Letter from the Editor

BY ALBERT J. MILLS

Welcome to the Workplace Review for Fall, 2018**.** In this issue we get to showcase the research talents of some of our students from across the region. We have four papers, three of which have been authored or co-authored by undergraduate students.

In our first paper, Mount Allison University student Lydia Phillip, and her supervisor, Rosemary Polegato report on their research into brand aversion. Their study examines the role of the self-identity of selected consumers (e.g., millennials) and the influence of messaging (e.g. social media) that suggests that the product is contrary to their self-identity. From a survey of 102 participants the authors found that consumers who identify less with a reference group, compared to those who identify more strongly with the reference group, will experience *negative emotions* toward a *Dissociative Reference Brand* and will engage, at least moderately, in brand avoidance behaviours. Identification with Dissociative Reference Groups – through the dynamics of *brand aversion* and *negative emotions* towards the brand – ultimately lead to brand avoidance behaviours. Thus, the study – despite limitations - reveals the importance of consumer self-identity in consumer-brand relationships and reinforces self-identity as the determinate of whether a group is a *Dissociative Reference Group* or not.

In our second paper Acadia University student Candace Conrad examines the reasons why women's sports experience "factors of failure" as a business enterprise. She identifies "three distinct themes" to explain the viability of women's sports organizations – "severe gendering and sexism throughout sport," the discourse of women's sports organizations," where there is a branding misalignment between trying to align women with sports in general to selling the idea of women's sport as unique; and media inattention to women's sports. She concludes with a series of questions for future research.

Next, Acadia student, Jenna Roberson, along with professors Donna Sears and Terrance Weatherbee focus on winescapes and the important role played by tour guides in linking individual wineries to the notion of the wine area or region. The paper follows a regional experiment – "The Wolfville Magic Winery Bus" or WMWB – and the reported responses of tourists to how they were understanding the winescapes involved and how that is mediated by the tour itself. They conclude with a call for further research "in other regions and contexts – how the winescape is experienced from the wine tourist (demand) perspective."

Our final paper – by UPEI faculty Susan Graham and A. J. MacFarlane – return us to the theme of gender and represents our management education paper for this issue. In this paper the authors are examining issues of gender in business schools. Specifically, they are interested in why an imbalance continues to exist (e.g., more males than female students) in some business schools, particularly in the Canadian Maritime provinces. The study emphasis is on the UPEI business school "and the burgeoning research program mounted by business faculty "to both better understand and remedy this problem." Their in-depth study gathers a number of data that reveal a continuing problem of inequality that justifies "further investigation into the gender and undergraduate business schools. The existing data from the Maritime provinces suggest that this issue is persistent, despite the gender over-correction in some academic disciplines or the continuous narrowing of the gender gap in

other programs of study. Until a better understanding of the problem is developed, actions to address the problem may be inadequate."

Afterword

Workplace Review seeks to publish high-quality articles from authors in Atlantic Canada, or on topics pertinent to the Atlantic Canadian and Canadian context. We are also pleased to consider special issues. If you have an idea for a Special Issue of the Workplace Review, please contact myself (albert.mills@smu.ca) and Ellen Shaffner (ellen.shaffner@smu.ca). To submit a paper for review, please contact Ellen Shaffner, Managing Editor, at the email above.

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OMG THAT'S SO #WHITEGIRL: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON BRAND AVERSION

Understanding brand aversion may be as important, or even more important, than understanding brand loyalty. This study examines consumers' self-identity with a dissociative reference group and how that relationship may lead to brand aversion, negative emotions, and brand avoidance behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

Young consumers, especially Millennials (Knittel, Beurer and Berndt, 2016), are exposed to brand-related stimuli produced by the company itself or through external resources. Although products and services may be of high quality and may not have negative product or service attributes, a consumer may form negative emotions toward a brand (Romani, Grappi and Dalli, 2012) based solely on stimuli created by external sources, such as blogs, consumer reviews, and social media (Romani *et al.*, 2012). With information spread widely on social media, trends can quickly become Internet phenomena and create negative perceptions of brands (Knittel *et al.*, 2016), as in the case of the 'white girl' stereotype and the associated brands (Caratas, 2015). A brand stereotype can have negative effects for a company if consumers do not identify with the brand. To protect their image, consumers may actively dissociate themselves from particular brands. Consumers may also develop strong, negative emotions toward a brand leading to brand aversion and brand avoidance behaviours.

There is growing interest in brand aversion and why consumers actively decide to not interact with certain brands. The purpose of this research is to study consumers' self-identity with a dissociative reference group and how that relationship may lead to brand aversion, negative emotions, and brand avoidance behaviours. The context is consumer attachment and aversion to one brand associated with a social media trend that has exploded in recent years: *Starbucks*, a well-known brand, and the 'white girl' stereotype or #WhiteGirl (Caratas, 2015).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Brand Personality

Brands have evolved over the years and appear to have a more complex role in consumer-brand relationships (Romani, Sadeh and Dalli, 2009). Brands are perceived to be tools that communicate a relationship between the brand and the individual, as well as provide information about the individual's social groups (Bannister and Hogg, 2004). Consumers may see brands in an active role of carrying out actions, representing collective ideologies and values. Consumers see the company and the brand as one entity. Brand personality develops when a brand is personified and lent humanlike traits (Mathews, 2015). Consider the question, "Can you believe what *Starbucks* just did?" (Arrgawal, 2004). Romani *et al.* (2009) suggested that brands are 'agents' when they are given personality traits and characteristics that are then passed on to the user. A brand with a strong personality can affect the owner of the brand, as they can be perceived to have the same characteristics of the brand (Fennis and Pruyn, 2007).

Brands and the 'Self'

Consumers are motivated to maintain a positive image. One way that consumers regulate their positive self-evaluations is by avoiding brands that are associated with negative reference groups. By expressing negative opinions of certain brands and products, consumers attempt to protect their self-identity by distancing themselves from specific social groups (White and Dahl, 2007; Lee *et al.*, 2009b). If consumers fear that certain brands feature an 'undesired self,' they are driven toward anti-consumption (Lee *et al.*, 2009b). Indeed, instead of pursuing products that will create a positive self-image, consumers more readily avoid brands that are incongruent with their identity (Bannister and Hogg, 2004; White and Dahl, 2007). In other words, consumers are more motivated to avoid brands that are identified with negative reference groups than to pursue brands that would be identified with positive reference groups (Bannister and Hogg, 2004).

Brands and Emotions

Positive emotions toward brands have been well studied, but there is limited research on negative emotions toward brands (Romani *et al.*, 2009; 2012). Consumers express negative emotions toward brands with which they do not identify or which are connected to an undesirable consumer stereotype (Romani *et al.*, 2009; 2012). When consumers experience negative emotions toward a brand, they distance themselves from the brand (Romani *et al*., 2009). Romani *et al.* (2009; 2012) identified six key negative emotions: anger, dislike, sadness, worry, embarrassment, and discontent. Negative emotions toward brands, such as dislike and anger, are more commonly experienced than other emotions, such as fear, disappointment, and embarrassment (Romani *et al.*, 2009; Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė, 2015).

Negative emotions can have a direct relationship with brand avoidance behaviours (Romani *et al*, 2009; 2012). Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė (2015) found that dislike and anger were a result of consumers feeling that a brand was not symbolically congruent to them and that the brand's ideologies did not align with their own. The stronger the incongruence and incompatibility, the stronger the emotions of dislike and anger, and the stronger the brand-related stimuli, the stronger the negative emotions toward the brand, that then increased intent to avoid the brand.

Dissociative Reference Groups

Bannister and Hogg (2004) found that avoidance groups motivate consumers to reject certain brands. Englis and Solomon (1995, as cited in White and Dahl, 2007) identified a group that an individual is greatly motivated to be dissociated from, and feels strongly disconnected from, as a dissociative reference group. When consumers reflect on their undesired selves, they have a concrete idea of what that is, whereas consumers often stereotype dissociative reference groups (Lee, Conroy and Motion, 2009a). If a consumer perceives the stereotypical brand user to have undesirable characteristics, they can experience strong negative emotions toward the brand (Romani *et al.*, 2009). Further, Lee *et al.* (2009a) found that brand avoidance due to dissociative reference groups may be caused entirely by the stereotype of the brand's typical consumer. When consumers feel that a brand is symbolic of a dissociative reference group, they experience a weak connection to that brand and more negative emotions (White and Dahl, 2007). Negative emotions toward the brands are not mitigated by high-quality products and service, but stem from the stimuli related to the brand (Romani *et al.*, 2012; White and Dahl, 2007).

Social media creates symbols of brands by linking them to certain groups (White and Dahl, 2007). Social media has made it easier for consumers to communicate negatively about brands to a widespread audience. Negative evaluations of brands are communicated more frequently than positive evaluations (Knittel *et al.*, 2016). Negative brand-focused stimuli can shift consumers' perception of the brand (Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006). For example, social media has created the 'white girl' stereotype through #WhiteGirl. Urban Dictionary defines a 'white girl' as a female who conforms to her surroundings and blindly follows social trends. She often drinks *Starbucks* while wearing *Ugg* boots in August and posts pictures of herself on social media sites every single day ("Basic White Girl", 2013). A 'white girl' is perceived as mainstream, inauthentic, conceited, and not very intelligent. The 'white girl' stereotype is assessed on multiple factors including brand preferences, activity on social media platforms, hashtags, and even phrases that are commonly used (Caratas, 2015). The 'white girl' stereotype has expanded to include people of all genders and ethnicities who consume the stereotypical brands and products.

Brand Aversion and Brand Avoidance

Fournier's (1998) pioneer anthropomorphic view is the conceptual basis for consumer and brand relationships and how it is understood today. Recently, Park, Eisingerich, and Park (2013) validated a scale to measure consumers' Brand Attachment-Aversion, shaping how consumer-brand relationships are measured and understood. Brand avoidance is defined as the "phenomenon whereby consumers deliberately choose to keep away from or to reject a brand" (Lee *et al.*, 2009a, p. 422). Brand avoidance only occurs when a consumer has the financial means to afford a brand's products, but rejects the brand (Lee *et al.*, 2009a; Bannister and Hogg, 2004). Further, brand avoidance occurs when consumers stay away from a brand; and brand aversion is when consumers turn away from a brand (Hogg, Bannister and Stephenson, 2009). It is imperative to understand why consumers avoid certain brands and products; brand avoidance may be even more important than understanding consumers' loyalty to brands (Lee *et al.*, 2009a).

One type of brand avoidance is identity brand avoidance which develops when a brand's image does not align with the consumer's self-identity; if a brand is perceived to have negative attributes or values, consumers will practice brand avoidance behaviours so as not to be associated with the brand's characteristics (Lee *et al.*, 2009b). Identity brand avoidance is relevant to Millennial consumers as they are easily able to identify brands to avoid (Lee *et al.*, 2009b; Knittel *et al.*, 2016). This large cohort can influence the success or failure of some brands (Knittel *et al.*, 2016).

Although brands are widely consumed, consumers strive to feel a sense of individuality. One of the sub-themes of identity brand avoidance is deindividuation (Lee *et al.*, 2009b). Symbolic brand meaning that eradicates consumer individuality is what leads to deindividuation brand avoidance. Deindividuation brand avoidance occurs when consumers avoid mainstream brands to preserve their sense of individuality (Lee *et al.*, 2009b). To protect their identity and sense of individuality, Lee *et al.* (2009b) and Thompson *et al.* (2006) found that many consumers avoid brands that they consider to be mainstream and therefore can be perceived as inauthentic. Inauthenticity and loss of individuality is a theme for the brands implicated in #WhiteGirl. For example, *Starbucks*, one of the brands associated with #WhiteGirl, has become widely consumed by Millennials; this popularity can essentially be detrimental to the brand (Thompson *et al.*, 2006).

