

COMPARISON OF THE COVERAGE OF FEMALE
ATHLETES IN THE 1984 AND 1988
SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES BY TWO
DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND TWO
WEEKLY MAGAZINES

By

BETH ANN CHLOUBER

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1986

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
May, 1989

Thesis
1989
C544c
cop.2

COMPARISON OF THE COVERAGE OF FEMALE
ATHLETES IN THE 1984 AND 1988
SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES BY TWO
DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND TWO
WEEKLY MAGAZINES

Thesis Approved:

Charles L. ...

Thesis Advisor

Michael

Philip E. Paulin

Norman N. Dushorn

Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express deep gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Charles Fleming, for scholarly guidance and encouragement during this project. I am also grateful to Dr. P. E. Paulin and Dr. Marlan Nelson for being on my thesis committee.

I am thankful for the friendship and professional assistance of my classmate, Cynthia Tuznik.

The encouragement and support of my parents, Dale and Carla Chlouber, will always be greatly appreciated. Thanks are also extended to my friends for their patience and understanding during this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background.	2
Statement of the Problem.	6
Purpose	6
Objectives.	6
Assumptions	7
Theoretical Framework	7
Importance of Study	8
Definition of Terms	9
Outline of Remainder of Thesis.	10
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.	13
Introduction.	13
Background.	13
Previous Research	19
Need for Study.	24
Cultural Stereotypes.	26
Sexism in Language.	28
Sports.	33
Olympics.	36
Summary	39
III. METHODOLOGY.	45
Introduction.	45
Scope of the Study.	46
Media Selected.	46
Time Frame.	47
Selection of Items.	48
Research Design	48
Coding.	49
Statistical Tests	51
Tables.	52
Limitations	52

Chapter	Page
IV. FINDINGS	54
Data Collection	54
Hypothesis	60
Newspapers vs. Magazines	61
Magazines	62
Newspapers	65
V. CONCLUSION	68
Summary	68
Recommendations	74
Conclusion	75
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	77

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Increase in Women's Sports Participation	17
II. Participation in Olympic Games	38
III. Number of Articles with Sex Bias, and Frequency of Sex Bias by Type, by Publication.	56
IV. Number of Articles with Sex Bias, and Frequency of Sex Bias by Type, by Publication, in 1984.	57
V. Number of Articles with Sex Bias, and Frequency of Sex Bias by Type, by Publication, in 1988.	59

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s brought into focus the treatment of women in the mass media. At the same time, women were making progress in the job market and society in general, and they were also opening the doors to greater sports participation.

Criticism of the mass media's coverage of women athletes highlighted the apparent bias in coverage and the inequities that women in sports faced. Much of this criticism focused on the lack of media coverage and on the way female athletes were portrayed.

Criticism of the media's coverage of female athletes is based partly on the argument that the media both reflect and also help shape our society. The concerns about women's sports coverage include whether female athletes are portrayed realistically (reflection of society) and whether or not their portrayals provide positive role models for young women (shaping of society).

Despite the progress that women in sports have made in media treatment, much of the research suggests that sex bias is still prevalent in the media coverage of female athletes

Whether or not progress has been made in recent years is a question this research will address.

Background

The opportunity for women to compete and excel in sports has been virtually nonexistent for a greater part of the history of the United States. Intense physical activity was not, and to a great extent still is not, associated with the female gender. The traits associated with sports, such as strength, endurance, and agility, as well as the cultural goals of discipline and competition, were thought inappropriate for women.¹ Sports have generally been a male domain with emphasis on aggressiveness, toughness, effort, ambition, achievement, and success.²

The movement toward increased opportunities for women in sports has its roots in a long struggle that dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. The ideal upper-class Victorian woman was stereotyped as a submissive helpmate who was homebound, obedient, and demure.³ But it was in this era that the women's movement began to form. Women began to take an active role in the abolition movement. The exclusion of women in 1840 from the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London served as an impetus for the organization of the first Women's Rights Convention in 1848.⁴ The first stage of the women's movement culminated on August 20, 1920, when the 19th Amendment was passed, giving women the right to vote.⁵ After

the passage of the amendment, many women believed the right to vote would give them equality and took a passive interest in women's rights. The women's movement remained dormant for the next 40 years.⁶

The women's movement helped to bring about the first wave of athletic feminism. Competitive female athletics became popular in the 1920s and 1930s, and American women entered the Olympics in 1920. But the first wave of athletic feminism ended in the mid-1930s.⁷

The 1960s and 1970s brought about a sports revolution for women. Sparked by athletic competition with the Soviet Union and the revived feminist movement, as well as legislative and court mandates, opportunities for women in sports began to surface.⁸ Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972 provided for greater funding of women's sports in higher education and school districts that received federal funding.⁹

The progress that women have made in sports was difficult because of the male-dominated culture that has existed for centuries. Athletics are a powerful social institution and they often mirror (as well as generate) social stereotypes that dictate society's values and roles for women and men. Male-dominated societies have systematically barred women from participating in sports. The Olympic Games of ancient Greece provide an extreme example: women were not permitted to watch and were put to death if they viewed the Games.¹⁰

The modern Olympics began in 1896, and women did not participate but could watch. Some scholars contend that the Games were reintroduced in order to prepare the French male population for war--hence, the participation of women was irrelevant.¹¹ But women's sports have gradually been added to the Olympics during the twentieth century.¹²

The emergence of female athletes coincided with the rise of popular newspapers and magazines. Partly because of this, journalists who covered female athletes tended to depict the women according to their physical appearance and the personality they projected. Journalists adopted the basic imagery that was used in movies and television to describe female athletes.¹³ Female athletes were always at risk of being labeled masculine if they appeared too independent or physically fit.¹⁴ Of the different aspects of popular culture, it is probably in sports that women have had, and continue to have, the most difficult time breaking down stereotypical images and expectations.¹⁵

One of the major findings of media research on women is the relative absence of women portrayed in the media. A second consistent finding is that when women do appear they are depicted in highly stereotyped ways.¹⁶ These findings would also apply to the portrayal of female athletes in the media. Female athletes gain attention for being attractive, well-dressed, ladylike, petite, or controversial rather than for their athletic achievements.¹⁷ The factor that makes women athletes marketable is often not their ability in

athletics but a femininity that says "yes, you can compete seriously in sports and still be a lady or be sexy."¹⁸

Female athletes are often asked questions about their love life, spouses, and children, but these questions are seldom posed to male athletes.¹⁹

The mass media are an important part of today's society. The manner in which the media treat any one specific group will affect the role that that group plays in our society. The issue of sex-role stereotyping is not new, but most systematic analyses of women in the media have been conducted since 1970.²⁰

Research on women and sports in the media is important because it will help focus on the inequities that women in sports face and can serve as an impetus for change.

The portrayal of women's sports in the mass media is important because it will have an impact on women's sports, in general.

Given the dominant place of the mass media in a modern society, it is especially important to examine the treatment of women's sports by the various media. This is a critical issue because the fact remains that, regardless of what is actually happening to the relationship between women and sports, it is the media's treatment and evaluation of that relationship that will shape its direction and content.²¹

Statement of the Problem

The main concern of this study is whether or not the media coverage of female athletes is sex biased and whether it has changed. This thesis will compare the media coverage of female athletes of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games with the 1988 Summer Olympic Games.

Purpose

This thesis studies 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic media coverage of female athletes in newspapers and magazines. The newspapers studied were The Daily Oklahoman and The Washington Post. The magazines studied were Newsweek and Sports Illustrated. These media were chosen because it was believed they would give a diversified view of the coverage of female athletes. This thesis tests the notion that media coverage of female athletes is sex biased and has changed over time. This study uses content analysis to analyze the data collected. While this thesis deals primarily with media coverage of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games, the questions raised by this research are by no means unique to the media studied or to the Olympics themselves.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are to determine to what extent the media coverage of female athletes, in specific media, is sex biased and whether there has been a

change in the media coverage between the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games.

Assumptions

Criticism of sexism in the media is based on the theory that the media both reflect and help shape our society. Because of the media's importance in today's society, this issue is even more critical. Some people also believe that the media have social and ethical obligations despite their first amendment rights. This principle was first brought to attention by the Commission on Freedom of the Press in the 1940s and is called the social responsibility theory.²²

A basic underlying assumption to this research is that equality is desirable and that no one group of society has the right socially to oppress another group. The mass media (under the social responsibility theory) have an obligation to help society and its members fulfill their full potential. Women are members of society and sexism in the media inhibits women from achieving their potential, ultimately hurting society as a whole.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is based upon the belief that the media have a responsibility to the public. In the late 1940s a group of scholars called the Commission on Freedom of the Press (the Hutchins Commission) brought forth the idea of social responsibility.²³ The

social responsibility theory states that freedom carries the obligation to be responsive to society's needs.²⁴ The Hutchins Commission stated that the duty of the press is to provide "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning." The Commission also stated that the press should give a "representative picture of the constituent groups in society."²⁵

This theory can be applied to the media's coverage of female athletes. The media should give an accurate account and representative picture of women in sports.

The media's responsibility is also outlined in the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, Code of Ethics. In the code it states: "News reports should be free of opinion or bias and represent all sides of an issue."²⁶ This statement can be applied to the media's coverage of women in sports, which should be free of bias.

