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1

Introduction

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The Olympic Games are among the major sporting events in the contemporary world. Olympic broadcasts and news media, accordingly, are followed by large audiences, which place sport momentarily at the centre of world's attention (Puijk, 2000). To highlight the visibility of the Olympics, Segrave (2000) points out that the total broadcast audience, including global newspaper readership, for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta 'has been estimated at close to two billion, almost half of the world's population' (p. 268). It is also evident that while the Olympics are a global event, they can be represented in multiple ways to multiple audiences around the world depending on the different cultural contexts (e.g. Puijk, 2000). With such an expansive scope, the Olympic Games have become a part of a large commercial media complex which offers a global platform to showcase the achievements of athletes. In addition, the media are now a significant part of the politics around the Games. The media industry can now participate in the exclusion and inclusion of different sports; the scheduling of Olympic events according to the market requirements of large television companies or providing an advertising platform for large multinational companies sponsoring the Games (e.g. Lenskyj, 2000; 2002; 2008; Maguire, Butler, Barnard and Golding, 2008; Slater, 1998; Tomlinson, 2005). Televising the Olympics, in particular, has directed large investments to the Olympic Games governing body through the sale of televising rights and advertising space/time (e.g. Bernstein, 2000; Billings, 2008). While broadcasting has arguably shaped the mode of Olympic representation, newspapers still act as an important site for the representation of the Games. While newspapers have less financial power than television, they still reach large audiences interested in the Olympics and can play a significant role in

shaping public opinion of Olympic sports (Lenskyj, 2000; 2002). For example, in her critical analysis of the role of the newspaper media in the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Lenskyj (2002) demonstrates how reporting both 'boosts' and 'critiques' the event. Bernstein (2000) adds that newspaper coverage tends to provide a 'local' (or, as she defines it, 'national') reading of the athletes in a global event. The newspaper coverage, however, also reflects a 'shared professional culture' of reporting (p. 367). It is, therefore, pertinent to analyse how newspaper coverage depicts Olympic athletes in their local, national context, but also provide comparison points regarding the commonalities between the news media in different countries.¹ In this book, we focus specifically on how women athletes are represented 'locally' in newspapers in Europe, North America, Asia and New Zealand, but also how these local reports provide a 'global' reading of the differences and similarities between different nations, their coverage of the Olympics and their representation of women athletes.

Women's participation in the Olympic Games has steadily increased, partly as a result of national Olympic committees sending more women athletes to the Games, but also because of the increased number of sports open to women in the Olympic Games. To locate our project within the existing research regarding women athletes in the Olympic media, I first review previous findings from quantitative, content media analyses of women's sport to demonstrate the need for further feminist perspectives in media analyses of women Olympians. This chapter aims, thus, to give an overview of the different feminist approaches to researching sportswomen's representation in the media. In addition, I aim to highlight how this book complements or expands on these theoretical assumptions.

Liberal feminist readings: equal media coverage for women Olympians

There is a substantial literature detailing the amount of coverage women receive in the sport media. In general, the results demonstrate that women are greatly underrepresented (e.g. Alexander, 1994; Bernstein, 2002; Bruce, Hovden and Markula, in press; Capranica and Aversa, 2002; Capranica et al., 2005; Duncan and Messner, 1998; Kane and Greendorfer, 1994; King, 2007; Lee, 1992; Pedersen, 2002). While the results differ depending on the cultural context, women generally receive less than 10 per cent of sport coverage in both newspapers and TV. While the coverage for women's sport remains low in comparison

to men, it does tend to increase during major international events like the Olympic Games (e.g. Bernstein, 2002; Billings and Eastman, 2002; Lee, 1992; Tuggle and Owen, 1999; Urquhart and Crossman, 1999). For example, while there are significant variations among different countries, women's representation in North American and European newspapers comprises well over 20 per cent of the Olympic coverage (Bruce et al., in press; Capranica et al., 2005; Kinnick, 1998; Shields et al., 2004; Vincent et al., 2002). A recent study of the Athens Olympic Games reported over 30 per cent coverage for women Olympians in China and Japan, and 16 per cent in South Korea (Bruce et al., in press). In addition, while women's overall coverage is lower than men's, women tend to be represented relative to their participation to the Games or national Olympic teams (Bruce et al., in press). Women's increased coverage appears to pave the way towards gender equality during newspaper reporting of the Games. This development, some researchers conclude, is the positive result of several factors.

Women's increased media visibility demonstrates that some of the gender equality policies initiated by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have taken effect. For example, Capranica et al. (2005) argue that these initiatives have increased not only women's participation but also the number of women's events in the Games and thus have enabled growing acceptance of women's sport in general. In addition, the increased visibility of women's sport in the Olympic movement has created a better market for women's mediated sport. Some researchers point out that at international-level competitions other factors than gender might create media visibility. For example, several studies demonstrate that women who are expected to win medals receive more attention in the media and successful athletes, regardless of their gender, are the focus of media interest (Wensing and Bruce 2003). In this sense, national identity overrides the athlete's gender. Consequently, women's increased Olympic success in a variety of sporting events has resulted in greater media coverage. While these are positive developments, most researchers are only cautiously optimistic about gender equality in sport media representation and question whether mere increase in the amount of coverage results in better representation of women's sports.

Some researchers warn that focusing on 'raw' numbers might provide a too encouraging picture of the equality of women's Olympic media representation. For example, North American data (e.g. Lee, 1992; Shields et al., 2004; Vincent et al., 2002) demonstrate that newspapers tend to focus on sports that are traditionally stereotyped as 'feminine',

such as gymnastics, diving, swimming and figure skating. Shields et al. (2004) conclude that '[f]or women and women's Olympic sports/events, unless a "gold medal" was at stake, the coverage of less "feminine" sports/events was at best thin' (p. 94). Consequently, such a media message promotes an acceptance of sportswomen, as long as they participate in appropriately feminine sports, that is those that do not require strength, power or contact. Moreover, several researchers are concerned about the quality of the Olympic coverage. For example, the descriptors of women athletes tend to focus on appearance rather than skill (e.g. Bernstein, 2002; Capranica and Aversa, 2002; Eastman and Billings, 1999). According to Bernstein (2002), such representation 'continues to send a message that sport is in essence a male activity, in which women play only a subordinate and/or sexualized role' (p. 426). She asks: 'If more media coverage means more sexualized images is more necessarily better? Or is more even worse?' (p. 426). Does reporting that trivialises and sexualises women athletes, these researchers ask, promote women's sport in a positive light? Other researchers have questioned whether research that focuses on promoting an equal amount of media coverage for women and men also plays a part in perpetuating poor quality in favour of quantity in women's sport coverage.

