strict diet and a hard training in society, where muscularity is still a synonym of masculinity. According to Suffolk, competitive bodybuilding is an aesthetic pursuit and despite nowadays fitness-oriented culture, it is still common, that society "disrespect hovers over the bodybuilding community, which may be a consequence of past and more recent work that describes a relationship between female bodybuilding and maladaptive behaviors, for instance, substance use, extreme exercise regimes, and disordered dietary practices" (Suffolk, 2015:2). Author was trying to examine why women are motivated to begin bodybuilding and why they want to continue in this sport. In this case Suffolk interviewed 24 female bodybuilders in age from 29 to 49 years. It quickly appeared that the term „female bodybuilder“ is covered with many possibilities. Some women may self-label themselves as one according to their physique and even though they did not compete yet, while other, who compete a few times, still do not feel secure to call themselves a bodybuilder. Parish, Baghurst, and Turner (2010:153) provide a definition, that "a bodybuilder is an individual who trains with weights on a regular and frequent basis in order to achieve high levels of muscularity and leanness for the primary purpose of competing". The main focus in this article was on the purpose and motivation for becoming a bodybuilder. The most common answer was improvement of a body, striving to success and belonging to some subculture. Stressing the point that bodybuilding is not just a sport, but a complex subculture was very important. I am aware of that, because my trainer always put a strong believe that bodybuilders have their own set of values and morals, that are often very different from what other people might use. What for others might be a "freak" of nature, for us is the greatest achievement. We can go even further with saying that we are really proud of that. An interesting part of this subculture is that a member is easily recognized – muscular body, fitness clothes almost all day, food always packed and prepared. Even during my studies people easily noticed that I am somewhere into sport and started asking questions before I have even spoke about it. Due to the fact that building

a muscular body needs plenty of time at the gym, bodybuilders end up spending plenty of time together, which causes an association with each other more than with others. All these aspects make bodybuilding an interesting example of a subculture and profession, what will be helpful to truly understand the discourse analysis I will make during the interviews analysis.

Dean Garratt (2015) writes about natural female bodybuilders. As Garratt wrote, “natural bodybuilding, as distinct from its more mainstream counterpart, is a minority niche sport and subculture, whose quest is to build the body free of performance-enhancing drugs”. Women in this sport use and even abuse of steroids (like testosterone, human growth hormone, anavar, winstrol etc.) to build bodies into an extreme level -muscular and vascular, beneath almost transparent skin. This article also contains interviews with athletes. The main thesis of them was that by natural bodybuilding women only enhance their own femininity. Many argued, that without doping and using only their own determination and hard work female bodybuilder cannot build their bodies beyond what they are capable to achieve. Gender differences in this sport was mentioned in addition to competitions and public opinion. Interviewees in the article were wondering why they have to show glutes, while men don't have to or how it differs to prepare for a contest while being a man and a woman. As well, most of the interviewees said that they have experienced unpleasant comments from other people of “not being normal” or look “mannish” at least once (Garratt, 2015).

Chris Shilling and Tanya Bunsell (2014) begin with a colourful description of the Sarah's participation in the Strongwoman contest. From this perspective, bodybuilding and other sports provides women to access the male dominated space and it is modelling their physical development and liberating experiences of achievement. Sarah, who is a main character in the article, a bodybuilder and a Strongwoman, firstly dedicated herself to bodybuilding. She was disciplined in every aspect of everyday life for several years to pursuit muscles. She was devoting huge attention to diet and supplements, exercises, rest, regeneration and organizing her social life around all this regime. I know how much it costs, because this is how my life looks like for three years right now. Unfortunately, the “unfair” judgements and gender-based discriminations discourage her for this sport. Her body was considered “too big and too muscular for a woman”, which wasn't a really clear response. This sport is very subjective, and it is hard to judge, so she took a step on another stage of life's journey and entered the world of Strongwomen's. Authors claimed, that female bodybuilders relay on “the others”, which can be referred as judges, audience or fans. This mentioned “others” validate the appearance of a

competitors and judge their appearance. Judging on lifting is totally different from being evaluated in terms of body and its muscularity. Sara admit that “in Strongwoman it’s all based on performance. It’s very simple – you either lift it or you don’t. No one gives a monkey’s what you look like or what you are wearing” (Shilling & Bunsell, 2014). For Rosenberg, such practical accomplishments can contribute to a sense that these competitors are not simply ‘freaks of nature’, but ‘super beings’, equipped with strength and abilities that are Herculean. This article also mentions two disadvantages of both sports - drug use and injuries. Sarah’s experience both of them in either bodybuilding and strongwoman contests and she highlight the danger of enhancing steroids and injuries during the competitions or preparation for them. Additionally, another research from Gary Goldfield (2009) draws attention to the important problem of eating disorders, weight preoccupation and abnormal weight control behaviour among female fitness athletes and enthusiast of the fitness lifestyle.

3.2 Women in sport and bodybuilding

Before I will continue with interviews, I would like to write more about women relation to the sport or sport competitions. Females participation in sport and competitions has a long history, which was marked by not only division and discrimination, but also with major accomplishments by these athletes and some important advances for, in example, gender equality or empowerment of women. Among all of the achievements, the most important for me are those of Helene Madison who was the first woman who swim the 100-yard freestyle in one minute at the 1932 Olympics, Maria-Teresa de Filippis as a first woman to compete in a European Grand Prix auto race in 1958 or Nawal El Moutawakel, the first woman from an Islamic nation to win an Olympic medal and Tegla Loroupe of Kenya who became the first African woman to win a major marathon.

