

Martin Saldaño & Leo Istas

Women's Mixed Martial Arts

A description of the current academic perspective and discussion on the representations of female MMA fighters in German media

Abstract

Women have been fighting in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) events for more than 20 years now. However, it was not until 2013 that the most important league for this sport (the UFC) started integrating female fighters into their events, and even nowadays there are numerous differences between men and women in this growing sport. A significant pay-gap and oversexualized representations of their image are some of the issues that female fighters still have to face in this sport.

This research aims to summarize some of the main issues and perspectives that gender studies might offer and are already offering on the situation of women in this sport. After a brief description of the history of women in this sport, this exploration goes forward presenting current theoretical analyses on women's sports and more specific observations in MMA, such as the preferences of MMA viewers and the fighters' relationships with post-feminist discourses. These theoretical approaches are described here with examples from actual situations and empiric results from different researches on women's participation.

Concluding, this study also expands the theoretical analysis and scholarly evidence on this area, by exemplifying and discussing those perspectives with recent news coverage concerning Women's Mixed Martial Arts (WMMA) in German media.

Keywords

MMA; WMMA; Gender; Germany; Sport Media

Contact

Martin Saldaño

German Sport University Cologne

martinsaldano.k@gmail.com

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) and published in the [JOMAR | Journal of Martial Arts Research](https://j-o-mar.com) (ISSN 2567-8221) on 2019-08-30.

For more: j-o-mar.com

1 Introduction

Mixed Martial Arts or *MMA* is a combat sport with a fast growth over recent years – this holds true for its female divisions too. Once relegated to a minor place by the major international leagues and the sports media, women's fights (commonly abbreviated as *WMMA* fights) are nowadays among the most watched events in this sport, prominently questioning the idea that combat sports are a masculine domain. The history of fighters in this sport is to date documented in an imprecise way and most of this documentation is obtained from websites such as *Sherdog.com* (Jennings, 2014, p. 126). However, during the last years the research on this field increased drastically, accompanying the development of this Sport, criticizing its weakest aspects and ultimately suggesting new possibilities for its development. Many of the different approaches on this topic are even presenting contradictory observations such as the accusations against the representation of women in this sport – which allegedly aims exclusively at the preferences of male audiences – but apparently shows an even greater success as a marketing strategy among female viewers (McClearen, 2017).

The following work will delve into the different approaches on this sport, aiming to offer a short description of the actual state of the female divisions in this sport. In order to achieve that, this exploratory research will make a brief introduction into the historical background of the women's divisions in this sport, followed by a description of some of the different scholarly approaches on this sport as well as their contradictions, ending with a short exemplification of how the German media represents women in this sport and which of the previous approaches could be integrated for further analysis of this field.

2 Historical background

A well resumed history of the female divisions in this sport is presented by Jennings (2014) in her book *She's a Knockout! A History of Women in Fighting Sports*, where she summarizes many of the main episodes of *WMMA*. According to her, the first documented combat sports event, with similarities to the actual *MMA*, that presented female fighters took place in Japan in 1995. In the United States, the first women's *MMA* fight took place in 1998, and by the year 2001 the franchise *Hook 'n Shoot* presented the first women's fight as main event of the evening during an *MMA* event on US soil (Jennings, 2014, pp. 127-129).

The development of the women's divisions had one of its highlights in the arena of the franchise with international relevance called *Strikeforce*. This league presented some of the most recognized female figures of this division at that time, such as *Miesha Tate*, *Ronda Rousey*, *Cristiane Santos* and others. The fight of the latter against *Gina Carano* was also, with between 576 and 856 thousand viewers, one of the most followed events worldwide in the first decade of the 2000s (MMAjunkie, 2009).