Quantitative content analyses of sportswomen's media representation are grounded in liberal feminist ideals of equal access and equal opportunity in sport (e.g. Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Pirinen, 1997): an equal amount of media coverage will reflect general equality between men and women in sport.² Much of Olympic gender equality policies are based on a similar assumption that equality of representation will resolve any issues regarding gender discrimination. Creating equal access and equal opportunity to sport is also among the most tangible points of action for decisions-makers at the higher levels of international sporting organisations. However, feminist critics of liberal feminist research and policy-making argue that campaigning for equal opportunity alone does not end gender discrimination because they do not question the hegemonic values that structure competitive sport. According to these critics, all women entering sport will face marginalisation unless the underlying structure that favours male sport changes. For example, even if there is greater coverage of sportswomen, they are marginalised in other, more subtle ways in a male-dominated system. Bernstein's (2002) concern with the sexualisation of women's sports coverage is one example of such a subtle way of discrimination. In line with Bernstein, many of the contributors in this book participated in a large international content analysis which tracked women's Olympic

coverage in newspapers during the Athens Olympic Games in 2004 (Bruce et al., in press). While we were able to detect increased coverage of women's sports during the Olympics and present it in an easy-to-read numerical form, this analysis did not tell us much about how women athletes were actually represented. We noted that much of the coverage tended to focus on a few 'star' athletes, but we were unable to trace how and why some of these athletes appeared in the coverage. Did the increased coverage reinforce women's discrimination in a male-dominated sport system? To bring about lasting change in the media representation of sportswomen, we needed different feminist tools from the ones that simply advocate more media coverage.

I now turn to feminist research concerned with how structural constraints continue to marginalise, trivialise and sexualise women's sport media representation despite the increased visibility of women in the Olympic media. For further discussion of liberal feminism in sport studies, see chapter 5.

Critical analysis: ideological construction of male hegemony in sport media

There has been a recent surge of qualitative, textual analyses of women's sport in sport studies. While these studies approach sport media from a variety of theoretical perspectives, much of this research detects how sport is ideologically constructed as a male hegemony and how women's media coverage is formed within this structure.

A significant proportion of feminist sport media research is inspired by a Gramscian notion of how systematic relations of dominance are maintained in society, not through force, but through mutual consent by dominant and marginalised groups. This type of dominance appeals to common sense and the natural order of things, and tends to be accepted also by the subordinate groups. The concept of hegemony refers to dominance through ideological control. Ideology refers to 'a set of ideas that serve the interests of dominant groups but come to be understood and taken up as the societal common sense about the way things naturally are and thus should remain' (Theberge and Birrell, 1994, p. 327). From this viewpoint, sport is considered as a male-dominated or patriarchal system where women's oppression is maintained through the ideology of masculinity which reinforces men's natural superiority over women: while women now have increased access to sport, the ideology of masculinity works in more subtle ways to exclude them. For example, sport preserves male dominance by marginalising, trivialising and sexualising women

athletes by ideological means. Media representation plays an important role in constructing the ideological meanings of femininity in sport.

Birrell and Theberge (1994) argue that sport media reinforces the image of women as physically inferior to men, and thus works ideologically to construct male hegemony. One way to identify women as the 'weaker sex' is to structure women's sport as a discrete category of men's sport (e.g. Kane, 1995). Birrell and Theberge (1994, p. 346) posit that

the artificial separation of the sport world into two separate spheres delineated by sex clearly marks gender difference as significant and worth maintaining. Consequently, sex difference is constructed as a logical and necessary part of our cultural world.

In addition, women's sport is considered to be not only separate, but also inferior to men's sport (Lee, 1992; Pirinen, 1997).

In practice, this leads to the structural marginalisation of women's sport, something that is also evident in media representation. As demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, women's sport is generally underrepresented in the media, and while women receive increased coverage during the major events like the Olympic Games, women's sport remains vastly underrepresented in general sport media coverage. Feminist sport scholars argue that women's sport is 'symbolically annihilated': the media give the impression that women's sport does not matter or does not even exist. For example, Duncan and Messner (1998) showed that televised sport in the US was systematically constructed to marginalise women's sport by providing significantly less coverage of women's sport and, when it was aired, its technical quality was much poorer than men's sport (see also Messner, Duncan and Cooky, 2003). Such marginalisation is an important indication of how the ideology of masculinity operates through sport media. Therefore, the structural, ideologically-based marginalisation cannot be 'fixed' by merely increasing women's sport participation. In addition to marginalisation, women's sport is ideologically controlled by trivialising women's performances.

Trivialisation refers to the belittling of women's sport achievements. Messner, Duncan and Cooky (2003) demonstrate a form of trivialisation of women's sport in the televised coverage in the US, where a considerable proportion of women's sport coverage is devoted to humorous feature stories of non-serious women's sport. In addition, women athletes can be 'infantilised' by referring to them by their first names (male athletes are typically referred by their surnames), by calling them 'girls',

