

# **Women in Motorsports**

**“ I set out to win every race that I’m in”**

Sanni Nurmela

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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää tekijöitä, jotka motivoivat naisia harrastamaan autourheilua sekä mahdollisia haasteita, joita naisurheilijat kohtaavat lajin parissa. Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin myös urheilulle asetettuja tasa-arvokysymyksiä naisautourheilijoiden näkökulmasta, naisten edustaessa toistaiseksi vähemmistöä lajissa.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena eli kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena. Tutkimukseen otettiin mukaan viisi (5) suomalaista naisautourheilijaa, jotka osallistuivat lajiin joko itse ajamalla tai kartanlukijoina. Jokaisella osallistujalla oli taustallaan vähintään seitsemän (7) vuoden kokemus lajista. Haastattelumenetelmänä hyödynnettiin temahaastattelua.</p> <p>Tutkimustulosten mukaan naisautourheilijoita motivoivat henkilökohtaisten ajotaitojen kehittäminen sekä menestyminen lajissa. Voittaminen kilpailuissa nähtiin suurimpana motivaattorina, joka nähtiin myös päällimmäisenä keinona ansaita arvostusta muilta kilpikumppaneilta. Tutkimustulokset myös osoittivat, että tasa-arvoinen autourheilu toteutuu urheilulle asetettujen sääntöjen mukaan molemmille sukupuolille mm. kilpailuissa. Autourheilu nähtiin tasa-arvoisen urheilukulttuurin suunnannäyttäjänä sen huomioidessa molemmat sukupuolet tasavertaisena, kun kilpaillaan samassa luokassa.</p> <p>Toimenpiteitä naisten osallistumisen edistämiseksi ei tutkimustulosten mukaan tehdä kansallisella tasolla tarpeeksi. Naisautourheilun edistäminen nähtiin kuitenkin välttämättömänä sekä edellytyksenä mahdollisten ennakkoluulojen rikkomiseksi, joiden mukaan autourheilu mielletään yhä vahvasti maskuliiniseksi lajiksi. Lajitietoisuuden lisääminen sekä naisharrastajien kannustaminen lajin pariin nähtiin edistävän autourheilun tasa-arvoisuutta entisestään tulevaisuudessa.</p>		
Avainsanat ( <a href="#">asiasanat</a> )  autourheilu, nainen, tasa-arvo, motivaatio,		
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Abstract  <p>The aim of the study was to find out the motivational factors of female auto racing drivers and also to investigate the challenges that women face in the sport. The study also examined the gender equality issues from the point of view of women, so far representing the minority in auto racing.</p> <p>The study was conducted as qualitative research. Altogether five female auto racing drivers or co-drivers participated in the study. Every participant had at least seven-year experience of the sport. A semi-structured interview was utilized in the study.</p> <p>Based on the results of the study, female auto racing drivers were motivated by developing personal driving skills and also by succeeding in the sport. Winning in competitions was perceived as the highest motivator, which was also seen as the most significant way to earn respect from fellow competitors. The results also indicated that equality in auto racing is fulfilled by the rules set for the sport, for example in competitions. Auto racing was also perceived as a forerunner in an equal sports culture, considering the genders equal to compete side-by-side.</p> <p>Actions for improving the participation of women in motorsport are not sufficiently executed at a national level. However, promoting women in auto racing was perceived as a necessity and as a prerequisite for breaking possible preconceptions about auto racing, which is still perceived as a high masculine activity. Increasing the awareness of the sport and encouraging women to get involved were seen to promote equality among auto racing in the future.</p>		
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# 1 Introduction

The sight of a woman race car driver is not common, neither it is an exception in the present day. Taking a look at the history of the highest class of single-seat auto racing, five women have accessed a Grand Prix to compete in Formula 1 (Barretto 2012).

The involvement of women has been under discussion ever since motorsports have existed. Men have predominantly taken the seats as drivers, while women are hiding from the cameras in the paddock and mastering the tasks of team principals or managers. The number of men participating in auto racing is significantly greater than the number of women, which is why women are often invisible in the motorsports industry.

Under the head of the International Automobile Federation (FIA) operates a commission, aiming to prove that women are as competent as men in building successful careers in different areas of motorsports. The objective of the FIA Women in Motorsport commission (FWIM) is to increase the women's participation by encouraging and improving the position of female drivers, whilst also assisting women in working as mechanics and engineers in the motorsports field. (FIA Women in Motorsport, N.d.)

Hence, the commission launched a project to finally introduce girls to racing culture. The main objective of The Girls on Track -program is to increase the awareness of for women's opportunities in motorsports by allowing young girls to participate and try auto racing for free. The Girls on Track Karting events were held in eight European partner countries, each of which attracted an unexpected number of participants. So far, the movement towards promoting the participation of women in motorsports has been the most significant at the grassroots level. (The Girls on Track, N.d.)

However, not only the FWIM is striving to assist females in getting involved in motorsports. In 2019, a new concept in auto racing is promoting women towards pursuing careers in Formula 1. The W Series operates as a platform for talented female drivers, accelerating their access to compete in the highest class of auto racing by offering a stage to show their abilities as drivers. Under their Rethink

Racing -slogan, the W Series aims to change the face of male-centric motorsports by providing a chance for females to prove that they can compete equally in Formula 1. (W Series, N.d.)

Along with the international organizations, Finland's motorsport organization AKK Motorsport ry has a committee for women to support their participation in auto racing at the national level. During the year, the working group consists of four women who assist other women in getting involved in the sport. The existence of the group is essential for encouraging women to participate at the national level. Moreover, the commission stands for an equal motorsports culture, and promotes the involvement of women in all aspects of motorsports in Finland. (Toimintasuunnitelma 2018, 17.)

The main objective of this bachelor's thesis is to gain a better understanding of the female auto racing athletes in Finland. This study utilizes the qualitative research approach, according to which five women were interviewed in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and reasons behind that led them to participate in motorsports. The women involved in this study had at least seven-year experience of participating in auto racing as drivers or co-drivers. Participants were chosen who each perform in a different type of auto racing in order to increase the variety of perspectives.

The research questions were derived from the main research problem, which aims to investigate the motives, challenges, and equality issues of women in auto racing. Since women are underrepresented in motorsports, this research also aims to discover factors that might affect the low participation. Moreover, the research considers possible actions to increase the women's involvement in the future.

## 2 Gender equality in sports

The Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland is responsible for creating opportunities for sports and physical activities in addition to developing sports policy, and contributing to the gender equality of sports and culture in Finland (Linjaukset ja Kehittäminen. N.d.). The Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity sets the objectives for improving the actions in sports clubs to enhance the development of children, and dispose of the unequal actions in sporting activities. The requirements assigned to a sports policy have their basis in equality, integrity, and multiculturalism of sports. (Liikuntalaki 2015/390.) The updated act on the promotion of sports emphasises the significance of equality in sports and encourages all sporting associations to aspire towards it (Turpeinen & Hakamäki 2018, 9). The Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland states that sport is one of the main responsible domains in our society to educate about the norms of fair play, in addition to respect for the rules created for sports. Moreover, it encourages authentic peer group respect to be shown in all activities regardless of gender. (ibid. 17.)