Nowadays more and more females have taken up opportunities in all areas of sport and activity, including such jobs like coaches, managers and sport journalists. This was made in the face of plenty gender-based barriers and discrimination, because women are often perceived as too weak for sport (especially like weightlifting) and in the past it was often argued as harmful for women’s health (Sandys, 2007). Gender based discrimination between women and men in sport is a gendering practice that is also apparent in the unequal representation of females in media (especially sport media) and the negative portrayal of female athletes and women’s sports. In addition, women’s sporting events are usually marginalized from the sport-media industry and while there are many local, national or international competitions (including both men’s and

women's events) - men's sport dominate in media coverage in the same level like in the local and global attention of society. Promotion and marketing of women's sport are usually highly sexualized in medias and the value of the women as an athlete is quite often determined in terms of her body, attractiveness or sex appeal, rather than her qualities.

The beginning of a modern bodybuilding can be traced in the XIX century and it is believed that this sport was introduced by Eugene Sandow, whose statue is still given to the winners of the most prestigious bodybuilding contest - Mr. Olympia. Bodybuilders, both female and male, try to develop all parts of the body and muscles to the maximum size with maintaining all its balance, symmetry and harmony. There should be no "weak points" in their bodies. They are reducing body fat and water under the skin to the minimum level before they hit the scene in order to clearly show as many details as possible. Still, the most wanted factor in this pursuit for perfection are the right proportions. What's hiding behind of this? Broad shoulders, narrow waist and long legs. In women categories there is less attention paid to the hardness, size of the muscles or definition and a little bit more at the general appearance, shape, presentation on the scene and overall beauty. Judges rate man in 7 compulsory poses and woman have only 5 of them. Competitors arrange body appropriate in order to expose their muscles in the best way and all of the poses are strictly defined in the regulations. All the information I used to write these chapter was found in the IFBB official website.

First ever bodybuilding contest for women was set in early 70s. Of course, it differs a lot than what we have now, but what didn't change was that women also wore a high-heels and weren't allowed to do typical "man" poses (like "front and back biceps" or "chest"). The contests were still held by promoters acting totally independently and was still lacked in governing body. But that would change in 1980 - it is when female bodybuilding first took off and where the first Ms. Olympia shows up. Women's bodybuilding was officially sentenced as a sport discipline in the 1982 at the IFBB (International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness) Congress in Belgium. You can read that in the IFBB official website which you can find in the bibliography.

As the sport grew, level of competitors and access to the steroids increase, the same like the size of female bodybuilders. I think that was the time when stereotypes about women and muscle growth showed up. In 1992 it caused a lot of controversy - in response to the increased size displayed along with increasing drug abuse and plenty of androgenic side effects, IFBB made an attempt to "feminize" this sport. Following the 1992 debacles, the judging rules were

rewritten. The new rules retained provisions for aesthetics but allowed the contests to be judged as physique contests. The judges guide to the competitors, stated that they were looking for a highly feminine and optimally developed, but not emaciated physique. According to Wikipedia, because of this change, well known female bodybuilder, Chizevsky-Nicholls, decided to retire from bodybuilding after winning the 1999 Ms. Olympia and according to some sources “she retired due gender discrimination guidelines set up by the IFBB that advocated for more “femininity” and less “muscularity” in the sport”. At the 2014 Ms. Olympia, Iris Kyle won her tenth overall Olympia win, beating her own previous record of nine overall Olympia wins. She also won her ninth consecutive Olympia title in a row, beating famous Ronnie Coleman's (male bodybuilder) and Lee Haney's (also a male bodybuilder) record eight consecutive Olympia titles in a row, thus giving her more overall and consecutive Olympia wins than any other bodybuilder, male or female, of all time. After winning she announced that she would be retiring from bodybuilding. The 2014 Ms. Olympia was the last Ms. Olympia competition held. In 2015, the Ms. Olympia was dropped, marking the possible end of women's bodybuilding.

These days women can compete in several competitions: fit-model, bikini fitness, figure, fitness, physique, and bodybuilding. The posing and related requirements are different for each of them, but the main difference is obvious: muscular size. The less muscular are fit-model competitors, who also wear dresses and more built-up costumes. Next one would be the bikini fitness, where women wear bikini costumes with normal pants and are a little bit more muscular, but also really feminine (this is the most popular category right now and I would say that people like this "look" the most) and figure, where the costume is similar to bikini fitness competitors, but women in this category wear thongs and should be way much muscular. There are two categories of competition that are closely related to bodybuilding: fitness, which has a swimsuit round and around that is judged by the performance of a routine poses with aerobic, dance or gymnastic and physique, which is judged on symmetry and muscle tone, with much less emphasis on muscle size than in bodybuilding.

Bikini Fitness is my category in this sport and it has been introduced in 2011 by IFBB. This one is aimed for women who keep their body in shape and eat healthy and that is where overall body lines, balance and proportions, body tone and healthy appearance are taken into the most consideration. The emphasis is on a well-shaped, fit, healthy and attractive appearance, similar to that of models. Competitors are assessed in two rounds, wearing a two-piece bikini and high-heels. In both rounds, quarter-turns, including front, back and both sides stance, are performed

(according to the IFBB official webpage). As well, the final round begins with “T-walking” or “I-walking”, which gives each competitor a chance to present her body and her charm on the move. According to the IFBB official website, this competition started with one open class and – due to the extreme popularity - expanded to six body-height categories nowadays: 160 cm, 163 cm, 166 cm, 169 cm, 172 cm and over 172 cm. I am in the "up to 169cm" category and usually there are 50 other girls with me I have to conquer with. To be honest it is not easy to conquer with so many beautiful ladies in the same time and it is easy to be unnoticed on stage when you are standing in a big group of well-prepared competitors. I feel lucky and proud that since now I have always end up in final (at least) or in top 3 - except World Fitness Championships, which was my fourth competition in my life and I had to contest with the most famous athletes in the world.