or by prefixing women's teams with the term 'Lady' and thus establishing men's teams as the 'false generic'. Sport media that focus on women's personal lives, appearance and attractiveness trivialise women's athletic prowess, their ability to compete, and their strength, speed and tactical ability as sportswomen (e.g. Birrell and Theberge, 1994; Duncan and Messner, 1998; Stone and Horne, 2008). Duncan and Messner (1998) identify how differences between the ways that men's and women's sports are reported on US television trivialise women's performances: whereas the commentators focused on male athletes' strengths, women's weaknesses, emotionality or failures were discussed. Similarly, sport media that, instead of sport, write about the athletes' traditional gender roles as daughters, girlfriends, wives or mothers emphasise the differences between men and women and belittle women's athletic skill. Dallario (1994) observed that even women who competed in Winter Olympic sports that defied stereotypical notions of femininity, such as the biathlon, luge and alpine skiing, were described in the media through condescending descriptors and compensatory rhetoric, as 'adolescents' driven by cooperation rather than competition. Such representation, Dallario concluded, 'reinforced a masculine sports hegemony through strategies of marginalization' (p. 275). Pirinen (1997) summarises that in the trivialisation/marginalisation discourse, gender relations are constructed as hierarchical power relations. This means that women in sports are often portrayed as 'less than' and 'other than' their male counterparts by giving women's sports scant coverage and by framing women's achievements as inferior to men's with sarcastic comments on successful performances and by sexually objectifying women athletes. In this book Wu (chapter 4) demonstrates how Chinese female athletes are belittled by the media which prefer to emphasise their personal relationships and appearance rather than their athletic skills. Such a portrayal further reproduces the masculine hegemony of sport (e.g. Pirinen, 1997). Pirinen draws attention to sportswomen's sexual objectification in the media. This trend has been further evidenced by several feminist researchers.

Birrell and Theberge (1994) point out that often women's physicality is portrayed differently from men's. Women athletes are often depicted in a sexualised manner that has nothing to do with their sport performance. Such portrayals emphasise how women athletes look, instead of what they do (Hall, 1996). This supports the ideology of masculinity and its definition of women as passive objects of the male gaze (to be looked at). One of the seminal feminist qualitative studies of women's sexualisation in the Olympic media is Duncan's

(1990) study of sport photographs from the 1988 summer and winter Olympic Games as well as the 1984 summer Olympic Games. After analysing pictures from the US magazines *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *MS*. and *Macleans* during the Olympics, Duncan found that sport photographs tended to emphasise stereotypical sexual difference between female and male athletes by focusing on female athletes' physical appearance, by depicting sportswomen in poses that resembled soft-core pornography, by placing women in submissive poses and by displaying women as above all emotional. These differences sexualised the sportswomen and downplayed their abilities as athletes. According to Duncan, sport photography constructed an ideological terrain that legitimated patriarchal relations. She concluded: 'Focusing on female difference is a political strategy that places women in a position of weakness. Sport photographs that emphasize the otherness of women enable patriarchal ends' (p. 40). Elling and Luijt (chapter 7 below), who ground their methodology on Duncan's study, examine Dutch photographic coverage during the Athens Olympics to find similar sexualisation of the Dutch swimmer Inge de Bruijn. Following Duncan, they conclude that the sexualisation of female athletes contributes to women's oppression in western societies. Messner, Duncan and Cooky (2003) note an additional tendency to indulge in humorous sexual objectification of women athletes on US television (see also Duncan and Messner, 1998), a trend generally absent in men's sport reporting.

In addition to the sexualisation of athletes' sport performances, feminist researchers point to the tendency of the sport media to employ sexualised images of non-sporting women or sportswomen outside of sport contests (e.g. Duncan and Messner, 1998; Messner, Duncan and Cooky, 2003). Davis (1997), for example, draws attention to highly sexualised images of women in the *Sports Illustrated* 'Swimsuit' issue and Lenskyj (1998) analyses how one Australian sport magazine, *Inside Sport*, exploited women through sexualisation. The marketability of such images has also evolved into the phenomenon of so-called 'naked calendars', which are produced (often by sportswomen themselves) to raise funds for women's sport (see also Lenskyj, 2008). Thus, Mikosza and Phillips (1999) examined the second 'Golden Girls Calendar', launched by the Australian heptathlete Jane Flemming in 1996, and drew several parallels to the *Sports Illustrated* 'Swimsuit' issue. The calendar used 'the traditional form of the "girlie" calendar' in its portrayal of 13 Australian women from 11 Olympic sports. The focus is on large colour images of these

athletes 'modeling in skimpy or transparent swimsuits, underwear and evening gowns' (p. 7). The researchers characterise these pictures as "soft-porn", with codes such as long styled hair, cosmetics and poses connoting the sexualized female' (p. 8). This portrayal invites the viewer to see each athlete as a sexual object and thus produces a femininity 'which views women as sexually active and available' (p. 8). In addition, the women depicted in the calendar all display the characteristics of 'traditional femininity': white, lean, toned, with long hair and wearing make-up. The 'Golden Girls' portrayal, then, reproduces femininity as defined by the ideology of masculinity. The researchers acknowledge, however, that the proponents of the sexualised images of feminine athletes proclaim that this is a way to get publicity and raise the profiles of women athletes who otherwise have been unable to obtain funding or access to media outlets. The sexy, feminine image has also been advantageous to certain female athletes, such as the tennis player Anna Kournikova, who have attracted media attention and consequently lucrative sponsorship thanks to their looks rather than their performance (e.g. Bernstein, 2002; Harris and Clayton, 2002).

According to Bernstein (2002), the media attention, particularly photographic coverage, devoted to the blonde Kournikova clearly demonstrates how looks and image are ranked above athletic skill in women's sport. Harris and Clayton (2002) add that the hegemonic construction of femininity is the only way to explain the media attention devoted to a relatively unsuccessful tennis player like Kournikova, who epitomises the sexualisation of the female body through her participation in photo shoots entirely unconnected to tennis. The positive emphasis on Kournikova's sexuality, the authors argue, transmits sexualised, heterosexual femininity as the acceptable athletic identity of women.

Feminist sport research demonstrates that the media prefer to construct sportswomen as heterosexually attractive. As Creedon (1998) succinctly observes: 'homosexuality doesn't sell' (p. 96) in the sport media, which want to frame their coverage to a heterosexual male audience (Duncan and Messner, 1998). This audience is expected to prefer 'little girls and sweethearts' (such as tennis players or gymnasts), heroines that overcome pain or other setbacks to succeed, or scandalised athletes such as the figure skaters Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan, whose rivalry was eagerly reported and analysed (see e.g. Baughman, 1995) or the sprinter Marion Jones whose involvement with drugs was reported globally (see also Creedon,

1998). In this media climate, a lesbian athlete is either invisible or seen as a 'problem'. Kane and Lenskyj (1998) argue that a 'lesbian presence in sport is threatening because it challenges male hegemony by upsetting existing power structures based on gender and sexuality' (p. 189). Sport media react to this threat by emphasising female athletes' heterosexual roles and 'conventional femininity', or not covering women in so-called 'male sports' because, it is commonly believed, women must be masculine to be able to perform well in these sports and thus lesbian. Kane and Lenskyj label this strategy the 'erasure' of women in ice-hockey, softball and rugby (see also Wright and Clarke, 1999). In addition, sport media 'neutralises lesbian existence by severely underrepresenting images and narratives that reflect women's physical and emotional bonds' (Kane and Lenskyj, 1998, pp. 193–4). These erasure tactics serve to maintain the images of female athletes as firmly heterosexual and 'create a female sport culture in which traditional notions of heterosexuality are rigidly enforced' (p. 200).