In 2005, the Ministry of Education in Finland published a program concerning gender equality in sports in Finland. The initial plan centered upon the consideration of permanent actions to enhance equality between genders in sports and supervise the realization of the entrusted actions. The most urgent objective of the program was related to spreading awareness of gender equality and particularly to observing the decision-making bodies to pay attention to the issues of equality. (Marttila & Virtala 2005.)

After setting the first actions in motion, a second report was published in 2011, targeting an inspection of the previous six years and comparing the execution of the actions instructed in 2005. The main observation related to gendered sports was dominated by imbalanced numbers of male and female participants. Additionally, the number of female decision-makers in sport administration was alarmingly low. The following movement concentrated on stabilizing the gender division in certain sports, in addition to considering possible changes to balance the numbers of female and male participants in gendered sports. (Turpeinen, Jaako, Kankaanpää & Hakamäki 2011.)



The latest report, released on 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, examines the development of gender equality in sports sector in Finland (Turpeinen & Hakamäki 2018, 11). The report observes the difference between the total number of females and males participating in sports, suggesting that men tend to participate more than women (mts. 46). Council of Europe (2015) states in the report that it is significant to recognize the reasons why genders are dropping out from sports at a certain age (Turpeinen & Hakamäki 2018, 17).

Nevertheless, the report also summarizes the improvement and progress of gender equality in sports from 1995 to 2017, and notes the increased number of females in leadership positions in sport administration. However, it underlines the ongoing gender imbalance in the decision-making bodies of sport with females still representing the minority in the groups. (Turpeinen & Hakamäki 2018, 58-59.)

Along with the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, the Finnish Olympic Committee similarly promotes gender equality, offering guidelines for sports clubs and communities for observing the fulfillment of gender equality in different sectors of sport. Additionally, the Finnish Olympic Committee recommends observing the number of female coaches and sport administrator representatives. (Tasa-arvo liikunnassa ja urheilussa, N.d.) Guidelines of the Finnish Olympic Committee emphasize that a similarity of male and female athletes is not a target to strive for. Instead, they promote the equal valuation and treatment of both genders among sporting communities. ("Sopivia" tyttöjä – "oikeita" poikia 2011, 13.)

However, guide books are essential for each community and administration promoting sports, but absolute for sports clubs where the distribution of genders is significant. Programs in sporting organisations can be stagnant, hence complicating imperceptibly the possibilities of men and women to manage equal access in the sport. At the worst, organisations might shut the other gender entirely outside without noticing. (mts. 14-15.)

As the sport industry has a higher number of men working in the field as coaches and policymakers, both tasks requires the increment of females in order to an equal sporting culture. Thus, equality is displayed largely by the number of the

representatives who are in charge of sport administrations and communities. (Turpeinen & Hakamäki 2018, 60.)

According to Teronen & Vuolle (2018), Sari Essayah states that an increase in the number of female representatives in sport administration is entirely dependent on the actions actualized towards the encouragement of females. Anyhow, in recent years the work towards increasing the number of female representatives has begun to bear fruit. (Teronen & Vuolle 2018, 123-124.)

### **3 Women in sport**

According to Young (2010), women have been excluded from the idea of sports as if it has related symbolically somehow to the feminine body, which was considered to be unsuitable to carry out physical activities. The substance of female bodies was questioned, sexually objectified, as if representing anything but values portraying the athletic ideal. (14-15.)

The culture around sport emphasized values representing high masculinity, such as power, dominance, aggressiveness, and the winner takes it all -mentality, which created distorted norms for the society of sport (Young 2010, 18-19). Thus, the values of an ideal athlete were not suitable to represent femininity and the female body, consequently women acquiesced to playing side roles in the sporting culture (Hiilloskorpi et al. 2012, 13).

Nevertheless, women managed to take part in different sports despite the biases that sports are damaging the ideal of femininity, and even destroying the bodily self-image of females (Hargreaves 1994, 144). According to Hiilloskorpi et al. (2012) Vasara (1997) suggests that sports participation stole time from duties set for females, who mainly took care of household chores (Hiilloskorpi et al. 2012, 15). Another view argued that restricting the possibilities of females to attend certain activities had, in addition to social ideologies, biological reasons as well (Hargreaves 1994, 146).

Sporting culture was shaped to conform to specific paradigms, allowing females to attend the field with less doubt. Both genders had certain sports regarded as appropriate for the gender ideology. (Hiilloskorpi et al. 2012, 17.) As Heywood and Dworkin (2003) cites the Mary Jo Kane's definition of gender continuum: mainstream sports which included physical contacts, such as ice-hockey and football, represented masculine values, determining the sport to be appropriate for the male gender. In turn, females participated more in sports that highlighted the essential values of the growth and development of women. Traditionally feminine sports like gymnastics and dancing represented the feminine beauty, enhancing the appearance of the body, having no aggressive vibes presented through the activity. Having the genders to participate in appropriate activities ensured the continuum of the two genders, strengthening the impossibility to comprehend females attending men's sport, and vice versa. (Heywood & Dworkin 2003, 9-10.)

Nevertheless, the domain of sports remains to be managed by men even the participation of females has extended from the traditionally feminine sports to "unfeminine" activities by lowering the gender boundaries, moreover contributing to the equality between sexes. Even though, the participation of women in unfeminine activities is still doubted by some, because the activity has its basis on male experiences. Hiilloskorpi et al. (2012) states that allowing females to participate does not ensure the fulfillment of the equality questions in sport especially when considering the values, regulations, and standards assessed for sports, which constitutes the main equality issues in sports in general. (256-257.)

The sporting culture has various aspects concerning why the verified equality between the genders is becoming mistrusted. For instance, women are lacking pro-level athlete role-models in general, but especially in sports where the representation of females is significantly low. Additionally, the physical appearance and beauty of women is still highlighted in the media, rather than their achievement in sports. Also, men's sports are overpowering in the receiving of media publicity compared to women. (Hiilloskorpi et al. 2012, 259.)

### 3.1 Gender socialization

According to Almy and Sanatullova-Allison (2016), Shepard (2013) suggests that genders are educated from a young age to display certain behaviors that are accepted by the society and culture. These behavioral models primarily stem from parenting, but also educational institutions, peer groups, and media displays idealities about genders, and this has an effect on the socialization process of individuals. Humans tend to assimilate preferences, values, and aspirations to adhere to, in addition to selecting an activity according to the learned models from the socialization process.

(Pfister & Hartmann-Tews 2005, 9.)

Since birth, children are born to represent biologically the female or male gender, but the biological sex alone does not define the type of identity the gender represents. Social realities are partly restricting the genders in certain issues: for example, men are unable to give birth to a child. However, social roles associated with genders do not prevent individuals from achieving certain issues and from adapting in appropriate identity in life. (Hargreaves 1994, 146-147.)

#### **Parenting**

According to Hargreaves (1994), Coakley (1990) suggests that parenting has the primary effect of constructing the self-perception of an individual, mainly how actively parenting emphasizes the gender roles and also how staunch gender perceptions parents are committed to. Therefore, if an individual is raised with an assumption that genders are assumed to display different behavior in society, odds for the fulfillment of the assumption are increased. (Hargreaves 1994, 147-148.) Including this to sports, gender categorizing occurs when alternative sporting opportunities are excluded and the individual is conducted towards specific, gender appropriate sports. (mts. 149.)