IV. INTERVIEWS' ANALYSIS

I choose to ask each of the athletes around 10 questions. I knew they were busy and except from work and family, they also had to take care about their trainings and diet. I know that from my own, because I was trying to combine my studies, work and competitions and I know that every extra activity is just impossible or annoying. That is why I thought that an hour for each will be an enough time for a meeting and still, two of them was really hard to reach, because these women are literally always busy and couldn't spend any extra time on that. Finally, I have met with my interviewees online. I am happy that we figured it out somehow, but it is an obvious sign of how absorbing this lifestyle is and that people, who decide for that, need to be very predictive and good in logistic.

4.1 Mother, wife and a successful competitor

First thing I wanted to discuss was how other competitors deal with everyday life, like work, school and house-hold duties. For me it was never hard to do my work and prepare for the competitions in the same time, because I used to work in the gym since I remember. It was easy to have my job and trainings in the same place and do not have to move across the city. It wasn't hard to study and work either, because I work since I am 20 and always combine this with my studies. The problem appears always at the beginning of the academic year - when I had to work, study and prepare for the competition in the same time and a lot of new responsibilities came up to my life. I noticed, that most of the interviewees combine their work and hobby with family and I asked them what they think about it. For J.N. there is no prescription how to

manage everything, except a sensible approach to every area of life and adequate logistics. It is easier for her now, when she shares the responsibilities with her partner, but she used to alone for some time and she managed to deal with everything somehow. “This may require less sleep and slack, but if you want to do something and other things you just have to do, you will figure a way out” (J.N, 2017, skype).

Goran Knetta (2014) brought up the idea about parenthood in female sporting career – when is the right time for a woman to become pregnant and how many responsibilities it makes on her as both mother and athlete? J.N. was competing when she was a single mother with two kids and I remember that she did a great job. Now, since she is back together with her partner, she has also competed and achieved her goals. But this is something that is worth of consideration. According to gendering social norms, women are responsible for the kids, so when they broke up she was the one who took care of them most of the time, even though she wanted to develop her career. For those girls everything is a matter of organization and cooperation with the other half. E.S said that she has never had problems reconciling duties at home with work and preparation for the competition. “To have time for I used to get up early in the morning and then I used to go to sleep after midnight. Good planning and organization is a key to success.” (E.S, 2017, skype). Her partner is a famous bodybuilder and trainer, but he was not competing for a long time. I know he supports her very much. I remember that she was a little bit tired though and, in the interview, she got back to the times when she used to have a second job - that was too hard to manage for her and finally she quit it. Relationship with a trainer was mentioned in the Knetta (2014) article. It is interesting, because her boyfriend was her trainer too and that is how they met. Knetta noticed that “the coach–athlete relationships for many of the best female athletes are quite different from those of male athletes in terms of the gender match. At the Olympic level, female coaches are rarities. In this context, many female-athlete–coach relationships develop into love and marriage. This phenomenon is anecdotally reported in team sports but is more common in individual sports” (Knetta 2014:6). Most of these women work full time and doing personal trainings or group fitness trainings after work. “It is hard, because there is not much time for everything. Every free moment I am trying to spend with my son. Together with my husband I exchange household duties. We have to work together to find time for trainings - both of us” (J.R, spring 2017, skype). Her partner is also a competitor. They share all responsibilities together and understand each other very well, but because they both compete they also have much more responsibilities than “normal” couples do. Knetta suggest that “male athletes seem to find it easier to focus on a limited number of important life

domains—sometimes, in fact, only the single domain of sport— rather than to worry about performing well in multiple domains” (Knetta, 2014:8). I was also wondering about other people from the family of female athletes – do they support them? Are they interested in their hobby? E.S. said that family and loved ones understand her passion and support her, only people who do not know her very well are sometimes mean or cannot understand her lifestyle. “That is when I have learned to only care about them, not everyone” (E.S, spring 2017, skype). My family also support me and E. S. was the person who usually stand right beside me giving me a good pep talk about important things in life when I only felt unmotivated or weak. She always said to me that I can win and I shouldn’t even look on other people. If someone doesn’t want to support you that’s fine, but you don’t have to think about that person any more too - she used to say. She was also the first person ever who actually thought I might be successful - a long time before I get accepted to the Polish National Team or attend the World Fitness Championships.

J.R. said that at first people in the neighbourhood were sceptical about her passion. They asked her what and why is she doing this. They didn’t really believe that she would succeed and they thought it is only temporary. However, when she proved them that hard work was profitable they have changed their minds. “Today I try to surround myself with people who do not cut my wings and who support me. I think people see how much involvement I put in this sport and for them I'm winning regardless of the outcome” (J.R, spring 2017, skype). As I and Knetta (2014) mention before, both parenthood and coach-athlete relationship influence the feelings of wellbeing and ill-being. Surrounding yourself with people that encourage you is almost a tactical move in that case. It takes time to show people why we are doing this and that this is what makes us happy and so the loved ones believe that it is not only a whim. All of the athletes admitted, that they had similar struggle, but when they finally get to the point – the fitness journey became easier and more fun.