In summary, the review of the literature demonstrates that brand avoidance includes behaviours in which a consumer consciously decides to not consume specific brands and can also include behaviours that attempt to stop others from consuming the brands. Brand avoidance behaviours stem from a consumer's self-identity and rejection of a dissociative reference group. The personification of a brand creates a more complex consumer-brand relationship. A brand's personality can be affected negatively by social media and dissociative reference groups because a brand becomes a symbol of a dissociative reference group. When a consumer views a brand's personality to be incongruent with their own or as representing a dissociative reference group, they form negative emotions and are motivated to avoid that brand.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Figure 1 depicts the Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Dissociative Reference Groups and Brand Avoidance Behaviours. A consumer may self-identity with a reference group – referred to as an *Associative Reference Group* - or not – referred to as a *Dissociative Reference Group*. *Dissociative Reference Brands* are multiple brands that are associated with negative reference groups, or with negative consumer stereotypes. *Brand Attachment-Aversion* is a consumer's relationship with a brand and their aversion or attachment to the *Dissociative Reference Brands* (Park *et al.*, 2013). *Negative emotions* toward brands exist and may be commonly felt by consumers (Romani *et al.*, 2012). *Brand avoidance behaviours* are actions carried out by consumers to actively avoid brands through methods such as brand switching and negative word of mouth. Based on the review of the literature, three hypotheses are proposed.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Dissociative Reference Groups and Brand Avoidance Behaviours

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Consumer Self-identity:         │
                    │  Associative Reference Group     │
                    │  Dissociative Reference Group    │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                                  ▼
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Dissociative Reference Brands  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
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              ▼                                           ▼
┌───────────────────────────┐           ┌───────────────────────────┐
│ Negative Emotions toward  │           │ Brand Attachment-Aversion │
│ Brand:                    │           │ Brand Relationships:      │
│ Dislike                   │ ◄──────►  │ Averse/Attached to        │
│ Anger                     │           │ Disloyal/Loyal to         │
│ Discontent                │           │ Hate/Love toward          │
│                           │           │ Cold/Warm feelings        │
└───────────────────────────┘           └───────────────────────────┘
              ▲                                           ▲
              │    ┌───────────────────────────────┐     │
              └──► │ Brand Avoidance Behaviours:    │ ◄───┘
                   │ e.g., Negative word of mouth,  │
                   │ switched brands                │
                   └───────────────────────────────┘
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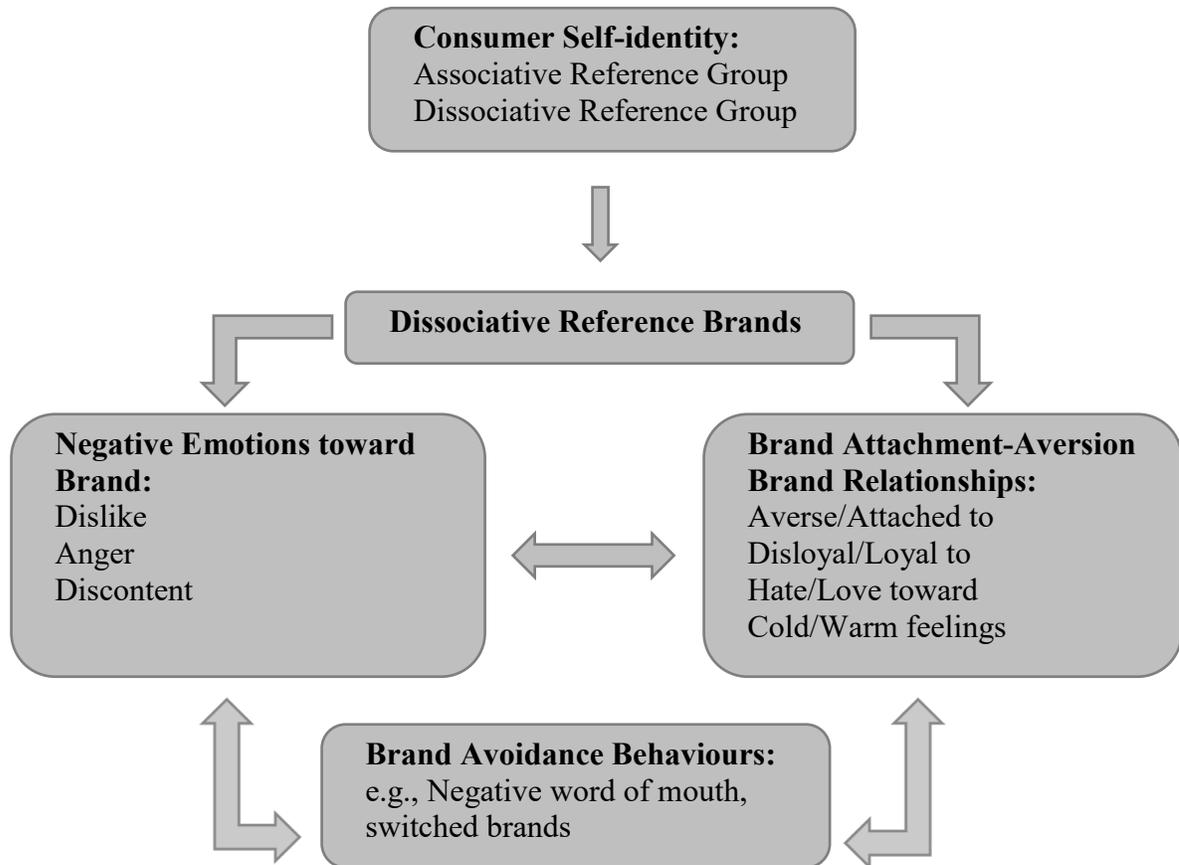
Research Hypotheses

The increasing complexity of brands influences consumer-brand relationships. A brand can take on personality traits of consumers that use the brand (Maehle and Shneor, 2010). If brand personality traits, values, or attributes are negative, the result can be a negative relationship with the brand (Fennis and Pruyn, 2007; Romani *et al.*, 2009). Consumers are averse to brands that represent negative reference groups and may attempt to distance themselves from these brands (White and Dahl, 2007). Due to the personification of brands, they have active roles in consumer-

brand relationships. A negative brand personality due to *Dissociative Reference Groups* leads to higher aversion to those brands (White and Dahl, 2007). The aversion may be toward individual brands or toward a constellation of brands. Thus,

> *Hypothesis #1: Dissociative Reference Groups lead to brand aversion.*

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Romani *et al.* (2009; 2012) and Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė (2015) found that there are specific *negative emotions* evoked by *Dissociative Reference Brands*, for example dislike, anger, and discontent. Incongruent self-identity and brand personality can lead to *negative emotions* toward a brand. If a brand is perceived as representative or symbolic of an undesirable social group or stereotypical consumer, more *negative emotions* are expressed toward the brand (Romani *et al.*, 2009; 2012). It is easier to foster more *negative emotions* toward brands that are interacted with frequently than brands that are non-essential (Romani *et al.*, 2012). Due to a *Dissociative Reference Group*, a consumer may never purchase an associated brand, but may still foster negative feelings toward the brand (Romani *et al.*, 2009; 2012). Thus,

> *Hypothesis #2: Dissociative Reference Groups lead to negative emotions toward Dissociative Reference Brands.*

Consumers practice *brand avoidance behaviours* when brands are associated with negative attributes and negative reference groups (Bannister and Hogg, 2004; Lee *et al.*, 2009b). *Dissociative Reference Groups* are one of the main contributors to *brand avoidance behaviours*. *Dissociative Reference Brands*, due to the quick uptake of the brand's products, can be seen as mainstream and inauthentic. Consumers practice *brand avoidance behaviours* to protect their sense of individuality (Lee *et al.*, 2009b). Popularity and inauthenticity is a theme for *Dissociative Reference Brands*, which leads to brand avoidance behaviours (Thompson *et al.*, 2006). *Dissociative Reference Brands*, as symbols of negative 'out-groups', inauthenticity, and incongruent consumer self-identity, lead to *brand avoidance behaviours* (Lee *et al.*, 2009b; Hogg and Bannister, 2004; Thompson *et al.*, 2006). Thus,

> *Hypothesis #3: Dissociative Reference Groups lead to brand avoidance behaviours.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Instruments

After research ethics approval, quantitative data were collected with a pretested *Survey Monkey* questionnaire used for a larger study of brand aversion. The sample was 800 students of all genders, programs of study, and years of study selected randomly at a small university. Participants had the option to submit their e-mail addresses for a draw for $50. Qualitative information was obtained through in-depth interviews with two female, Caucasian participants who received a $10 gift card. Two questions were asked after the *lifestyle description* (described in the next section) was read: (1) "Have you heard of #WhiteGirl?", (1a) "If no, how does the above description make you feel?", (1b) "If yes, please describe your thoughts and feelings about it." and (2) "Of the mentioned brands, what are your thoughts and feelings toward these brands?"

Five constructs in the conceptual model (Figure 1) were operationalized:

1. Dissociative/Associative Reference Groups/Brands. To determine whether participants identified brand consumption constellations as *Dissociative Reference Brands*, they first responded to the following question: "Please indicate which description is most like you. (1) 'I have purchased a brand because it was associated with something I liked', (2) 'I have avoided or

not purchased a brand because it was associated with something I did not like,' and (3) 'Both statements are true for me.'" Participants then read a narrative, referred to as a *lifestyle description,* that included a brand consumption constellation associated with the 'white girl' stereotype, but which did not explicitly name the stereotype:

> Their favourite study spot or hangout is the local *Starbucks*. They are drinking *Frappuccinos* – since it's no longer Fall and *PSL* season. They browse through *Instagram* and *snapchat* with the latest *iPhone*. (Of course, they only buy *Apple* products.) They are wearing *Lululemon* leggings or *PINK* yoga pants. Depending on the weather, they wear *Canada Goose* or a *North Face* jacket with *Uggs* or *Hunters*.

Then, participants responded to eight questions. First was an open-ended question: "What words come to mind when you read the above *lifestyle description*?" Self-identity to the 'white girl' stereotype *lifestyle description* was measured with seven questions on a scale that ranged from (1) = "Not at all" to (11) = "Completely": (1) "To what extent does the lifestyle description express who you are as a person?" and (2) "To what extent does the lifestyle description represent who you want to be?" (from Park *et al.*, 2013). Five items were added: (3) "To what extent does the lifestyle description represent a social group that you want to be part of?", (4) "To what extent does the above lifestyle description represent a social group that you are part of?", (5) "To what extent do you identify with the lifestyle description?", (6) "To what extent do you feel that the lifestyle description represents your personality and values?," and (7) "To what extent do you feel positively about the lifestyle description?" The purpose of the seven questions was to measure a participant's self-identity with the *lifestyle description* to determine whether #WhiteGirl was a *Dissociative Reference Group* for that individual. If a participant evaluated #WhiteGirl as a *Dissociative Reference Group*, the associated brands were considered *Dissociative Reference Brands. (Starbucks* is potentially a *Dissociative Reference Brands* in this study.)

2. Brand Attachment-Aversion (to *Dissociative Reference Brands)*. *Brand Attachment-Aversion* has two dimensions: brand-self distance and brand prominence (Park *et al.*, 2013). Brand-self distance was measured on an 11-point scale: (1) = "*Starbucks* is far away from me and who I am" to (11) = "*Starbucks* is very close to me and who I am" and (1) = "I am personally disconnected from *Starbucks*" to (11) = "I am personally connected to *Starbucks*." Brand prominence was measured with an 11-point scale, (1) = "Not at all" to (11) = "Completely": "To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward *Starbucks* often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own?" and (2) "To what extent do your thoughts and feelings toward *Starbucks* come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don't have much control over them?"

3. Brand Relationships. To determine how consumers interacted with the *Dissociative Reference Brans*, participants were presented with the four most pertinent of twelve brand relationship measures (Park *et al.*, 2013). Participants were presented with the *Starbucks* brand and asked to evaluate their relationship to the brand on a scale of -4 (most negative relationship) to (0) (indifference) to 4 (most positive relationship: Averse/Attached to; Disloyal/Loyal to; Hate/Love toward; and Cold/Warm feelings.

4. Negative Emotions (toward *Dissociative Reference Brands*)**.** Participants evaluated whether three of six negative emotions (Romani *et al.*, 2012) were evoked towards *Starbucks* using a 7-point scale ranging from (1) = "Not at all" to (7) = "Very much": anger, dislike, and discontent.

5. Brand Avoidance Behaviours. Participants reported the extent to which they carried out eight brand avoidance behaviours (adapted from Bougie, Pieters and Zeelenberg, 2003) using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) = "Strongly disagree" to (7) = "Strongly agree, for example, "I switched from *Starbucks* to a competing brand."

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Of the 800 students contacted, 102 participants (12.8%) provided usable responses. The majority of participants (75.5%) were between the ages of 19 and 22; 16.7% were 17 or 18 years old. Overall, the distribution in each year of study reflected the student body. The majority were completing a BA (51%) or BSc (34.3 %) degree; there was underrepresentation of students in professional programs. Female participants were overrepresented: 67.6% vs. 57% in the student body. A large majority (82.4%) of participants identified as Caucasian, white, or as a non-visible minority. Only three (2.9%) participants identified themselves as a member of a visible minority. Finally, a large majority (71.8%) reported that they both purchased products because they liked what the brand was associated with and avoided products because they did not like something that the brand was associated with. Only four (3.9%) participants reported that they have avoided and have not purchased a brand because it was associated with something they did not like.

The words that most frequently came to mind when participants read the '#WhiteGirl' *lifestyle description* were synonymous with 'wealth' (rich, wealthy, privilege, entitled, and social class) at 39 times (38.2% of participants) (Table 1). 'White girl(s)' was mentioned by 31 participants (30.4%). A fifth (21.6%) of participants used synonyms for 'girl' (woman, female) without mentioning the race of the person in the *lifestyle description* and nine participants (8.8%) mentioned the race as either 'white' or 'Caucasian.' About a quarter of participants used negative adjectives, such as 'dumb, 'annoying', and 'superficial' (27.5%), as well as 'basic' (23.5%), a noteworthy adjective, as it is a degrading term, considered an insult commonly used by Millennials that usually refers to the #WhiteGirl stereotype. About one-fifth mentioned 'unoriginal/ conform(ing)/trendy/cliche' (18.6%) and 'young/teenager' (18.6%). Also, mentioned were 'typical' or 'stereotypical' (14.7%), and words that drew attention to the brands mentioned in the *lifestyle description* or to the notion of 'brands' and 'branding' (10.8%). Thus, based on the words mentioned, we can conclude that the 'white girl' stereotype is well known and widely understood among Millennials and is a *Dissociative Reference Group* for some consumers.