It was in *Strikeforce* also, where some of the situations showed up that deserve special attention in the context of gender studies. One of them occurred in the context of the mentioned fight between *Carano* and *Santos*. This fight for the title of the featherweight division was also nicknamed as the 'Beauty and the Beast' fight by journalists, due to the

fighters' physical appearance (Jennings, 2014, pp. 137), revealing another case of excessive valuation of the aesthetics of female fighters in relation to their sporting performance. The former champion, Carano, lost her title by TKO in the first round and abandoned MMA after it to dedicate herself to her acting career in Hollywood and appearing in well-known movies such as *Deadpool* and the 6th film of the *The Fast and the Furious* series. However, the later path of victorious Santos was distinctively different. In spite of her victory on that night, Santos had to deal with numerous depreciatory comments regarding her 'masculine' appearance, which worsened even more after a positive result of doping.

Another occasion in Strikeforce that can be argued about in this context was Rousey's argumentation in 2012 for the title fight against Miesha Tate. In this case, Rousey explicitly asked Strikeforce to capitalize her own and the champion's aesthetic appeal, instead of organizing the originally planned fight between Tate against *Sarah Kaufman* (who actually qualified for the title fight according to Strikeforce's qualification system). Rousey considered it a risk, that the attractive champion would be defeated by Kaufman and that the title fight between the more attractive fighters (which according to Rousey would be also much more profitable for the WMMA) would be wasted. The organizers from Strikeforce seem to have taken these arguments seriously and eventually organized the title fight between Rousey and Tate (Jennings, 2014, pp. 144-149).

Despite its growing relevance, the Strikeforce league, which until then had many of the most prestigious names in the women's divisions, was acquired by *Zuffa LLC* (the company that owned the famous league *UFC*) in March 2011, whose president, *Dana White*, had said only a couple of months earlier that the public would never see WMMA fights in the arenas of his league. This purchase spread fear about the future of WMMA and its fighters. It was in this context that *Janet Martin* and *Shannon Knapp* founded the exclusive women's league *Invicta FC* in 2012, which to this day has become the most recognized WMMA league in the world. Only a few months after the creation of *Invicta* and its proven success, Dana White announced the integration of WMMA into the *UFC* in a press conference. This announcement was made in November 2012 in conjunction with the announcement of the first female champion of the league, Ronda Rousey – even before she had fought at any event in the *UFC*. From this moment on, the history of the female divisions accelerates and their significance in the media increases drastically. After Rousey's integration to the league and, with her, the integration of the heavier Bantamweight divisions, the *UFC* progressively added the Strawweight, Featherweight and Flyweight classes to their events. At that time, the *UFC* also launched the 18th season of its reality TV show, *The Ultimate Fighter* (TUF), which featured female fighters and coaches for the first time in its history (Jennings, 2014, pp. 150). The growing social acceptance and demand for female divisions in the most relevant league of this sport can be observed in the constant appearance of female fights as the main event of the evening and in the fact that three of these fights are with more than one million PPV-sales within the list of best sold by the franchise (The Sports Daily, 2017). However, and despite these achievements, several issues relativize the optimism that one can have regarding the equity towards women in this sport. One of these is

the fact that according to an observation published by *Forbes* magazine in 2016, the average income of female fighters (with top earner Ronda Rousey left out) was around \$25,000 annually, while that of men was above \$61,000 in 2015 (Forbes, 2016). Even in the case of Rousey, Sarah Kaufman noted a significant difference between what she received for fighting when compared to male fighters with comparable records. Kaufman took the example of former champion *Chris Weidman* who received \$500,000 for a victory in the UFC, while the female celebrity received 'only' \$140,000 for a comparable victory (Kaufman, 2015).

This paradoxical situation in WMMA, where on the one hand it is possible to see the integration and significant increase of the relevance of female divisions, but on the other hand there are also many instances where the inequalities remain and are even being justified by fighters, merits an observation of these divisions through different perspectives, in order to assure a better understanding of the actual situation. In the following section, some of the academic perspectives that address the issue will be presented including specific results of selected works.

3 (Un-)Doing Gender through MMA?