#### **Education**

Awareness of gender distinctions comes to light at the latest in educational institutions when genders are instructed to perform sports in different groups (Hargreaves 1994, 151). Educational institutions hold significant power of influencing the genders

during the growing up process. Along with parenting, schools socialize children to become conscious of ideologies and capabilities of genders, partly restricting the possibilities to express genuine emotions and interests at schools. (Almy & Sanatullova-Allison 2016.) When educating sports, boys are conducted towards activities that are considered to be more aggressive. On the contrary, appropriate sports for girls involve cooperation. According to Hargreaves (1994), Scraton (1986, 1992) argues that the ideals that teachers are holding about the abilities of boys and girls are sustaining the gender categorizing among the society. The difficulties in changing the institutionalized gender assumptions at schools are also maintaining the separation of girls and boys in sporting culture. (Hargreaves 1994, 153-154.)

### **Sport Organizations**

In addition to parenting and educational institutions, gender ideologies are also constructed and educated in sports institutions. Communities of sports similarly hold the responsibility of educating the individual, in addition to teaching essential norms of the society, models of behaving, and authentic peer group respect through sports. It is essential for sports communities to ensure that genders are treated equally and equal sporting culture is learned from the performed activity. (Hiilloskorpi et al. 2012, 251-253.)

Sport has held, and continues to hold the power to represent one of the main arenas designating what is considered to be appropriate for females and males, as well as educating the norms and gender order of the society. Gender roles and specific behavior are learned through sports as much as they are learned through education and parenting. (Pfister & Hartmann-Tews 2005, 11.)

### **Stereotypes**

As suggested, ideologies of genders sustain the constancy of outdated assessments of categorizing sports as being suitable to either males or females. When the ideological order is destabilized by allowing females to perform activities designated for men, discrimination in sports occurs. (Heywood & Dworkin 2003, 58-59.) Females exhibiting traditionally gendered ideologies easily causes denial, displaying an negative

attitude towards the abnormality. Stereotypes tend to prohibit the difference by creating negative biases, especially in sports in which females are challenging gender categorizing simply by participating and adopting masculine attributes (Herrala 2018, 59; Schneider 2010, 46, 49).

Carless and Douglas (2010) argues that participation of women in gender appropriate sports stems from the way in which society represents stereotypical female athletes and activities. As the media creates images about sporting females, it also specifies the assumptions of what kind of sports females should represent, in addition to how female athletes should look like in general (Carless & Douglas 2010, 102).

Also Herrala (2018) argues that the sports system reminds females of their role when performing in a masculine area. Women participating in a traditionally masculine sport lack recognition of their skills as players. Women are challenging the ideologies about typical masculinist players by playing ice hockey, and simultaneously reorganizing the traditional gender order in the sport. Participating in the sport has an underlying desire of abolishing the stereotypes associated with female players, in addition to creating alternative ways of thinking about the activity and the women participating in it. (Herrala 2018, 61-63; Schneider 2010, 49.)

### 3.2 Motivation

According to Liukkonen and Jaakkola (2012), motivation conducts the behavior of an individual to act in a particular way for a reason. In regard to sports, the level of motivation designates the amount of interest towards an activity, in addition to how an individual is oriented in practicing sessions or targeting certain goals from it. (Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 48-49.)

Primarily the motivation for sports arises from the inner volition to participate. Taking part in sports is personally important for the athlete, moreover producing enjoyment and satisfaction, sports are a significant factor in constructing the identity and self-image of the athlete. (Forssell 2014, 197; Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 49.)

Besides inner motivation, motivation is also affected by external factors. The social environment has a tendency to affect motivation considerably, either increasing or

decreasing the willingness to participate. The social environment in sports is mainly constructed of peer athletes, in addition to the association in which the activity is fundamentally operated. The positive effect of the social environment in sports is the social cohesion and supportive atmosphere, suggesting an increase in the motivation as well as the better physical and mental health of an athlete. On the contrary, an unsupportive peer group and criticism have an effect of contributing to giving up the sport. (Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 50, 54.)

However, what has been considered to be essential for the athlete is recognizing the factors that are actually increasing the motivation to participate (Weinberg & Gould 2015, 52). The receiving of positive experiences from the performed sport strengthen the perception of an athlete's personal image, and increase the self-value in addition to the perception of one's own abilities. Usually the aforementioned factors are present when the athlete authentically enjoys performing the sport. (Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 49-50.) Thus, Forssell (2014, 198) argues that any external influencer does not motivate individuals completely to perform successfully in the long term.

The motivation of an athlete is constructed of two sources: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Either affect the participation and expectations of the individual according to the sport, in addition to managing the performance in different activities and situations. (Weinberg & Gould 2015, 134.)

### 3.2.1 Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation appears as an internal desire towards a certain activity. An individual is intrinsically motivated to perform in sports when the activity causes immediate joy and enthusiasm without expecting to receiving any rewards from it. (Forssell 2014, 201.)

Inner motivation arises by pursuing personal accomplishments defined for a performed activity: gaining knowledge, learning new skills, evolving to become better when performing is personally rewarding for an intrinsically motivated athlete. A perceived improvement in skills increases the satisfaction, in addition to driving the internal motivation and advancement of success in sport. (Weinberg & Gould 2015, 134.)

Regarding Liukkonen and Jaakkola (2012), an intrinsically motivated athlete has confidence when performing, and perceives one's own abilities to be competent to perform sufficiently. An athlete has sufficient self-valuation to recognize one's own abilities to construct and maintain social networks, in addition to the ability to understand one's own emotions together with the emotions of peers. An athlete is able to recognize one's own personal abilities, and possess intelligence to be successful in other areas in life. (251-252.) Weinberg and Gould (2015, 134) also suggest that an intrinsically motivated athlete has a high self-determination towards mastering the tasks.

To maintain long-term motivation in sports, it is necessary to sustain intrinsic motivation. Pro-level athletes with intrinsic motivation are able to better conquer possible setbacks, when the activity itself is desirable for the athletes. A willingness to try harder than their counterparts and a commitment to attend practicing sessions is more likely to be displayed by an intrinsically motivated athlete, than an athlete lacking the intrinsic motivation. (Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 54; Weinberg & Gould 2015, 135.)

### 3.2.2 Extrinsic motivation

An extrinsically motivated athlete is externally controlled by various factors, suggesting an increase in the motivation to perform successfully in sports (Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 51). Rewards are commonly received after competitions when either the outcome or the performance of the athlete are rewarded. Usually, when the athlete is only expected to be rewarded by the outcome, the athlete is extrinsically motivated. In some cases, external rewards motivate the athlete to perform better. Financial rewards, medals, and honors shared among the participants after competitions are regular for the athlete to contest for the highest placement in the final results. (Weinberg & Gould 2015, 134.)

When an athlete is motivated by external sources over a short period, motivation is perceived to have increased. Preparing for a competition by aiming to beat the opponents, in addition to receiving the honor for the highest place produce more motivation to perform in competitions. On the contrary, maintaining a long-term motivation



by engaging in activities for extrinsically reasons only, contributes to quitting the activity earlier. (Liukkonen & Jaakkola 2012, 51.)