The #WhiteGirl stereotype is well recognized and prominent within the Millennial cohort. Indeed, participants in the in-depth interviews insinuated larger social issues with gender and race implicated in #WhiteGirl:

> *There's no equivalent of a man's stereotype, it demotes women's interests. If I happen to like Starbucks coffee, I don't want to be labeled as a 'white girl.'* – (Interviewee 1).

I've heard of the concept, but not the hashtag. The 'white girl' stereotype is just attacking our affinity for weird fashion trends and specialty coffee, whereas most stereotypes about other ethnicities are negative. For example, some stereotypes of other races are that they are criminals or unintelligent. But for 'white girls', it's Pumpkin Spice Lattes and Uggs. It's privileged that even "bad" stereotypes still allow you to have jobs and succeed in life. (Interviewee 2).

Table 1: Words used for the "White Girl" Lifestyle description (n=102)

Words	Frequency*	Percent (%)
Rich/Wealthy/Privilege/ Expensive/Entitled/Social class	39	38.2
White girl(s)	31	30.4
Girl/ Female/ Woman	22	21.6
White/Caucasian	9	8.8
Negative adjectives	28	27.5
Basic	24	23.5
Unoriginal/Conform(ing)/ Trendy/Cliché	19	18.6
Young/Teenager	19	18.6
Typical/Stereotypical	15	14.7
Brand(s)	11	10.8

Frequency is based on the number of participants who mentioned specific words. Therefore, the percentage adds up to more than 100%.

This insight suggests moral brand avoidance alongside identity brand avoidance. Based on the brands in the 'white girl' *lifestyle description*, participants were able to determine a variety of different factors about the individual in the description based on the perceived stereotype – socioeconomic status, intelligence, ethnicity, and age. Congruent with Bannister and Hogg's (2004) research, the brands acted as symbols and provided participants with ideas about the individual. These findings demonstrate the ability of brands to act as agents that fit a consumer into a stereotyped category based on behavioural traits and attitudes (Romani *et al.*, 2009). The words that came to mind when participants read the *lifestyle description* were remarkably consistent and appear to hold little social desirability. For some participants, the consumer in the *lifestyle description* represents a *Dissociative Reference Group*. Congruent with White and Dahl's (2007) findings, the high quality and the popularity of *Starbucks* did not mitigate the association with a negative reference group. Thus, for the purpose of this study, *Starbucks* is justifiably considered a *Dissociative Reference Brand* for some consumers.

Hypothesis #1: Dissociative Reference Groups lead to brand aversion.

Using Park *et al.*'s (2013) Attachment-Aversion scale, means were calculated to get a total average 'Brand Aversion-Attachment Score' for *Starbucks* as a *Dissociate Reference Brand*, as well as for the separate dimensions of brand-self distance and brand prominence (Table 2). Overall, there was fairly strong *brand aversion* towards *Starbucks* (M = 3.7, SD = 3.0). With respect to brand-self distance, participants felt personally disconnected from the *Starbucks* brand and far from who they were. With respect to brand prominence, thoughts of the brand did not come to mind spontaneously nor did thoughts and feelings about the brand come to mind naturally and instantly. Further, over the four *Brand Relationships* for *Starbucks* as a *Dissociative Reference Brand*, the total average means (M < .1, SD = 2.0) show clear indifference toward the brand which is reflected in the means for the four *Brand Relationships* measured (Table 3). In summary, there is high brand aversion towards *Starbucks* as a *Dissociative Reference Brand* and an indifference towards the brand. Thus, Hypothesis #1 is partially supported.

Table 2: Brand Attachment-Aversion to Dissociative Reference Brand

Brand Attachment-aversion	Dissociative Reference Brand: Starbucks (Means & Standard Deviations; n=102)
Brand-self distance	
Who I am	M = 4.0; SD = 2.8
Connection to brand	M = 3.4; SD = 2.8
Brand prominence	
Spontaneity	M = 3.8; SD = 2.9
Naturally and instantly	M = 3.5; SD = 3.1
Total	M = 3.7; SD = 3.0

Scales: Brand-self distance: (1) = "This brand is far away from (1)/very close to (11) me and who I am" and "I am personally disconnected (1)/connected (11) to this brand." Brand prominence: "To what extent are your thoughts and feelings towards this brand often spontaneous, coming to mind seemingly on their own?/come to mind so naturally and instantly that you don't have much control over them?" (1) = Not at all to (11) Completely.

High *Brand Aversion* towards *Starbucks* is characteristic of a *Dissociative Reference Group* (Bannister and Hogg, 2004). Congruent with White and Dahl's (2007) findings, the symbolism of a *Dissociative Reference Group*, the 'white girl' stereotype, resulted in a weak connection with *Starbucks*. Consumers believe that they acquire the traits and personality that brands symbolize (Maehle and Schneor, 2010). Overall, Starbucks as a brand associated with the 'white girl' stereotype is recognized as symbolic of a group with which they do not identify. Starbucks, a *Dissociative Reference Brand* in this study, may be perceived as having little social value and may be less likely to be consumed (Maehle and Shneor, 2010).

Unexpectedly given high brand aversion toward *Starbucks*, there was an indifferent relationship towards the brand. This result may be due to a social desirability bias with respect to the 'white

girl' *lifestyle description* and self-identity. If the societal consensus of #WhiteGirl is perceived to be negative, the orientation towards the *Brand Attachment-Aversion* questions could have been held with prejudice in order for the participant to be viewed more favourably. The concurrence of brand aversion and indifference needs further study.

Table 3: Relationships with Dissociative Reference Brand

Brand relationships	Dissociative Reference Brand: Starbucks (Means & Standard Deviations)
Averse/Attached to (n = 101)	M = .1; SD = 2.1
Disloyal/Loyal to (n = 102)	M = .2; SD = 2.0
Hate/Love toward (n = 99)	M = -.6; SD = 2.2
Cold/Warm feelings (n = 101)	M = .4; SD = 1.8
Total	M < .1; SD = 2.0

Scale: (-4) most negative relationship to (0) Indifference to (+4) most positive relationship.

Hypothesis #2: Dissociative Reference Groups lead to negative emotions toward Dissociative Reference Brands.

To test Hypothesis #2, the responses to the seven questions about self-identity and association/dissociation with the #WhiteGirl *lifestyle description* were first added to determine a total 'self-identification score.' The scores could range from (7) = "Not at all self-identified with #WhiteGirl" to (77) = "Completely self-identified with #WhiteGirl." The actual scores ranged from 7 to 63, with a mean of 20.0. Participants were divided into two groups for comparison. Scores less than or equal to 20 were categorised as identifying less with the *lifestyle description* and are referred to as the *Dissociative Reference Group* (DRG) and scores above 20 were categorised as identifying more with the *lifestyle description* and referred to as the *Associative Reference Group* (ARG), with respect to #WhiteGirl.

Independent sample t-tests (Table 4) were conducted to examine whether members of the DRG compared to the ARG differed in *negative emotions* towards *Starbucks* as a *Dissociative Reference Brand*. Overall, the means for the *negative emotions* – anger, dislike, and discontent – are low. However, DRGs felt significantly greater dislike for, (M = 2.7, SD = 1.7), $t(80.0)$ = 2.8, p = .01, and greater discontent with, (M = 2.8, SD = 1.8), $t(76)$ = 3.0, p = .00, *Starbucks* than ARGs. Thus, Hypothesis #2 is supported.

Consistent with Romani *et al.*'s (2009; 2012) findings and the words used to describe the 'white girl' *lifestyle description* (Table 1), those who identify less with the *lifestyle description,* that is the DRGs, experienced greater *negative emotions*. When brands profile a consumer with undesirable traits <u>and</u> when the stereotypical brand user has negative characteristics, consumers can experience *negative emotions* toward the brands (Romani *et al.,* 2009). Similar to White and Dahl's (2007)

study, one brand (*Starbucks*) that was symbolic of the 'white girl' stereotype evoked *negative emotions*. Consistent with Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė's (2015) findings, the more incompatible and incongruent the reference group is with a consumer's 'ideal self,' the stronger the *negative emotions*.

Table 4: Comparison of Negative Emotions Toward Starbucks between the Dissociative Reference Group (DRG) and Associative Reference Group (ARG)

Negative emotions	Mean	SD	t-statistic	df	p-value
Anger					
DRG (n= 58)	2.3	1.8			
ARG (n= 32)	2.0	1.6	.8	88	.42
Dislike					
DRG (n= 58)	2.7	1.7			
ARG (n= 32)	1.8	1.3	2.8	80	.01
Discontent					
DRG (n= 58)	2.8	1.8			
ARG (n= 32)	1.8	1.5	3.0	76	.00

Participants indicated the extent to which they felt each emotion toward the brand from
(1) = Not at all to (7) = Very much. DRGs identified less, and ARGs identified more, with the #WhiteGirl *lifestyle description*.

Participants experienced moderate levels of *negative emotions* toward *Starbucks,* an everyday brand (Romani *et al.*, 2012). Romani *et al.* (2009) and Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė (2015) found that dislike and anger were the most common *negative emotions* directed toward brands; this study found dislike and discontent to be the *negative emotions* that distinguished between DRGs and ARGs, perhaps due to age and cultural differences in the sample.

Hypothesis #3: Dissociative Reference Groups lead to brand avoidance behaviours.

Independent t-tests (Table 5) showed that DRGs were more likely to agree than ARGs that they carried out four brand avoidance behaviours towards *Starbucks*: negative word of mouth ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 2.0$), $t(83) = 2.5$, $p = .01$; discouraging friends and family from buying *Starbucks* ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 2.0$), $t(78) = 3.8$, $p = .00$; recommending people not to buy *Starbucks* ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.9$), $t(81) = 2.2$, $p = .03$; and discontinuing buying *Starbucks* products ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 2.2$), $t(67) = 2.0$, $p = .05$. There was also a statistically significant difference between DRGs ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 2.0$) and ARGs ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 2.2$) in continuing to own and to purchase *Starbucks* products, $t(75) = -3.8$, $p = .00$. In summary, DRGs differed significantly from ARGs in most brand avoidance behaviours for *Starbucks*. Overall, Hypothesis #3 is supported.

The means for the brand avoidance behaviours engaged in by DRGs were consistently higher than they were for ARGs. Lee *et al.* (2009b) found that consumers avoid brands to protect their self-image and avoid brands that cause them a loss of individuality. Participants who described the 'white girl' *lifestyle description* as negative appear to practice more brand avoidance behaviours – which is congruent with Lee *et al.*'s (2009b) findings. This is also similar to Bannister and Hogg's (2004) finding that avoidance groups are motivation for consumers to avoid certain brands. White and Dahl (2007) found that negative word of mouth is a way for consumers to distance themselves from certain groups of people, a finding replicated in this study as DRGs had significantly higher negative word of mouth than ARGs. DRGs have lower self-identification scores than ARGs, which suggests that brand avoidance behaviours are a way in which DRGs attempt to protect their self

Table 5: Comparison of Brand Avoidance Behaviours between Dissociative Reference Group (DRG) and Associative Reference Group (ARG)*

Brand Avoidance Behaviours	Mean	SD	t-statistic	df	p-value
I have said negative things about.					
DRG (n= 55)	3.9	2.0			
ARG (n= 30)	2.8	1.9	2.5	83	.01
I discourage friends and family from buying.					
DRG (n= 53)	2.8	2.0			
ARG (n= 30)	1.6	.9	3.8	78	.00
I recommend not to buy.					
DRG (n= 53)	3.0	1.9			
ARG (n= 30)	2.1	1.7	2.2	81	.03
I buy less frequently.					
DRG (n= 38)	4.2	2.3			
ARG (n= 29)	3.9	2.3	.6	65	.54
I switched brands.					
DRG (n= 32)	3.1	2.4			
ARG (n= 28)	3.0	2.1	.1	58	.92
I stopped buying.					
DRG (n= 40)	2.9	2.2			
ARG (n= 29)	2.0	1.7	2.0	67	.05
I owned or purchased but will not in the future.					
DRG (n= 41)	2.7	2.0			
ARG (n= 31)	2.4	1.8	.7	70	.46
I own or purchase and will continue to do so.					
DRG (n= 46)	2.9	2.0			
ARG (n= 31)	4.7	2.2	-3.8	75	.00

Scale: (1) = Strongly Disagree to (7) = Strongly Agree. DRGs identified less, and ARGs identified more, with the #WhiteGirl *lifestyle description*.

identity. However, the means for the DRGs are also mid-range (or moderate) at best, indicating that their brand avoidance is not overwhelming (though the effect on market share may be significant). This seeming ambiguity may be explained by the fact that a large majority (71.8%) of participants reported that they <u>both</u> purchased products because they liked what the brand was associated with and avoided products because they did not like something that the brand was associated with. Brand loyalty and brand aversion may co-exist for the same brand, in this case, *Starbucks*.

> *I definitely avoid certain behaviours and some of the brands on the list. There's [sic] definitely things that I avoid so that I won't be labeled a 'white girl.'* (Interviewee 1).