Importance of Study

The mass media have become extremely pervasive in today's society and have, at least to some degree, an influence on people's values and beliefs. Because of this influence, it is important to understand the media.

This research will be of value to people in the media because it will help them to assess their social responsibility performance. This research will also be useful to educators and researchers, especially in sports

or other women's issues, and may give them insight into the issue of women's sports coverage.

People who are concerned about equality and fair treatment will find value in this research because it will help focus on inequities that women still face. This research will also show whether there have been changes for the better.

Definition of Terms

The concept of "sexism" refers to a set of beliefs, previously enacted into law and now reinforced by social custom, concerning the appropriate social roles of women and men.²⁷ Over the years, the sexual caste system has created a language that is sex biased and that is difficult to avoid.²⁸

Although sex bias in language is, in large part, the semantics of language and difficult to quantitatively measure, there are guidelines to help determine if sex bias is present. The guidelines used for this research were drawn primarily from the publication on sexism Women on Words and Images, which was researched by a New Jersey task force of the National Organization for Women and published by the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education.²⁹ Guidelines were also drawn from the McGraw-Hill publication Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes.³⁰

Outline of Remainder of Thesis

In this thesis, Chapter II covers the literature review. Chapter III covers the methodology that will be used. Chapter IV covers the analysis of the data. Chapter V contains a summary, conclusions, and recommendations that are gathered from this research.

ENDNOTES

¹June Sochen, Enduring Values (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987) 118.

²Howard L. Nixon II, Sport and the American Dream (New York: Leisure Press, 1984) 60.

³Tina Trunzo and Leslie R. Wolfe, "Like She Owns the Earth: Women and Sports," in Beyond Sex Roles, ed. Alice G. Sargent (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1984) 268.

⁴Alice G. Sargent, Diane Kravetz, and Dorothy Diemer, "A Short History of the Women's Movement," in Beyond Sex Roles, ed. Alice G. Sargent (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1984) 190.

⁵Sargent, Kravetz, and Diemer 190-191.

⁶Sargent, Kravetz, and Diemer 191.

⁷Stephanie L. Twin, Out of the Bleachers (New York: The Feminist Press, 1979) xxviii.

⁸Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983) 335.

⁹Rader 340.

¹⁰Trunzo and Wolfe 267.

¹¹Mary A. Boutilier and Lucinda SanGiovanni, The Sporting Woman (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1983) 222.

¹²Trunzo and Wolfe 267.

¹³Sochen 120.

¹⁴Sochen 129.

¹⁵Sochen 130.

¹⁶Boutilier and SanGiovanni 185.

¹⁷Boutilier and SanGiovanni 45.

¹⁸Boutilier and SanGiovanni 45.

¹⁹Boutilier and SanGiovanni 206.

²⁰Diane Silver, "A Comparison of Newspaper Coverage of Male and Female Officials in Michigan," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1986, 144.

²¹Boutilier and SanGiovanni 184.

²²William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm, and Clifford G. Christians, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) 44-45.

²³Rivers, Schramm, and Christians 44.

²⁴Rivers, Schramm, and Christians 44-45.

²⁵Rivers, Schramm, and Christians 45.

²⁶Rivers, Schramm, and Christians 293.

²⁷Matilda Butler and William Paisley, Women and the Mass Media (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978) 18.

²⁸Butler and Paisley 35.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the past, research on women and the mass media has concentrated mostly on the portrayal of sex roles in various media and different types of messages disseminated by the media. Content analysis has been the most commonly used approach in the study of media images of women.¹

But the recent surge of research on women and the mass media has often not included the portrayal of women in sports in the media. The increasing feminist consciousness in sports has not brought about a great deal of recognition of sports in the feminist movement among either scholars or activists. The inattention among scholars is evident because of the infrequent appearance of analyses of sports, physical activity, or physical education in most literature on gender and feminist studies.² Many prominent researchers on women in the mass media, such as Gaye Tuchman, fail to mention women and sports.³ But the issue of women's sports coverage is beginning to become a concern among both feminists and researchers.

This chapter will begin with a general discussion of the role of women in sports and the media coverage of women in

sports. Then an overview of research on women in the media and women's sports in the media will be presented and the need for this study will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a review of the literature which will include discussions on sexism in language and women in sports.

Background

There are several reasons for the past lack of interest in women in sports, and particularly the lack of coverage of women and sports in the mass media. In an essay titled "Sport and Feminism in North America" in the book Women in Sport: Sociological and Historical Perspectives (1985), Nancy Theberge wrote that because of the history of sexism in sports, a large percentage of women have had little opportunity to experience the pleasures and rewards of sports. Many times, women's involvement in sports has been limited to dreary physical education classes in school. The fact that their involvement in sports has not been personally rewarding no doubt contributes to many women's lack of interest in sports as a feminist issue.⁴ But an additional and more compelling reason for the disinterest in sports as a feminist issue is that, next to the many social, political, and economic issues that face women, sports do not emerge as a major issue.⁵

There are many reasons women are discouraged from participating in sports. More positive coverage of female athletes in the media could encourage the number of girls

entering sports, suggests one-time sports writer Tom Elias in the book Women in Sports by Irwin Stambler.⁶ Cultural stereotypes, which are often reflected in the mass media, tend to discourage female participation in sports. Stambler discusses a conference that focused on discrimination against women in sports in Los Angeles in 1974 in which Jean Stapleton, of the National Organization of Women, pointed to the obstacles that women athletes encountered.⁷ "In our society, the qualities of aggressiveness, speed and agility are considered to be male characteristics. Women are discouraged socially and financially from participating in sports."⁸

One of the reasons that many girls have accepted a passive role in sports, Tom Elias stated at the meeting, was not an inherent dislike of athletics by girls, but rather the lack of positive attitudes by much of the media toward female athletes. "The basic rule of sports writers is that the best-looking women are singled out for coverage, no matter how badly they played the game."⁹

In the American culture, the concept of what is considered "feminine" and "masculine" has a great deal of influence on women's sports participation. K. F. Dyer, in Challenging the Men, wrote that an article in a 1973 Sports Illustrated magazine on women in sports seemed to suggest that: "Behind the myth that participation in sport will masculinize a woman's appearance there is the even darker

insinuation that athletics will masculinize a woman's sexual behavior."¹⁰

Dyer wrote that females in sports, in general, are evaluated according to what is pleasing to a white, heterosexual male. Women who tend to depart from this norm are thought of as being too muscular, too masculine, as "tomboys," or "butch" and "dyke."¹¹ Although women in sports have made many advances since the 1970s, many of the cultural stereotypes of what is "feminine" or "masculine" still persist and are evident in the mass media. But many positive advances have been made concerning women in sport.

Howard L. Nixon in Sport and the American Dream wrote that the changing conceptions of women's roles and legal and political movements to reform women's rights have contributed to a climate that is more favorable for women in sports.¹² This is evidenced by the increasing number of females engaged in some form of sport. The number of females in interscholastic sports programs increased by 600% between 1970 and 1979. By 1980 females represented 33% of all high school athletes. At the beginning of 1980 females represented 30% of all intercollegiate athletes.¹³ The increase in women's sports participation is shown in Table I.¹⁴

This increase in women's sports participation was evidenced by the first National Women in Sports Day, which was observed February 4, 1987, on Capitol Hill and across the country. The day sought to spotlight both women's

TABLE I
INCREASE IN WOMEN'S SPORTS PARTICIPATION

Year	Sports Participation
1970	Nationwide, 3.7 million men participate in high school sports; only 300,000 women (or 7.4%) do. About 170,000 men take part in intercollegiate athletics, as opposed to some 30,000 women.
1972	Congress passes Title IX. About 700,000 (or about 17.2%) of all participants in high school sports are women, up from 7.4% in 1970. Nearly 32,000 women play intercollegiate sports but they get less than 2% of the athletic budget.
1975	Final Title IX regulations are issued. About 1.2 million high school women take part in sports--23.5% of all participants. Budget for women's athletics at the University of Kansas is \$21,000, up from \$9,000 in 1973.
1978	Elementary and high schools, as well as colleges, must now be in compliance with Title IX. About 32% of all participants in high school sports (or some 2 million) are women. At the college level, women are offered 5.6 sports per school.
1980	The female participation rate for inter-scholastic high school sports peaks; 35.7% (some 2 million) of high school players were women.
1982	The peak year for college scholarships for women; 15,000 from 500 schools. Women can choose from 6.5 sports per school.
1984	The Supreme Court decides <u>Grove City College vs. Bell</u> ; 64 Title IX cases are dropped. Some 1.8 million women participate in inter-scholastic sports (35.2%). The 150,000 women in intercollegiate athletics get 16% of the money.
1987	The Civil Rights Restoration Act is introduced in Congress to restore Title IX to its original strength. About 1.8 million women participate in high school athletics. Women are offered 10,000 college scholarships.

achievements in sports and the need for legislation to ensure and encourage females' athletic opportunities in school and college.¹⁵

Theberge wrote that the current interest in women and sports is one manifestation of the influence of the women's movement in our society. As the concern with sexual inequality, changing social roles, and the relations between the sexes became the topics of debate and analysis, this discussion eventually was extended to sports.¹⁶

The issue of women in sports has been extended to the mass media and their coverage of female athletes. Dyer wrote that the influence that the mass media have as a socializing agent is of great importance.¹⁷ But the coverage of female athletes is often not positive. Dyer wrote:

The media coverage of women's sports and women in sport is in most countries quite appalling. It is considerably less than the coverage of men's sports; it frequently concentrates on the women involved as either freaks or sex objects; and it often trivializes women's activities, reducing the serious sporting content and emphasizing the clothes worn, the 'social' and sexual nature of the game and so on.¹⁸

The first female athlete to become a great media favorite was Babe Didrikson Zaharias. She was born in 1912 in Texas. Zaharias broke three women's world records at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and went on to become a successful professional golfer. Journalists portrayed her as a female Samson and because she was such an incredible athlete was the exception, not the future rule, for women in sports.¹⁹

One of the more modern female athletes to receive widespread media attention was Billie Jean King. King was an exceptional tennis player who won numerous titles throughout her career. King became an important symbol of the revived feminist movement of the early 1970s. She was harassed by reporters for her pursuit of tennis as a profession and her decision not to have children.²⁰ Much media attention was given to the televised tennis match between King and Bobby Riggs in September of 1973. Riggs had denounced women athletes and challenged King to a tennis match. King won the match and also gave female athletes someone to look up to.²¹

Previous Research

Most of the research regarding women in the mass media has been conducted since the beginning of the contemporary women's movement. Since its beginnings in the early 1960s the women's movement has received much public attention and has become familiar to nearly every American. Because the mass media reach millions of people daily and reflect society's values, the mass media have become targets for scrutiny by feminists and by researchers interested in the effects of the women's movement on the media, wrote Linda J. Busby in her article "Sex Role Research on the Mass Media," which was published in the Journal of Communications in Autumn 1975.²²

Matilda Butler and William Paisley in Women and the Mass Media (1978) note that most systematic analyses of media

images of women have been conducted since 1970.²³ The research on women in the media is often done through content analysis. Butler and Paisley wrote that one problem that researchers studying women in the media encounter is the lack of a theoretical framework. Research on language and sexism is still relatively new. Butler and Paisley note that Sol Saporta, addressing the Modern Language Association, stated, "A linguist trying to discuss language and sexism is immediately confronted with the absence of the relevant theory."²⁴

The use of content analysis in analyzing media bias and stereotypes has its limitations. Ellen Seiter in her article "Stereotypes and the Media: A Re-Evaluation," which was published in the Journal of Communications in Spring 1986, wrote that there is often failure to specify what is meant by a certain stereotype and how it is related to ideology. Blanket assumptions are frequently made concerning the effects of media stereotypes without drawing distinctions as to the kind of audience being referred to.²⁵

Most research concerning gender in the social sciences has been carried out on the basis of nineteenth-century assumptions about sex and gender, wrote Lana F. Rakow in her article "Rethinking Gender Research," which was published in the Journal of Communications in Autumn 1986.²⁶ Rakow wrote that communication research, like that of the other social sciences, incorporated gender study into the standard research approaches and methodologies of the fields of

speech, interpersonal, and mass communication. Gender has been operationalized as a pregiven category that can contribute to measurable differences in men's and women's speech, interaction, and mass communication behavior, which often leads to the popularization of research findings into advice for women to help them correct their speaking and into criticisms of media content for its contribution to women's "deficient" socialization.²⁷

Researchers have found that the mass media portray women in stereotyped roles. The women's movement prompted much of the research done regarding sex bias. A study of Fort Worth and Dallas newspapers in the late 1970s by Foreit et al. found that stories about women were much more likely to report personal appearance, marital status and spouse than articles about men.²⁸ In a 1982 study Junetta Davis showed that newspaper stories more often identified women than men by personal appearance or marital status, while men were more likely identified by occupation, experience, or background. Davis also found that women were more likely to be in the news in domestic or subordinate roles or as sex objects, but less likely to be in the news because of occupation, sports, or crime.²⁹

The landmark study of women in television, Women in the Wasteland Fight Back, sponsored by the Washington, D.C., Chapter of the National Organization of Women, used content analysis and was published in 1972. This study found that

women were stereotyped in television commercials and also television programming.³⁰

A 1974 study by Susan H. Miller analyzed the roles of men and women in news photographs of the Washington Post and Los Angeles Times. Miller found that men far outnumbered women in the photographs. Photos of men outnumbered women by three to one in the Post and two to one in the Times. Almost half of the photos of women were run in the lifestyle sections.³¹

A 1981 study by Roy E. Blackwood replicated the 1974 study by Miller. Blackwood found that in photographs men outnumbered women four to one in the Washington Post and three to one in the Los Angeles Times.³²

The study of language and sex has become the subject of research and a topic of discussion in books and journals only since the late 1960s and the 1970s. The words that are used to describe men and women and their behavior have received attention as problematic language structures and activities only since the start of the contemporary women's movement.³³

Some journals have given special attention to research on women and the media. The Journal of Communication devoted part of its Spring 1974 issue to articles focusing on women and media content and effects of television, magazines, and newspapers. In that issue Gaye Tuchman characterized the mass media's treatment of women as "symbolic annihilation," in that the media under-represents and trivializes women.³⁴

The treatment of female athletes in the media has also been researched, but still remains a relatively new research topic. Mary A. Boutilier and Lucinda SanGiovanni in The Sporting Woman (1983) wrote that although research on the content of the sports page with respect to coverage of women is still in its infancy, there are a number of studies that confirm the general findings regarding the media's portrayal of women.³⁵ When women's sports are covered in newspapers, the style and placement of the coverage contains the same types of sexist themes that are found in television coverage. The majority of the news of women's sports is found in the back pages of the sports section.³⁶

Boutilier and SanGiovanni note that the coverage of female athletes in magazines also suggests that sex bias is present in this medium. One of the earliest research studies of the way that magazines portray female athletes was carried out by Slatton (1970). She analyzed the content of advertisements of five magazines, covering the period 1900-1968. Her data showed that women in sports were rarely used as themes in magazine advertisements.³⁷

The coverage of female athletes in magazines has shown some signs of the media's being aware of the bias that women in sports face. Boutilier and SanGiovanni wrote that in a major exception to the general trend of sex-biased coverage, Sports Illustrated, in 1973, published a ground-breaking three-part series on the status of women's sports. The series was co-authored by Bill Gilbert and Nancy Williamson and won the

1974 National Magazine Award for Outstanding Editorial Achievement in Service to the Individual. The series, by documenting the growing participation of women in sports and the social and institutional barriers to women in sports, had an impact on public awareness.³⁸

Need for Study

In her essay, Theberge wrote that demonstrating the pervasive sexism in sports is an important first step in understanding the sportswoman's experience and the connections between sports and feminism.³⁹ Tina Trunzo and Leslie R. Wolfe in the essay "Like She Owns the Earth: Women and Sports," in Beyond Sex Roles (1984), wrote that understanding sports and women's involvement in sports can trigger changes in other aspects of the women's movement. Because sports have been one of the major vehicles for promoting sex-role stereotypes into every structure in our society--including work, government, politics, and the family--changes in the participation of women in sports may help reverse many of these limitations by expanding women's roles.⁴⁰

Part of the sexism in sports is the language that the sportswriters use when reporting on female athletes. Sexism in sports reporting hurts not only women in sports but also men and women in general. Neither women nor men are able to reach their full potential when men are conditioned to be only aggressive, analytical, and active and women are

conditioned to be only submissive, emotional, and passive.⁴¹ If the stereotyped portrayal of sex roles is inaccurate and outdated, the mass media may be preparing children--girls, in particular--for a world that no longer exists.⁴²

Karen L. Adams and Norma C. Ware in the essay "Sexism and the English Language: The Linguistic Implications of Being a Woman," in Women: A Feminist Perspective (1984), wrote that being aware of sexism in language is important because language not only reflects social values and attitudes, but also reinforces them.⁴³ Adams and Ware wrote:

One implication of this argument is that the ability of language to reinforce the status quo helps to perpetuate sexist attitudes and practices and inhibit social change. Another implication is that, according to this theory, women are likely to come to 'see themselves as the language see them.' Women will be encouraged to view themselves as sex objects, as trivial, as ambivalent about their status as complete human beings, etc.⁴⁴

The social status quo is kept intact by patterns of interaction which define and declare a person's status, role, social value, and expectations.⁴⁵ Language can reinforce the status quo, or it can work to facilitate change.⁴⁶

Language plays an important role in socialization because it helps teach children the roles that are expected of them. Children conceptualize their ideas and feelings about themselves and their world through language. Thought and action are reflected in language, and language in turn conditions how a person thinks and acts. The elimination of

sexist language will not eliminate sexist conduct, but as the language is liberated from sexist usages and assumptions, men and women will begin to share more equal, active, caring roles.⁴⁷

Although there has been progress in the elimination of sexist language in the mass media, sex bias in reporting still exists. Research in sexism in language can help make people aware of sexism in language. Once people, especially journalists, are aware of sex bias, they can take steps to correct their language.

This study will help show the extent of sex bias in sports reporting and whether it has changed from 1984 to 1988. This study will also show what type of sex bias is most prevalent.