One of the perspectives from which WMMA can be analyzed – and which appears quite frequently in respective works – is how gender is constructed in this environment. A theoretical basis for this analysis is offered by the authors West and Zimmerman (1987) in their work 'Doing gender', where a substantial differentiation between sex and gender is described and where a description of numerous scenarios, in which men and women construct their identity as such by repeating and recreating social understandings of their gender identities, is given. With this background it is possible to find many texts about MMA and other combat sports that highlight the deconstructive potential of these, as well as some observations that describe this environment as a scenario where gender differences are maintained and reproduced. Among the first approaches is Dioszeghy-Krauß' (2015) work, who, in her observations on *aikido*, points out precisely how this discipline equalizes the roles of men and women. In her observations, the author focuses on identical clothing, identical categories, techniques that favor those with the lowest center of gravity, and even the role of the female coaches as deconstructive tools of normally established gender roles. She also mentions results of her investigations, which point out the difference between the genders, such as the fact that the female participants responded to have more fear and reported to feel more pain in aikido classes than their male counterparts.

A similar perspective on different combat sports is offered by Channon (2014) in his text *Towards the 'undoing' of gender in mixed-sex martial arts and combat sports*. In this case, the author highlights the potential that martial activities have to deconstruct the concepts of gender, when for example men and women train together, or when women occupy places of authority in combat sports classes (either as athletes or coaches), because in these cases the woman is seen in an empowered space and the preconception that fighting is something that only men do well is discredited (Channon, 2014, pp. 591-594). Channon also warns about some difficulties for this deconstruction, such as the great majority of men in classes that might

discourage women from signing up or the difficulties some students have in accepting women either as instructors or even as training partners (a situation that can sometimes be aggravated by different practitioners with different cultural and religious backgrounds), and even unnecessary sex-based distinctions made by some instructors with activities that suggest that women cannot perform in these classes as men do (Channon presents the example of so called 'girl's push-ups', with knees on the floor to reduce the effort for this exercise, insinuating that women are not capable of this effort).

Even more critical than Channon is Weaving (2015), who points out in her text about gender construction in the UFC that within martial arts there are numerous spaces where the female gender is constructed in a way that is far from being egalitarian. Weaving criticizes the men-centered culture in combat sports which can be seen, for example, in the use of names for techniques such as: 'Girly-D' (abbreviation of Girly Defense), 'Butt slam', or 'Saturday night ride', which are used in wrestling, and even others like 'Rape choke', 'Cuntbar' and 'Beaver Trap' which are used in MMA (pp. 59; 63). Weaving also criticizes the common use of expressions in this environment such as: 'Fighting like a girl' and 'Take a defeat like a man'. Weaving's critique is not limited to the language but also argues that women fighters, despite their integration, are still portrayed in an objectivized manner within the UFC.

Against this backdrop, it is possible to relativize the optimism of some positions regarding the deconstructive potential of combat sports in general and especially in MMA. Even when many elements with interesting potential appear in this environment, it is also true that this potential does not come without the risks of integrating women into this environment in a way that does not lead to an equalization of possibilities, but rather might integrate them as subjects of lower importance. In order to understand how this integration works not only in MMA classes but also for the millions of viewers of this sport, the following section will look into different researches on the marketing of professional MMA events.

4 Marketing WMMA

Considering the relevance that the advertisements of this sport have in the way the practitioners and non-practitioners of MMA perceive the role of women in this sport, this field and the researches on it become an unavoidable sphere for different analyses. Important research on this topic was done by Kim et al. (2008) at a local MMA event in the USA, where some important differences were observed among men and women who attended an MMA event. The authors of this research mentioned a significant majority of male audience, which they presume is partly a result of the way in which the event was advertised (this had been done mainly on television channels with a mainly male audience). In addition, the authors also observed a difference between the motivations of men and women to attend an MMA event. Significant differences appeared in the interest for the sport itself, which was the main factor of interest for men while in the case of women the drama behind the fights was a big motivator to attend the event. In addition, the vicarious achievement also played a relevant role in men's interest in this sport, while it appeared to be irrelevant for female viewers.