Further Discussion

The data support the claim that members dissociated from reference groups practice brand avoidance behaviours towards the associated brands. Overall, the results support the Conceptual Model (Figure 1). Consumer self-identity was the determinant of #WhiteGirl being a *Dissociative Reference Group* or not. As expected, *Dissociative Reference Groups* and the implicated brands were found to lead to *negative emotions*. *Dissociative Reference Groups* led to brand aversion and indifference in brand relationships. Consumers who identified with the 'white girl' stereotype did not perceive the reference group to be a dissociative one; therefore, they were more likely to continue brand ownership and purchase behaviours.

Brand aversion to *Starbucks* led to moderately strong engagement in brand avoidance behaviours; for example, DRGs still buy the brand, just less so than ARGS, which could be due to the brand being a well-established brand. Consumers could also be practicing brand avoidance behaviours due to the accessibility of substitute brands in markets where *Starbucks* is not available. Still some brand avoidance behaviours seem to be due to high (negative) association with #WhiteGirl.

In summary, the results indicate the importance of understanding the role of consumers' self-identity in consumer-brand relationships. Previous research on brand avoidance also demonstrates the importance of the relationships among a consumer's identity, a brand's identity, and a dissociative reference group. Park *et al.*'s (2013) Attachment-Aversion scale was able to capture self-identity with a brand. In congruence with previous research, it was found that participants' self-evaluation of their connection and identification with the brand was the best predictor of brand avoidance behaviours. The research methodology allowed for the study and analysis of identity brand avoidance which is most relevant to the #WhiteGirl stereotype.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research was to study consumers' self-identity with a *Dissociative Reference Group* and how that relationship may lead to brand aversion, negative emotions, and brand avoidance behaviours. The hypotheses testing revealed that consumers who identify less with a reference group, compared to those who identify more strongly with the reference group, will experience *negative emotions* toward a *Dissociative Reference Brand* and will engage, at least

moderately, in brand avoidance behaviours. Identification with Dissociative Reference Groups – through the dynamics of *brand aversion* and *negative emotions* towards the brand – ultimately lead to brand avoidance behaviours. *Brand relationships,* however, were found to be indifferent and the brand avoidance behaviours were not as strong as expected. Nevertheless, this study reflects the importance of consumer self-identity in consumer-brand relationships and reinforces self-identity as the determinate of whether a group is a *Dissociative Reference Group* or not.

There are societal and cultural influences on consumer brand aversion. Social media has been at the forefront of the creation of the #WhiteGirl stereotype. For some consumers, there is negative affect toward a brand associated with this stereotype. *Dissociative Reference Brands*, such as *Starbucks,* act as agents and symbols for the 'white girl' stereotype. The widespread knowledge of this stereotype has changed perceptions of the implicated brand's personality, attitude, and traits. Consumers who do not perceive congruence between their self-identity and the 'white girl' stereotype practice identity brand avoidance behaviours that are detrimental to the brand.

One limitation of this study is that the sample was not representative of the diversity of Canadian Millennials. Also, the study did not determine qualitative motivations for brand aversion and brand avoidance behaviours. Motivation for brand avoidance was assumed to be identity brand avoidance. Finally, only one brand from the *lifestyle description* of #WhiteGirl was examined.

Directions for future research

 Research on brand aversion should be continued. Aversion to the #WhiteGirl *Dissociative Reference Brands* amongst minority groups needs to be examined. There is also an aspect of moral brand avoidance, as well as identity brand avoidance, that could be researched further. Motivations behind brand avoidance behaviours amongst different generational cohorts, that is, Generation Z, Millennials, Baby Boomers, and Generation X consumers, also needs to be studied.

Implications for society and managers

Brands have an impact on consumers and the people around them. *Dissociative Reference Brands* help to perpetrate undesirable stereotypes, as they categorize individuals into a group based on brands with which they associate. The 'white girl' *Dissociative Reference Brands* can give information about consumers' personalities, traits, and values – all of which are inherently negative. More specifically, the #WhiteGirl stereotype can lead to racial micro-aggressions or insensitive remarks and have negative societal impact; the stereotype works against valuing the culture and diversity prominent in Canada and across the world.

Brand managers who have a broad understanding of societal and cultural norms, and how they determine who the Dissociative Reference Groups are, can mitigate the negative effects on brand image and market share. To better position a brand, marketers may benefit from a rival brand's connection to a negative reference group. For example, an advertisement that shows an "out group" interacting with a competing brand and features an "in group" using their brand, may make their brand more appealing to specific consumers by fostering brand aversion to other brands. Understanding consumers' brand aversion, as opposed to consumers' brand loyalty, may be more

integral to marketing strategies, especially when targeting Millennial consumers due to the importance of social media in communicating loyalty and aversion to brands.

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**FEMALE SPORT AS A BUSINESS:
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF FAILURE**

Women in sport have not been extensively studied from a business perspective. There have been many attempts to start and sustain professional women's sports leagues in many countries, however there is little comprehensive research outlining the successes and failures of business models and practices in this context. This paper intends to review what research currently exists on professional women sports through a business perspective and try to deduce the contributing factors of failure for professional women's sports organizations. Analysis of the existing research shows that there are three distinct themes that are identifiable when considering women's professional sport: the severe gendering and sexism throughout sport, the discourse of women's sports organizations, and media coverage leading to lack of fan identification. I conclude with questions to for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Women in sports are studied extensively from psychological and sociological perspectives, but there is a lack of quality content coming from the business perspective. With many attempts to start and sustain professional women's sports leagues in many countries, it is puzzling that there is not more comprehensive research outlining the successes and failures of business models and practices surrounding women's professional sport. There is extensive research on sports, specifically sports marketing which is a field that has had an explosion of research conducted. There is studies and literature readily available surrounding all kinds of sports, and business strategies for marketing teams, franchises, and leagues to employ successfully, but this is predominantly on the male side of sport. It is evident that the male side of sport is prospering regardless of the research done within this field. Yet, women's success is scarce within professional sports and this is where the deficit of research is. Why is this the case? Since the 1990's there have been many women's professional leagues in soccer, football, basketball, softball and volleyball that have failed, each only after a few seasons (Allison, 2015). So why is there no research to explain these failures or to identify pathways to success? It is evident that sports, especially team sports are a male

dominated arena consumed by male hegemony partnered up with sexism and bias surrounding sports organizations, and it only gets worse as the sports become elite or professional. When researching women's sports one of the many common themes to easily recognize throughout literature reviewed was the lack of funding and sponsorships, it is easily understandable if there is no money to be made there will be no investors. This is where the deficit of research around establishing successful professional women's sports organizations is concerning. Almost all studies reviewed used semi-structured interviews, qualitative data rather than quantitative which shows a need for more evidence to help support conclusions around women professional sports leagues.

This paper intends to review the findings of what exists currently on professional women sports through a business perspective and try to deduce the contributing factors of failure for professional women's sports organizations, as well as conclude with questions for further research. There are three distinct themes that are identifiable when considering women's professional sport through a non-traditional business perspective; the severe gendering and sexism throughout sport, the discourse of women's sports organizations, and media coverage leading to lack of fan identification. Most of the research reviewed centralizes around soccer, with a few sources studying basketball, keeping in mind that soccer is the most popular sport in the world with approximately 3.5 billion estimated fans (Top 10 List of the Internet World's Most Popular Sports. n.d).

SEXISM AND GENDERING IN FEMALE SPORT

There are far fewer examples of success in female professional sport compared to their male counterparts, per Forbes' List of 100 Highest Paid Athletes only two are female, Serena Williams ranking 40th with a net income of 28.9 million, 20 million of which was in endorsements and Maria Sharapova ranking 88th with a net income of 21.9 million, 20 million also in endorsements (100 Highest Paid Athletes. n.d). Both athletes are tennis players with most of their income coming from endorsements. There is a commonality of solo female athletes being more successful and marketable than female team athletes. Fans can identify with solo athletes as heroes better than rallying behind whole teams. On a more positive note for female sports per Business Insider out of the "Top 50 Most Dominant Athletes Alive", it is split almost even with men and women athletes, spanning a wide range of sports such as; soccer, boxing, swimming, MMA, golf, tennis, and basketball (Davis & Knowlton, 2016). This point is a perfect counter to one of the first arguments that many people will use against why professional sports for women cannot succeed. It is not entertaining or not good enough to be televised. There is proof that women athletes are good enough and are some of the most dominant athletes alive right now. When searching for success within professional women's sports it is difficult to find sustaining leagues but there are currently two leagues in North America that are long standing; the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL).

The WNBA was founded in 1997 (History WNBA Official Site, n.d) with an average salary of $72 000 in 2012 (Yuilee, 2012), which is staggering comparing to their male counterparts in the NBA. The National Women's Soccer League was founded in 2012 and is the longest standing women's professional soccer league in North America to date, but the minimum salary for NWSL players not part of national team program is a mere $7 200, with a cap of $39 700 (McCauley, 2016). Considering the vast difference in salaries and revenues between male and female professional sports it is important to consider the reality of a justified inequality. In "The Challenges of Women's Professional Soccer in the US: A Theoretically and Empirically Informed Discussion" there is discussion of Sports in America insisting upon three criteria to frame sport, those being: "Sports should be fun for the participant", "Sports should enhance the health of both the individual and the general society" and "Sports have an obligation to provide entertainment" (as cited in Hellborg, 2012, 26), Michener then applied these criteria to men and women's college sports and their funding, stating that both gender's pass the first two criteria but women's sports cannot fill stadiums

and entertain like men's sports can, therefore the inequality in their budgets are justified (Hellborg, 2012). It is widely known that sport is extremely gendered, even from a young age males and females are separated, and society has generalized many sports as feminine or masculine. Sports that are associated with power, strength and competition such as; American football, baseball, hockey, which when translated into professional women's athletics it is paramount in contributing to the ideals of male sport superiority over women.

To understand gendering of sport as being institutionalized it is important to consider leadership roles and positions. Even at the grassroots level this is portrayed in the organizations by women being massively underrepresented. Walker and Bopp (2011) state that less than half of coaches for female sports are women and assert the "glass wall effect", and the old boys network with homologous reproduction in hiring practices. Walker and Bopp make the impact of gendering sports clear by stating, "As long as society continues to consent to the inferior role of women in sports, women will continue to suffer unequal representation in men's sports and in leadership positions in sports as a whole. "(Walker & Bopp, 2011, 53). Through interviews with many different female coaches, it was a predominant theme that women felt marginalized within their roles in sport, feeling as if looking through a glass wall to the men's side of the sport, with one particular coach saying "Men have different choices. So, if you're a woman and you get fired at the collegiate level, the only opportunities you have are to coach at women's high school or [women's] college. If you're a man, you can slide over to the women's side. You have twice as many opportunities to succeed. You can just go over to the other side." (Walker & Bopp, 2011, p. 56), women as coaches have far fewer job opportunities. When the equal opportunity policies around sport were brought in it helped gain women positions but only on the women's side of the sport, not equalizing the whole playing field. Without women coaches society cannot reduce the stigma around women and sport, the game cannot grow for women, they need ambassadors, youth need role models, and there needs to be visibility in elite level sports and coaches are just one of these roles that needs to be occupied by women. This is explained through one of the coach's statements expressing, **"**A double standard in sport exists in the segregation of women in men's sports and the integration of men in women's sports" (Walker & Bopp, 2011, p. 60).

When considering how there is not more women coaches it is because of the severe gendering of sport embedded at an institutional level, instead of outright individual discrimination, as Walker and Bopp (2011) elaborate upon the hiring practices by applying the homologous reproduction theory. The coaching staff is more likely to hire someone who is similar in race and sex as themselves, this explains how coaching staff and leadership roles are continually filled by more males, "there are biased ideological and structural beliefs against women that are very much entrenched in the organization as a whole established by years of male dominance which are not welcoming to women" (Walker & Bopp, 2011, 60). It is important to consider how this gendering and sexism in workplaces around sport can deter women from evening pursuing these jobs. It is imperative for success to happen that there needs to be changes even at the grassroots level of sport, including having more women overtaking gender normative roles around and within sports and organizations.

THE DISCOURSE OF FEMALE SPORTS

The discourse of female sports, especially women's professional sport has an interesting dichotomy of uniqueness and perceived reality within marketing. Melkersson expresses how marketing professional women's teams becomes a dichotomy problem. The brand tries to differentiate itself as unique with specific core values which often becomes blurred when trying to express their message to consumers, thus resulting in the consumer's perception of the brand not aligning with the brand's intention. This then equates to the brand losing trustworthiness and credibility with its audience (Melkersson, 2013). It is suggested that women's soccer biggest obstacle is created internally, "It can be proposed that soccer developmental

challenges and opportunities are strongly influenced by both external and internal factors. However, this article ultimately suggests that the biggest challenge for contemporary women's soccer might just come from within soccer itself" (p 845). This was a common insight throughout multiple sources, not only with the discourse of the actual perception with consumers but even more so with the discourse within organizations. In Allison's work, "Business or Cause? Gendered Institutional Logics in Women's Professional Soccer" the point was made extremely clear that often organizations had trouble subscribing to their goal alignment, "women's sports are seen as an ROI problem because business logic is not embraced evenly by men and women within the organizations". Understandably the business mindset is driven by profit and the sports industry has become a big business player but sports is an intangible product, especially on the women's side, and rightfully so cannot be approached like a conventional business ought to be. The dichotomy in views on business within organizations is a contributing factor to failure from the internal challenges that women's soccer faces. The study conducted by Allison explored macro-level institutional logics behind women's professional soccer, this led to two logics, the "business" logic which was concerned with ticket sales, revenues and sponsorships and the opposing "cause" logic, that supported an emotional experience for empowerment of women and girls (Allison, 2015). The "business" logic is self-explanatory, organizations want to capitalize on their market, but this "cause" logic is a major driving force behind many women's sports organizations and teams.