It has been suggested that the role of extrinsic motivation negatively affects to intrinsic motivation. When motivation begins to come from more external sources, and the pleasure received from the performed sport is not the primary factor to motivate the individual, athletes tend to consider the core reasons for participation. (Forssell 2014, 201.) Although, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation together increase the amount of motivation in sports (Weinberg & Gould 2015, 136). Thus, it is essential for the athlete to recognize the factors that are motivating intrinsically and extrinsically and to what extent.

### 3.2.3 Gender differences in motivation

Gender differences have been investigated by Vora and Naik (2016), suggesting a higher motivation among males towards sports participation. The difference between male and female athletes is analyzed by comparing the support received from coaches, and presuming that the gender order among the society still appears in the sporting culture. Researchers suggest that male athletes tend to display the significance of external motivation in performing, whereas female athletes are motivated to perform successfully for internal reasons. (Vora & Naik 2016, 355.)

Motivational differences between male and female athletes are suggested to arise from the gender order of society. Acceptance from society appears for men for building promising careers in sports. On the contrary, women tend to be internally motivated towards winning, and it is suggested that women participate in certain sports as pro-level athletes just for the pleasure received. (Vora & Naik 2016, 357.) Hiilloskorpi et al. (2012) argue that the lack of economic resources invested in female athletes, in addition to the natural instinct to create a family and be mothers are decelerating the careers of females as professional athletes. (271-272.)

However, Vora and Naik (2016) suggests that women who participate in sport values the improvement in physical health within the personal joy towards the desired activity, which increases the motivation towards exercising the most (Vora & Naik 2016, 358). Also, Carless and Douglas (2010) argues that in addition to improving

physical well-being, women tend to participate in sports for social reasons as well. This relational orientation of females is connected to the instinct to put another's needs above their own. (Carless & Douglas 2010, 105.)

Despite the motivational factors between the genders, the sex of an athlete does not seem to have an effect when learning skills in sports. In addition to motivation, the amount of practicing and the quality of the practicing sessions have the highest role when performing in sports. This summarizes the insignificance of gender when gaining knowledge and learning skills. Thus, motivation is the core issue that matters. (Hiilloskorpi et al. 2012, 103-104.)

#### 3.2.4 Values and motivation

In addition to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, personal values of the individual also set the level of motivation. Various situations require the individual to opt from between alternatives, which usually occurs by selecting the option that complies with the values of the person. Thus, the personal values are assigned to assist the individual in operating in beneficial way when the choices are producing satisfaction. (Forssell 2014, 111.)

As for the athlete, it is usually challenging to recognize the core values that she/he personally agrees with. To identify the personal values through the journey of an athlete, making decisions in difficult situations are easy to observe and personal preferences are recognizable. Values are in a core position when constructing the athlete identity. (Forssell 2014, 111-112.)

### 3.3 FIA & Women in Motorsport Commission

Under the head of the governing body of motorsports (FIA) works an active commission established only for promoting females in motorsports. FIA Women in Motorsport commission (FWIM) was founded in 2009 to assist women to become globally involved in the motorsports field. The aim is not only to obtain new enthusiastic females to drive and compete, moreover to inspire and share excitement among women and encourage females to bravely pursue different careers in motorsports.

Besides driving, working in other areas in motorsports field are just as important cases to improve and enhance the women's participation in the future. (FIA Women in Motorsport, N.d.)

As the image of motorsports results in biased beliefs about the culture of the sport, it additionally affects the numbers of female participators. Thus, the commission strives to transform the old gendered ideologies which decelerate the participation of women in the sport. (FIA Women in Motorsport Seminar Booklet, 2016.) The aim of the commission is to prove that gender is not an obstacle to participating equally in auto racing culture, either in achieving success or even participating in the highest class of auto racing, Formula one.

In 2019, FIA Women in Motorsport Commission will operate globally with 32 members and 19 ASN countries. In addition, the commission designates national representatives globally to each partner country to improve the opportunities for females to participate in motorsports. The current number of national representatives is more than 70 (FIA Women in Motorsport, N.d.)

In 2016, the commission created a toolkit with ASN partner countries to implement between the years 2016-2020. The 8 recommendations assessed by the commission for each ASN countries are:

1. Deliver practical seminars for officials and volunteers
2. Identify role models and ambassadors
3. Develop local programmes highlighting opportunities
4. Develop young driver detection programmes
5. Network drivers & sponsors
6. Create social media platforms & communities
7. Provide examples of career opportunities
8. Promotional materials that reflect equal opportunities

(8 Recommendations Toolkit, 2016)

A previously executed project by FWIM, The Girls on Track involved the European countries organizing events to find talented and enthusiastic girls competing and building careers in motorsports. The free entry-event invited all 13-18-year-old girls to try karting, the one form of auto racing. (FIA The Girls on Track, N.d.) According to

the President of the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission, the aim of organizing the events globally enables the spread of awareness of the sport to young girls, "who might never have given motorsports a thought". (Getting the Girls on Track, 2018.)

The Girls on Track -events select the three fastest girls of each ASN country to compete at the finals in March 2019 at Le Mans, Paris. Two events were organized in Finland during summer 2018, and the three fastest drivers were selected at the end of autumn 2018. (FIA The Girls on Track, N.d.)

Together 300 girls participated and tried auto racing at the two events in Finland. It seems that free-access events for girls are needed for spreading the awareness about the possibilities of motorsports. (The Girls on Track Suomen joukkue on valittu – Legendaarinen Le Mans odottaa, 2018.)

### **Erasmus+ Programme**

The Girls on Track Karting Challenge is co-funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme. The program aims to support projects that are related to education, training, sport, and youth action around the Europe. Sporting projects are supported, aiming to achieve gender equality, increase the involvement of women, and eliminate possible negative causes that may restrict the women's participation in sports. (FIA The Girls on Track, N.d.)

## **4 Research design**

### **4.1 Qualitative study**

The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to examine Finnish female motorsports athletes, who participate in auto racing as a driver or co-driver. This study aims to investigate women, representing the minority in a masculine sport, in addition to examine the fulfillment of equal sporting culture among motorsports from the women's point of view. Moreover, the study aims to increase the consciousness of female motorsport athletes by investigating the reasons and motives behind participation.

The study utilizes the qualitative research approach, allowing one to observe the topic intensively to gaining an understanding of the phenomena by examining the

participants concerning the research problem. A qualitative approach is suitable for this research, because it explores motives, beliefs, views, and experiences of the participants giving broader perspectives to observe the problem from the respondents' point of view. (Kananen 2017, 33-34.)

Typical questions utilized in the qualitative study are what-, why-, and how, assisting in figuring out the respondents view of the phenomena (Kananen 2017, 62-63). Findings of the study are presented as non-numerical, which is another typical characteristic for a qualitative study. Thus, it explains the results by using a lot of adjectives, words, and sentences to describe the existence of the phenomenon. (Kananen 2017, 34; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

The study aims to find answers for following questions presented below:

1. What motivates women to participate in auto racing?
2. What kind of challenges women encounter in auto racing?
3. Does the equality meet the genders in auto racing?

The research is limited to only investigating the female auto racing athletes with a Finnish citizen, who obtained a license to compete during the research process. License owners were participating in motorsports as drivers or co-drivers in the season 2019. Each of the interviewees had at least seven-year experience of participation.

## 4.2 Data collection

A qualitative study has several methods for implementing the data collection. An interview is commonly used for collecting the primary data in the research process when the researcher manages the entire data collection for the study. (Kananen 2017, 88.)