Cultural Stereotypes

Research on people's perceptions of the sexes suggests that cultural stereotypes of the sexes are prevalent, but those stereotypes do not necessarily reflect reality. Pingree and Hawkins observe that research on the psychology of sex roles has shown that caricature-like stereotypes of women and men are widely accepted by both sexes and suggest that journalists are susceptible to the same sorts of perceptions as the general public audience for which they write.⁴⁸

To examine whether journalists are biased in their treatment of male and female newsmakers, Drew and Miller

(1977) designed an experiment using journalism students. An analysis of the stories showed that the students were more likely to mention the newsmakers' qualifications for a job if they were male. In the interview questions that students made up, female newsmakers were more likely to be questioned about sex-roles and about problems with the combining of a career and family responsibilities. Although the blatant stereotyping predicted in the hypothesis was not confirmed, the questions of the students showed subtle bias based on the sex of the newsmaker.⁴⁹

Many of the cultural stereotypes of men and women do not accurately reflect the characteristics of women and men. The landmark review of research on the psychology of sex differences was published in 1974 by Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin. One of the most notable conclusions reached by Maccoby and Jacklin is that most psychological sex differences are assumed or perceived and not real. Stated differently, many commonly held beliefs regarding sex differences in anxiety, competitiveness, dominance, and compliance, among others, are unsubstantiated in controlled studies. The beliefs are cultural myths which continue to be perpetuated, without basis, merely because we assume they are true.⁵⁰

Some of these traits, such as competitiveness and dominance, are considered desirable for sports participation. By assuming that women lack those traits, people have assumed they would not be good in sports. This has helped people

view athletics as an expression of male sexuality and power, a world in which women are intruders.⁵¹ Journalists would probably have many of the same assumptions as the general public; therefore, their coverage of women in sports could tend to be biased.

Sexism in Language

Sexism in the English language has been fostered by the stereotypes of men and women held for many years. These stereotypes have assigned certain characteristics, such as strength, aggressiveness, and power, to men, while females are assigned passivity and powerlessness.⁵² These male/female stereotypes have been codified in language.⁵³

The structure of the English language reinforces the stereotypes through the symbolic exclusion of women where they should be included and also in the unnecessary proliferation of terms, often derogatory, for use in referring to women.⁵⁴

To understand the importance of linguistic sexism, one must understand the important role language plays in influencing our thoughts and actions by naming, defining, describing, and ignoring.⁵⁵ People have used language, and continue to use language, to dehumanize a group into submission.⁵⁶

Sexism in language takes three main forms: it ignores, it defines, it deprecates.⁵⁷ An example of ignoring would be the masculine "generic," which even in context is likely to

have a masculine bias.⁵⁸ Defining helps maintain women's secondary status by referring to women in terms of their relationship to men.⁵⁹ The depreciation of women in language is illustrated by the connotations and meanings of words applied to male and female characteristics. The language applies different adjectives to the actions or productions of the different sexes.⁶⁰

One area of sex differences research in language has been sexism in the vocabulary and structure of the language itself. Some of the earliest research on sexism and language consisted of word counting and constructing word lists that demonstrated there were more words in general for men and more positive words for men than for women. Miller and Swift's "Words and Women" and Key's "Male/Female Language" are two of the important treatments of vocabulary differences in labels, descriptors, taboos, and asymmetrical word pairs. A process of semantic derogation occurs over the years once a word becomes associated with women. Another concern in sexism in language is the use of pronouns, in particular the "generic masculine." Feminists such as Wendy Martyna have shown that the generic masculine is not as generic as language "authorities" claim it is.⁶¹

Another way in which language classifies women in essentially male terms is in social titles that make the declaration of a woman's marital status, i.e., her relationship to a man, obligatory.⁶²

The use of "lady" for "woman" often has negative connotations, e.g., lady doctor. Similar in effect to the substitution of "lady" for "woman" is the practice of referring to adult females as girls. Although the suggestion of youth may be desirable in our youth-oriented culture, the association carries certain negative connotations--irresponsibility, immaturity, "smallness" of body or mind, etc.⁶³

The use of animal metaphors in relation to females also points out how language is used to degrade women.

In the chicken metaphors, a young girl is a chick. When she gets old enough she marries and soon begins feeling cooped up. To relieve the boredom she goes to hen parties and cackles with her friends. Eventually she has her brood, begins to henpeck her husband, and finally turns into an old biddy.⁶⁴

In language women are also compared to items that people acquire for their pleasure. Females are described as a dish, a cookie, or a tart. Women are also compared to toys. Young girls are called little dolls while older girls, if they are attractive, are simply called dolls.⁶⁵

The continuing awareness of sexism in the English language has had an effect on how people write. Simple changes have been encouraged by teachers, editors, and others who deal in language. Many publishing companies encourage or require writers to use nonsexist language, and some scholarly associations require nonsexist language in their journals.⁶⁶

Beginning in the early 1970s, professionals in communication started making changes in language and sexism.

In the spring of 1970, Benjamin Bradlee, executive editor of the Washington Post, sent his staff a memo on the topic of the equality and dignity of women. Bradlee advised writers to avoid such terms as divorcee, grandmother, and blonde as synonymous for woman and to avoid using sexist adjectives such as vivacious, pert, dimpled, and cute.⁶⁷

In April 1972 "The American Heritage School Dictionary" was published and claimed that it was "the first reference book to seriously consider the problem of sexism in school materials and to take considered steps to solve the problem."⁶⁸

In October 1983 Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care was revised to rid the book of sexism. After 27 years, 201 printings, and 23,445,781 copies of his family Baby Bible, Dr. Spock revised his pronoun usage, which referred to the baby as he, him, or his roughly ten thousand times. In the new edition, Dr. Spock uses the sexless they, them, and their except where the plural is exceptionally awkward. Then, as a balance to the old book, Dr. Spock uses she, her, or hers.⁶⁹

In the spring of 1975 the U.S. Department of Labor published a 363-page book entitled "Job Title Revisions to Eliminate Sex- and Age-Referent Language from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, Third Edition."⁷⁰

Also in the spring of 1975, Robin Lakoff's paper "Language and Woman's Place," which was originally printed in

Language and Society, was published in paperback by Harper and Row. Lakoff pursued the point that society has given women certain roles to fill and the language that is associated with these roles serves to perpetuate the system.⁷¹

In June 1975 "The American Psychologist" put out guidelines drawn up by a seven-member task force to offset language bias and to present alternatives for nonsexist writing. "The purpose of these stylistic guidelines," the editors wrote, "is to overcome the impression presently embedded in the English language that (a) people in general are of the male gender and (b) certain social roles are automatically sex-linked. Another purpose is to insure that psychological writing does not degrade or circumscribe human beings."⁷²

By 1977, the Associated Press Stylebook, as well as numerous style manuals for other news organizations, came out with pronouncements on style and remedies for sexism.⁷³

The Associated Press Stylebook's entry for women states:

Women should receive the same treatment as men in all areas of coverage. Physical descriptions, sexist references, demeaning stereotypes and condescending phrases should not be used.

To cite some examples, this means that:
--Copy should not assume maleness when both sexes are involved, as in Jackson told newsmen or in the taxpayer . . . he, when it easily can be said Jackson told reporters or taxpayers . . . they.

--Copy should not express surprise that an attractive woman can be professionally accomplished, as in: Mary Smith doesn't look the part but she's an authority on . . .

--Copy should not gratuitously mention family relationships where there is no relevance to the subject, as in: Golda Meir, a doughty grandmother, told the Egyptians today . . .

--Use the same standards for men and women in deciding whether to include specific mention of personal appearance or marital and family situation.

In other words, treatment of the sexes should be even-handed and free of assumptions and stereotypes. This does not mean that valid and acceptable words such as mankind or humanity cannot be used. They are proper.⁷⁴

The AP Stylebook, under courtesy titles--marital status, states: "If a woman prefers Ms. or no title, do not include her marital status in a story unless it is clearly pertinent."⁷⁵

Sports

The research on the coverage of women in sports suggests that sex bias does exist. Casey Miller and Kate Swift in The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing (1980) wrote that recent years have brought a marked change in the amount of space allotted to women's sports, and the language sportswriters use in describing women's sports is becoming more evenhanded.⁷⁶ This is important in sportswriting because good sports reporting concentrates on the game and the players, not on their sex or marital status.⁷⁷

Sports Illustrated is the largest national weekly sports magazine, and its coverage of sports is considered by many to be the most professional. There have been several empirical studies of women in sports regarding Sports Illustrated.⁷⁸ To celebrate its 25th year of publication, Sports Illustrated published a 26-page reproduction of its magazine covers from August 1954 through 1978. A content analysis of the 1250 covers (Women's Sports, 1979, p. 12) showed both the "symbolic annihilation" and the trivialization of women in sports. Women appeared on only 115 of the 1250 magazine covers and only 55 of the women on the covers were female athletes, accounting for less than 5% of the magazine covers.⁷⁹

The symbolic visual message of these magazine covers is one that reinforces the traditional association of sports with men and gives only minimal approval to the least threatening deviations by women.⁸⁰ In an interpretation of the magazine cover of Chris Evert, Sports Illustrated's 1977 Athlete of the Year, J. Kaplan in Women and Sports (1979) observed:

For the cover picture, this sports champion was in a replica of the 1884 tennis costume--a long white dress complete with bustle. The underlying message to male readers was that if they were dismayed at a woman's getting the magazine's highest honor, they could console themselves by looking at the picture of prim and proper Chris, standing straight-backed in an Edwardian setting of bentwood furniture and potted palms. Holding an outmoded tennis racket, she was hardly the image of an athlete to be reckoned with. The photograph suggested to male

readers that while it was fashionable to recognize women as athletes, they could regard the whole thing as a joke.⁸¹