A similar study by Andrew et al. (2009) added to these observations that violence was in the third place of attraction factors among men, while for women it had not such relevance. Recently, Greenwell et al. (2015) observed that men and women react differently to advertisements of MMA events. Men showed a greater aversion towards MMA advertisements with women in a more explicitly violent setup than when male fighters were presented in similar setups. These observed differences between masculine and feminine audiences indicate the difficulty for organizers of these events in integrating women, both as fighters as well as audiences, in their events. According to these observations, integrating women in MMA events can be not only a difficult task due to the need of the addition of new characteristics in the events which are not necessary for male audiences, but even more radical: a careless inclusion of women as fighters could be counterproductive and generate a dangerous apathy among the biggest portion of the spectators MMA has until now.

In this context, McClearen (2017) makes an interesting contribution by pointing out that the integration of women into MMA would bring more economic benefits than difficulties. According to her, the UFC could have used the integration of fighters from different geographical spots and social sectors numerous times to reach the audiences that felt represented by these figures. Such would have been the case with the inclusion of the fighter *Kimbo Slice*, who collaborated with the UFC, drawing his audience from the internet as well as the African American and Latino communities in the USA, as well as boosting the events and reality TV shows that the UFC broadcasts in Europe and Latin America (pp. 3232-3234). McClearen suggests that the UFC is repeating this strategy with women, contradicting the thesis that women are only there as sexualized objects for the male audience of this league. In fact, she also mentions the social media campaigns of the UFC with the hashtags *#TUFbeauty* and *#TUFstrength* that, although they pay attention to an aesthetic aspect of the fighters in a way that they would not do with the male athletes, had a significant response and success among women (pp. 3225-3226).

The previous approaches show once again the complexity of the situation of women in this sport, also in the way the events are promoted. A single-minded criticism, recommendation, or praise of the way in which the female divisions are being promoted would ignore significant economical and sociological aspects in regard of the actual and possible spectators. The following section will now take a deeper look into different approaches on how the media represents WMMA.

5 WMMA in the media

Analyzing the way in which the female divisions in MMA are portrayed by the media has great relevance for understanding essential aspects of the development of this sport and, as will be shown below, reveals most varied postulates on the subject. First of all, it is possible to achieve a wider perspective by transferring classic postulates on women's sports in general to WMMA, in the sense that different types of trivialization of the athletes' performance, as well as oversexualization of the way in which they are represented, also appear in this sport. Schaaf (2011)

resumes some of the approaches regarding the situation of women's sport in the media even more precisely. Some of them are the "*Kournikova Syndrome*", the "*oppression and exclusion of oppressed bodies*" (original in German: "*Unterdrückung und Ausschließung unterdrückter Körper*"), the "*de-athletization of women*" and finally the growing danger of the *internalization of post-feminist approaches* by athletes. The first of these, the Kournikova syndrome (which derives its name from the well-known tennis player), addresses the phenomenon of higher media focus on physically more attractive sports stars than on those with the best performance in sport. The second, the oppression and exclusion of oppressed bodies, warns of the problem that arises when athletes refuse to appear in erotic situations and are therefore excluded from media attention. The third, the de-athletization of women, occurs when the focus of the media portrays moments in the private life of sportswomen more emphatically rather than sports related coverage. Finally, the risk of the internalization of post-feminist approaches among the athletes means that sports-women assume that they have already reached a more than sufficient point of equality in western societies, resulting in the opposition to feminist claims and assume the possibility of using their own sexual attractiveness as a form of *self-empowerment* and *freedom of choice* (original in German: *Selbstermächtigung* and *Wahlfreiheit*).

These postulates can be observed and analyzed at many points in the history of WMMA. A case in which the Kournikova syndrome can be interpreted was when *Reebok's* sponsorship (which is given to the main stars of each category in the UFC) went immediately to *Paige VanZant* instead of going to the actual champion of her category, *Carla Esparza*. According to Jennings (2015, pp. 84), the main reason for this decision from Reebok might have been the favorable appearance of VanZant, which would get much more attention from viewers than the sporting performance of the champion.

With regard to the exclusion and oppression of oppressed bodies, it is possible to refer to the current weight categories that exist for women in the UFC, which started from the lightest weight and – even today – do not exist above 66kg. The case of the de-athletization of women can be seen in the way in which the media often concentrate on aesthetic aspects of the fighters instead of their performance. This is observed by Jennings (2015, pp. 73) in an advertising video of TUF with exclusive female fighters, where the images and words used focused much more on the femininity of the fighters than on their sporting potential.