4.2 Social-media and bodybuilding

Female participation in sport might be challenging to the important issues of gender stereotypes and discrimination, and therefore it might be strong and powerful vehicle for promoting gender equality and by this empowerment women and girls. By this, women leadership in sports might shape their attitudes as leaders and decision makers in traditional male domains. Sandy (2007) mention positive outcomes of sport for both gender equality and women’s empowerment which are habitually constrained by discrimination and furthermore filled by continuing stereotypes

of physical incomplete abilities and social roles for women. Author mention that women are often involuntarily segregated into different types of sports, competitions and events specially target for woman and their access to leadership and decision-making in sport is constrained. Furthermore, the value of the women's sport is often lower, which results in unequal wages and prizes for female athletes and also inadequate resources for women sport.

In social medias women's sport is marginalized and presented in a totally different style than men's sport. When I have made my decision about competing in the Bodybuilding contest I was already a personal trainer committed to the sporty lifestyle with my own motivational Facebook fan page. I didn't have a lot of viewers, but at least people around me knew I am interested in sport. After my first competition a lot of changed and now thousands of people follow me and my preparations for another contest. At the beginning I didn't earn any money on that, and so it is right now, but what changed is that I get more propositions of cooperation (photo sessions, supplements, cosmetics etc). From the other hand, it makes me more visible in the media and more people get interested in me, therefore I gain more clients as a personal trainer which became my profession. My followers comment my photos and write to me. Usually, I try to respond everyone who is trying to connect with me. I know that this people want me to answer their questions (sometimes about me and my life, sometimes about training and diet). Women ask me mostly how to lose fat easily, but there are also girls who are attracted in a healthy way of losing weight too. I always stress that it is important to give ourselves a time - you did not gain fat in one month, so you won't lose it in one either. Men are usually interested if I am competing in near future, what I am doing in Sweden and how it looks like to live abroad.

Unfortunately, sometimes I receive unkind or even offended comments from an unknown people. I know I shouldn't care about opinion of strangers, but it depends from a day - sometimes it is harmful and sometimes not at all. The most upsetting comment was after my first competition, when some girl insults me for achieving such high score because I definitely knew someone important (I didn't, and I came to my first competitions in Poland directly from Sweden). She claimed that my physique wasn't special and she might easily achieve similar, if she only focus more on a diet and training. She also accuses me for sleeping with a judge panel, which was totally irrational and I don't want to even comment such words. I remember I was really sad about it. As I mentioned before, everyone need a support and I am not an exception! I also like to feel understood and supported and it is hard for me to bear with a negative opinion.

The comments about female bodybuilders sounds terrible: people said they are disgusting, terrible etc. (Shilling & Bunsell, 2014). The comments about bikini fitness competitors differs - women in this category are less muscular and are more likely to “fit in” the norms of a perfect body, but still there will be plenty of people who do not like it and will comment it in a harmful way. In Dean Garratt’s article his interviewees, female bodybuilders, admit that they were offended at least once in their career, but most of them said it was even more.

According to Shilling and Bunsell (2014), this sport is an exploration of the female bodybuilding athletes as a “gender outlaw”. In their paper female athletes are figures which are stigmatized not because of the broken of a formal law, but mainly because they disregarded a common understanding of “what is aesthetically, kinesthetically and phenomenologically acceptable within the gendered order of social interaction” (Shilling & Bunsell, 2014:1). Being “male equal masculine” and “woman equal feminine” is still an only appropriate way in our society, where female bodybuilding “is reflected in typically hysterical media coverage that portrays these women as 'scary monsters', 'at war' with society and their own bodies, looking and sounding like men and rejecting what is culturally tolerable” (Shilling & Bunsell, 2014:3). Girls are thought that being strong and muscular is an attribute of men and that their strength is unappealing to men. They are thought that competing with boys may cause questions about their gender and sexuality and that they should definitely strive for a men’s attention and perception of attractiveness. For society a hard training isn’t an attribute of a women, beside that - they should find some “feminine activity”. There are such times nowadays that there is ubiquitous jealousy, so I suspect that there will always be people that may express unkind opinions. It is easy to talk about someone and to express harmful opinions. “Often people criticize those who achieve something in relation to their imagined vision - and they, themselves, sit on a couch with chips and a finger in their nose” (J.N, spring 2017, skype). This exactly refers to my previous situation. People like to judge, but (un)fortunately they are not the judges. I care about opinion of others, but only if they have an objective critique that might help me to get better. If someone only wants to bring me down I try not to listen. For E.S. annoying comments from people who are completely unfamiliar with the sport and who often offend competitors are something she hates the most! “I’m not interested in the opinion of the others, because it is my passion which gives me satisfaction, fulfilment and happiness. I do it for myself, not for society. From society I get nothing in return” (E.S, spring 2017, skype).

Bradshaw (2002) wrote a broad section about the idea of the sport, which seems to endow women by increasing their confidence and self-esteem, by own motivation and strong believes. During the training you can watch your body doing more than you suspected. After a few months you would notice a small change on your muscles and physical condition, but after a few years you will see the difference it made with your inner self. I have trained 6 years now and I can say it is like a drug, just like in the Shilling and Brussel (2014) article, where they claimed that a “female bodybuilders experience these changes as a heightened sense of being alive, a sense manifesting itself in an emboldening and merging of the senses”. They also wrote, that “boundaries between pleasure and pain weaken and dissolve within the bodybuilding 'high'. What would previously have been uncomfortable becomes transformed as a 'beautiful and pleasurable' pushing of the limits” (Shilling & Bunsell, 2014).