Altogether five female motorsport athletes were chosen for the research to share information and experiences concerning the research problem. The participants were interviewed individually during March 2019 via a phone interview method. Some of the interviews were managed via WhatsApp, implementing the conversation by using voice messages with the interviewee. The arrangement of discussion opportunities was challenging with most of the participants, therefore none of the interviews

were face-to-face conversations. Interviews were conducted over a very short time, thus restricting the possibility of arranging a proper day for the interviewer and the interviewee.

Before the interview sessions, participants were contacted by phone and e-mail to offer short information about the background and the aims of the study. A suitable day for the interviews was under discussion too. Each of the participants was informed about the discussed themes beforehand, to accelerate the conversation with participants who had a limited time for the talk.

Anyhow, the purpose of this research concerned each participant, having the authentic volition to discuss their own experiences and motives to perform in motorsports. Despite the challenges of managing the face-to-face interviews with the participants, some of the interviewees arranged the time for the conversation even on evenings and weekends, enabling their own participation in the research. Interviews were also operated in Finnish, using the mother language of all the participants to ensure the understanding of the conversation and presented questions during the discussion. (Kananen 2017, 89). Interviews were translated into English afterward, and the results presented in this study in section 5.

### **Semi-structured interview**

In a qualitative research, an interview is an arduous method for collecting the data, thus it should be designed in such a way that it enables sufficient data to be collected as effectively as possible (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006). This study applied a semi-structured interview, because it was a suitable method to gather the required data by using pre-formulated themes (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 87-88).

The interview was constructed together with 5 different themes, operating as a guide, and leading the discussion from one theme to another, aiming to understand the core of the research problem (Kananen 2017, 95-96). Themes are used to assist the investigation of the reasons and motives to participate, images of female motor-sport athletes, and the equality issues concerning the sport. Also, ideas for increasing the participation of females in motorsport were under discussion too.

Because the interview as a method is based on interaction and discussion, it is impossible to foretell how the conversation will proceed. Each theme included some pre-formulated questions designed to lead the conversation in the right direction, however, the questions did not prevent new issues to come up during the discussions. (Kananen 2017, 96.) The base of the interview remained the same for all participants, but the order of the discussed topics varied depending of the process of discussion (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006). The form of the themes is attached at the end of this report (Appendix 1).

The main advantage of using the semi-structured interview method were flexible conversations with every participant. Each participant had individual experiences from the sport and an authentic desire to share them out. Interview sessions with participants were interesting and different themes took more time to undergo. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006.)

### 4.3 Validity and reliability

Scientific research requires evaluation in an appropriate way. Validity and reliability are two common abstracts to define scientific research, and how truthful the results of the study are. (Kananen 2017, 174-175.) Since these abstracts have origins for evaluating quantitative research, this qualitative study applies validity and reliability quite differently. In order to measure the truthfulness in this study, validity and reliability are based on the honesty of the investigator, in addition to detailed and careful reportage in different parts of the research. (ibid. 176, 178.)

#### **Validity**

There are certain aspects in a qualitative study, how the validity can be ensured before the research, and also after the research process is implemented.

Validity in qualitative research can be measured by examining:

- the group of interviewees
- the validity of the research questions
- the gathered results of the study

(Kananen 2017, 176.)

This research focuses on understanding the experiences of participants who know the most about the phenomena. If the group of interviewees is suitable to obtain sufficient data, and the study has relevant themes and assisting questions for solving the core of the research problem, the validity of the study is increased. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 163.)

In this research, validity is enhanced during different parts of the research process. All of the participants are chosen accurately and are relevant to produce appropriate data according to the research problem. Themes presented during the interview are derived from the primary research problem, complying the appropriate questions appointed for the qualitative study.

Also, the questions and discussed themes were presented as clear as possible for each of the interviewee before the interview session, and unclear questions were avoided. Participants received discussed topics and pre-formulated questions delivered by e-mail one week before the interview session. Some of the interviewee's had a limited time for the discussion, thus providing the questions beforehand for the participants assisted the flow of the conversation. After the interviews, notes gathered from the conversation were discussed with the participant to revise that all essential information is collected and valid. (Kananen 2017, 103.)

### **Reliability**

Reliability measures the constancy of the gathered results, if the study is repeated. Hence reliability is examined during the implementation of the research (Kananen 2017, 175-176). To measure the honesty during the data collection process, the investigator is required to operate as carrying out many interviews if necessary, to gain an understanding about the investigated phenomena, and solve the core of the research problem. To obtain an understanding of the phenomena, a qualitative study seeks similarities from the gathered results when comparing the answers and finding generalization. (ibid. 126.)

During the interview sessions, the conversations with each participant were recorded, which is a conventional method for ensuring and strengthening the reliability of the qualitative study. Documentation during the interview process provides the possibility for the investigation to be repeated, additionally it increases the reliability



of the research. (Kananen 2017, 178; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

## 5 Results

This chapter presents the gathered results from the interview sessions conducted with five female auto racing athletes. Displayed results are expressed distinctly, including direct citations from the replies of the interviewees to strengthen the expressions and views of the participants. The quotes are presented while keeping the participants' identities anonymous.

As previously mentioned, this study utilized the semi-structured interview method for collecting the data. The interview was constructed together with five different themes according to the research problem, investigating the reasons and motives behind participation. The discussed topics are reviewed one by one, discoursing with the thoughts of the participants.

The researcher aimed to choose the interviewees from several types of auto racing. Thus, each driver participating in this study perform a different sport, which enabled collecting experiences and viewpoints from various aspects of auto racing.

### 5.1 Involvement in motorsports

Each of the interviews began with a discussion about the **factors that influenced the participation** of women in motorsports at a certain age. Participants were also asked to mention the most significant influencers on their decision to choose motorsports. Based on the conversations, it appeared that participants were led into motorsport for various reasons and at different ages.

Most of the participants mentioned a parental influence on the sport from a very young age. The influence stemmed from the parents' desire towards motorsports. Usually the father represented the enthusiastic one, participating as a driver or having an interest in motorsports in general. Some of the participants did not mention the involvement of the mother as an influencer, or the mother did not show any interest towards the sport at all.

One of the participants described her involvement in the sport since childhood by assisting her father who participated in auto racing as a driver, although her participation in the sport took place years afterward. According to her, the inspiration for car racing was caused by a female co-driver in a national auto racing event.

*“there was a female co-driver in one of the FRC classes, I don’t even remember who – it was in some 2-wheel-drive cars – and then I thought that I want that too, dammit”*

Another interviewee described her enthusiasm in auto racing as being *“inherited from her parents”* since her birth. When describing her involvement in the sport, the father has been the most significant influencer in her career. According to her, being transferred from one competition to another during childhood it had been evident that she was going to be a race car driver too.

*“it’s always been a big part of my life, so I couldn’t be without it”*

One of the participants described the significance of motorsports as a family bonding activity in her childhood. Similarly, the father’s enthusiasm for motorsports was underlined. Additionally, the interest of the mother was mentioned as well.

*“--the best part however was the time spent together. It was our family thing, the way of spending summers and weekends and even some weekday evenings together”*

As most of the participants were influenced in the sport by their parenting, one of the interviewees became interested in motorsports together with her friends at the age of 7. Coming up with an idea to participate in auto racing at such a young age had the interest of her father as well, who assisted her with the issues relating to the car. According to her, the father has always been interested in *“sort of things”* related to motorsports. Thus, partly allowing the commencing of the sport.