Wensing and Bruce (2003) provide an apt summary of the framing techniques used by the media to promote appropriate femininity. First, the media use gender marking, by identifying an event as a women's event, to *marginalise* women's sport. Second, women's sport is *trivialised* by infantilising women athletes (by using terms like 'girls') and emphasising non-sport-related aspects, such as appearance, family relationships and personal life, that detract attention from women's sport achievement. Third, sportswomen are framed by 'compulsory heterosexuality': they are portrayed as the mothers/wives/girlfriends of men to ensure that women's sport is not a serious threat to men's sport and thus is of lesser importance. Finally, sportswomen are *sexualised* by focusing on 'traditional feminine' physical and emotional characteristics, thus emphasising their 'appropriate femininity'. All these journalistic techniques work to reinforce male sport as 'the pinnacle of sporting value and achievement' and thus help to construct sport as a male domain (p. 387). Although these framing devices effectively support the ideology of masculinity, Wensing and Bruce also point to increasingly positive descriptions and images of women athletes that introduce more ambivalence to the sport media representation. For example, they argue, the media tend to 'accommodate' successful, nationally important sportswomen during major sport events. Other factors that, in addition to gender, intersect with the ideological construction of women athletes in the media have been considered by feminist sport researchers.

Reading the 'power lines': intersectionality and women's sport media representation

To emphasise further the complexity of cultural and social life (Theberge and Birrell, 1994), feminist sport researchers are increasingly conceiving gender relationally to other social forces. Birrell and McDonald (2000) argue that a singular focus on gender will produce incomplete or even dangerously simplistic analyses of complex power relations (see also McDonald and Birrell, 1999). They advocate that structures of dominance are expressed around 'the power lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality (and age, nationality, ability, religion, etc.)' (p. 4), which work simultaneously and have to be conceptualised as interrelated. It is necessary to 'read sport critically' to capture the 'complex interrelated and fluid character of power relations' (p. 4). In chapter 12 below Spencer, drawing on Birrell and McDonald, critically reads sportswomen's media representation in *USA Today*. This approach is theoretically grounded in critical cultural studies that build on the previous insights of feminist theory, critical race theories, Marxist theories and/or queer theory (for a discussion of feminist cultural studies, see also Bruce, chapter 8 below). Engagement with power is understood as a central focus for understanding social life, including the construction of media images. Consequently, sport media representation also has to be considered as formed in the intersection of relations of class, race, gender, sexuality and nation to understand fully how its current meanings have become dominant. Several feminist sport scholars have elaborated on the notion of intersectionality by examining interlocking systems of power, such as race, class, gender, simultaneously within the sport media representation of women's sport.³ For example, Birrell and Cole (2000), Lock (2003) and McDonald (2008) undertake a critical reading of the intersections of gender and sexuality; and Duncan and Aycok (2005) interrogate the construction of disability and gender, class, race and sexuality in sport advertising and media (see also Schell and Rodriguez, 2001). In the US context, the intersection of race and gender in women's tennis, with its highly visible and celebrated global stars, has attracted the attention of several researchers (e.g. Douglas, 2005; Giardina, 2001; 2005; Schultz, 2005; Spencer, 2001; 2003; 2004). Hills and Kennedy (2006) derive from Collins's notion of intersectionality and Puwar's ideas inspired by Bourdieu about 'space invaders' – how individuals negotiate their way within mainstream organisations – an analysis of how gender and race intersected with nation and class in televised and newspaper representations of the Wimbledon tennis

semi-finals and finals in 2005. Hills and Kennedy continue their discussion of intersectionality in this book (chapter 6 below) by focusing on how Kelly Holmes, the English double gold medal winner, was constructed in the British media during the Athens Olympic Games. In addition, in chapter 7, Elling and Luijt locate the Dutch media coverage within the intersections of gender, race and nationality and compare the representation of three Dutch athletes in Athens. The impact of nationalism on the representation of women Olympians has also drawn the attention of other feminist media scholars.

Several feminist researchers have articulated how the power lines of nationalism, gender, race and class cross in the mediated sport to produce relations of dominance and subordination (e.g. Borcila, 2000; Elder, Pratt and Ellis, 2006; Hogan, 2003; Jamieson, 2000; Stevenson, 2002). As an ideological construction, nationalism is based on an 'imaginary' national unity that is created through a powerful 'narrative of the nation' by excluding 'Others' (Elder, Pratt and Ellis, 2006; Hogan, 2003; Stevenson, 2002). For example, Hogan (2003) argues that capital interests, socially dominant groups and the state benefit from the Olympic opening ceremony by 'constructing widely palatable gendered and ethnicized discourses of national identity' (p. 118). These discourses create an impression of a nation as a unified, homogeneous place, either by excluding women and ethnic minorities or by representing them in a form that supports masculine hegemony. In this book, Koh (chapter 9) demonstrates how South Korean newspaper coverage uses women athletes to celebrate nationalism, but at the same marginalises and trivialises their performance by emphasising their emotionality over achievements. Lippe (2002), who examined the broadcasts of five nations from the European handball championships in 1998, discovered that the image of the female athlete as the national symbol aligns with hegemonic masculinity: the women handballers were 'feminised', sexualised, emotional athletes in a male world of leaders, coaches and journalists. Adding nationality to the mix, however, creates a certain ambivalence in the representation of the female athletes: successful female athletes were described 'in terms of active agents, of aggression and toughness' (p. 382) similar to 'the hegemonic masculine logic of continual success' (p. 388). To become national symbols female athletes cannot be entirely constructed as the 'Other' (of the male) and therefore need to embody some masculine features. As Lippe explains: "'We" must succeed in contrast to the "others", at the same time as "the other" features "us" in what we lack in comparison to other countries. In these contexts issues of gender might be