It serves this discussion to also consider the "cause" logic that can be extracted from Walker, Sartore, and Macintosh's piece on the NBA justifying their investment into the WNBA as strategic investment through corporate social responsibility, and furthermore adding to the idea of women's sports being driven by the need to grow the game and opportunities for women (2012). As shown earlier the salaries of female athletes don't even compare to what their male counterparts make, women play their sport at a professional level for the love of the game and to inspire other young women and girls. Female athletes are not giving up years of their lives for the fame or money, or lack thereof in actuality but in inspiring a dream and empowering others. This means that within organizations there needs to be a balance in the "belief behind the machine", the whole organization needs to understand how to balance the social goals of the cause and the business approach, until this is fine-tuned within women's professional sports organizations are doomed to failure.

MEDIA COVERAGE & FAN IDENTIFICATION

There is debate throughout the sports community on female sports being able to sustain themselves because there is no audience, to squash that idea there is proof of an audience for women's soccer in North America. The Women's World Cup final was the most-viewed soccer game, male or female in US history to date. How can women's soccer not sustain if men's soccer can? The "European Policy Brief –Women Football and Female Fans" (Pfister et al, 2015), states that since 2011 women's soccer events such as the world cup have become mega-events as dubbed by the media, and explain the continuous growth of women's soccer in the European Union. The issue is not that there is no audience but it is the continuation of a lack of identifications with fans, and mix that with minimal coverage by the media and it presents a large setback not only women's soccer but female sports in general.

Soccer is one of the sports that is not completely saturated by men in the US, which gives hope that women can succeed here, or at least organizations should be able to. As explained simply by Markovits and Hellerman in "Women's Soccer in the United States: Yet Another American "Exceptionalism"", "Soccer has furnished a unique venue in which women could affirm their respected arrival in America's public space" (2003). In Hellborg's work, she evaluates fan identification and how it is possible women are being marketed the incorrectly. She elaborates on identifying athletes as either hero or celebrity where heroes are known for their achievements and celebrities for their image. She questions, how to sell female athletes only as celebrities and expect success (2012)? Without fans identifying heroes they cannot truly feel

connected and support a team or player, often women's sports leagues failed to do this. Media plays a massive role in organizations abilities to succeed if they cannot find television deals for air time and negotiate pre-game and post-game shows they are doomed to failure. They need exposure, Hellborg explained this factor clearly by applying the "agenda setting theory", where the media can influence the importance of content to the public through their coverage of it. "This displays the importance of accurate and favorable media coverage, and how hard it is to change the ideas people have attained through the media" (2012, p. 7),

It is no secret that women's sports receive a fraction of male sports, this is a truth. It is concerning though that even when female athletes, or sports or organizations such as the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup garner the attention from audience worldwide they're media coverage is hardly increased. The inequalities shown between female and male sports in some aspects are understandable but when there is an audience for female sports and it still is not given service or access, it gives women's sports just another obstacle they must overcome. Media coverage is scarce for women's sports which makes success seem distant, and considering that organizations need the media to identify with fans to obtain success this is a vicious circle that only leads women's sport down a dark and lonely path. A solution many leagues and organizations try to solve with their social media campaigns which bring great success for little cost, but no comparison to what real main stream media could give them.

> The centrality of sport to definitions of dominant masculinities remains true today, with professional sports competitions offering male fans a "vicarious" masculine capital that connects them to other men through bolstering constructions of male superiority over women. In fact, scholars have suggested that men's elite sports leagues have enormous cultural currency precisely because they allow men to establish feelings of physical prowess given women's advancement in education and the professions (Allison, 2015, p.2).

CONCLUSION

It is a saddening reality that women face within life and sport, but there is hope for there to be success, having 3.5 billion people watching televised women's soccer is progress, women being ranked among the most dominant athletes in the world is unheard of 20 years ago, and professional leagues popping up all over the world in all different sports for women is a huge jump that should not be overlooked.

The purpose of this paper was to review material within an area of study that is in desperate need of more content, there needs to be insightful new research to be able to fully understand and solve this problem around professional women's sports. Women in sports have come a long way in the past few decades, with policies in place such as Title IV, and receiving more sponsorships and screen time in the media than ever before, but still have a long way to go until being viewed with the same respect and admiration as male athletes.

The perception of female professional athletes is one of many areas that has the potential to positively impact women in sport and women in general. When considering this issue through a business lens I have synthesized where women's professional sports leagues are failing and the impact of these shortcomings, speaking on problems of the gendering and sexism, the discourse of female sport, and the lack of fan identification and media coverage which are all contributing factors to try and understand what is holding back women's professional sports from succeeding. It is important for these organizations to progress at a sustainable pace, there needs to be realistic goals set, there are currently policies in place to help progress sport for women and girls and these policies need to stretch into the organizations themselves.

Still, there are many questions left unanswered: With so many failed leagues (WUSA, NWSL, W-League etc.) there is a lack of in-depth research on how to structure leagues to be successful, why is this? What best serves professional female athletes and organizations, what would best practices look like? When examining this topic, how can success be measured, profit or reachability? What would the right balance of business and cause logic be? What affect does the approach of how they currently market women impact the sexist superiority maleness throughout sport? If there is a market for women's sports why can nobody fully capitalize, why go after unprofitable groups? Is there a way to break down the barriers that women face in sports? And finally, how can we change this systematic institutionalized sexism towards women in sport? Because when that question is answered there will truly be room for women to succeed in sports.

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**THE WOLFVILLE MAGIC WINERY BUS:
A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE CONSUMER
VIEW OF THE WINESCAPE**

The wine tourism literature coins the term winescape to describe the region in which wineries are situated. Two scales have been developed to measure the winescape: the micro level (an individual winery) and the macro level (the winery area/region). The results of this study reveal the important role played by tour guides in linking the micro and macro perspectives, creating a social environment and mediating the winery experience.

BACKGROUND

There are currently over 18 wineries located across the Province of Nova Scotia ("Nova Scotia Wineries," 2018). The cool-climate, rich soil and close proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, specifically the Minas Basin, all play roles in how Nova Scotia wines are produced and enjoyed.[1] Nova Scotian wines have high acidity and often reveal light, crisp, fruity flavours with prominent hints of minerality[1]. Nova Scotia winemakers are known for producing high quality wines such as Traditional Method Sparkling, also known as Champagne-style wines; and crisp and aromatic white wines and ice wines, which are starting to be recognized on an international scale ("In Nova Scotia wine country, tipple a little Tidal Bay," 2012).

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[1] This is personal knowledge acquired from training received while employed at Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards located in the Annapolis Valley

The Wolfville Magic Winery Bus (WMWB) is a hop-on, hop-off winery tour excursion that is one-of-a-kind in North America ("Discover the Nova Scotia Wineries," 2018). It operates in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, and originated as a collaboration amongst the town of Wolfville and five wineries in close proximity to the area (Sears & Weatherbee, Forthcoming). The WMWB first opened the doors of its classic British double-decker bus to the public in June of 2012 and has seen a significant increase in popularity over the past 6 years ("Wine bus expands season," 2017). The WMWB idea was initiated by Pete Luckett and Hanspeter Stutz, two winery owners who brought the idea to David Hovell of the Wolfville Business Development Corporation (WBDC). Hovell agreed to participate in the project and take on the role of Operations Manager, which was then added to his work duties at the WBDC (Sears & Weatherbee, Forthcoming).

The signature double decker bus operates from May to October, traveling in a continuous loop from downtown to each of the five wineries, allowing guests to experience the wineries at a relaxed pace and customize their tour experience ("Discover the Nova Scotia Wineries," 2018). The WMWB also stops in downtown Wolfville during each hour loop ("Discover the Nova Scotia Wineries," 2018). The WMWB is designed to showcase not only the individual participating wineries, but also the beautiful region and history of Nova Scotia wine country, which is delivered in a fun and educational way by the winery bus tour guide. The wineries included in the excursion are Gaspereau Vineyards, L'Acadie Vineyards, Luckett Vineyards, Domaine de Grand Pré and the newest addition, Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards ("Wolfville Wineries," 2018).

Each winery on the tour offers a complimentary wine sample and winery/vineyard tour ("Discover Nova Scotia Wineries," 2018). The social nature of the WMWB begins to emerge as passengers enjoy the individual winery tours and tasting with friends – old and new.[2] The WMWB is a learning opportunity: about the terroir – a French term for earth or soil (Vaudour, 2002) and a key factor in creating standout wines reflective of a region; about the history of the region and its connection with food; and about how the Wolfville area of the Annapolis Valley emerged as the "heart" of Nova Scotia wine country ("Wolfville Magic Winery Bus," 2017).

Various blogs, news articles and informative websites have referred to the Town of Wolfville as the 'hub' or 'heart' of Nova Scotia wine country. For example, Tourism Nova Scotia (2017) stated "The Wolfville Magic Winery Bus – a classic British double-decker – will whisk you away for an incomparable day of tasteful adventure in the heart of Nova Scotia wine country". Further, the Globe & Mail (2012) wrote that: "a main street strip of shops and cafés make it [Wolfville] a great base for exploring the heart of Nova Scotia wine country."

The Town of Wolfville has also taken steps to establish its position as the center of Nova Scotia wine country. Wolfville's Economic Action Plan (2012) suggested the desire to position Wolfville as the 'heart' or 'hub' of Nova Scotia wine country, explaining that the Town must "Work with the WANS [Winery Association of Nova Scotia] to showcase Wolfville as the centre of Nova Scotia's Wine Country," and that "Tours should start and end in Wolfville" (Wolfville, 2012 p.17). Sears & Weatherbee, (Forthcoming) also pointed out that "nowhere else in the province is there a cluster of

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[2] This is knowledge from personal experience from riding on the bus on various occasions, as well as from observing the experiences of others who have previously experienced WMWB.

wineries that is within a one-hour drive of an urban centre comprising half of the province's population," (p.13) which provides a demographic/geographic explanation for the evolution of Wolfville's position as the heart of Nova Scotia wine country.

WINE TOURISM & THE WINESCAPE

Wine tourism is described by Hall, Sharples, Cambourne, & Macionis, (2002) as "visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors" (p.3). Wine tourism research has largely focused on supply-side concerns. Researchers have rarely considered the wine tourism experience from a consumer perspective. This omission is particularly acute in the winescape literature which has limited its perspective to a researcher-imposed binary view.

The natural and built landscape within which wine tourism occurs has come to be known as the winescape. Quintal, Thomas, & Phau, (2015) explain how the concept of a 'winescape' has been derived from servicescape theory which essentially describes and identifies the specific environmental, tangible and intangible factors of a service environment that can be controlled to alter the consumer experience. By using servicescape theory, it is then possible to extend it more specifically to the wine tourism industry, which is also known as the "winescape" (Quintal, et al., 2015). The 'winescape' is described by Bruwer & Gross, (2017) as the "wine region image" (p.498) and is known to have shifted from a typical idea of wine regions with neatly kept vineyards to an increased emphasis on other features of wine regions such as the natural scenery, cultural aspects and leisurely features (Bruwer & Gross, 2017). The 'winescape' has been applied at the organization level (micro) and the broader regional level (macro) (Quintal, et al., 2015).

The macro-winescape considers the whole wine region or route, and the geographical area where the wineries are located, including the landscape and is the most common viewpoint adopted in the wine tourism literature (Quintal, et al., 2015). The micro-winescape, on the other hand is an "approach that focuses on the winescape as the environment at a specific winery" (Quintal, et al., 2015, p.597). Essentially, the two approaches attempt to provide two ways to explore how consumers perceive the winescape in terms of either a specific winery (micro) or in terms of the general winery region or route to arrive at the wineries (macro).

Bruwer & Gross, (2017) explain that the "microapproach" in theory "conceptualizes the winescape as a second-tier destination (the winery) within a first-tier destination (the wine region)" (p.498) and go on to explain that previous studies have found evidence that tourists choose the destination (region) before selecting a particular winery to visit. Bruwer & Gross (2017) explain that their use of a macro-winescape scale is to avoid limitations presented in the previous study caused by the use of a micro-winescape scale. Bruwer & Gross (2017) acknowledge that there is a lack of wine tourism literature that attempts to conceptualize the winescape, the one exception being the study conducted by Quintal et al., (2015) that uses a microapproach.

This study observes wine tourism from a consumer perspective, to help understand how the consumer experiences wine tourism in Nova Scotia, and more specifically how they perceive the WMWB as an experience.