*“Actually, we first went there to drive with the neighbour’s kids. And well, the next time we just had to bring dad along. And that’s how it all started”*

Additionally, she mentions the influence of her peer group, suggesting it to play a significant role in childhood when choosing an activity to perform. It was absolutely important to fit in with the group, in addition to participate in the same sports as one’s peers.

*"- and when I was little, all my friends were always boys, so that way I somehow accidentally ended up doing this"*

In comparison with others, one participant had developed her interest in auto racing later in life. After turning 18, the excitement towards cars encouraged her to purchase own one. Consequently, she attended various auto racing occasions to construct her network and to become acquainted with the car culture and other enthusiasts inside it. According to her, the most essential matter was her initiative to find things out by herself. Nevertheless, she emphasizes the importance of her father from the beginning of her driving career.

*"dad has really helped me a lot – he provided me with connections and was supportive in that way, which of course was really important to me in the early stages"*

## 5.2 Motivation in motorsports

One theme focused on examining the motives of women to perform in auto racing. Pre-formulated questions assisted in clarifying the factors that **increase the motivation** towards the sport, along with discussing possible reasons that are **decreasing the motivation** towards participation.

Based on the conversations, the most compelling reasons for performing were the authentic desire and enthusiasm for driving. Each of the interviewees emphasized passion as the essential thing to possess, describing it as a prerequisite for participating in auto racing.

*"Nothing gets my adrenalin going and gives me so much good vibes, as well as the feeling of self-confidence, as driving does"*

*"I think that the biggest motivation like comes from myself. Or like because I enjoy it, and I just wanna do more, more and more--"*

Several participants mentioned the development of personal knowledge, along with the individual skills as an athlete. Recognizing the functionality of the car on various occasions and becoming aware of the improved driving skills increased the motivation to strive for better performance.

*“- the most fascinating thing about it is feeding the brain and thoughts -- when you get to figure out stuff and solve problems”*

*“-you really have to challenge yourself – it’s a pretty thin line between success and failure”*

In addition to developing oneself as a driver, succeeding in competitions was assessed to be a fundamental part of the sport. According to the interviews, participants defined winning as a priority when performing, also perceiving it as the primary objective when competing.

*“I want to win. It’s like, I’m never going to settle for anything less. I set out to win every race that I’m in”*

*“-- being able to drive for victory is something I enjoy more than driving for the lesser positions. If I’m honest, that’s just the way it is”*

One of the interviewees described the motivation to participate, as long as the odds for winning a competition are higher than the probability of losing.

*“-- as long as I can drive for the win. It doesn’t mean that I have to win, but that’s how long I have the motivation to do this”*

Combining the personal knowledge with winning was perceived to increase the self-confidence and motivation to continue performing. In other words, the combination motivated participants to strive determinedly for better outcomes, compared to previous competitions.

*“ -- you know, it’s like you always get that kind of feeling from it that wow, that I really can improve—”*

Besides the factors that increased motivation to participate in the sport, interviewees were also asked to mention factors that **reduced their motivation** to participate.

Common factors that almost every participant mentioned as momentarily decreasing their motivation was the disappointments in competitions. Disappointments were mainly associated with the technical issues of the car, defined as unexpected and undesirable obstacles that are, however, part of the sport. Setbacks were usually

turned into assets, motivating participants to strive towards a better performance next time.

*“ – if it’s a bad drive then it’s a bad drive. – You can’t dwell on it, you have always just had to like pick yourself up, and it has been character-building”*

*“-if you think about the reason or cause for it, then straight off you have to think about what can be done, so that it won’t happen a second time“*

Besides the disappointments in competitions, some of the participants mentioned the perception of women in motorsports. According to the interviews, being labelled by their gender made it frustrating to participate sometimes, thus women desired to be seen as equal to men as athletes.

*“I have grown up into a setting where I’m one of the guys. Huge work has been done on track so that you could compete as an athlete among others, without any special labels, but you are constantly being labelled from the outside“*

Almost each of the participants had experienced a type of negativity from fellow competitors during the race weekends. Inappropriate treatment was displayed commonly by acting mean, mainly gossiping behind one’s back. One of the participants had even experienced negativity from the team members. However, interviewees suggested receiving the negative behaviour from both men and women.

*“- as a woman, out there on the track, you do face a lot of all sorts of jealousy – but on the other hand, you can also turn it into motivation“*

*“that if I had been a bit more weak-minded, I probably would have quit because of those comments-“*

As participants emphasized the significance of having the authentic desire for the sport, setbacks and obstacles were assessed as being easily conquered when the inner motivation to participate was at its highest. Performing successfully in auto racing was suggested as impossible, if the sport itself does not produce pleasure for the athlete.

*“even if I didn’t do so well, then on the other hand... I would still drive, that’s not the thing. Inner motivation is the driving force in all of this anyways“*

However, almost each of the participants had experienced disappointing, even miserable seasons by undergoing a diversity of negative emotions along with their journeys as athletes. Even though, the personal enjoyment, as well as the inner motivation, assisted participants in continuing practicing and turning the hardships into victories.

*“if you want to go through a brick wall, it can’t deter you – you had to come up with the means instead. When you’ve got 110 percent enthusiasm, you will find the way to do it”*

### 5.3 Women in motorsports

Another discussed topic constructed for solving the image of female auto racing athletes. As women are representing the minority group in motorsports, the question **“how are you perceived in auto racing culture?”** assisted participants in revealing personal thoughts regarding their experiences with the sport. Interviewees were also asked to bring up situations whether the **female gender has caused challenges when participating in auto racing.**

Each of the interviewees recognized the old ideology of female drivers in our society. Regarding that assumption, women are suggested to not operate cars as well as men. This assumption still exists in motorsport, and the preconceptions about female drivers are apparently ingrained inside the sport. The outdated thinking is anyhow, arising from the gender ideologies assessed to the sports by society rather than evolving solely from the sport itself.

*“-- It’s like that the assumption is that I can’t be as good as a male driver -- our whole society is under the impression that women are bad drivers”*

*“As a woman, sometimes you get to be just an athlete among others, sometimes you have a certain label -- some consider you as one of the guys, and some see red”*

In contrast to the assumptions about female drivers, interviewees suggested that performing successfully in competitions as a woman has been alarming for some of the male competitors. Especially, if the success was earned at the beginning of their driving careers.

*“-- there has been talk behind my back that if someone lost to me, he had then been moaning to other people. That a bitch came and beat me—”*

During the discussion it appeared that some of the participants had perceived their gender as an advantage in certain situations. They report that private organizations and stakeholders show a positive interest towards the female motorsport athletes with an aim of cooperation. Additionally, some of the interviewees assumed that they were approachable as persons compared to male counterparts.

*“ Usually, those coming from outside [the sport] have a positive feeling about me being a woman in motorsport”*

*“ -as a woman, I am after all a bit more approachable than the boys, so it’s really great that I can also be there as a role model for the junior drivers”*

Furthermore, a significant factor associated with the sport is the respect and reverence from others, which is considered as being deserved simply by succeeding constantly in competitions. Respect was regarded to be equally received, regardless of gender. Each of the participants agreed with this.