understood as denied, a doxa, or ambivalent' (p. 388). Stevenson (2002) identifies similar contradictory themes in the media representation of the Australian Open in 1999 in Melbourne. Although tennis Grand Slam players do not represent nations, Australianness, hyper-femininity and power intersected in the media representation of women's tennis, but did not freeze the players as passive recipients of 'feminised' media narratives. In her reading of the golfer Nancy Lopez, Jamieson (2000) found parallel 'oppression and opportunity' embedded in the power crossings for a female athlete: 'The intersecting forms of domination in Lopez's experience offer her privilege as a professional athlete, a financially secure woman, and a heterosexual woman, but oppression as a person of Mexican heritage and working class heritage' (Jamieson, 2000, p. 150; see also Douglas and Jamieson, 2006). As the Olympic Games constitute a globally transmitted mega-event, the construction of women athletes as symbols of nationalism in this context has interested several researchers.

Borcila (2000) examined how gymnastics, an individual, acceptably feminine sport, was used to frame a narrative of US nationalism in NBC's 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games coverage. In general, the gymnasts were presented, not as sexy, but as 'vulnerable yet invincible "little girls"' (p. 210). Through sentimentalised stories of injuries overcome, strong will and perseverance became central tenets of American national identity. In addition, the coverage worked 'hard at separating and distinguishing "America" from other nations' (p. 120) when the gymnastics coverage presented American 'vulnerability' in the context of 'tough warriors' versus children from 'other' countries beset by 'tyrannical' regimes and poverty. Echoing previous studies of nationalism and femininity, the American gymnasts were represented ambivalently as little girl warriors. Wensing and Bruce (2003), who examined the representation of the Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman in the Australian press during the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, saw the impact of nationalism in a more positive light (see also Elder, Pratt, and Ellis, 2006; Gardiner, 2003). Freeman received huge visibility during these Games and the reporting of her success emphasised the ambivalence of gendered identity construction. As an Australian hope for national success, Freeman was represented as an emotionally strong athlete fully in control of her performance as someone who made decisions in consultation with, and not dependent on, male support and '[r]eferences to the stereotypical female and Aboriginal inability to cope with pressure was markedly absent' (p. 390). Therefore, Freeman's status as a 'national hope' positively disrupted the stereotypical gender marking of female

athletes by adding ambivalence to identity construction. In chapter 8, Bruce continues this research by analysing how the articulation of gender with nationalism could potentially mobilise forces in professional sport to bring about change in representations of sporting women in the New Zealand media.

Feminist sport research indicates that when the female athlete's identity is constructed in an intersection of gender, race and nationality, the media coverage tends to endorse male hegemony. Women athletes continue to be constructed as different from and inferior to male athletes. For example, nationalism acts to reinforce sport as a masculine domain by reproducing women athletes as heterosexual, traditionally 'feminine', 'sexy' and emotionally charged women who do not threaten male dominance. However, while the narratives of race and nationality act to support the ideology of masculinity, they, like all ideologies, can also generate critique. For example, the increased ambivalence created by nationalism that cannot distance women too much from the successful, male national hero allows for a different type of representation of sporting femininity where female athletes assume some of the characteristics typically preserved for male athletes. This emerging diversity has inspired media readings that expand the analyses of ambivalence of women's sport media representation to interrogate further the interplay between the textual construction and larger social forces around women's sport.

The intertextual analyses focus on how the ideologically constructed media messages are shaped within the complex web of the media production. For example, in this book MacNeill (chapter 3) analyses the construction of the Canadian Perdita Felicien in the interacting meaning-making by journalists, television broadcasters and young audience members. The media-sport cultural complex (Rowe, 1999) is understood as more than mere interplay between dominant ideologies and resistance from marginalised groups to construct gender, class, racial and national identities. The media are seen as transmogrifiers of cultural meanings into hyperreal narratives of iconic and supra-normal celebrity image identities which become more real than 'real' life. In this virtual environment 'mass-produced images replace personal lived experience with events where free-floating signifiers ... come to represent and stand in for an unquestioned social reality' (Giardina, 2001, p. 215). Sport plays an important role in the construction of these identities because of its remarkable media presence and its tendency to celebrate superlative, individual performances (e.g. Jackson and Andrews, 2001; Darnell and Sparks, 2005). In this context, contemporary forces, like globalisation,

add complexity to the ways sportswomen are represented in the media. For example, the new communication technologies have enabled the creation of a global space: a placeless 'reality' that meets us on the television screen everywhere in the world (Hills and Kennedy, 2006). Giardina's (2001) study of the construction of Martina Hingis's transnational celebrity status serves as a case in point.

Giardina's (2001) seeks to 'deconstruct Hingis within an interpretive space that frames her as a free-floating commodity-sign' (p. 205) to reveal her 'flexible citizenship' which has resulted from her transnational celebrity status. When the media-assisted process of globalisation breaks down the 'old structures and boundaries of nation-states and communities' (p. 205), a new type of citizenship – the flexible citizen – that is unbound to a nation emerges. For example, Hingis, who was born in the former Czechoslovakia, but now has Swiss citizenship, and also maintains a home base in Florida, has managed to negotiate her cosmopolitan citizenship to her advantage in the economic conditions of the consumer market in the women's tennis tour, which moves and is broadcasted globally. Each of her 'locales' reflects differently from her identity. For example, while the European media portrayed her as an intellectual player playing near-perfect technical tennis, outside of Europe Hingis has been associated with traditional American values of heteronormativity: femininity, grace and success. In this global context, then, Hingis's representation is either 'resistant' to the ideology of masculine or entirely oppressed by it.

Nike advertisements that target female athletes have drawn the attention of a number of feminist scholars who read these advertisements as constructing both 'dominant' and 'alternative' feminine identities within post-Fordist, post-feminist, neoliberal consumerism (Capon and Helstein, 2005; Cole and Hribar, 1995; Giardina and Metz, 2005; Lafrance, 1998; Lucas, 2000; McKay, 2005). In these advertisements, 'femininity' and masculinity are no longer diametrically opposed: 'the New Age female athlete à la Nike is both "girly-girl" and "athlete"' (Giardina and Metz, 2005, p. 75).