The thing that also bring me and other girls from the interviews down are nasty comments from people totally outside the field who comments our body. I used to hear that I am way too much muscular (someone based their opinion on a flexed photo from stage, where I am anhydrate and flexing my muscles) or conversely about the lack of muscles and definition with being only a skinny girl (comments under the photo from a family meeting). I guess it is hard to satisfy everyone and we definitely shouldn't even try. Some of my female friends while posting pictures in a great shape were accused for taking steroids or doping and no one appreciate their hard work. I think men and women experience it in the similar level, but to be honest I have heard about such things mostly from my female friends. That made me think why is it so? “Well trained men are usually gaining respect. It seems to me that it is more difficult for a woman to be taken seriously in the same time (like posting the picture of the shape)” (J.N, 2017, skype). Women who are fitness competitors and are well trained are usually described as all "done" - because they care about their hair, make-up and the whole cover and it is often seen as empty and plastic.

In a conclusion, according to my interviewees women suffer from the assessment from the society on a higher level than men. Shilling (2009:9) assumed that it is because “female bodybuilder is deemed outrageous by 'normals' because she rejects the relatively passive roles, customs, body techniques and appearances associated with Western apprenticeships in femininity” and therefore it causes a negative reaction in society. Male bodybuilder, from the other hand, produce more acceptable norms.

4.3 Judging the bodies

Every time the competition ends and final results are visible to everyone, there are always a few voices saying “she shouldn’t won, the other girl was very much better” etc. Sometimes it is even a competitor who is saying that. I never disrespected the judgement and I always accepted the score. Judgement is hard, especially in such subjective sport. People usually forget that this sport is much more than muscles - it is also symmetry and presenting on the stage and you just can’t choose the best competitor by looking only at the photos. Photos are not objective. “There are criteria that judges should guide, but it is a sport where there are no clearly defined standards and the rating will always be subjective” (J.N, spring 2017, skype). As J. N. said, this sport is subjective, because it is not counting the scores like goals, but it is a human who judge other human basing on some written criteria’s that are not strictly specified.

“It seems to me that chances for being in the final 6 has these competitors with well-known names who represent a good level of shape in the same time than an unknown competitor with the same, good shape. (...) It is hard for me to say about differences on stage relying on sex, because on stage I only compete with women. The only thing I noticed is that bodybuilders men do not have to be beautiful to stand out. The beauty in bikini plays an important role.” (E.S, spring 2017, skype)

What is “beauty” and what is “ugly”? For a long time, beauty was defined in opposition of ugliness and by differences with ugly. In the article “Identifying Ugliness, Defining Beauty: A Focus Group Analysis of and Reaction to Ugly Betty” Adria Goldman & Waymer (2014) mentioned that media are playing an important role in the societal concept and standards of beauty. Mostly TV, where most of the sitcoms or films feature a female cast having long and shiny hair, thin body and youthful look. Social perception of beauty and ideal body is affected by medias (magazines, tv, advertisements) and there has been plenty of studies that confirms this theory. Sung-Yeon Park (2005) studied relationship between pictures in fashion magazines and women’s desire to be skinny and Alexis Tan (1979) discussed how beauty in adverts effects on female’s audience. Constantly changing and multi-dimensional beauty standards are embedded and created within society with a help of social media. Women have to face stricter beauty standards than man, which are difficult to achieve. Female image in media is usually idealistic and often one-dimensional and “the extremeness of such one-dimensional and idealistic images, some scholars posit that these standards are a form of social control over

women and are the result of a violent backlash against feminism” (Goldman & Waymer, 2014:2).

These authors relay on interviews with people who is watching the tv series about Ugly Betty and ask them about their own theories on bodies, ugliness and beauty. According to Susan Bordo (2003) female who are disciplining their bodies through diets or plastic surgeries may experience a sense of power and control, but it is only an illusion and in the same time they are still in the oppression of a cultural norms about beauty and normativity. I wouldn't agree with that, or at least I would take a broader look on this case. I am dieting and training my body not because I hate it, but because I love it. I want it to be strong, healthy, fit. I see the difference now and then, when I had to run to the bus or lift my heavy bag on the airplane - and to be honest, I travel a lot. Scholars has a strong belief that the whole idea of beauties might be damaging and oppressive for women and therefore cause psychological damage.

I find it unfair, that this kind of problems do not exist in male's sports career in bodybuilding and do not affects the score. Male bodybuilders do not have to consider their beauty or ugliness and it doesn't have any impact at their success. Such problems do not exist for them and they don't have to wonder if they are fulfilling the criteria's of nowadays beauty and ideal bodies.

4.4 Economy in sport

This sport costs a lot of money. Competition suit, supplements, diet, trainer and trainings are only the top of the iceberg. I am really happy that my family and friends helped me at the beginning. Now I have a sponsor and a lot of costs is fixed by them. I wasn't looking for a sponsor at the beginning of my fitness journey, but fortunately they found me. I may say I was the lucky one, because nowadays there are a lot of trainers and competitors who want to achieve that and the market is supersaturated. “It is not easy to find a sponsor in Poland. Nobody wants to give financial support for you and almost every athlete is searching for one. I only receive supplements and clothing, but I do not use everything and later on I do not know what to do with it. I often give out extra stuff to friends” (E.S, spring 2017, skype). Currently, she is looking for an extra financial support to take part in international competitions and there is no company willing to support her right now. “This sport is very expensive! To take part in the international competition costs about 600 euro and in one year I have 4-5 of them!” (E.S, spring 2017, skype)

All of my interviewees, except E.S., do not have any sponsor and has to work hard to achieve money for the competitions. Budget you need to have to attend at the competitions may vary between athletes. Bikini costs around 250 euro, shoes costs 100 euro, jewellery around 50 euro. You need to have a makeupist and hair stylist, which usually costs me 100 euro. Manicure, pedicure and fake lashes costs around 100 euro. Usually I do other beauty treatments like waxing, spa and face masks. It costs me another 200 euro extra. I need to buy special cosmetics to take care about my body before I hit the stage and special bronzer, which is minimum 50 euro. I should also mention that competitions are all over the world, so I spend a lot of money both on travel and hotels – around 150 euro each time. At the end, there is also a need to pay an entry fee which is between 25 to 200 euro. So basically, I have to pay between 500-1000 euro for each competition (and there are few of them each year, but the more you make the better). The costs of supplements, workout clothes and shoes, diet, trainings, medicines and having a trainer I won't even mention here, because it is too much during the whole year. "Having a sponsor is hard, especially since I'm a person who doesn't like to ask for anything. It happens occasionally that I get something from sports companies. All trips and competitions were paid out of my own pocket" (J.R, spring 2017, skype).