*“And if you want that you’re like respected in motorsport, then you really have to give it your all. There are the men next to you. But when you put that helmet on, it doesn’t matter one bit which one you are, only the results speak for themselves”*

Most of the participants similarly underlined the fact that being trustworthy as an athlete requires plenty of work, whether the athlete is male or woman.

*“ -- like in my opinion, no one gets respect for free, whether you are a man or a woman, or like the same goes for this sport or the working life. That you do have to earn it and really work for it”*

Furthermore, participants had an opportunity to discuss possible factors that could affect the low representation of women in auto racing. Each of the participants had various opinions, but also quite similar thoughts compared to others.

Most of the participants mentioned their parents influence, in addition to gender stereotyping among society, which still represents motorsports as a masculine activity. One of the participants emphasized the significance of parents allowing their children to grow out of gender roles.

*“In our family, kids have always been allowed to try and do everything they have wanted. That has not been influenced by any gender roles, so it does come from your home as well as from the natural gender differences”*

It was pondered that the possible preconceptions of young girls regarding motorsports restrict the involvement of women. The threshold for girls to participate in auto racing is higher than for boys. Women can be excluded from motorsports because they are unaware of opportunities for them to participate

*“people don’t really know what it is and are like ‘oh, girls can have it as a hobby too?’, as unfortunately there still are those assumptions that racing and motorsport are pretty much a male thing--”*

Moreover, some of the participants underlined their personalities as being suitable for the masculine sport. Having the ability to tolerate joking eases the process of fitting into this environment.

*“I don’t have to think about if something went well or badly, as I will be told that straight to my face, but some people might get frightened by it”*

#### 5.4 Values and equality issues in motorsports

One of the discussed topics constructed to examine the **values that are represented in the auto racing culture**. Participants were also asked to consider the personal values towards the sport, in addition to **discussing the equality between male and female auto racing athletes**. Discussion regarding values turned out to be more difficult than expected.

Values that participants considered to be important were cooperation, trust between the team and the driver, and honesty in competitions. Also, the involvement of the family was underlined by some of the participants. One of the important values, such as honesty, was suggested to be unreachable in the sport.



*“family is the most important thing” – if this wouldn’t have been possible for the family, I don’t think that I would have been driving”*

When discussing the equality issues in auto racing, one interesting topic related to the media visibility of female auto racing athletes. Some of the participants suggested that the visibility of female athletes remained slight compared to male athletes in both printed and digital media. Moreover, the images of women in car-related magazines do not portray them as equal to their male counterparts.

*“men are always portrayed as kings of this sport and they are the real archetypes of racing drivers—”*

It was suggested that the biased images of females in car-related media are restricting the young girls’ opportunities to participate in the sport without preconceptions.

*“Finland’s biggest motorsport organizations produce this kind of material, they are creating this image that men are racing drivers, - I think it’s really sad”*

In general, the questions of equality in auto racing divided the participants in groups. Some of the interviewees had come across full equality between male and female athletes, whereas some of the participants had experienced strong inequality.

*“- some feel that they [men and women] are on an equal footing and give [women] a chance, and some see it clearly as a problem. And then you experience all these challenges”*

However, the small number of female participants in auto racing was recognized by almost every participant. It was suggested that women are facing fewer opportunities simply because the percentage of female participants is lower compared to men.

*“if there really is a female driver who’s doing well out there in the mix, then I do feel that she really is on an equal footing with the others – but then again, the fact is that the female percentage is so much lower”*

Despite the fact that the equality issues divided opinions among the interviewees, each of the participants perceived motorsport to be equal for the genders regarding the rules assessed for the sport.

*“In that sense, motorsport has a great chance to prove something. That when you put the helmet on, it doesn’t matter if you’re a man or a woman. That it’s just an individual against another individual, that it’s equal”*

## 5.5 Promoting women in motorsports

The last topic under discussion focused on observing the existing actions of **how women are encouraged to participate in motorsports in Finland**. The discussions allowed interviewees to consider suggestions for increasing female participation in motorsports in the future. Significant observations appeared when interviewees were asked to mention how female involvement is already promoted in Finland.

Each of the interviewees mentioned the recently launched The Girls on Track -event, executed by the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission. Participants assumed that promoting the participation of women have eventually become the consciousness of people.

According to the interviewees, The Girls on Track -program was suggested to be the first significant step towards increasing the female participation in auto racing. Interviewees agreed on the advantages of the event, which assisted girls to participate at the grassroots level. Also, during the discussions it emerged that, before the program, previous projects for promoting the involvement of women did not exist in Finland.

Almost all of the interviewees recognized the Women’s Working Group in AKK Motorsport, the objective of which is to promote women’s involvement in the Finnish motorsports field. Only one interviewee was able to mention an event organized by the Women’s Commission at the national level.

Another question assisted participants in giving opinions regarding the **necessity to improve the participation of females**. Each of the interviewees agreed with the need for enhancing, in addition to increasing the women’s involvement in auto racing.

Directly afterwards, participants had an opportunity to **consider suggestions for increasing the involvement of women**. Each of the interviewees had at least one recommendation. The most important was to organize easy access events for women at the national level.

Sports associations and clubs promoting motorsports were placed in an essential position for offering girls a chance to try auto racing. Associations promoting motorsports should emphasize the equal involvement of the genders, especially when promoting the sport in schools for the youth.

*“--there too, it should just be stated more boldly that this seriously isn't just a boy thing. Bring up the fact that there are like a lot of girls, female drivers too”*

*“like so that a person who's doing this sport could go and talk about themselves, about how they have been doing, and maybe dispel those possible prejudices a little bit”*

Another recommendation was the co-operation between motorsport organizations and educational institutions. Promoting auto racing as an alternative form of sports class would offer easy access to the sport. Interviewees suggested that even one trial could inspire the youth to be enthusiastic about the sport.

*“Maybe have like some trial days for girls, because for some of the girls it can be a pretty big hurdle to just come over and join the boys”*

Each of the participants admitted that motorsports as an activity, unfortunately, requires financial resources and plenty of support, along with knowledge of parents about the mechanical issues relating to cars. This was mentioned as a cause that can deter the involvement of both genders.

*“It's so extremely hard to really take up this sport as a hobby through someone else than your own parents and family”*

The final question sustained the thinking of futuristic ideas regarding motorsports. Participants had an opportunity to consider a motorsport culture where more females are involved and participating in different fields among the sport.

*“-- we could like really show that ‘Hey we women can drive too. And we are just as good as men’. Because right now, when there are so few of us, we are just somehow lost in there among the men, you know.”*

*“—if there were more women competing, then it could probably start to interest women more too as a sport”*

Participants agreed that increasing the number of female decision makers in motorsports could be an opportunity to increase the equality in the sport even more in the future.

*“it would surely bring some different perspective into it, as my path to success still hasn’t been the same as the boys’ path”*

For most of the interviewees, retaining the possibility for men and women to compete side by side was a necessary arrangement to sustain in auto racing, as it was the core idea of the whole sport. Participants were aware of their own ability to be as competent with male counterparts.