Through intersectionality and intertextuality, feminist sport researchers have further highlighted the contradictions and ambiguities of sportswomen's media representation in the current global sport-media complex. As a result, they have begun to challenge the process of 'modern' identity construction confined between the two poles of dominance and marginalisation: while sport media representations continue to align with hegemonic masculinity, there is an added concern regarding multiple meanings created through the contemporary image culture of floating

signifiers. Consequently, feminist researchers now draw from a variety of theoretical perspectives to understand further the complexities of women's (mediated) sport in the contemporary world.

Poststructuralist readings of women's sport media representation

While poststructuralism is not a unified theoretical perspective, such theoretical perspectives as Lacanian psychoanalysis, Derridean deconstruction, the Foucauldian theory of discursivity and Deleuzian rhizomatics have been classified to comprise poststructuralism. While poststructuralist feminist sport media research is still relatively new, there are some examples of how Derridean (Cole, 1998), Deleuzian (Markula, 2005), Foucauldian (Markula, 2000; Markula and Pringle, 2006; Thorpe, 2008) and psychoanalytic (Helstein, 2003; 2005; 2007) theories can be used to read women's sport media representation. This book contributes to feminist poststructuralist analysis through psychoanalytic readings of women's Olympic representation by MacNeill (chapter 3) and Martin (chapter 10), Derridean deconstruction by Markula (chapter 5) and Foucauldian discourse analysis by Barker-Rucht (chapter 11).

While these theories differ from each other, poststructuralism can be generally characterised as challenging the modernist notion of one truth in favour of an examination of multiple realities. Consequently, poststructuralists assume that meanings are not fixed, but always changing, in flux, depending on the context. For example, the meaning of what constitutes an 'oppressive' media image is not decided before the analysis. As the poststructuralists would put it: certain signifiers are not firmly attached to predetermined oppressive or oppressed identities but the definition of 'feminine' identity is always considered as changing and context-specific.⁴ This does not, however, denote a denial of power relations in the contemporary world. Foucault, for example, asserted that 'although governments, social institutions, laws and dominant groups are commonly assumed to hold power' they actually represent only its terminal forms (Markula and Pringle, 2006, p. 34). To understand the existing social inequalities, it is more important to understand how power is exercised through the formation of influential social phenomena. For example, women's mediated images are formed within certain relations of power between the numerous individuals involved in the media, sport and the international and national politics around sport. Consequently, unlike the hegemony theory perspective,

power is not considered a possession of a specified group of people, but rather dominant individuals, groups, corporations or states 'become influential due to the contingent workings and, at times, tactical usages of "discourses"' (Markula and Pringle, 2006, p. 34). For example, in chapter 3 MacNeill examines how the Canadian Olympic athlete Perdita Felicien's image is negotiated as a combined 'effort' within the power relations of media production, the audience's (anticipated) gaze and the larger context of race relations in Canada. A poststructuralist perspective further challenges the necessity of such binary opposition as oppressive masculine and suppressed feminine identity as a basis for feminist politics (e.g. Hekman, 1990). In chapter 5, for example, Markula uses Derridean deconstruction to discuss the limitation of the binary logic of assigning certain sports as masculine and others as feminine. Martin (chapter 10) looks at the difficulty of fixing the meanings of sporting femininity through the psychoanalytic feminist lens of Luce Irigaray.

When power can no longer be conceptualised as a position for a clearly identifiable dominant group, it becomes more difficult to determine how to understand women's 'liberation' in or through sport. Following Foucault, a poststructuralist would assume that '[e]ach individual is ... caught in a network of historical power relations through which s/he constitutes her/himself as a subject acting on others: s/he is subjected to control but also has some freedom to use power to control others' (Markula and Pringle, 2006, p. 138). Instead of a 'true' feminine self to be liberated from the clouding of the dominant ideology of masculinity, a sportswoman's identity is already continually being produced, 'in flux', within the current power relations of sport of which each athlete is a part. A poststructuralist, therefore, might question the assumption that if the patriarchal sport system is finally abolished, then a 'new', 'better' and 'truer' femininity, currently locked under false representation created by the ideology of masculinity, will emerge.⁵ Rather, the meaning of femininity is always constructed within various social contexts and within the pressure of constantly changing power relations. For example, Barker-Ruchti (chapter 11) offers a Foucauldian reading of the Swiss triathlete Karin Thürig which departs from a classification of her representation as either oppressive or liberating to look at how Thürig's athletic identity is constructed through the broader discursive context of a highly technologised, international elite sport. When identity construction is dependent on specific power relations, unified meanings for such terms as gender, 'nationalism', 'race' or ethnicity become more difficult to maintain. Poststructuralism, therefore,

aims to further sensitise sport media researchers to cultural context of meaning-making. In this book, we examine further how cultural contexts create different conditions for meanings even in the increasingly globalised world. For example, Wu (chapter 4), writing on the Chinese media representation of women Olympians, points to the very different development of feminism in China from 'westernised' countries. Therefore, women's media representation should not be read through western theoretical constructs either.

While it is more difficult to determine how relations of dominance operate, poststructuralism remains deeply committed to a politics of change. The solutions to changing unjust conditions or discrimination are less simple within fluid, constantly changing cultural conditions. However, the relations of power are also deemed to be productive rather than exclusively prohibitive or repressive to women (e.g., Pringle and Markula, 2006). This means that sportswomen are also producers of their identities and can thus have a positive influence on how they are represented in the media. While the current discursive construction of sport and media acts to limit an individual, neither are these fields closed for social action by sport feminists, sport media researchers, feminist activists or individual sportswomen. A feminist poststructuralist researcher, for example, might ask the following questions: What representation would change the cultural and social conditions that create the discursive field of sport? How would changing the competitive ethics of sport and sporting women affect the media representations? Why should we change the discursive field of sport? How can we examine media representation in the globalised, discursive field of sport where multiple power relations continually mould the athletes' identities and where the athletes themselves are, by necessity, parts of these power relations? Although not fully answering these questions, the contributors to this book have opened a discussion about further engagement of feminist theory and the analysis of sport media representation.