Most of my interviewees do not have any sponsor, but they are managing to do this by their own. Knetta (2014:8) wrote that "female athletes often face a harsher reality, with limited financial resources, as compared to the conditions for male athletes. consequently, only a small number of female athletes can make a living from being semi-professional or fully professional in their chosen sport" and all of my interviewees agreed with that. "I do not have a sponsor. It would be nice to have a support, but I'm not going to show the nearly naked body to get a can of protein. For serious sponsors the results are what count and not the number of likes under the picture with his product" (J.N, spring 2017, skype). She stated that his sport is expensive and it doesn't turn out at all - beside the satisfaction you get from the winning and being the part of it - both for women and men. In Poland you cannot live from bodybuilding, except you are a PRO bodybuilder. PRO athletes get salaries, contracts and plenty of sponsors (not only in clothing or supplements brands). Unfortunately, it is not easy to become one. In order to become an IFBB Pro, a bodybuilder must first earn their IFBB Pro Card which is equal with winning a regional contest weight class. When a bodybuilder wins or places highly, they earn an invite to compete at their country's National Championships contest for that year. The winners of each weight class at the National Championships will then go head-to-head in a separate contest to see who the overall champion for the year is. Depending on the federation, the overall champion

might be offered with a Pro Card. A bodybuilder can also earn a Pro Card at the IFBB World Bodybuilding Championships.

Another interesting thing is that Polish athletes bring medals from World Fitness Championships in bodybuilding almost every time and it is never mentioned in the local newspaper or Polish TV. Although, when there is a football match everyone speaks about it, even though Polish team is not really successful. Almost everyone knows the names of the players, teams or dates and scores of the current matches. Football players achieve normal salaries and they also achieve an extra money. I cannot understand why football is so popular. Players get a huge salary and are well promoted, even if they are not really successful. Poland won World Fitness Championships in Bodybuilding and no one ever spoke about that. No one has ever shown our champion in the TV or newspaper and he didn't get any thanks. Also, Polish female fitness competitors are usually in the top 3 of the world or European championships and it is not broadcasted. Is it related to the status of this sport in Poland in relation to the religion, class, gender or moral values according to the dominant elites? I believe that the answer is yes. Poland is a Catholic country, where human body is still a taboo. Therefore, this sport might be seen as inappropriate and valueless. Additionally, football is very popular and Polish players and teams are well-known and therefore people do not feel the need to develop in other directions.

V. DISCUSSION ON GENDER EQUALITY IN BODYBUILDING

Even though bodybuilding was traditionally a male domain, the participation of women and girls in this specific sport challenges a multitude of gender stereotypes, not only the ones related to physical ability, but also those in regarding to women's role in communities and society. Nowadays it is Bikini Fitness that catches eyes of other people and make them come and visit the whole bodybuilding show. It is women, who attract the viewers most and make this machine still going. So why female bodybuilding is still marginalized? Why its values are lowed all the time? Female athletes get less attention and support during the competitions and preparations. While everyone cares about making it easier and easier for men, women need to fight for equal rights. In 1931 Lili de Álvarez from Spain shocked social propriety when she has been playing Wimbledon in shorts instead of the long dresses which women tennis players were expected to wear. At the 1996 Spalding Sports introduced the first baseball glove which was specially designed for a woman's hand – before that they had to use big and uncomfortable men's equipment. This sporting attire may also present a particular problem for Muslim women, when

dress codes prohibit them from wearing Western-style sport clothes. Despite all the strides made by women's participation in sport, media still provide limited attention to female athletes and there is also a strong emphasis on heterosexuality when promoting women's sport. When women are featured in media, their image is often sexualized – showing forms of femininity, not athleticism. According to Krane femininity is (2004) “a socially constructed standard for women's appearance, demeanor, and values”. Idealized, hegemonic femininity is grounded in middle-class, white ideals and is strongly associated with heterosexual sex (Ussher, 1997). In women's bodybuilding gender is manifestly challenged. Musculature in female athletes confronts the social perception of women as fragile, weak and limited (Bunsell, 2012). Tajrobehkar (2016:1) noticed that “women's bodybuilding manifestly challenges hegemonic understandings of the female body as weak, fragile, and limited. Because it has acquired characteristics that are traditionally deemed masculine, the muscular woman is thought to be in need of having her femininity restored”. In bodybuilding social and cultural norms about gender are stereotyped in the contest by highlighting a “female” and “male” appearance in every possible way – posing, preparation and clothing. I guess it is the reason why female bodybuilding competitors are required to display femininity on stage by attitude, posing, gestures, hair and make-up while men, from the other hand, need to care only about their physique.