An analysis of Sports Illustrated by Corrigan (1972) reported that every article surveyed contained descriptions of the female athletes' physical attributes. A 1976 study by Zang contains supporting data that reflects the disproportionately small amount of coverage given to female athletes and the emphasis placed on socially approved, individual sports.⁸² In television coverage between August 1972 and September 1973, NBC devoted one hour out of 366 hours of "live" sports coverage to women.⁸³

The study by Miller found that only 5-6% of sports photographs were of women.⁸⁴

In the mass media one of the most blatant examples of "symbolic annihilation" is found in television coverage of female athletes.⁸⁵ In 1979, Grete Waitz won her second New York City Marathon and set a new world record for women. Despite much publicity about the marathon and Waitz, live television did not cover Waitz winning the race.⁸⁶

Television was not the only medium that virtually ignored Waitz's historic accomplishment. This event was reported on page nine of the Sunday New York Times sports section. The first eight pages of the sports section reported the news of men's sports. The headline of the Waitz story also captured the biased reporting of her story. It read: "Grete Waitz Sets Record in Park Run." The headline

does not mention what record was broken, in what time, or at what level of competition. Even the use of the words "Park Run" seem to suggest a casual, pastoral romp through the park rather than a serious and demanding marathon.⁸⁷

A partial explanation for the existence of sex bias in the sports reporting of the mass media is that the majority of sports reporters are male. Although women sportswriters have made gains in the past decade, sports reporting is still largely a male-dominated field. Today, almost every major daily newspaper with a circulation of more than 175,000 has a woman on its sports staff. Some newspapers, such as the Oakland Tribune, have women who are deputy sports editors. But, as in other areas of the women's movement, the gains made by some women have obscured the fact that there is still a long way to go. Only 10% of the sportswriters in the United States are women and 40% of the nation's newspapers have no female sportswriters.⁸⁸ Female sportswriters still face inappropriate and outdated attitudes that make their jobs difficult and discourage some women from going into or staying in the field.⁸⁹

Olympics

Like the issue of women in sports in general, the issue of female athletes in the Olympics may still be considered an unresolved problem (Spears 1976). Although women have made much progress in athletic participation and performance since

the start of the Olympic Games, they are still underrepresented on sports governing bodies, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and are still subject to often restrictive and outdated conceptions of the role of women in society and in sports.⁹⁰ Table II shows the participation of female athletes in the Olympic Games.⁹¹

In 1977 "The Final Report of the President's Commission on Olympic Sports 1975-77" recommended the establishment of programs and policies to support female athletes and to eliminate discriminatory practice in the treatment of women's programs.⁹² In its "Olympic Charter" of 1979, the IOC retained the Olympic discrimination clause which read, "No discrimination in them (the Olympic Games) is allowed against any country or person on grounds of race, religion, or politics." The omission of the word "sex" in the discrimination clause implies that the IOC views that discrimination against women is acceptable or does not exist. Discrimination against women does, in fact, exist.⁹³ Betty Spears points out that the inferior status of women's participation in the Olympics is still sustained by emphasizing language that is implicitly hostile to women's participation in the Olympic Games.⁹⁴

Boutilier and SanGiovanni wrote that the coverage of female athletes in the Olympic Games suggests that the coverage is sex biased. In the broadcast media coverage of the Olympic Games, far fewer women's events are covered. Coverage of women's events is often taped and aired in

TABLE II
PARTICIPATION IN OLYMPIC GAMES

Date	Site	Nations	Athletes	
			Males	Females
1896 (April 6-15)	Athens	13	295	0
1900 (May 20 - Oct. 18)	Paris	11	1066	11
1904 (July 1 - Nov. 23)	St. Louis	21	546	8
1908 (May 5 - July 22)	London	28	1998	36
1912 (May 5 - July 22)	Stockholm	28	2447	57
1916	Cancelled due to WWI			
1920 (April 20 - Dec. 9)	Antwerp	29	2527	64
1924 (May 4 - July 27)	Paris	44	2939	136
1928 (May 17 - Aug. 12)	Amsterdam	46	2708	263
1932 (July 30 - Aug. 14)	Los Angeles	38	1281	127
1936 (Aug. 1 - 16)	Berlin	49	3652	328
1940	Cancelled due to WWII			
1944	Cancelled due to WWII			
1948 (July 29 - Aug. 14)	London	58	3677	385
1952 (July 18 - Aug. 3)	Helsinki	69	5349	518
1956 (Nov. 22 - Dec. 8)	Melbourne	67	2971	371
1960 (Aug. 26 - Sept. 11)	Rome	84	4859	537
1964 (Oct. 10 - 24)	Tokyo	94	4854	732
1968 (Oct. 12 - 27)	Mexico City	125	5782	844
1972 (Aug. 26 - Sept. 11)	Munich	123	7019	1125
1976 (July 17 - Aug. 1)	Montreal	88	4915	1274
1980 (July 19 - Aug. 3)	Moscow	81	4265	1088

Source: U.S. Olympic Committee.

Note: The number of nations listed is based on the countries filing official entries, not necessarily the actual number of nations that entered competing athletes.

fragments before or after live coverage of men's events. Women's events are rarely broadcast in their entirety; usually only finals or semifinals are shown. The only exceptions to this general rule are those events that confirm the stereotyped images of the acceptable sportswoman. Much attention is given to gymnasts, figure skaters, and swimmers and divers. Sports that do not conform to the stereotyped image of women, such as volleyball, basketball, speed skating, track and field, and Alpine skiing, get little television coverage.⁹⁵

Summary

The research concerning women's portrayal in the mass media suggests that coverage is biased. The studies of female athletes in the media also suggest bias in sports coverage of women. Language and sex is a relatively new field of research, but studies done of language and sex in the media suggest that the language used to describe women is also biased.

This study involves the coverage of female athletes in the media, particularly in the Olympic Games, and focuses on the language that is used to describe female athletes. The media coverage of female athletes and sexism in language were covered in the literature review and will help in understanding the research topic.

ENDNOTES

¹Matilda Butler and William Paisley, Women and the Mass Media (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978) 7.

²Nancy Theberge, "Sport and Feminism in North America," Women in Sport: Sociological and Historical Perspectives, eds. Amy L. Reeder and John R. Fuller (Carrollton, GA: West Georgia College, 1985), 46.

³Mary A. Boutilier and Lucinda SanGiovanni, The Sporting Woman (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1983) 218.

⁴Theberge 48.

⁵Theberge 48.

⁶Irwin Stambler, Women in Sports (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1975), 4.

⁷Stambler 3.

⁸Stambler 3.

⁹Stambler 4.

¹⁰K. F. Dyer, Challenging the Men (St. Lucia, NY: University of Queensland Press, 1982) 108.

¹¹Dyer 108.

¹²Howard L. Nixon II, Sport and the American Dream (New York: Leisure Press, 1984), 164.

¹³Boutilier and SanGiovanni 37-38.

¹⁴Candace Lyle Hogan, "What's in the Future for Women's Sports," Women's Sports and Fitness, June 1987, 46.

¹⁵Anne J. Stone, "1987 in Review," The American Woman 1988-89: A Status Report (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988) 36.

- ¹⁶Theberge 41.
- ¹⁷Dyer 105.
- ¹⁸Dyer 105.
- ¹⁹June Sochen, Enduring Values (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987) 120-123.
- ²⁰Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983) 343.
- ²¹Boutilier and SanGiovanni 188.
- ²²Linda J. Busby, "Sex-Role Research on the Mass Media," Journal of Communications, Autumn 1975, 107.
- ²³Butler and Paisley 39.
- ²⁴Butler and Paisley 39.
- ²⁵Ellen Seiter, "Stereotypes and the Media: A Re-Evaluation," Journal of Communications, Spring 1986, 19.
- ²⁶Lana F. Rakow, "Rethinking Gender Research in Communication," Journal of Communication, Autumn 1986, 13.
- ²⁷Rakow 12.
- ²⁸Diane Silver, "A Comparison of Newspaper Coverage of Male and Female Officials in Michigan," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1986, 145.
- ²⁹Junetta Davis, "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, Fall 1982, 458.
- ³⁰Butler and Paisley.
- ³¹Susan H. Miller, "The Content of News Photos: Women's and Men's Roles," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1975, 71.
- ³²Roy E. Blackwood, "The Content of News Photos: Roles Portrayed by Men and Women," Journalism Quarterly, Fall 1984, 711.
- ³³C. Kramarae, "Perceptions and Politics in Language and Sex Research," Language: Social Psychological Perspectives, eds. Howard Giles, W. Peter Robinson, Philip M. Smith (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980) 83.
- ³⁴Rakow 18.