Structure of the book

While one aim of this book is to introduce a variety of feminist perspectives into sport media analysis, it also intends to map the differences and similarities of athletes' representation in different countries. Consequently, the book is organised based on the country of which newspaper representation women athletes were analysed. In addition, a chapter that provides methodological guidance for qualitative, textual analysis of media has been included.

With significant literature mapping women's representation in sport media from diverse feminist perspectives, there is a dearth of methodological texts for feminist sport media analysis. Liao and Markula (chapter 2) aim to provide a guide for qualitative methods specifically for sport media researchers. They draw on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Foucaudian discourse analysis to develop methods for feminist textual analyses of sport.

In chapter 3, MacNeill analyses the construction of the Canadian hurdler Perdita Felicien who fell in the final of the women's 100 metres hurdles and failed to complete the race. MacNeill provides an intertextual analysis to look at how a 'failed' female athlete was represented in Canadian newspapers and TV, but also elicits how girls understood the meaning of Felicien as a Canadian, female athlete. MacNeill adopts a psychoanalytic analysis of 'gaze', combined with postcolonial reading of Felicien as a black, Canadian, female athlete to analyse the meanings of femininity, nationality and race in Canadian context.

Ping Wu (chapter 4) provides an analysis of two Chinese newspapers, the *Titan Sports Weekly*, a market-oriented tabloid, and the *China Sports Daily*, a 'party organ' newspaper supported by the ruling Communist Party in China. To contextualise her analysis, Wu also discusses the development of feminism and the current climate for sport media in China. She focuses particularly on the representation of Chinese female divers, table tennis players and weightlifters, all of whom were expected to win medals for China in Athens, 2004.

Markula focuses in chapter 5 on the coverage of a Finnish newspaper, *Turun Sanomat*, of women Olympians. In addition to textual analysis, she traces, through Derridean deconstruction, the development of the concept 'feminine appropriate sports' in feminist sport studies.

In chapter 6, Hills and Kennedy look at the narrative construction of double gold medal winner, the middle-distance runner Kelly Holmes, in four British newspapers: *The Sunday Times*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Mirror* and the *News of the World*. Holmes' surprise success at the Athens Olympic Games caught the British media off guard, and Hills and Kennedy, while drawing from multiple theorists, locate the newspaper narratives within the intersections of race, gender, class and sexuality in the Great Britain.

Echoing Hills and Kennedy, Elling and Luijt (chapter 7) locate Dutch female athletes' representation within the intersections of gender, race and nationality. They compare and contrast three Dutch medallists: the 'white', ethnically Dutch swimmer Inge de Bruijn, the 'black' Surinam-Dutch judoka Deborah Gravenstijn (bronze) and the 'black'

Indonesian-Dutch badminton player Mia Audina in two national newspapers (*Het Algemeen Dagblad* and *NRC Handelsblad*).

In chapter 8, Bruce employs feminist cultural studies to examine how nationalism and gender are articulated into an ambivalent representation of the New Zealand gold medalists, the cyclist Sarah Ulmer and the rowers Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell. Such ambivalence, she suggests, can open up spaces for political strategies to change the routine practices of sport journalists who tend to follow the dominant cultural assumptions about women's sports as less interesting or exciting than men's sport.

Eunha Koh (chapter 9) also examines how the media representation of women athletes has been constructed within the intersection of nationalism and gender in a major South Korean daily newspaper, *Donga Ilbo*. Unlike in the 'westernised' countries, the South Korean media do not sexualise Korean women athletes because they are seen as national heroines. While Korean women athletes continue to be trivialised and marginalised, only foreign female athletes are sexualised in this newspaper coverage.

In chapter 10, Martin introduces Lucy Irigaray's psychoanalytic feminism to sport media analysis. She uses narrative writing techniques to map how one Spanish newspaper, *El País*, represents the star player Amaya Valdemoro, captain of the women's basketball. Through the eyes of an undergraduate sport student who is struggling with a media analysis assignment, Martin shows the need to look beyond the 'female-male binary' to provide an understanding of sexual difference as the original and primary human difference. Martin's aim is to illustrate what Irigaray's call for a focus on the radical difference between the two sexes and a theory based on the uniqueness and irreducibility of femininity might mean for feminist sport media studies.

Similar to Martin, Barker-Ruchti draws from poststructuralist theorising in chapter 11 to examine the Swiss media representation of the cyclist Karin Thürig, whose successful Olympic performance, despite cycling being an unfamiliar sport in Switzerland, attracted significant media attention. Barker-Ruchti reads this coverage through a Foucauldian lens to examine how Thürig's performance was 'normalised' through referrals to invaluable assistance from sport science and technology.

In chapter 12, Spencer focuses on a series of 'Olympic portraits' shot by the *USA Today* photographer Robert Hanashiro. These portraits conjured up images of the ancient Olympic Games through wreaths of vegetation; flowing robes worn by the athletes; and photographs printed in sepia hues with ragged borders. Spencer critically reads seven

portraits – of the swimmer Natalie Coughlin, the fencer Sada Jacobson, the triathlete Barb Lindquist, the freestyle wrestler Patricia Miranda, the softball pitcher Jennie Finch, the gymnast Carly Patterson and the beach volleyball players Kerri Walsh and Misty May – through the concept of critical nostalgia to interrogate the meaning of such representations in contemporary American culture.