The problem of post-feminism stands out in this particular sport and is also picked up by Channon et al. (2018) with relatively scandalous examples for the environment. One of these scandals occurred when UFC fighter *Bec Rawlings* uploaded a semi-nude photograph of herself to her social media accounts being covered only with a sign reading: "*Fuck feminism. I believe in human rights ... for all!*" (Rawlings, 2015) and an explanation at the bottom of the post suggesting that the only thing that really oppressing her are feminists. Something less blatant but in a similar tune was the comment of Ronda Rousey when asked in an interview about her opinion on the protest of female Australian soccer players regarding gender-based pay gaps. The MMA star was critical of this protest and stated that the payment should correlate with the

generated revenue for the league, thus openly dismissing the protest of the players (Rousey, 2015).

This aversion of such star fighters against the feminist claims and even the internalization of over-sexualization as a mechanism of self-marketing could be one of the most serious problems for women in this sport since in the context of the communicational changes in society produced by social networks, the role of sportswomen as role models and ultimately as direct communicators with their followers, the effects of sports stars justifying the logics of a patriarchal system could be even more influential than the different constructions made by sport leagues or the classical media. In this sense, it is also interesting to mention a study done by Quinney (2016) regarding comments on WMMA on Twitter. In her study, Quinney observed that the messages that appear on social networks seem to repeat many of the problems that the mainstream media were accused of, regarding their representation of women. Among others, the author highlighted the presence of tweets that defined female fighters as athletes of lower importance than men, as subjects that did not value their femininity, and even as athletes that were out of place in the UFC and should only serve with their aesthetics to satisfy the male gaze. In this context, such statements reveal that the transition to a world with new and different channels of communication might not per se abolish the issues that the classical media was accused of in terms of how they present women sports.

As noted before, the different approaches on the way the media presents WMMA and constructs different concepts of gender in sport might be the most critical and show it as the most problematic scenario. Nevertheless, most of the research on WMMA and its media representation have so far been done on the media from the English-speaking world. As a complement to this, the following segment will explore the way in which the media presents WMMA in Germany with selected examples.

6 WMMA in German media

Exploring the cultural differences that may exist between different countries and observing the different ways in which WMMA fighters are portrayed in the media might reveal alternatives to some of the classic postulates on this topic. In this regard, Jakubowska et al. (2016) express that until then there was hardly any literature available in English on women in combats sports in the media of other countries outside of the English-speaking world. Their research on the Polish press regarding the local champion, *Joanna Jedrzejczyk*, reveals a generally respectful stance of the media towards the sportswoman, although few but severe exceptions from some journalists, who did not seem to give a similar treatment to men and women in this sport by focusing too much on the female fighters' aesthetics or even complaining about female practice in such a sport, exist. In the particular case of Germany, no significant research on the way in which the media portrays WMMA could be retrieved. For this reason, the following exploration intends to indicate some characteristics that can be observed in German media, providing a first step and hopefully encouraging further research in the field.

One of the most striking examples is offered by the *Bild Zeitung*, the largest national tabloid, when portraying the great success of the national fighter Katharina Lehner (who at that time entered the Invicta FC league where she later fought for the champion's title in the United States) using a photo of her half-naked in a sexually suggestive position and asking about her sex life (Lehner, 2017; Soibel & Inan-Serttas, 2017). An absolutely different style can be seen in 2013 by the internationally recognized newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, when its online portal covered the entrance of German *Sheila Gaff* into the UFC (Spiegel Online, 2013). Contrary to the focus of the *Bild Zeitung*, the text and video material seen on the portal focused purely on explaining the sport, the situation of the sport in Germany and barely uses a couple of comments on Gaff being a woman who wears pink clothing and trains mostly with men.