METHOD

Qualitative data were collected over the period of five years, between 2013 and 2017, from the WMWB tour guests. These data consisted of two qualitative, open-ended questions, which appeared within a survey that was distributed to WMWB participants. Each person who had gone on the WMWB tour was eligible to participate. The questions asked on this survey were, "What was the most memorable part of your experience on the Wolfville Magic Winery Bus tour?" and "What was the highlight of your stay in the Town of Wolfville?" In total, approximately 2,250 responses were collected for each question, making a total of 4,500 useable responses available for analysis. These data were sorted in an excel spreadsheet according to year and question. Grounded theory – an iterative process where theory emerges from the data during analysis (Bryman, Bell, Mills & Yue, 2011)– was used to analyze these data.

Data were coded until the point of theoretical saturation, when no new concepts or categories emerged (per Bryman et al., 2011). These data were sorted into groups of common themes and categories. After the initial categorization, the excel spreadsheets were revisited to apply a macro-winescape and micro-winescape approach to be able to further conceptualize the data. This was done in order to better understand whether the micro-winescape and the macro-winescape were identified in the data, and, if so, to understand how these data fit within these two perspectives.

DATA, RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In terms of the micro-winescape and macro-winescape, the data show that consumers aboard the WMWB did not consistently experience these two perspectives separately. Participants did not distinguish between attributes found in Quintal et al., (2015) as the micro-winescape, nor the attributes found in Bruwer & Gross, (2017) the macro-winescape. Participants frequently mentioned features of both the micro-winescape and the macro-winescape, without distinguishing between the two. Of course, the tour itself was commonly mentioned: "the busride [*sic*] (learning about the area and the local wineries from the tour guide and seeing the beautiful views)" and in longer responses such as:

> "Originally a native of Nova Scotia and was not personally aware of the number and quality of the wineries we now have. Really enjoyed the scenery during the ride and the host on the bus was excellent. Interested in seeing the inside workings of the winery at Grande Pre [*sic*] and the knowledge gained at L'Acadie on the natural process."

These examples show how consumers have not consciously separated the micro-winescape and macro-winescape while recalling memorable aspects of the day.

The winescape literature has attempted to partition the experience of the winescape as either a macro or a micro, suggesting that consumers are experiencing the winescape from only one of these perspectives. Our data show that the micro-winescape and macro-winescape are deeply intertwined during the tourist experience and that a winescape does not naturally divide these two perspectives. Instead, the experience interlaces them together. This means that the micro versus macro view is not capturing the entire consumer experience. The separation of micro and macro winescapes has created gaps where the concept of tour guides as mediators of the experience and the importance of social interactions have been omitted. By acknowledging that these two perspectives are deeply intertwined, it allows other important features of the winescape to emerge that have not previously been considered.

The WMWB is an ideal vehicle for intertwining both the macro-winescape and the micro-winescape during the wine tourism experience. The WMWB focuses not only on showcasing and allowing consumers to experience the individual wineries (micro-winescape), but it also focuses on offering a tour of the surrounding geographical area, learning about the history of the landscape and offering amazing views of the scenery, which have all previously been identified as the macro-winescape.

The survey data reveal that tour guides – specifically Jeremy on the WMWB – are highly noted and important to the overall experience. Not only is Jeremy frequently mentioned in great detail amongst the data, but the bus driver is also mentioned quite often, which means it is likely that the bus driver also plays an important role in the experience of the tour. It is important to note that tourists aboard the WMWB often recall very detailed information about how Jeremy or the bus driver created an experience aboard the bus. These entries range from answers with few details, "Jeremy the tour guide", "Jeremy, the tour guide, he does an amazing job!" to answers with many details "Besides the great wineries, the bus driver and host/bus tour guide were exceptionally friendly, funny and entertaining, we had so much fun!!" and:

> "I went on the tour with co-workers and it was a great way to spend time together outside of work. The day started off amazing with an awesome tour guide (Jermey) [*sic*] and great bus driver. Both had great personalities and the tour guide was able to share great facts about the town of Wolfville as we drove by destination spots. I have lived in the valley my whole life and still discovered new things. My group had a wonderful visit at our first stop at Grande Pre [*sic*] where the host there was full of energy and explained wonderful facts about the winery (I loved finding out how family based they are). We enjoyed a lovely meal sitting outside. I enjoyed the whole experience and I have already recommended the tour to customers (I work in Wolfville)."

Guests aboard the bus tend to also recall tour guides who accompanied them throughout their experiences at each individual winery, similarly they recall specific details about the winery tour

guides (names, places of origin, appearance etc.) as shown in this entry "Chloe's presentation at Luckett [*sic*]. She was amazing!" and often consider these people to be the most memorable part of their winery tour experience. Tour guides have not appeared thus far in the wine tourism literature, although the general tourism literature has already addressed the role of tour guides specifically.

Arnould & Price, (1993) found that tour guides play an important role in creating the narrative of river rafting experiences and that guides "are inducted into the community as friends and team players" (p.42). Arnould & Price, (1993) also explain that "service employees hold special relationships with customers" (p.27), explaining that tour guides often create strong bonds and relationships with their tour guests. This survey entry, "We stayed on the bus at the first stop and had one on one experiences with Jeremy and Jim from vineyard to vineyard and therefore, had one on one experiences with Katie at L'Acadie and each of the other vineyards" is a good example of how the tour guides have created a bond with the guest. This helps support the argument that the winescape literature to date has omitted an important element of the winescape (the tour guides), which plays a large role in how tourists experience wine tourism.

Furthermore, Arnould & Price, (1993) explain "guides sometimes attempt to facilitate the development of community by leading people through various team-building games over the course of the trip" (p.34), on the WMWB a community forms on the bus itself. Many of the participants observed refer to activities facilitated by the tour guide on the bus such as "The guide on the bus sang songs and was very entertaining" and "Our tour guide singing some songs to the people on the bus." This activity is often encouraged by the tour guide Jeremy, who attempts to get the bus goers to bond and chant along with each other to various tunes.[3] This social community aboard the WMWB shows that the winescape literature has thus far omitted the important social aspects that often emerge during tours, and specifically in the context of the WMWB.

The WMWB survey data provides insight into how consumers experience the day amongst family and friends, and the data shows that being social has a strong connection to how the day is experienced. Arnould & Price, (1993) identified this as "communitas". This is explained as "an evolving feeling of communion with friends, family and strangers" (Arnould & Price, 1993 p.34). Many guests who participated in the WMWB survey tend to mention spending time with other people during the day as a highlight or most memorable aspect of their journey. Examples of these survey entries include, "Our group of friends enjoying each vineyard" and "great group on the bus and tour guide and bus driver were awesome" as well as instances where winery bus guests have met new people from the tour itself "Sampling some wine with a stranger from the bus and comparing notes." These types of interactions are noted frequently in the data and allows us to consider the idea that social connections are quite important to wine tourists. It must be noted that thus far in the winescape literature, the only mention of the social nature in the winescape literature is expressed through the "winery service staff" in Quintal et al., (2015) and similarly a seven-item scale under the label "People" in Bruwer & Gross, (2017) which includes "elements of the employees" as well

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[3] This is knowledge from personal experience from riding on the bus on various occasions, as well as from observing the experiences of others who had previously rode on the WMWB.

as "locals" from the winery area. Both of these concepts fail to identify the social aspects of attending a winery or experiencing the winescape, which include spending quality time with loved ones (family, friends, significant others) and meeting new people throughout the experience.

A possible reason why the social elements have been omitted can be that these relationships and experiences do not necessarily fit within the perspective of a micro-winescape or a macro-winescape. Taking a demand-side, or customer-centric, view surfaces aspects that are otherwise missed. During the coding process, these comments were identified as "Bus Related," since they do not fit solely as a micro or macro outlook on the winescape. This further confirms that using only a micro-winescape or macro-winescape perspective, or purely a supply-side perspective of wine tourism can result in omitting key factors or elements of the winescape that are important to consumers and affect how they experience wine tourism.

In the consumer behaviour literature, Schmitt, Dubé, & Leclerc, (1992) found that strong evidence exists to support that "the queue constitutes a social system" (p.814). We may consider the WMWB to be a type of waiting line to arrive at each winery, as each person who is on the bus understands that they will soon arrive at a new winery, and that they must endure the wait on the bus to be able to arrive at their destination. Therefore, the findings of Schmitt et al., (1992) aid in understanding the social environment on the WMWB.

CONCLUSION

The WMWB allows us to ask some important questions about how it is contributing to the winescape in Nova Scotia, specifically in the Town of Wolfville. The WMWB offers a unique opportunity to learn about the winescape, and compare it to pre-existing wine tourism literature, as well as to the literature that attempts to conceptualize the micro-winescape and macro-winescape. This study is aimed to explore how people experience the WMWB and furthermore how they experience the micro-winescape and macro-winescape throughout this experience. There are two very important themes that emerge from the data that have not previously been conceptualized in the winescape literature: the importance of tour guides; and the social nature of the WMWB experience. This study identifies these omissions and compares them to other tourism and management literature which recognize tour guides and social interaction as important elements of tourist experiences.

The data also reveal that many other aspects, which are not currently mentioned in the micro-winescape or macro-winescape literature, nor in the wine tourism literature are memorable to wine tourists. For example, the frequency of dog-friendly establishments was often referred to by respondents as one of the highlights of their visit in Town of Wolfville. This calls for further study of the memorable aspects of wine tourism experiences.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

There are several important practical implications to consider when reviewing the findings of this study. The prominence of tour guides in the participant statements suggests that participating organizations should recognize the importance of selection and training of tour guides in the winery setting and on the WMWB. Moreover, wineries might be wise to consider developing friendly relationships with other tour operators (i.e., van, limo, bus, etc.). Recognizing this important aspect of the winescape helps ensure that wine tourists are engaging in a positive experience.

Another implication involves recognizing the importance of the social nature of the WMWB experience, and how the experience is holistic in nature. Wine tourists think of the day as one experience in itself, instead of distinguishing each winery on its own. The wine tourist experience at any one of the five wineries can impact the experience at each separate winery, as the emotions and memories may carry over into different winery settings. The tourists view the day as one single experience, which is social in nature. Each winery might also want to be aware of prioritizing a social connection between winery guests, to further develop the social experience for each person.

It is also important to note that the winescape reveals to industry members that it is very difficult, if not impossible to separate the winery from the community and region in which it is situated. The macro-winescape especially shows us that careful planning and consideration is key when developing a new wine region. This study provides evidence that, in this context, the micro-winescape (winery) and macro-winescape (region) of the wine tourism experience, are deeply intertwined: wine tourists do not consciously separate the two when they are experiencing them. A beautiful winery depends on its surroundings to help create an ideal experience for the consumer/wine tourist.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It should be noted that this research makes no claim of generalizability beyond the specific context in which it was undertaken. This is an exploratory study that seeks to better understand the concept of the winescape in the wine tourism literature, and specifically how this can be interpreted in the context of the WMWB. However, it seems likely that wine tourists do not consciously separate the micro-winescape and the macro-winescape scales during the course of their experiences. Future research should continue to investigate – in other regions and contexts – how the winescape is experienced from the wine tourist (demand) perspective.

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GENDER IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS [1]

While the gender imbalance in post-secondary education has been largely erased (and in fact has in many cases been reversed), a few anomalies remain - including the persistent gender imbalance among some (but not all) university undergraduate business program, notably those located in the Canadian Maritime provinces. At the undergraduate level across Canada, most university level business programs hover around gender parity, with only a few institutions experiencing a full reversal (female students outnumbering male students) of gender balance at the undergraduate level. There remains, however, a small but significant number of universities in Canada, all located in the Canadian Maritime provinces, that have yet to consistently reach gender balance in their undergraduate business programs and seem to be stuck where other faculties and institutions were in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s at about 40% of enrolled students being female. This paper will describe the current status of gender balance in university level business programs across the country and will highlight those few institutions where an imbalance remains. Particular emphasis will be placed on UPEI and the burgeoning research program the business faculty is mounting to both better understand and remedy this problem.

INTRODUCTION

While the general gender imbalance in post-secondary education has been largely erased (and in fact has in many cases been reversed), a few anomalies remain - including the persistent gender imbalance among some (but not all) university undergraduate business program, notably those located in the Canadian Maritime provinces. At the undergraduate level across Canada, most university level business programs hover around gender parity, with only a few institutions

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experiencing a full reversal of gender balance at the undergraduate level. There remains, however, a small but significant number of universities in Canada, all located in the Canadian Maritime provinces, that have yet to consistently reach gender balance in their undergraduate business programs and seem to be stuck where other faculties and institutions were in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, at about 40% of enrolled students being female (Vanderkamp, 1984).

Gender imbalances in post-secondary education have a long established history. Originally developed for the purposes of educating clergy and society's elite males, universities were the exclusive domain of men well into the 1900s, with very few exceptions (Alexander, 1931). Enrolment in post-secondary education institutions expanded considerably after World War II, and because of the Civil Rights and Women's Movements, baby boomers flooded the labor market and the information-age and knowledge-based economy emerged (Windolf, 1992). Yet, despite the enormous increases in post-secondary enrolment between the 1940s through to the 1970s, the enrolment of females continued to lag far behind the enrolment of males in almost all program areas. During the 1970s – 1990s, female students began closing the gender gap across many programs of study and during the late 1990s and early 2000s actually reversed the gender imbalance in several broad academic areas, including arts and science (Card, Payne, & Sechel, 2011; Lorz, Schindler, & Walter, 2011).