*“ -- I think it’s really cool, when you don’t separate the women and the men. For me, that’s one of the best things.”*

## **6 Conclusions**

As sports have enhanced the gender continuum by defining appropriate activities for men and women, it has simultaneously designated the gender order among society (Pfister & Hartmann-Tews 2005). This research focused on investigating women in auto racing, whose participation generates colourful opinions in society, but the sport itself allows men and women to compete on an equal footing. Despite the fact that auto racing enables equal gender involvement, women have been conspicuously absent compared to men.

According to the results, participants suggested that motorsports are still seen as a highly masculine activity. Additionally, the main equipment required in auto racing happens to be a car, combined to the common assumption that “women are bad

drivers'' is arising from the society, already has an existing conflict for women in the sport. This assumption, combined with a lack of visibility of female race car drivers in the media, challenges women to get involved in the masculine environment in several ways.

The low representation of women in motorsports was suggested to arise from gender socialization. Society follows the old habit of presenting dresses and dolls for girls, while boys are introduced to cars and aggressive activities. Participants who were introduced to motorsports solely by their parents had grown up outside of society's stereotypical gender categories. Thus, the decision to conform to societal ideas and stereotyping genders since birth is primarily parental, but also under the authority of educational institutions. (Hargreaves 1994; Almy & Sanatullova-Allison 2016.)

Not only socialization process influences the appropriate activities for genders. In fact, interviewees suggested that girls are unaware of motorsports as a hobby, since the sport has had its basis in male experiences. It seems that the involvement of women in auto racing is not expressed boldly in the society.

As Hiilloskorpi et al. (2012, 259) underlines the significance of role models to be represented for youth in sports, women race car athletes are somehow hidden from the sights of girls. Moreover, the face of motorsports sees only the features of men, especially in the media, where the representation of female athletes is inadequate. As the participants discussed, media only displays motorsports as an appropriate sport for men, simply because the percentage of women as drivers and co-drivers is lower. Women are additionally often represented through their physical appearance and beauty in car-related magazines, which creates biased images of women in the motorsports culture.

As has been mentioned above, the women's participation in so-called "unfeminine" activities is still doubted by some. Women are reorganizing the traditional gender order by taking part in the sport, creating alternative ways of thinking that women are capable of driving for wins against male counterparts. The battle against the gender stereotypes about female drivers forces women to perform successfully in each competition, when the sport and society reminds them of their role in a masculine area. (Herrala 2018, 61-63)

With reference to the results, the sport itself might decelerate the involvement of women, partly because the gender distribution is still significantly unequal for the reasons mentioned above. In other words, motorsport has been a men's world to a large extent, which is why motorsports associations are unaware of girls' interest to participate. ("Sopivia" tyttöjä – "oikeita" poikia 2011, 14-15.)

Despite the fact that women encounter challenges when representing the minority in the auto racing culture, participants had the inner desire and enjoyment for the sport. Developing personal knowledge about their driving habits was related to increased self-confidence as an athlete, which was the most essential attribute when striving for success in competitions.

Vora and Naik (2016) suggested that women are intrinsically motivated towards winning in competitions. Several interviewees defined victory as the primary target when competing, utilizing it as proof that women are as competent as men to drive for a win. Success was considered to be important for women in order to overcome the prejudices about female race car drivers, in addition to inspiring young girls to get involved in motorsports in the future.

Nevertheless, auto racing as a sport has equality at its base, since it allows men and women to compete side-by-side. It simultaneously addresses that gender is not relevant when participating. It was underlined by the interviewees that auto racing is a forerunner in an equal sports culture, since the sport does not question women's physical ability to participate. According to the interviews, it was necessary to retain the possibility for the genders to compete on an equal footing. Women desired to be the best auto racing athletes without the particular label of being female among all the male competitors.

## 6.1 Other findings and remarks

Regarding the objectives of the thesis, the study aimed to gain a better understanding of female auto racing athletes in Finland by investigating the motives, challenges, and equality issues from the participants' point of view. Earlier studies relating to the topic did not exist, hence this research offers concrete ideas for motorsport associations to improve their sports policy in the future.

As mentioned earlier, this issue concerned each of the participants and still lacks recognition in the auto racing culture. According to the interviews, the limited number of female drivers or co-drivers should be taken as a concern, especially for national associations that are promoting motorsports in Finland. It was discovered that the sport emphasizes the equal involvement of genders, but simultaneously, the low number of women confuses the assessment of equality.

As the Commission of Women in FIA has determinately sought results on working towards an equal motorsports culture, it also proves, through its accomplishments, that women are holding an interest to become involved in the auto racing environment. Through their various projects, the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission has reached talented girls who had expressed their enthusiasm for motorsports, but usually are lacking opportunities to take part in at the grassroots level. The organization of an easy access event for girls attracted an unexpected interest in individuals who had never given a thought to motorsports. (The Girls on Track, N.d.)

Considering the validity and reliability after the investigation, the number of the participants enabled one to collect adequate data to find answers for the main research questions. Additionally, the qualitative approach was appropriate for the study, since the women's experiences were the main objective to explore. (Kananen 2017.) One of the main difficulties of the study related to the question that examined the values of the sport, which turned out to be unclear for most of the interviewees. Some of the participants did not recognize the values of the sport at all. Even though the primary objective of the study was to increase the consciousness of women in a male-dominant sport, values were not placed in an important position to clarify to.

In summary, the study offers resources for auto racing associations to contribute to the women's involvement in the sport in the future. To improve the participation of women, the preconceptions about the male-centric sport, along with the stereotypes of women drivers, should be removed from the auto racing culture. In order to achieve full equality at the national level, the Women's Commission in Finland is in charge of creating concrete ways of contributing to the involvement of girls and women in Finnish motorsports.

## 6.2 Recommendations for future research

Since the topic has less existing studies available, further investigation is definitely needed from the field. When considering the overall motorsport field along with the number of women working in other sectors among the sport could be taken under investigation in the future. Similar research questions can be utilized to clarify the reasons behind the involvement.

As the theory section emphasised the power of the educational institutions for socializing the genders in specific roles, another exciting research opportunity could be on investigating the children of different ages. For example, to examine children's personal beliefs about motorsports, in addition to the assumptions about different sports in general could be interesting to investigate in the future.

As the interviewees suggested in this research, organizing easily available events for girls can indeed, increase the awareness about motorsports in general. One research suggestion relates to investigating the implementation process of those events. For example, surveys could be created for the participants who are involved in the event to examine the core reasons behind participating.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview questions form

#### 1. Background information

Name

Age

Type of auto racing

#### 2. Involvement in motorsports

When you started performing in auto racing?

What factors influenced you in auto racing?

What other forms of auto racing you have experienced?

#### 3. Motivation in motorsports

Why are you performing in auto racing?

What factors are increasing the motivation to perform?

What factors are decreasing the motivation to perform?

#### 4. Women in motorsports

How are you perceived in the auto racing culture?

Are you competing side-by-side with men? If yes, how do you see it?

Have you experienced challenges in your career your gender has affected?

What factors might affect the low number of female participators in auto racing?

#### 5. Values and equality issues in motorsports

What kind of values auto racing represents?

Do you think auto racing is equal for both genders?

Are male and female motorsport drivers perceived as equal athletes?

#### 6. Promoting women in motorsport

How the participation of women in auto racing is promoted in Finland?

Should auto racing organisations increase the promotion of women in Finland?

What are the possibilities for auto racing, when more women are involved in the sport?