Another alternative that deserves mentioning is an article of the online portal of the newspaper *Die Welt* (Welt.de, 2014), which portrays the female fighter *Anne Merkt*, who – despite not having a record mentioned in sports – is portrayed in this newspaper of greater national relevance as an eminence in the field. This particular case is interesting because Merkt's doctorate in psychology is repeatedly mentioned here. The insistence with this characteristic, that is not part of the sport, invites to think that the author of the article is playing with the contrast between being a fighter but also a woman and an academic. This contrast can be criticized for moving the focus away from the sport in this representation, but the truth is that it also might generate a greater attention and cannot be interpreted as a devaluation of Merkt's image. This last assumption can also be transferred to the media value that women have in this sport in general, understanding femininity not as something that reduces their sporting value but as something that generates greater attention. An article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on Ronda Rousey (Aleythe, 2016) can be interpreted in a similar sense. Here, the journalist raises the rhetorical question: "*Eine Frau als Gesicht des brutalsten Kampfsports?*" [A woman as the face of the most brutal combat sport?]. The tacit affirmative answer to this question can be read between the lines of this article, which collects data on Rousey's media importance even outside the MMA environment and celebrates the personality of the athlete, who became an icon of this sport worldwide.

At the regional level, it is also possible to find different examples of media representations. The newspapers *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger* and *Berliner Morgenpost* offer two very different forms of representation in this respect. Both regional dailies show their local heroines by valuing their sports performance first and foremost (Häfner, 2018; Wessendorf & Neumann, 2015). The newspaper from Cologne, however, repeats comments about the aesthetics of the local fighter and her opponent while at the same time pointing out the 'contrast' between the sporting performance of the local as well as her beauty. Interestingly, the article focuses its attention on the fighter who loses the fight of the night and leaves aside the victories of the male fighters from this city, suggesting again that being a woman in this sport could well be a positive factor for media attention.

Sports media also offers differing positions. The online media channel specialized in combat sports, *GNP1.de*, hardly differentiates the representation of men and women in this sport (Stefanescu, 2017) although – probably for a numerical reason – offers many more notes and rankings on male fighters than on women (GNP1, n.d.). On the other side, Ran’s online channel, *Ran.de*, which covers news on many different sports, shows impressive trivializations and reductions of female fighters to mere objects of sexual desire. Unlike the heroic presentations that the sports channel gives on male MMA events and fighters, news on women focus on the “hottest MMA fighters” and locally on how “hot” the local fighter Kamila Porczyk is (Ran.de, n.d. [a]; n.d. [b]). Even when talking about the internationally renowned personality Ronda Rousey, the sexual preferences of the sportswoman, especially in regard of her statements that sex is part of the preparation for fights, seem to get the media’s attention much more than her performance or personality (Stiefelhagen, 2015). Concluding, at first glance the selected examples show a huge variety in the way in which the German media present the female MMA fighters to date. While some of the news presented show a great openness and willingness to portray the female fighters at the same level and with the same value as male fighters, others focus on the apparent contrast between their femininity (or academic background, in the case of Merkt) and the practice of this combat sport, which seems to present them as exceptional. Even more, the most impressive reductions of women’s sport persist to this day also in German examples. While in the case of Lehner’s half-naked photo – in an announcement that celebrates a major event for the sport in Germany – it shall be mentioned that the referred newspaper also made reductions and banal comments on male fighters as well. However, this excuse cannot be attributed to *Ran.de* where men’s fights are presented with sport-centered words and comments (Ran.de, 2018), while the mentioning of women in this sport focuses exclusively on their sexuality or even their value as a mere object of sexual desire.

7 Conclusion

With their recent popularity in the media, WMMA is offering a wide field for possible researches and some precursors of research in this area are already pointing out some data of great importance for the evolution of this sport. The different perspectives portrayed in this work also indicate that to date it is possible to find very contradictory perspectives with solid arguments on the different sides. On the level of the WMMA and its potential for deconstruction of social roles, on the marketing researches in this sport, and even on the analyses on the fighters in the media, it is possible to observe many different contributions that invite to an optimism with regard to the equitable possibilities that this sport offers for women, but also many other criticisms which warn of the numerous injustices and difficulties the female fighters encounter.