Notes

1. For more detailed discussion of the ‘global–local’ debate in sport media studies, see Bernstein and Blain (2003); Hoberman (2004); Maguire (1999; 2006); Rowe, 2003; Silk, Andrews and Cole (2004); Wamsley, Barney and Marty (2002); and Wenner (1998). From a feminist perspective, the theories of globalisation have served as a backdrop to ‘transnational’ feminism. While not a unified concept, this type of feminism, through intersectional analysis of women’s condition in the globalised world, aims for social change in women’s lives, particularly in the developing world. Mendoza (2002) asserts that transnational feminism ‘points simultaneously to the position feminists worldwide have taken against the processes of globalization of the economy, the demise of the nation state and the development of a global mass culture as well as pointing to the nascent global women’s studies research into the ways in which globalization affects women around the globe’ (p. 296). Transnational feminism thus draws on the discussions of globalisation, from Third and First World feminist theorisation on race, class and sexuality and feminist postcolonial studies ‘to make us aware of the artificiality of the idea of nation and its patriarchal nature’ (p. 296). Several chapters in this book examine the media construction of sporting women through intersectional analysis and/or postcolonial theory, but as the focus is on national context, the authors have not identified their feminist approach(es) within transnational feminism.
2. So-called post-feminism can be seen as a continuation of liberal feminist ideals in consumer capitalism. However, instead of calling for equal opportunities and access for women, post-feminism implies that feminist activism and feminist movement are no longer needed because today’s women have already achieved the equality fought for by earlier feminist movements. Newly achieved women’s freedom, autonomy and liberation are often combined with a ‘consumer lifestyle’ which allows women to make choices and also experience personal freedom through numerous leisure pursuits. Consequently, women’s liberation is now associated with freedom to be both powerful and sexual: experience success in the workplace, but still be ‘feminine’. McDonald (2005) summarises: ‘Post-feminism is not synonymous with the absence of feminism, but rather refers to the growing number of women who now take for granted some of the goals and achievements of the 1970’s feminist movement while shunning the label of feminist’ (p. 27). Post-feminist ideals have occupied especially North American feminists, who have examined contemporary media representations of women’s sport and exercise (e.g. Cole and Hribar, 1995; Heywood and Dworkin, 2003; Lafrance,

1998; McDonald, 2005). For example, McDonald demonstrates how *Women's Sport and Fitness* in the US employs 'post-feminist ideologies' to depoliticise feminist critiques of gender, class and race-based oppression to promote a 'liberated' woman who personifies the 'traditional' form of femininity with a new-found self-acceptance and a freedom to consume. This includes the freedom to appear 'sexy' and heterosexually attractive, even when appearing in a traditionally 'male' environment such as sport, as a celebrated choice of an individual woman. Lenskyj's (2008) reading of the 'naked calendars', an increasingly popular practice for sportswomen to raise funds for their training and competition, reveals post-feminist attitudes used to defend this form of fundraising in the popular media. For instance, the production of these calendars is justified based on such rationales as defending the images as artistic and tasteful representations of athletes who 'really' are feminine and sexy and who have the self-confidence to 'show off' their beautiful bodies. These women can still be taken seriously as athletes and so be successful in their 'work'. This type of 'empowerment' is embedded in the post-feminist logic of individual athletes' celebrated choice to have their bodies consumed in the marketplace of sport.

Critical readings of post-feminist rhetoric reveal how the political aims of feminism have been turned against feminism by hijacking such terms as 'liberation' to serve the 'cult of American individualism through which consumer capitalism thrives' (McDonald, 2005, p. 26). In this way, feminism is stripped of its critique of social, political and economic inequality to promote forces benefiting from these social conditions. For example, Lenskyj (2008) asserts that the post-feminist readings of the 'nude calendars' continue to reflect and reinforce sexual exploitation and homophobia not different from representations of 'soft porn'. She concludes that 'few, if any, of the nude images challenge that longstanding underlying myth that a woman's appearance, and not her achievement, athletic or otherwise, is the only indication of her worth and the key to her success and happiness' (p. 147).

3. The term 'intersectionality' can be attributed to Patricia Hill Collins' groundbreaking work deriving from black female intellectuals' creative use of their marginality or 'their outsider within' status (Collins, 1986, p. S14) in the US academia. Collins demonstrated how sociology can benefit from the key themes central to 'Black feminist thought' (p. S16). One of these themes is the 'interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression' (p. S19). Collins has since developed this theme, which is now better known as intersectionality (Anderson and Collins, 2004; Collins, 1990, 1994). Race, gender and class are seen as forming a 'matrix of domination' through simultaneous overlapping and intersecting (Andersen, 2005). Consequently, 'gender can never be studied in isolation from race and class' (Andersen, 2005, p. 444) and should be analysed in the context of such structural changes as globalisation, redistribution of capital and wealth and inequality. Andersen (2005), however, distinguishes an analysis of intersectionality of race, class and gender from an 'additive model' of thinking where such 'new' categories as sexuality, disability and age are subjected to the analysis. In this model, identities are understood solely as 'a plurality of views and experiences' detached from the systems of domination that permeate society (p. 445). Intersectionality is concerned with structural inequalities caused by race,

gender and class relations, not 'comparative or additional' thinking were identity categories are simply added and compared through different experiences of diverse groups of people. For example, Andersen cautions against the simple addition of such identity categories as sexuality to the mix without explicating 'a political economy of sexuality and its connections to the political economy of race, class, and gender' (p. 449) because 'the appropriation and exploitation of racial/ethnic and gender labor makes race, class, and gender fundamentally different in their operation than sexuality' (p. 450). Instead, she calls for feminist theory and politics framed with political economy that 'connects sexuality to race, class, and gender in more than the ideological realm' (p. 452).

4. For readers interested in further readings of feminist poststructuralism, see Buchanan and Clairebrook (2000); Butler (1993); Diamond and Quinby (1988); Groz (1994); Hekman (1996); Holland (1997); Irigaray (1985); Markula and Pringle (2006); Weedon (1987).
5. This understanding of identity formation challenges the 'essentialism' of which some forms of feminism are accused. Essentialism refers to the notion that there is an essential 'female nature' that is more virtuous than the 'male nature'. Consequently, masculine domination should be replaced with feminine virtues. While such a presupposition is often connected to so-called 'radical feminism', other feminisms have also been accused of reifying, while more implicitly, the notion of an essential female nature. For example, the notion of male hegemony has been argued to imply an essentialist notion of a 'real' femininity that is waiting to be discovered once the ideological clouding is removed. This currently hidden femininity would then take over the power position from masculine hegemony. Poststructuralist thought challenges the essentialist conceptual binary of masculine hegemony and oppressed femininity waiting to replace it by arguing, not for a 'feminine epistemology' (specific women's ways of knowing) or 'feminine ontology' (specific women's truth) that would replace the currently unfair masculine domination, but for multiple truths (some of which are currently privileged) that 'have been formed through discursive processes by which human beings gain understanding of their common world' (Hekman, 1990, p. 9).

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