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*Expanding Understanding of Motherhood and Sport in Socio-Cultural Context: A Narrative  
Analysis of Stories in the Digital Landscape*

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The central objective of this three-year grant is to gain contemporary understanding of the portrayal of Canadian elite athlete mother identities in media stories in the digital landscape. By studying the stories of Canadian elite athlete mothers in two novel digital media sources (i.e., news media and Instagram) using a novel theory (i.e., narrative inquiry) and methodology (i.e., narrative analysis of big and small stories), a deeper understanding is gained as to how aspects of athlete mother identities are promoted and/or marginalized. A second objective is to gain understanding of the implications (e.g., psychosocial, behavioural, ideological) of intersectional identities (e.g., sexuality, age, physicality) portrayed in digital stories, for Canadian elite athlete mothers. The final objective is to make recommendations from study findings that enhance digital literacy to raise awareness of gender equity issues in sport, through digital media stories.

Year one (i.e., 2021-2022) data collection was narrowed to 10 'instrumental cases' (i.e., news stories explored to provide analytical and theoretical insight) of Canadian elite athlete mothers. Data collection of news stories focused on multiple sports (e.g., track, boxing, basketball, cycling, curling, ice hockey) and intersecting identities (e.g., sexuality, age, physicality) spanning the two recent Olympic years for summer and winter sports. Analysis from summer (n=6) and winter sport (n=4) cases is ongoing. The poster presentation features completed narrative analysis of 72 digital news stories of two compelling athletes' journeys to the Tokyo Games (i.e., boxer Mandy Bujold's fight to compete and basketball player Kim Gaucher's quest to bring her daughter to breastfeed). These findings uniquely display the intertwining of the pandemic with gender inequities in sport, by interrogating the 'motherhood penalty' (i.e., discrimination of women in the workplace) for athlete mothers. Two intersecting storylines show the implications of the motherhood penalty: 'last shots' (e.g., timing with career and children, age and veteran status) and 'forced to choose' (e.g., caring for children vs. high performance athlete). These storylines link with the continued regulation of pregnant and post-partum bodies in the context of discriminatory policies that force athlete mothers to 'go it alone' as 'trailblazers' in distress, by leveraging media for support. Remaining analysis of athlete mother news media cases (n=8) will focus on 'comeback' and 'super mum' narratives related to intersecting aspects of identity (e.g., gender, sexuality, age, physicality). Study 2 commences in late September, narrowing to 10-15

cases of elite athlete mother's self-identity construction with an intersectional lens, through images on Instagram.

**Tags: Digital Media; Gender Equity; High Performance: Pregnancy; Olympic Games**