The brief incursion in the German media also allows the observation that this multiplicity of perspectives is not only exclusive for the academic observations in English-speaking countries, but that even to this day it is possible to see the most different representations of the fighters in the German media; from those which ignore the gender of the fighters, to those which celebrates the female fighters as exceptional, to those that portray them as mere objects of

sexual desire. This small selection of prominent articles from the German media allowed the visualization of the different possibilities in the representations of female fighters, but further researches could reanalyze these representations quantifying also the frequency and number of the different types, in order to observe how much of the different representations are actually being transmitted to the viewers and readers.

Considering the young development of this sport, increased academic coverage can lead to the improvement of its image and marketing strategies. Additionally, further research on gender in MMA might help to point out and reflect on the different problems within the media and the institutions of this sport, and ultimately contribute suggesting possible alternatives, so that they can notice and improve the situation of the social groups engaged within.

References

- Aleythe (2016). *Ronda Rousey lebt den Schmerz [Ronda Rousey lives the pain]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/mma-ronda-rousey-lebt-den-schmerz-1.3307781>
- Andrew, D. P., Kim, S., O'Neal, N., Greenwell, T. C., & James, J. D. (2009). The relationship between spectator motivations and media and merchandise consumption at a professional Mixed Martial Arts event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 18 (4).
- Channon, A. (2014). Towards the “undoing” of gender in mixed-sex martial arts and combat sports. *Societies*, 4(4), 587-605.
- Channon, A., Quinney, A., Khomutova, A., & Matthews, C. R. (2018). Sexualisation of the fighter's body: some reflections on women's mixed martial arts. *Corps*, (1), 383-391.
- Greenwell, T. C., Hancock, M., Simmons, J. M., & Thorn, D. (2015). The effects of gender and social roles on the marketing of combat sport. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 24(1), 19.
- GNP1 (n.d.). [MMA Rankings]. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.gnp1.de/mma/mma-rankings/>
- Häfner, P. (2018). *Julia Dorny – Ihr Leben ist ein Kampf [Julia Dorny – Her life is a fight]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.morgenpost.de/sport/article213386233/Julia-Dorny-Ihr-Leben-ist-ein-Kampf.html>
- Jakubowska, H., Channon, A., & Matthews, C. R. (2016). Gender, Media, and Mixed Martial Arts in Poland: The Case of Joanna Jędrzejczyk. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 40(5), 410-431.
- Jennings, L. A. (2014). *She's a Knockout! A History of Women in Fighting Sports*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jennings, L. A. (2015). 'Beauty and Strength': Defining the Female Body in The Ultimate Fighter Season 20 Promotional Campaign. In A. Channon & C. Matthews (Hrsg.), *Global Perspectives on Women in Combat Sports* (S. 73-85). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Kaufman, S. (2015). Ronda Rousey gets paid peanuts compared to the male ufc champs Retrieved February 20, 2019 from: <https://www.vocativ.com/217929/ronda-rousey-gets-paid-peanuts-compared-to-the-male-ufc-champs/index.html>
- Lehner, K. [@ Katharinelehner] (on August 18th 2017). *Any promotion is a good promotion*. Retrieved Feb 28, 2019 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BX7evrVF4v9/>
- Kim, S., Andrew, D. P., & Greenwell, T. C. (2009). An analysis of spectator motives and media consumption behaviour in an individual combat sport: cross-national differences between American and South Korean Mixed Martial Arts fans. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 10(2), 53-66.
- Kim, S., Greenwell, T. C., Andrew, D. P., Lee, J., & Mahony, D. F. (2008). An analysis of spectator motives in an individual combat sport: A study of mixed martial arts fans. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 17 (2),109.
- McClearn, J. (2017). “We Are All Fighters”: The Transmedia Marketing of Difference in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). *International Journal of Communication*, 11 (18), S. 3224–3241.
- MMAjunkie (2009). “Strikeforce: Carano vs. Cyborg” draws 576,000 viewers, UFC 100 replay nabs two million. Retrieved Feb 20,2019 from <https://mmajunkie.com/2009/08/strikeforce-carano-vs-cyborg-draws-576000-viewers-ufc-100-replay-nabs-two-million>
- Quinney, A. (2016). The @UFC and third wave feminism? Who woulda thought? Gender, fighters, and framing on Twitter. *Martial Arts Studies*, (2), 34.
- Ran.de (n.d. [a]). *UFC: Das sind die heißesten MMA-Kämpferinnen – Gonzalez, Rousey, Goodwin [UFC: These are the hottest female MMA fighters – Gonzalez, Rousey, Goodwin]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.ran.de/boxen/bildergalerien/ufc-das-sind-die-heissesten-mma-kaempferinnen-gonzalez-rousey-goodwin>
- Ran.de (n.d. [b]). *Fitness-Weltmeisterin und MMA-Amazone: So heiß ist Kamila Porczyk [Fitness World champion and MMA amazone: Kamila Porczyk is so hot]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.ran.de/boxen/bildergalerien/fitness-weltmeisterin-und-mma-amazone-so-heiss-ist-kamila-porczyk>
- Ran.de (2018). *KSW 44: Das Mega-Duell der MMA-Kolosse [KSW 44: The Mega Duel of the MMA Colossuses]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.ran.de/kampfsport/news/ksw-44-das-mega-duell-der-mma-kolosse-101906>
- Rawlings, B. [@ Rowdybec] (on January 13th. 2015). *I am not oppressed... the only people that oppress me are the feminists & white knights that judge me & want me to conform to their agenda... I believe in human rights FOR ALL. My boys are not monsters, I am not a bad mother because I don't like pants, I am not being objectified... because I AM NOT WEAK, I make my own choices & I do what i want because I am freeeeee!!*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/xyLmyNA0xc/?hl=de>