The current status of gender equity in undergraduate university programs can be categorized three ways. First, for some program areas, gender parity has been reached with a relative balance between male and female students. Second, for other program areas, the gender imbalance has been reversed, or over-corrected, so that female students are consistently over-represented in comparison to male students, which is resulting in a renewed interest in promoting gender parity, except that the focus is on male enrolment patterns. And third, there continues to be program areas where women remain significantly underrepresented, even though the gap may have closed considerably over the past half century.

Post-secondary business/administration programs across Canada appear to be one of the program areas that has achieved gender parity overall, with some persistent over- and under-representation based on regional differences (Hunt & Song, 2013; Morrison, 2015). Of particular note, several universities in Canada's Maritime provinces have persistent gender gaps with respect to female enrolment in undergraduate business programs. This paper will describe the current status of gender balance in university level business programs across the country and will highlight those few institutions where an imbalance remains. Particular emphasis will be placed on the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) and the burgeoning research program the business faculty is mounting to both better understand and remedy this problem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the relevant literature in support of this paper spans three broad areas. First, the literature that examines gender and business schools will help contextualize this work beyond is narrow scope of universities in Canada's maritime provinces and situate the types of work that focused on gender and business schools. Second, this review of the literature will, very briefly, considers the broad topic of women in business, in particular the persistent underrepresentation of women in senior positions in organizations and the value of gender diversity in terms of an organization's bottom line. Lastly, the literature will help contextualize the importance of understanding, and ultimately dealing with, the gender imbalances in terms of social, economic, moral, institutional, and departmental ramifications. The literature review will conclude with an overview of the gaps in the literature and how these gaps need to be address.

Gender & Business Schools: Despite the important role educational institutions can play in working toward gender equality in society, there have been very few studies that have considered gender trends in undergraduate business programs. The issue of a gender gap in post-secondary business education in the literature has focused primarily on graduate programs. Analysis of undergraduate business programs has been limited to U.S. data. US based research suggests that women have consistently and increasingly turned away from studying business at the undergraduate level. That "as we celebrate the gains of women's representation in higher education, the phenomenon of the shrinking enrollment of female students in undergraduate business schools has gone largely unnoticed" (Davis & Geyfman, 2015). Ball (2012) reported that women are substantially less likely than men to choose business as a major and that this is leading to a shrinking proportion of all college degrees in the United States being business degrees. Similar findings by Davis and Geyfman (2015) indicate that the proportion of female students is lower at larger AACSB-accredited colleges in the United States, enrollment decisions by females are influenced by economic incentives and socioeconomic conditions, and that female-friendly institutional factors positively impact the percentage of female enrollment in undergraduate business programs.

The limited literature that exists regarding gender and business schools focuses on MBA programs, rather than undergraduate programs (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Leiber, 2018; McConnell, Rush, & Gartland, 2016). Covered in both academic journals and the popular press, the lack of female students enrolling in MBA programs is a consistent and troubling theme, with some authors heralding programs that achieve 40% female enrolment as "leaders" in gender equality. Additionally, several articles discuss the choice of majors in business programs by gender and found that males were more likely to major in finance, whereas female students were more likely to major in human resources. Interestingly, there were no gender differences in students who majored in marketing or accounting (Blau, et. al. 2016; Gemici & Wiswall 2014; Kumar & Kumar, 2013). Finally, a few articles observed the persistent underrepresentation of female faculty members in faculties of business and hypotheses about a potential relationship between the gender profile of faculty and that of students.

Women & Business: The gender gap in the labour market and in business leadership in particular exists despite much research indicating that companies' performance improves with female representation on boards of directors. Electing one additional female to a corporate board is associated with between 8 and 13 basis points higher return on assets according to the International Monetary Fund (Christiansen, 2016). Catalyst reported that companies with the most female directors outperformed those with the fewest recording a 26% higher return on invested capital and a 16% higher return on sales based on the performance of Fortune 500 companies between 2004 and 2008 (Carter, 2011). Academic research as to whether gender diversity on corporate boards results in increased company performance is mixed. Campbell and Minguez-Vera (2008) found that gender diversity has a positive effect on firm value. Francoeur, Labelle, and Sinclair-Desgagné (2008) reported that firms operating in complex environments do generate positive and significant abnormal returns when they have a high proportion of women officers. However, Carter, D'Souza, Simkins, and Simpson (2010) did not find a significant relationship between the gender diversity of the board, or important board committees, and financial performance for a sample of major US corporations. Similarly, Chapple and Humphrey (2013) did not find evidence of an association between diversity and performance.

One reason cited for this inequity is that females do not have the necessary executive experience to contribute at the board level. Others suggest that an increase in women on corporate boards will in turn result in more women being promoted to senior leadership positions within those companies (Rutherford, 2013). Certainly, the number of women reaching c-suite positions in Canada is dismal. At present there is not a single company on the S&P/TSX60 with a female CEO. Women in Canada

account for close to half of the labour force yet the proportion of women leading incorporated businesses (2.6%) is well below that of men (6.5%) (Cooper, 2017). Men holding executive level positions outnumber women by close to 2 to 1 and the ratio of men to women in c-suite positions (CEO, COO or CFO) is 4 to 1 (Bruggeman, 2016). Yet greater representation of women in top management positions is likely to yield economic benefits. Research suggests improved gender equity is beneficial for corporations. "Companies with more female executives had higher returns on equity, higher valuations, and stronger financial performance that those without" (Dawson, 2014).

Women lag their male counterparts in the entrepreneurship and small business domain as well. Women represent only 20 percent of small business owners in Canada (Devillard, 2017) and female majority ownership is found in only 15.7% of small and medium sized companies in Canada (Cooper, 2017). In 2015, women comprised 38.8% of self-employed individuals while 61.2% were men (Moyser, 2017).

Societal Impacts of Gender Imbalances: There is rising momentum in Canada for action to accelerate progress toward gender parity. The federal government has made gender equality a priority by appointing Canada's first gender-balanced cabinet in 2015 and issuing a gender-based budget in 2017 that specifically addressed women's issues. Canadian educational institutions also have a role to play in achieving gender equality in society. Investigating and understanding the gender gap in undergraduate business education, the subject of this paper, is a small step in that direction given that undergraduate business programs are incubators for our next generation of entrepreneurs, executives and corporate leaders. A review of the both academic and popular literature confirms the presence of a persistent and stagnating wage gap, an inequity in corporate boardrooms, a scarcity of women in executive positions and a disparate number of female entrepreneurs.

The rationale for improved gender equity is well documented. In short, progress towards gender parity translates into significant economic benefits. The McKinsey Global Institute has calculated that if women participated equally to men in the world economy it would add up to $28 trillion, or 26 percent to annual global GDP in 2025 compared to a status quo scenario. This impact is roughly equivalent to the size of the combined US and Chinese economies today (Woetzel, et al., 2015). In Canada an increase of $150 billion in incremental GDP in 2026 representing a 0.6 percent increase to annual GDP growth is achievable by furthering gender parity (Devillard et al., 2017). The World Economic Forum has confirmed there is growing evidence of the positive effect of increasing gender parity on economic growth (Schwab, 2016).

In recent years, the wage gap in Canada has plateaued after narrowing over the past decade. In 2017, females working full-time earned 88 cents, on average, for every $1 earned by males. Closing this earnings gap could boost economic growth in Canada (Cooper, 2017). Higher levels of education reduce but do not eliminate the wage gap. "Even when they had a university degree above the bachelor's level, women earned an average of 90 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2015," wrote Statistics Canada analyst Melissa Moyser (Moyser, 2017). Business school alumnae are not impervious to the gender wage gap. The gap actually widens as men and women advance through their careers widening to approximately US$400,000 over 20 years after graduation (Bruggeman, 2016).

Prominent global organizations such as the World Economic Forum, the United Nations and Catalyst as well as international consultancies such as McKinsey & Company, Spencer and Zehnder (2016) report a slow, modest growth in female presence around boardroom tables. In 2016, close to 19 percent of board positions of the largest global companies were held by women, an

increase from approximately 14 percent in 2012 ("2016 Global Board", 2016) Gender inequality is evident in corporate Canada. We know that females are not equitably represented around boardroom tables in Canada. In fact, based on 2014 measures, women hold just 20.8% of board seats at Canadian Stock Index Companies ("2014 Catalyst Census", 2014). Of the 677 companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, 45% do not have a single woman on their board. Maureen Jensen, the CEO of the Ontario Securities Commission also reported that of 521 board vacancies during 2016, only 76 were filled by women. In other words, 85% of the time, it was a man chosen to fill the position (Lu, 2016).

Gaps in the Literature: While some literature exists in the area of gender and business schools, much is missing. A comprehensive understanding of business enrolment by gender at all levels, including undergraduate, is needed so that a more fulsome picture of the problem(s) can be developed. The Canadian post-secondary education business programs are conspicuously absent from the literature and given the differences between the American and Canadian post-secondary systems, research that focuses on the United States may not reflect the realities of the Canadian experience. In addition to better information about enrolments and gender in business programs, research that delves into the reasons students chose, or do not chose, to pursue a business degree, including the influences and influences may help inform actions to remedy the gender imbalances.

FINDINGS

This paper explores the persistent gender imbalances in undergraduate business programs at post-secondary universities located in Canada's Maritime provinces, with particular focus on the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). Examination of existing publicly available data regarding gender and enrolment in post-secondary business programs a picture will begin to emerge. By thoroughly describing the current and persistent underrepresentation of females in select undergraduate business programs in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, a deeper appreciate of the nature and magnitude of the program may lay the groundwork for further research and action designed to help address the gender imbalance.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is a national body that advocates for university faculty members and publishes research relevant to its membership. CAUT publishes an annual *Almanac of Post-secondary Education,* which compiles the most current and relevant statistical information relating to post-secondary education in Canada. One area of focus for the Almanac is student enrolment, which includes information about student gender, program affiliation, graduation rates, and provincial comparisons. In the latest published *Almanac* which covers the 2014 – 2015 academic year, 52.3% of all undergraduate students in Canada enrolled in business, management, and public administration program were female. However, results varied widely by province. Saskatchewan reported 61.2% of business, management, and public administration students were female, whereas Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia reported female representation of 43.0% and 42.9% respectively. Graduation levels provide additional and interesting perspectives. The Canadian rate of female graduates from business, management, and public administration programs was 54.0%. Again, Saskatchewan let the way with 66.7% of all business, management, and public administration program graduates being female, whereas Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia were 50.0% and 51.0% respectively. Table One shows the enrolment and graduation rates for female students by province.

Table One: Enrolment & Graduation Rates for Females

	NL	PE	NS	NB	PQ	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	CAN
Enrolment % Female	59.8	42.0	43.1	50.2	56.2	48.1	53.6	60.2	51.1	49.7	51.1
Graduation % Female	60.9	50.0	51.0	55.8	57.8	51.3	56.8	66.7	58.8	53.8	55.5

Finally, CAUT also provides data on gender with respect to graduate business programs, such as MBA degrees, and college level diplomas or certificates in business or administrative disciplines. With respect to graduate degrees in business, management, and public administration, enrolment rates for females ranges from 42.6% in Alberta to 59.8% in Manitoba. Graduate rates vary as well, ranging from 47.1% in Nova Scotia to 58.8% in Manitoba. The gaps between enrolment and graduation also varied, with more females graduating compared to enrolling in four provinces and fewer females graduating compared to enrolling in six provinces. The gender profile of students enrolled in business, management, and public administration programs at community colleges ranges from 82.2% female enrolment in Newfoundland to 54.9% female enrolment in Quebec. Table Two shows the enrolment and graduation rates of females in both graduate and community college business programs.

Table Two: Female Enrolment & Graduation Rates for Graduate Programs & Community Colleges

Province	Graduate Program Enrolment	Graduate Program Graduation	Community College Enrolment	Community College Graduation
NL	58.2	57.1	82.2	85.7
PE	47.4	54.5	62.4	70.0
NA	53.8	54.9	66.4	71.7
NB	48.6	47.1	64.8	70.5
PQ	52.6	50.8	54.9	59.4
ON	49.8	50.9	55.7	59.8
MB	59.8	58.8	61.4	64.1
SK	59.6	52.7	69.0	70.4
AB	42.6	47.3	62.7	65.9
BC	55.0	49.8	57.1	64.2
Canada	51.6	50.7	57.2	61.7

CAUT data is informative but somewhat limited because the methodology groups other administrative programs with the standard bachelor of business administration or commerce degrees and results are reported at the provincial, rather than institutional, levels. For the next stage of investigation, provincial and institutional level data from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) that focuses on universities in the Maritime provinces provides further insight. The MPHEC is a multi-province governance and research body that supports evidence-based decision-making regarding higher education in the Maritime provinces. As part of the MPHEC mandate, the Commission publishes a variety of statistics that offers insight into the gender profile of students in business programs at select post-secondary education institutions.