- ³⁵Boutilier and SanGiovanni 197.
- ³⁶Boutilier and SanGiovanni 198.
- ³⁷Boutilier and SanGiovanni 211.
- ³⁸Boutilier and SanGiovanni 211.
- ³⁹Theberge 44.
- ⁴⁰Tina Trunzo and Leslie R. Wolfe, "Like She Owns the Earth: Women and Sports," Beyond Sex Roles, eds. Alice G. Sargent (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1984) 272.
- ⁴¹Alleen Pace Nilsen, Haig Bosmajian, H. Lee Gershuny, and Julia P. Stanley, Sexism and Language (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977) 182.
- ⁴²Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet, eds. Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 6.
- ⁴³Karen L. Adams and Norma C. Ware, "Sexism and the English Language: The Linguistic Implications of Being a Women," Women: A Feminist Perspective, ed. Jo Freeman (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984) 482.
- ⁴⁴Adams and Ware 483.
- ⁴⁵Nancy Henley, Mykol Hamilton, and Barrie Thorne, "Womanspeak and Manspeak: Sex Differences and Sexism in Communication, Verbal and Nonverbal," Beyond Sex Roles, ed. Alice G. Sargent (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1984), 169.
- ⁴⁶Adams and Ware 488.
- ⁴⁷Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 182.
- ⁴⁸Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Sex-Role Stereotyping in Writing the News," Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1987, 614.
- ⁴⁹Butler and Paisley 33.
- ⁵⁰Boutilier and SanGiovanni 52.
- ⁵¹Stephanie L. Twin, Out of the Bleachers (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1979) xxxvii.
- ⁵²Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley viii.

- ⁵³Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley viii.
- ⁵⁴Sandra E. Purnell, "Politically Speaking, Do Women Exist," Journal of Communications, Winter 1978, 150.
- ⁵⁵Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 170-175.
- ⁵⁶Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 170-175.
- ⁵⁷Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 170-175.
- ⁵⁸Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 170-175.
- ⁵⁹Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 170.
- ⁶⁰Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 171.
- ⁶¹Rakow 15.
- ⁶²Adams and Ware 480.
- ⁶³Adams and Ware 380.
- ⁶⁴Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 29.
- ⁶⁵Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 32.
- ⁶⁶Henley, Hamilton, and Thorne 172.
- ⁶⁷Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 2.
- ⁶⁸Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 7.
- ⁶⁹Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 10.
- ⁷⁰Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 16.
- ⁷¹Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 16.
- ⁷²Nilsen, Bosmajian, Gershuny, and Stanley 18.
- ⁷³Jean Ward, "The War of Words," The Quill, October 1980, 10.
- ⁷⁴Christopher W. French, Eileen Alt Powell, and Howard Angione, eds. The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (New York: The Associated Press, 1984) 220-221.
- ⁷⁵French, Powell, and Angione 221.
- ⁷⁶Casey Miller and Kate Swift, The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing (New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1980), 60.

- 77 Miller and Swift 62.
- 78 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 209.
- 79 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 209.
- 80 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 209.
- 81 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 209.
- 82 J. Kaplan, Women and Sports (New York: The Viking Press, 1979) 82.
- 83 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 187.
- 84 Miller 72.
- 85 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 186.
- 86 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 187.
- 87 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 199.
- 88 Joanne Lannin, "Assignment: Sports," Women's Sports and Fitness, March 1987, 77.
- 89 Lannin 77.
- 90 Jeffrey Segrave and Donald Chu, eds. Olympism (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1981) 76.
- 91 Ken Denlinger, "Blinded by Political Science," The Washington Post, 22 July 1984, 5.
- 92 Segrave and Chu 78.
- 93 B. Spears, "Tryphosa, Melpomene, and Nadia: The IOC and Woman's Sport," Olympism (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1981) 86.
- 94 Segrave and Chu 79.
- 95 Boutilier and SanGiovanni 190.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study employed content analysis to determine if there has been a change in the extent of sex biased reporting between the coverage of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games. Two magazines and two newspapers were analyzed.

A formal definition of content analysis was proposed by Bernard Berelson in 1952:

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.¹

This definition of content analysis stresses content (text and pictures) and technique (a repeatable procedure involving skill). Also inherent in this definition is a system (a set of rules or relationships) and objectivity (suspension of personal values in judgment). Analysis is quantitative and focuses on manifest content (i.e., there is nothing read between the lines).²

One of the earliest uses of content analysis to ascertain media performance was a 1920 study by Walter

Lippman and Charles Merz. They analyzed more than 1000 issues of the New York Times to assess the coverage of the Russian Revolution.³

Scope of the Study

Because of an increased awareness of sex bias in the media, it was hypothesized that a content analysis of the coverage of the two Olympic Games would indicate that there was less sex bias in that of the 1988 Olympic Games.

This study will look only at the coverage of the Summer Olympic Games of 1984 and 1988. But to some extent the results of this study can be used to determine the extent of sex bias in sports reporting in general. The study also looks only at selected media, but again some generalizations can be made to the mass media in general.

Media Selected

This thesis examines media coverage of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games. Newspapers selected were The Daily Oklahoman and The Washington Post. Magazines selected were Newsweek and Sports Illustrated. These media were selected because the style and type of coverage is different in each, thus giving the study a greater diversity of sample articles and little chance of the same article appearing in more than one publication. For example, although The Daily Oklahoman uses many Associated Press wire stories, The Washington Post

uses mainly staff written stories. Both of the magazines selected were weekly magazines, making their coverage somewhat equal, and providing enough data for analysis.

Time Frame

The 1984 Summer Olympic Games were held July 28 through August 12, 1984. For the two newspapers the time period researched was from July 1 through August 18, 1984. Each daily and Sunday edition of the selected newspapers was analyzed.

For the 1984 Games, the editions of Newsweek that were analyzed were: July 2, July 9, July 30, August 6, August 13, and August 20. The editions of Sports Illustrated that were analyzed were: June 25, July 2, July 9, July 16, July 23, August 6, August 13, August 20, and the Olympic Preview issue.

The 1988 Summer Olympic Games were held September 16 through October 2, 1988. For the two newspapers the time period researched was from August 17 through October 9, 1988.

For the 1988 Games the editions of Newsweek that were analyzed were: August 15, August 22, September 19, September 26, October 3, and October 10. The editions of Sports Illustrated analyzed were: July 25, August 1, August 8, August 15, August 22, August 29, September 12, September 26, and the Olympic Preview issue.

Selection of Items

To be selected, an article had to contain one or more specific references to the Summer Olympic Games and a female athlete involved in the games.

Research Design

This study uses content analysis to determine sex bias in the coverage of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games. The dependent variable is the treatment of women in the media. The independent variable is time (1984 vs. 1988).

Because of the articles and books criticizing the coverage of women (particularly in the area of sports), the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis Overall, there will be less sex bias in the coverage of the 1988 Summer Olympic Games than in the 1984 Summer Olympic Games.

In addition to the hypothesis, there are several research questions to be answered. They are:

1. What type of sex bias was most prevalent in 1984 and 1988?
2. Has there been a change in the predominance of the types of sex bias between 1984 and 1988?
3. Is there a difference in degree of bias between newspapers and magazines for 1984 or 1988?

Coding

The coding of articles to determine if sex bias is present was done by following guidelines that have been established. The guidelines used for this research are Guidelines for Sex-Fair Vocational Education Materials, a publication by the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education.⁴ Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes, a publication by McGraw-Hill, was also used.⁵

The publications include guidelines that encompass both the language used to refer to women and the way in which language is used to describe women. Perhaps the greatest degree of sex biased coverage involves the physical description of women and the emphasis placed on their appearance.

The McGraw-Hill publication states that:

In descriptions of women, a patronizing or girl-watching tone should be avoided, as should sexual innuendoes, jokes, and puns. Examples of practices to be avoided: focusing on physical appearance (a buxom blonde); using special female-gender word forms (poetess,, aviatrix, usherette); treating women as sex objects or portraying the typical woman as weak, helpless, or hysterical; making women figures of fun, objects of scorn and treating their issues as humorous or unimportant.⁶

Both publications provide extensive examples of sex biased language and the way in which it can be avoided.

In coding sex bias present in the articles, four categories were used. Each instance of sex bias was placed in one of the four categories. The categories were:

1. Physical Description/Appearance--Inappropriate or irrelevant reference to physical appearance or dress. Undue emphasis on the clothes, makeup or sexual characteristics of women. Example: "A deadpan blonde of 17 who sprinkles glittery makeup around her eyes." ". . . right down to their tiny bottoms."
2. Stereotyped Actions/Attitudes--Attributing stereotyped or belittling attributes of character or personality to women. Example: "That was the night the U.S. women's team stayed up until all hours at USC's Olympic Village to congratulate the men, waiting like patient housewives for their carousing hubbies to come home from the smoker at the Elks."
3. Personal Information--Inappropriate personal references. Mentioning personal relations when not relevant to the story. Example: "The American women could boast of Janice Lawrence's inside work-- Lawrence was rumored to be carrying on a village romance with one of Knight's guys whose identity will go unrevealed here."
4. Language--Not using parallel treatment for men and women. Referring to women as "girls" or "ladies" in a sense that is degrading. Referring to women by their first name when it is usually not the

practice. Example: "Buwick said she thought Kelly had done extremely well and had been underscored" (referring to Kelly Garrison-Steves).

The number and type of sex bias references in each article was tabulated. To make valid comparisons between years, the number of words per article was tabulated. This was done by using an average method. The average instances per article, average instances per 100 words, and average words per article were tabulated.

To determine if sex bias is present in the articles, two coders were used. The coders are a professional editor with a master's degree in English and a graduate student in mass communications. The coders reviewed the guidelines and met to make sure their understanding was similar. To determine coder reliability, 20 of the magazine articles were done by both coders and then checked against each other. The coder reliability formula was then used to determine the validity of the categories and method. The coder reliability was .94.