- Rousey, R. (October 2015). *Ronda Rousey skewers gender pay gap*. (BigSkyGroup) Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLrNBmXhr1M>
- Schaaf, D. (2011). Der Körper als Kapital – Sportlerinnen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Selbstvermarktung und Selbstermächtigung [The body as capital – sportswomen between the poles of self-marketing and self-empowerment]. In D. Schaaf & J.-U. Nieland (Hrsg.), *Die Sexualisierung des Sports in den Medien* (114-136). Köln: Herbert von Halem.
- Soibel, D. & Inan-Serttas, P. (2017). *Käfig-Kämpferin Kati macht in Amerika Karriere [Female cage fighter Kati goes in for a career in America]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.bild.de/regional/koeln/mixed-martial-arts/kaefig-kaempferin-kati-macht-in-amerika-karriere-52899496.bild.html>
- Spiegel Online (2013). *Deutschlands härteste Kämpferin [Germany's toughest female fighter]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <http://www.spiegel.de/video/mixed-martial-arts-sheila-gaff-kaempft-in-der-ufc-video-1268583.html>
- Stefanescu, E.(2017). *GMC 11: Böhm gegen Stoll, Solmaz trifft auf Dell [GMC 11: Böhm against Stoll, Solmaz meets Dell]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.gnp1.de/mma/mma-deutschland/news/gmc-11-boehm-gegen-stoll-solmaz-trifft-a-uf-dell/>
- Stiefelhagen, M. (2015). *Ronda Rousey: Sex gehört zur Vorbereitung auf einen Kampf [Ronda Rousey: Sex is part of preparing for a fight]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.ran.de/boxen/news/ronda-rousey-sex-gehört-zur-vorbereitung-auf-einen-kampf-100997>
- The sports daily (2017). Top selling UFC PPVs of All-Time. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from: <http://thesportsdaily.com/2017/11/17/top-selling-ufc-ppv-of-all-time-fox11/>
- Weaving, C. (2015). 'Chicks Fighting in a Cage': A Philosophical Critique of Gender Constructions in the Ultimate Fighting Championship. In A. Channon & C. Matthews (Hrsg.), *Global Perspectives on Women in Combat Sports* (S. 57-72). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Welt.de (2014). *Diese Forscherin kämpft bis aufs Blut [This female researcher is fighting to the death]*. Retrieved Feb 20, 2019 from <https://www.welt.de/sport/trendsport/video132623403/Diese-Forscherin-kaempft-bis-aufs-Blut.html>
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151.