According to MPHEC reports, overall student enrolment in business programs, including both undergraduate and graduate programs, at publicly-funded universities in the Maritime provinces in

2015-2016 was 12881. These figures include undergraduate and graduate level programs, as well as other management and public administration programs and thus do not provide the singular depiction needed to fully inform this paper. The percentage of the student body enrolled in business programs, according to MPHEC, ranges from a high of 51.2% for NB in 2009-2010 to a low of 41.8% for PEI in 2015-2016. Overall business enrollment for the three Maritime provinces hovers in the mid 40%, with a high of 47.3% and a low of 44.8%. Table Three summarizes the total enrolment, female enrolment, and percent of the student body who are female.

Table Three: Total Enrolment in Business Programs at MPHEC Universities, including Number of Females and % of Females

Year	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016
Total Business Enrolment (# Female) (% Female)	11860 5607 47.3%	12231 5672 46.4%	12671 5784 45.6%	13225 5945 44.9%	13369 5990 44.8%	13176 5921 44.9%	12881 5829 45.3%
Business Enrolment PEI (# Female) (% Female)	765 340 44.4%	814 347 42.6%	818 358 43.8%	770 348 45.2%	741 319 43.0%	727 311 42.8%	751 314 41.8%
Business Enrolment NB (# Female) (% Female)	3307 1694 51.2%	3297 1633 49.5%	3493 1678 48.0%	3536 1700 48.1%	3444 1669 48.5%	3169 1562 49.3%	3016 1486 49.3%
Business Enrolment NS (# Female) (% Female)	7788 3573 45.9%	8120 3692 45.5%	8360 3748 44.8%	8919 3897 43.7%	9184 4002 43.6%	9280 4048 43.6%	9114 4029 44.2%

Unlike CAUT reports, MPHEC provides results at the institutional level. The gender profile of undergraduate business program graduates with respect to female students ranges from 36% female students at Cape Breton University to 56% at Dalhousie University for the academic year 2014 – 2015. Mount Saint Vincent University, a historically female post-secondary institution, has consistently high percentages of female students, ranging from a low of 54% to a high or 79%. Whereas the major of the remaining institutions, with the possible exclusion of Dalhousie University and University of Moncton, have percentages of female students consistently below the threshold of 50%. Table Four depicts the percentage of female enrolment and graduate levels for the eleven universities from 2004/2005 – 2014/2015.

Table Four: Percentage of female students graduating from undergraduate business programs, by institution

	Acadia	CBU	Dal	Mt.A	MSVU	SMU	St.FX	UdeM	USte.A	UNB	UPEI
04/05	49	51	59	43	79	47	39	61	62	53	59
05/06	51	46	56	53	78	47	43	56	57	53	52
06/07	46	53	50	50	70	49	35	61	50	50	46
07/08	41	52	52	35	69	44	38	60	50	46	43
08/09	42	44	49	40	70	44	45	62	25	45	47
09/10	52	49	53	46	72	44	44	54	63	46	45
10/11	43	43	53	33	65	44	41	57	33	47	48
11/12	39	51	54	42	63	48	32	54	71	48	49
12/13	40	43	52	40	64	46	44	61	50	46	53
13/14	48	43	56	37	54	48	46	59	36	47	43
14/15	44	36	56	52	54	41	44	51	50	45	37

The statistics provided by CAUT and MPHEC do not provide a fulsome picture of gender in undergraduate business programs. For that, a more in depth review of UPEI as a case study is instructive. The University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) is the province's only degree granting institution. A primarily liberal arts university, UPEI has grown its student-body and program offering by recruiting an increased number of international students enrolled and expanding degrees offered to include more specialized and graduate level programs. Founded in 1969 with the merger of St. Dunstan's University and Prince of Wales College, UPEI graduated its first cohort of business students in 1971, 37 students in total - two of which were female. Since then, the faculty (previously the Faculty of Business was referred to as a "department" and then a "school, finally becoming a "faculty" in 2016) has grown such that it graduated 163 undergraduate students in 2016, of which 51 (31.3%) were female. Chart One shows the number of graduates and the number of female graduates of the Faculty of Business at UPEI from 1971 – 2016.

Chart One: Rate of female graduates at UPEI's Faculty of Business
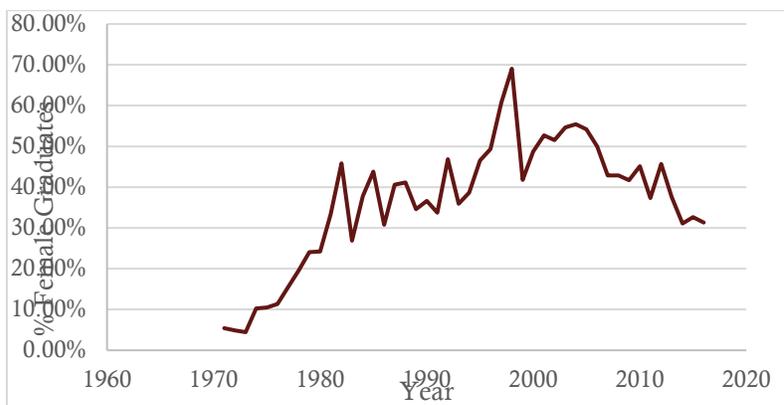
The profile of the Faculty of Business at UPEI differs from that of the Faculties of Arts and Science. In the 2015 – 2016 academic year, 58% of all undergraduate science students were female, 63% of all undergraduate arts students, and 41% of business students. These figures were relatively constant over the previous decade with highs/lows from science of 59%/56%, 65%/62% for arts, and 43%/39% for business. Table Five shows the gender profile of students in each of the three main faculties at UPEI from 2008/2009 – 2015/2016.

Table Five: Percentage of female students enrolled at UPEI by faculty

	Science	Arts	Business
2008-2009	59	65	43
2009-2010	58	65	41
2010-2011	56	63	39
2011-2012	57	62	41
2012-2013	59	64	41
2013-2014	56	64	41
2014-2015	59	62	42
2015-2016	59	62	41
Mean	58	63	41

Going further, the gender profile of UPEI undergraduate business students was examined by year of study. The gender profiles by year of study varied, from 29% female students in first year during academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 to 53% female students in fourth year during the 2011-2012 academic year. However, when we follow a cohort of students as they naturally progress thru their academic program of study an interesting trend emerges. The proportion of female students in a cohort increases in each subsequent academic year. For example, during academic year 2008-2009, the percentage of female students in first year was 47%, in the following academic year (2009-2010) when these same students would presumably be in second year the proportion remains at 47%, but that same cohort in their third year (academic year 2010-2011) is 48% female, and reaches 53% female in their fourth academic year (2011-2012). This trend continues for students who were first year students in 2009-2010 where the cohort gender balances went from 29%, to 34% to 36%, to 43% by the cohorts fourth year, and for the 2010-2011 cohort, the corresponding percentages were 29%, 37%, 37%, and 39%. The complete figures are not able for the 2011-2012 cohort of first year students, but the trend appears to continue with first year cohort being 40%, and increasing to 42% and 45% in second and third year respectively. Table Six and Table Seven show the percentage of female students per year of study from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014.

Table Six: Gender profile of students in UPEI's business program by year of study

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			All Years		
	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F
2008	81	91	47	72	128	36	35	54	39	61	61	50	249	334	43
2009	55	133	29	97	108	47	58	70	45	36	49	42	246	360	41
2010	54	134	29	67	129	34	72	78	48	69	66	51	262	407	39
2011	69	91	49	65	113	37	57	101	36	85	74	53	267	379	41
2012	62	88	41	76	105	42	48	82	37	69	90	43	255	365	41
2013	55	102	35	89	113	44	45	56	45	59	93	39	248	364	41

Table Seven: Gender profile of students in UPEI's business program by year of study, by cohort

Cohort	Year 1			Year2			Year 3			Year 4		
	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F	F	M	%F
Cohort 2008	81	91	47	97	108	47	72	78	48	85	74	53
Cohort 2009	55	133	29	67	129	34	57	101	36	69	90	43
Cohort 2010	54	134	29	65	113	37	48	82	37	59	93	39

To examine enrolment in a different way, the gender of students who enrolled in a third year required course over the past five years was considered. BUS 3430 is a third year required marketing class that all students pursuing the BBA, BBTH, and BST degrees at UPEI must take. Since 2008, there has been only one faculty member who has taught that course, effectively meaning that professor taught every single student graduating from UPEI's business program. The prerequisites and heavy workload for this course means that very few non-business elect to take this course as an elective. Over the past five years, the only years for which data was available via Moodle – the university's online classroom platform, 39.0% of the students who have taken this class have been female. Using BUS 3430 another way, this course is a case based course that incorporates the base method as a critical means of instruction and student engagement. Over the past five years, students studied 76 cases, most which were published by Ivey Publishing, a Canadian case publisher based out of University of Western Ontario. Of these 76 cases, 70 had male protagonists, four had female protagonists, and two had multiple protagonists of both genders (Graham, 2018).

When the issue of underrepresentation of female students was first discussed among business faculty members, one faculty member pondered the impact of the growth of international students within the Faculty of Business on the overall gender profile of students. Preliminary speculation was that international students were more likely to be male, particularly those students from some countries, and that therefore might be driving the gender imbalance. However, when business students were separated by domestic and international status it was discovered that the percentage of female international business students closely resembles female domestic students and in fact, in five of the eight years that were reviewed the rate of female international students exceeded the rate of female domestic students thereby reducing the overall gender imbalance among business students. Table Eight shows the number and rate of female students, both international and domestic from 2008-2009 to 2015-2016.

Table Eight: Gender profile of international and domestic students in UPEI's business program

		Female	**Male**	**% Female**
Fall 2008	International	47	64	42.34
	Domestic	202	270	42.80
Fall 2009	International	59	95	38.31
	Domestic	187	265	41.37
Fall 2010	International	65	96	40.37
	Domestic	197	311	38.78
Fall 2011	International	71	86	45.22
	Domestic	196	293	40.08
Fall 2012	International	65	91	41.67

	Domestic	190	274	40.95
Fall 2013	International	74	101	42.29
	Domestic	174	263	39.82
Fall 2014	International	89	131	40.45
	Domestic	171	235	41.12
Fall 2015	International	99	141	41.25
	Domestic	166	238	41.09

DISCUSSION

The findings of the paper attempt to describe the gender profile of undergraduate business students in the Maritime provinces. Through piecing together various reports about enrolment and graduation at the national, regional, provincial, and institutional levels, the beginnings of fulsome picture emerge. Gender imbalances do appear to be a challenge for some regions and/or institutions, yet before a definitive conclusion can be reached, and thus informed action taken, further research needs to be done.

Firstly, while a tremendous amount of data exists about post-secondary enrolment in Canada, a general lack of precision in the reporting of the data make conclusions related to this inquiry challenging. Data regarding both enrolment and graduation rates at the institutional level across the country would be beneficial in determining if the gender imbalances detected in the Maritime provinces are indeed unique to that region. In addition, data that exclusively considers undergraduate business or commerce programs, and that excludes public administration and other management programs, would provide more singular focus and may alter the findings. Finally, data about student persistence, attrition, and migration between programs may help to explain some of the incongruences in the data. Both CAUT and MPHEC may already have this data but the public reports thus far do not share that information.

Second, data regarding gender within business programs is notably absent from the academic literature as well as the quasi-industry reports. The relationships between gender and majors, gender and academic performance in business courses, gender and business-related extra-curricular learning opportunities (such as internships, exchanges, and student societies or clubs), and in-class behaviors would enrich the understanding of gender and business schools. Gender equity is not simply a matter of numbers, rather true equity comes from full participation and successes from both genders, which can only be understood by looking beyond enrolment figures.

Third, knowing that females are generally underrepresented in terms of faculty positions in business schools, peers in the classrooms of business schools, and with respect to women business leaders in the community, a better understanding of if, how, and why female students seek out, identify, and connect with female role models may be insightful. Examination of the representation of females within the curriculum, for example in the cases used as educational vehicles in many business courses, is also instructive because too many female students are not seeing themselves represented in the very material they are studying.

Fourth, limited research examines how, why, and when students make decisions regarding post-secondary education programs of study. Understanding key influences and influencers that help shape the decision-making process for all students, and female students in particular, might be useful when identifying actions intended to address gender imbalances in business schools.

Finally, a review of best practices for programs and/or institutions who have managed to achieve gender balance in undergraduate business programs may help in the development of future initiatives should this issue garner interest and concern from stakeholders. With respect to the underrepresentation of females in undergraduate business programs, some institutions appear to have been able to achieve gender balance and examining the strategies these institutions put into place to reach this objective may be instructive.

CONCLUSION

Sweeping conclusions are not yet possible given the publicly available data. Yet, a preliminary review of existing data and a deeper look into one case study (UPEI) does justify further investigation into the gender and undergraduate business schools. The existing data fro the Maritime provinces suggest that this issue is persistent, despite the gender over-correction in some academic disciplines or the continuous narrowing of the gender gap in other programs of study. Until a better understanding of the problem is developed, actions to address the problem may be inadequate.

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