Sport is one of the most contested and celebrated institutions in our world. Even in ancient times it served multiple social functions – religious, spiritual, health. Historically, sport was used as a spectacle and entertainment, but also to healthcare. Now it is a way to have fun, get better, get healthier, compete, compare and it is even a job. “Unfortunately, the context of sport does not always lead to positive outcomes. Many sport scholars have investigated the world of sport with a critical eye which has revealed a “dark side” of sport” (Roper, 2013:1). Even though sport provides opportunities, it also reinforces dangerous and damaging social patterns such as gender inequity, racism, homophobia and violence. In my interviews I have asked female athletes what they think about gender equality and stereotypes in bodybuilding as a masculine sport in Poland. We discussed parenthood, economy, education, judgement and social perception of a female and male athletes.

Swedish data from 2011 revealed that “only three mothers were playing football in the women's super league, in contrast to about 100 fathers playing in the men's super league and the average age of the women was 25.7 years, which is close to the men's average age of 26.5 years”

(Knetta, 2014:5). And even though there was no answer for that, it seems obvious that nine-month pregnancy followed with the responsibility for the kid, especially during the first year, might hinder women-athletes in such competitive environment of elite sports. Therefore, maternity leave might make a comeback more difficult – it is almost impossible to take care of an infant and prepare for a competition straight after giving birth. “The careers of the women also declined earlier than those of the men” (Knetta, 2014:5) and it might be related to the women desire for having children. According to my interviewees, it can be easier for men, because often women fill more household responsibilities, especially the ones with kids, but they also stressed that it is not a rule and it depends on partners and their relationship. Also, all of my interviewees agreed that their families and partners support and help them as much as they can. My family understand how important this sport is for me and supports me physically and sometimes help me economically, although I had to dispel their doubts about my wellbeing and health. Both preparation for the contest and cooperation in everyday life depends on good planning and organization - in the same level for women and man.

Economy in sport is not an easy topic. When it comes to money in bodybuilding, women invest more in this sport and achieve less in return. All of my interviewees agreed that women’s preparations are more expensive (costume, shoes, beautician, hairdresser) and still – women get the same prizes as men. In this case equality is not fair. Men’s shorts costs around 50 euro and bronzers costs do not vary between sexes. Men don’t need any stage shoes or jewelry. They don’t need makeupist or beautician. They just need to shave themselves good, go to solarium - maybe, but nothing more. The entry fee is the same for all bodybuilders. Only one interviewer said that sometimes we do not know about the hidden costs for male bodybuilders – like steroids and supplements, which usually is way much more than hairdresser or makeupist for a woman. From the other hand, steroids are illegal and therefore there are not “normal” components of preparation for contest, that is why I didn’t consider them in my parallel.

American Psychological Association (APA, 2011) refers sex “to a person’s biological status” which can be identified by “sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia”. Gender, on the other hand, means “attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex” (APA, 2011). Therefore, gender is a perception of “masculine” and “feminine” in a society. This causes binary system where people are classified into only two categories of sex: male or female. Butler (1990) extend this definition when she defined gender as a “performance”. In this theory, gender might exist only

when a person act, either performance, his or her gender identity. It involves clothes, speech, words, gestures and so on, but it is still not voluntary in most cultures, because “gender norms prescribe what gender performances are probable and in what ways they are to be performed” (Roper, 2013:13). In this case Butler (1990) assumed that people who identify with a gender version outside of cultural norms are usually rejected by most members of that society.

That is why society might not understand female bodybuilders, because they do not meet the requirements for femininity in females. Society reaction for female bodybuilder and male bodybuilder are different. According to my interviewers, people usually admire muscular man, or at least do not criticise them out loud. On the other hand, female bodybuilders often hear offend comments. Every athlete I spoke with confirmed that they were in such situation at least once in life, but most of them have to deal with it in everyday life. Women experience a barrier of social evaluation. According to Roper (2013) women have indicated anxieties which are related to the social evaluation within sports. These fears include the stigma of sports being masculine, being gazed at by male performing in the adult life as a mother and wife in accordance to being athlete and many others. Another element related to female athletes in relation to the society and professional sport is media coverage. Media are crucial elements that shape our knowledge and understanding of sports and athletes. That is why those, who present or write about sport are also those who shape society opinion in this topic. “Recent research, however, points to a disproportionate gender gap in the media. Lapchick et al. (2013) reported a lopsided gender breakdown of the Associated Press; a disproportionate 90.4% of sports editors are male while 90.2% of sports columnists are male. This gender disparity indicates that sport media, as a profession, is male-dominated” (Roper, 2013:8).

Judgement in bodybuilding differs between women and man. For example, there are very specific rules to judge and measure a man, but there are no written specific rules to judge women. I took a look on the official judgement rules to compare women and men bodybuilding rules, but there was nothing to compare. Most of the men categories has a mathematic sequence based on their weight and height, while in most women categories, according to IFBB rules, “at the first round the judges will be assessing the overall physique for the degree of proportion, symmetry, balance, shape and skin tone” and during the finals there are no more specific rules either: judges should take into consideration the general impression of the physique, the hair, the overall body development and shape, the presentation of a balanced, proportionally and symmetrically developed, complete physique, the condition of the skin and the skin tone and the athlete’s ability to present herself with confidence, poise and grace. Therefore, judging