Statistical Tests

Each article was coded according to the number of times and type of sex bias that was reported. Raw scores for each year (1984 and 1988) and each medium were totalled. Newspaper and magazine figures were then coded.

The simple chi square was used to see if there was any difference between the categories for each medium for each year.

The complex chi square was used to measure differences among all of the media and the types of sex bias in the different media.

Tables

The tables presented include a breakdown of the types and occurrences of sex bias present in each medium for each year. Tables showing the number of words for each medium for each year are also used.

Limitations

Because this study is a content analysis and the topic being researched could be seen as being emotional, there is a possibility of bias on the part of the researcher. The lack of many previous studies dealing specifically with sexism and language in print media could also be seen as a drawback to the research. But through the use of the guidelines described previously and awareness by the researcher of her own biases, it is hoped that some of the limitations of this study will be overcome.

ENDNOTES

¹Matilda Butler and William Paisley, Women and the Mass Media (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978) 60.

²Butler and Paisley 60.

³Butler and Paisley 61.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Data Collection

The problem analyzed in this study was whether Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, The Daily Oklahoman, and The Washington Post coverage of female athletes in the Summer Olympics changed in sex biased content of articles. The hypothesis focused on whether there would be a change overall in the coverage of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games. The research questions focused on the differences in the types of sex bias among the different media studied.

Two coders were used to classify the types of bias present in the articles into one of four categories: physical description, language, personal, and stereotype.

Articles were included in the study if they contained a reference to a female athlete involved in the games and a reference to the games themselves. Some of the articles analyzed contained information on other aspects of the Olympics but also mentioned a female athlete and so were included in the study. In all, 464 articles were analyzed for this study.

Of those articles, The Washington Post published the most--223 (48%). The Daily Oklahoman published 146 (31.5%), Sports Illustrated published 61 (13.2%) and Newsweek published 34 (7.3%). Some of the difference in the number of articles in the two media can be attributed to the different formats of the newspapers and magazines. Newspaper articles tend to be shorter while magazine articles tend to be longer but cover topics in more depth.

To give a more accurate representation of the data analyzed, the number of words per article was tabulated by using an average of the number of words per sentence in the article. Table III gives an overview of the data that were collected for this study.

Table III shows the number of articles analyzed for each medium for both 1984 and 1988. The number of words for each medium for both 1984 and 1988 is also given. The instances of each category of sex bias for each year for each medium are also given.

Table IV illustrates the breakdown of media for 1984 with the number of words for each medium. Table IV shows the instances of each category of sex bias for 1984 for each medium.

The raw scores in Table IV indicate that the average number of words per article for 1984 was 851. This was calculated by dividing the total number of words for 1984 by

TABLE III
NUMBER OF ARTICLES WITH SEX BIAS, AND FREQUENCY OF SEX BIAS BY TYPE,
BY PUBLICATION

Medium/Words	Articles	Instances			
		Physical Description	Language	Personal	Stereotype
<u>Newsweek</u> 1988 (19,467)	13	1	1	1	9/12
<u>Newsweek</u> 1984 (24,198)	21	2	0	4	11/17
<u>Sports Illustrated</u> 1988 (49,785)	39	10	0	3	7/20
<u>Sports Illustrated</u> 1984 (62,046)	22	13	9	8	24/54
<u>The Daily Oklahoman</u> 1988 (26,021)	52	3	5	4	1/13
<u>The Daily Oklahoman</u> 1984 (50,834)	94	9	12	3	18/42
<u>The Washington Post</u> 1988 (74,048)	105	5	11	10	16/42
<u>The Washington Post</u> 1984 (80,038)	118	7	17	8	22/54

TABLE IV
NUMBER OF ARTICLES WITH SEX BIAS, AND FREQUENCY OF SEX BIAS BY TYPE,
BY PUBLICATION, IN 1984

Medium/Articles	Words	Instances			
		Physical Description	Language	Personal	Stereotype
<u>Newsweek</u> (21 articles)	24,138	2	0	4	11
<u>Sports Illustrated</u> (22 articles)	62,046	13	9	8	24
<u>The Daily Oklahoman</u> (94 articles)	50,834	9	12	3	18
<u>The Washington Post</u> (118 articles)	80,038	7	17	8	22
255 Total Articles	217,116	31	38	23	95/167

Note: Average words per article = 851; average instances per article = .65; average instances per 100 words = .08.

the total number of articles for 1984. The average instances of sex bias per article was .65. This was calculated by dividing the total instances of sex bias by the number of articles for 1984. Thus, for 1984 there was less than one instance of sex bias per article. The average instances of sex bias per 100 words was .08.

Table V illustrates the breakdown of media for 1988 with the number of words for each medium. Table V shows the instances of each category of sex bias for 1988 for each medium.

The raw scores in Table V indicate that the average number of words per article for 1988 was 810. The average instances of sex bias per article was .42. Thus, once again, it can be said that there was less than one instance of sex bias per article for 1988. The average instances of sex bias per 100 words was .05.

From the raw data in Tables IV and V it appears that the degree of sex bias present in the articles analyzed has changed somewhat for the better from 1984 to 1988. The average instances per article in 1984 was .65 compared to .42 for 1988. The average instances of sex bias per 100 words for 1984 was .08 compared to .05 for 1988.

From Tables IV and V, the raw data indicate that for 1984 the most prevalent type of bias was stereotype (75). The next most prevalent type was language (38), followed by physical description (31), and personal (23).

TABLE V
NUMBER OF ARTICLES WITH SEX BIAS, AND FREQUENCY OF SEX BIAS BY TYPE,
BY PUBLICATION, IN 1988

Medium/Articles	Words	Instances			
		Physical Description	Language	Personal	Stereotype
<u>Newsweek</u> (13 articles)	19,467	1	1	1	9
<u>Sports Illustrated</u> (39 articles)	49,785	10	0	3	7
<u>The Daily Oklahoman</u> (52 articles)	26,021	3	5	4	1
<u>The Washington Post</u> (105 articles)	74,048	5	11	10	16
209 Total Articles	169,321	19	17	18	33/87

Note: Average words per article = 810; average instances per article = .42; average instances per 100 words = .05.

The first of these is the fact that the 1990s saw a significant increase in the number of people who were employed in the public sector. This was due to a combination of factors, including the fact that the public sector was seen as a more stable and secure place to work than the private sector, and the fact that the public sector was seen as a more socially desirable place to work than the private sector.

Secondly, the 1990s saw a significant increase in the number of people who were employed in the private sector. This was due to a combination of factors, including the fact that the private sector was seen as a more dynamic and innovative place to work than the public sector, and the fact that the private sector was seen as a more socially desirable place to work than the public sector.

Conclusion

The 1990s saw a significant increase in the number of people who were employed in the public sector. This was due to a combination of factors, including the fact that the public sector was seen as a more stable and secure place to work than the private sector, and the fact that the public sector was seen as a more socially desirable place to work than the private sector.

Secondly, the 1990s saw a significant increase in the number of people who were employed in the private sector. This was due to a combination of factors, including the fact that the private sector was seen as a more dynamic and innovative place to work than the public sector, and the fact that the private sector was seen as a more socially desirable place to work than the public sector.

The 1990s saw a significant increase in the number of people who were employed in the public sector. This was due to a combination of factors, including the fact that the public sector was seen as a more stable and secure place to work than the private sector, and the fact that the public sector was seen as a more socially desirable place to work than the private sector.

the two years. This means that in the coverage of female athletes the media did not significantly improve the instances of sex bias from 1984 to 1988.

Newspapers vs. Magazines

Newspapers and magazines were compared for each year using the chi square to see if there was a significant difference in the two media.

When comparing the overall totals between newspapers and magazines for 1984, the combined chi square at $df = 3$ is 7.3578, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, it can be said that newspapers and magazines did not differ significantly in their coverage for 1984. This means that whether the article was in a newspaper or magazine did not significantly affect whether that article would contain certain instances of sex bias.

When comparing the overall totals between newspapers and magazines for 1988, the combined chi square at $df = 3$ is 15.8533, which is significant at the .05 level. Thus, it can be said that for 1988 newspapers and magazines did differ significantly in their coverage. A simple chi square was used to see where the differences were for newspapers and magazines. There was no significant difference at the .05 level between the media for physical description or for stereotype. But a significant difference was found at the .05 level between newspapers and magazines for language and personal. This means that there was a difference in the

type of sex bias present in the 1988 coverage of newspapers and magazines.

These data would help answer research question number 3, "Is there a difference between newspapers and magazines for 1984 or 1988?" For 1984 there was not a significant difference between newspapers and magazines, but for 1988 there was a significant difference. This difference was attributed to the categories of language and personal. The contingency coefficient was .15, which indicates that although there is a relationship between media type and category of sex bias, it is not a very strong one.

Magazines

A complex chi square was used to see if there was any significant difference in the overall magazine coverage between 1984 and 1988.

When comparing magazines of 1984 and 1988 the combined chi square at $df = 3$ is 3.8836, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, it can be said that there was not a significant difference in magazine coverage between 1984 and 1988. This means that magazines did not significantly improve their coverage of female athletes from 1984 to 1988.

A simple chi square was used on each magazine for each year to see if there was any difference in the categories. The results of the simple chi squares are shown below. The degrees of freedom is 3.