women is so subjective, that people never know which standards are taken into consideration and it leads to misunderstandings about how to prepare for each contest and during my interviews this was the big issue each athlete mention. In addition to the IFBB rules, both women and man are divided by age – junior, senior and masters. An interesting fact is that this age for each category is different according to the sex. For example, Men’s Physique Juniors are 16-23 and masters are over 40 years old, but Women’s Bikini Fitness (female version of Men’s Physique) masters are over 35 years old. Judgement is a little bit tricky, because of this beauty part in Bikini Fitness which is something new in that kind of contests. It might be different on each competition, but it's a matter of the competition level, the judging panel and the rivals that are competing on the stage. Therefore, it is the same in both sexes. It might be a discrimination (someone with a great physique, who is not considered as a typical beauty might not get a chance to compete) and also it is very subjective when it comes to perception of a beauty. Some of the competitors assume, that judging is not objective, because well-known name is what counts the most, but not all of them. I do not agree with that opinion either, because my name wasn’t totally known in the fitness world when I was in the top 6 of Poland and get accepted to the Polish International Team. What is interesting, all of my interviewees agreed, that beauty is something that counts only in women’s categories. In men’s categories only physique and presentation on stage is taken in advantage. I think it is the biggest disproportion in this sport between sexes. Butler (1993) pick up her famous concept of performativity – where gender is a type of performance, which means something that someone does rather than is. She was trying to show the readers that bodies and gender are two separate things. In Bikini Fitness the body is muscular, which is a symbol of masculinity, but the whole appearance is feminine and there is a strong pressure for heterosexual behavior. Judging criteria are a central topic in many discussions during the competitions or straight after, but it doesn’t mean that women fight against them and (Tajrobehkar, 2016:6) mention important problem that “even though the competition criteria were frequently questioned and problematized by the participants, they were also accepted, and at times defended by the women. Their decision to ultimately participate in these competitions is further evidence to their consent”. I have noticed that these women are so involved into this sport that they do not want to criticize it out loud too much. I believe that it is because we hear a lot of critique from other people that we do not want to add ours – but then we cannot help the female bodybuilding to improve and growth.

VI. CONCLUSION

The aim of my study was to examine gender stereotypes in the masculine sport like bodybuilding. My own experience was really helpful to communicate with a professional bodybuilders during the interviews, because people from different professions develop their very own ways to perceive some things and their jargon helps them to talk about their ideas in more precise manner. My task was not only to translate my interviews from Polish to English, but also evaluate a professional discourse in a way that would be acceptable and easy to understand for other people. It is true, that professional discourse language became a very important tool in everyday professional life - for example in negotiations, meetings and conferences or interviews. It relays on writing and speaking skills of the professionals in contact with other professionals or lay people.

In my autoethnography I wanted to equate objectivity and present the facts. Everyone has a partial perspective about the world we are living in and every day this perspective is influenced by our experience. It is also important to remember, that society norms and opinion of others are shaping our point of view and defining our values in almost every subject. Being objective in the pure objectiveness definition is an unrealistic goal. People just do not have the power to see every single side of any issue and even though having an incomplete view might seem limiting, having a partial perspective can be the only way to achieve objectivity. Haraway (1988) stands for the thesis that gaining multiple viewpoints on specific topic gives our knowledge the value and worth. Situated knowledge encourages people to exchange their limited ideas and in advance share their knowledge between each other, understand other contexts and in consequence grow their own point of view, which becomes more comprehensive. This amount of perspectives (where multiple issues are considered and revealed during the producing knowledge) define Haraway's theory about "feminist objectivity" which I hope I represented through my own and the experiences of my interviewees in my thesis. Her resolving for this dilemma about objectivity is "vision" as an important, sensorial mode. And she also states that "objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision" (Haraway, 1988). In the same time, this definition is problematic, because it is a privilege for "unmarked bodies" (people from the majority, a part of norm and considered neutral), when "marked bodies" (specified by Haraway as women, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, members of LGBT community etc.) like those of bodybuilders cannot reveal their opinions in dissociation of who they are. In

consequence, the point of view of bodybuilders is seen as their own, one and only, and therefore it cannot be absolute or external, which makes it automatically subjective and flawed.

Through an academic analysis using gender, feminist and queer theory, relying on masculinity and feminist sport studies, sport is identified as both empowering and oppressing for women and girls. It has a potential to improve and aggravate health, well-being and social integration and it might be used to both challenge and produce gender norms. Even though lately there was a governmental movement to empower women through sport, a lack of research in academia using a critical feminist sport studies glance still remains. After the interviews and professional discourse analysis, as a bodybuilder and feminist, I assume that female bodybuilding has a great future, although it needs to be more structured. During the interviews athletes mentioned that women have to spend more money on the preparation for the contest (hair, make-up, jewelry, suit) in comparison to men. The visible gender difference is also in the social life of female and male athlete. Female athletes are more often exposed for offensive comments, while men are appreciated and treated with some dose of respect. According to Shilling (2009) it might be because female bodybuilders reject the passive role of presenting Western view of femininity while men bodybuilders produce more acceptable norms and Butler (1990) assumed that people who do not identify with a particular version of gender, and therefore are outside the cultural norms, are usually rejected and criticized by the society. My interviewees confirm my theory that judging for women and men is not equal and women categories are judged more subjective than men categories. Opposite from women, male bodybuilders do not have to consider their beauty or ugliness and it doesn't have any impact at their success. All of my interviewees noticed that parenthood influence the feelings of physical wellbeing and ill-being of female athletes, while man cannot become pregnant and therefore it has a smaller impact at their sport career.

My suggestions for improvements would be, first of all, that rules for judging in bodybuilding should be more systemized and available for each competitor. Secondly, contest should be held in the best possible conditions, which for me means spacious and clean backstage and structured time schedule for each category. Third, to deterring gender inequity of bodybuilding in media, I suggest recruiting media personnel with experience of the subculture of bodybuilding from different backgrounds and institutions. I believe that if more competitors would get involved in such surveys, we could make a change and this sport might become more popular and accessible for other people. I truly believe, that this thesis is not the end, but just a beginning.

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