1984

Newsweek x = 16.1765

Sports Illustrated x = 11.926

1988

Newsweek x = 16

Sports Illustrated x = 11.6

In each case, the calculated chi square was larger than the table chi square of 7.82 at .05 significance with $df = 3$. Thus, it can be said that in each case there was a significant difference between the categories of sex bias. This means that for the magazines there was a significant difference between the categories of sex bias. The categories of bias were not evenly distributed for each medium.

A complex chi square was used to see if there was any difference between the two years for each specific magazine.

When comparing the two years for Newsweek, the combined chi square at $df = 3$ is 2.5458, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, there is not a significant difference between the 1984 and 1988 coverage for Newsweek. This means that Newsweek did not significantly improve its coverage of female athletes from 1984 to 1988.

When comparing the two years for Sports Illustrated, the combined chi square at $df = 3$ is 6.8005, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, there is not a significant difference between the 1984 and 1988 coverage for

Sports Illustrated. This means that Sports Illustrated did not significantly improve its coverage of female athletes from 1984 to 1988.

Finally, a complex chi square was used to determine if there was any significant difference between Newsweek and Sports Illustrated for each of the two years.

When comparing the two magazines for 1984, the combined chi square is 5.4184, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, for 1984 there is not a significant difference between the coverage of Newsweek and Sports Illustrated. This means that one of the magazines was not more likely than the other to have more of certain instances of sex bias.

When comparing the two magazines for 1988, the combined chi square is 8.1212, which is significant at the .05 level with $df = 3$. Thus, there is a significant difference between the coverage of the magazines for 1988. A simple chi square was used to determine where the differences exist. For language, personal and stereotype no significant difference was found. But there was significant difference at the .05 level for physical description. This means that the two magazines differed significantly in the instances of physical description sex bias in 1988.

Newspapers

A complex chi square was used to determine if there was any significant difference between 1984 and 1988 for newspapers overall.

When comparing newspapers overall between 1984 and 1988 the combined chi square is 5.3228 at $df = 3$, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, there was not a significant difference between years in the newspaper coverage. This means that newspapers did not show any significant change from 1984 to 1988 in their coverage of female athletes.

A simple chi square was used to determine if there was any significant difference between the categories in each year for each newspaper. The results of this test are shown below. The degrees of freedom is 3.

1984

The Daily Oklahoman $x = 11.14$

The Washington Post $x = 11.6299$

1988

The Daily Oklahoman $x = 2.69$

The Washington Post $x = 5.8094$

From these results, the 1984 coverage of The Daily Oklahoman and The Washington Post showed significant differences at the .05 level. There was no significant difference for the 1988 coverage of both newspapers. Thus,

for 1984 there was a significant difference in the categories for both newspapers, but for 1988 there was not any significant difference in the categories. This means that in 1984 for the newspapers there was a significant difference in the categories of sex bias.

A complex chi square was used to determine if there was any significant difference between the years for each newspaper.

When comparing the two years for The Daily Oklahoman, the combined chi square is 8.2339, which is significant at the .05 level, with $df = 3$. Thus, for The Daily Oklahoman there was a significant difference between the 1984 and 1988 coverage.

A simple chi square was used to determine where the differences exist. For physical description, language and personal there was no significant difference at the .05 level. But for stereotype there was a significant difference at the .05 level. Thus, the difference between the 1984 and 1988 coverage in The Daily Oklahoman can be attributed mostly to the category of stereotype. This means that The Daily Oklahoman did change in its coverage of female athletes from 1984 to 1988.

When comparing the two years for The Washington Post, the combined chi square is 1.4161, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, for The Washington Post there was not a significant difference between the 1984 and 1988 coverage. This means that The Washington Post did not

significantly change its coverage of female athletes from 1984 to 1988.

Finally, a complex chi square was used to determine if there was any significant difference between the two newspapers for each year.

When comparing the two newspapers for 1984, the combined chi square is 2.3209, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, there is not a significant difference in the 1984 coverage of the two newspapers. This means that one newspaper was no more likely than the other to have a greater number of instances in 1984.

When comparing the two newspapers for 1988, the combined chi square is 4.5235, which is not significant at the .05 level. Thus, there is not a significant difference in the 1988 coverage of the two newspapers. Once again, this means that one newspaper was no more likely than the other to have a greater number of instances.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary

This study was inspired by the criticism of the mass media's portrayal of women. Critics have charged that the media portrayal of women is degrading and often demeaning. Criticism of the portrayal of women in the mass media was extended to criticism of the media's coverage and portrayal of female athletes. The media's portrayal of female athletes in the Summer Olympics was the subject of this study.

This thesis was written on the premise that the mass media, especially magazines and newspapers, have a social responsibility to present accurate, non-biased information to the public. This premise was formulated partly on the reports from the Hutchins Commission, which was discussed in Chapter I. It was contended that the media should present coverage that was not sex biased. It was predicted that the specific media studied would show a change for the better in the degree of sex bias present in their coverage of female athletes. The time period research for both years was the dates that the Olympic Games were held plus the dates that had most of the pre- and post-Olympic coverage.

Women have had a difficult time being accepted in sports, and especially in sports that are not considered as feminine. The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s brought about greater awareness of problems of women and the disadvantages they faced. People began to become aware of the abilities that women have and some of the stereotyped views of women started to fade. Female athletes such as Billie Jean King and Chris Evert brought female athletes into the limelight and became role models for young women interested in sports. Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, which gave greater funding to women's sports programs, also furthered the cause of women in sports. But many of the traditional views of females are still prevalent and are evident when female athletes are covered in the media.

Content analysis was used to examine 1984 and 1988 editions of Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, The Daily Oklahoman, and The Washington Post. The analysis was confined to coverage of the Summer Olympic Games that mentioned a female athlete involved in the Games. Analyzed were all articles mentioning a female athlete published during the specific time period studied.

For the newspapers the time period researched for this study was July 1 through August 18, 1984 and August 17 through October 9, 1988. The editions of Newsweek that were analyzed were July 2, July 9, July 30, August 6, August 13 and August 20, 1984. Also analyzed were the issues of August 15, August 22, September 19, September 26,

October 3 and October 10, 1988. The editions of Sports Illustrated that were analyzed were June 25, July 2, July 9, July 16, July 23, August 6, August 13, August 20, 1984 plus the Olympic Preview Issue of that year. Also analyzed were the issues of July 25, August 1, August 8, August 15, August 22, August 29, September 12, September 26, 1988 plus the Olympic Preview Issue of that year.

Two coders were used to determine the instances of sex bias in each article. The coders put the instances of sex bias into one of the following categories: physical description, language, personal, and stereotype.

Although the raw scores of instances of sex bias for 1984 and 1988 indicate that there was a change for the better, chi square analysis showed that the change was not significant. This rejects the hypothesis which stated there would be a change for the better. These data indicate that the media studied may not be fulfilling their social responsibility obligation and is not holding up to the standards that the Hutchins Commission set forth.

A significant difference was found for The Daily Oklahoman in its 1984 and 1988 coverage. These data would indicate that The Daily Oklahoman has improved its coverage of female athletes in the Summer Olympic Games. The articles analyzed in The Daily Oklahoman were mainly Associated Press wire stories. The 1988 coverage between Newsweek and Sports Illustrated also showed a significant difference. A significant difference was also found in the 1988 coverage

between newspapers and magazines. But newspapers and magazines did not differ significantly in 1984.

The individual simple chi squares for the media studied showed that there were real variations in the categories for each year in some of the media. The 1984 and 1988 coverage of Newsweek and Sports Illustrated showed significant differences among the categories. The 1984 coverage of The Daily Oklahoman and The Washington Post showed significant differences in categories but the 1988 coverage did not. Thus, we can conclude that there is a difference in the type of bias presented in some of the media studied.

From the raw data, the most common type of bias for both the 1984 and 1988 was stereotype. This is different from the category that was expected, physical description.

Although, overall, the data did not show a significant difference, the treatment of female athletes in the media was much better than had been expected for both years. Women have made great strides in athletics and athletic performance over the past decade and the media are perhaps beginning to take female athletes more seriously. Will Grimsley in a 1984 article in The Daily Oklahoman wrote:

For the first time women ran, jumped and rushed their way to equal status with the men, particularly American women who too long had performed in the shadow of their male counterparts. Every day seemed to be "Ladies' Day," from the moment Jesse Owens' granddaughter brought the torch into the Coliseum, continuing through triumphs by such heroines as gymnast Mary Lou Retton, the basketball and volleyball teams and the plucky marathoner Joan Benoit, and climaxing with Mary Decker's heart-breaking spill in the 3,000 meters.¹

The coverage of female athletes, such as Joan Benoit in the 1984 Olympics and Jackie Joyner-Kersey in the 1988 Olympics, provided positive role models for women in sports and focused mainly on their athletic accomplishments.

Florence Griffith Joyner was the standout of the 1988 Summer Olympics. Griffith Joyner is an exceptional athlete who broke the women's world record in the 100 meters. Griffith Joyner was noted for her attire, which included four-inch-long painted fingernails and one-legged running suits. But the articles emphasized Griffith Joyner's athletic accomplishments and not her appearance. Because Griffith Joyner's attire was out of the ordinary, mentioning it may not necessarily be considered sex biased (i.e., if a male athlete were to dress very differently the media would probably mention it, such as Carl Lewis' haircut). Because of this, the articles about Griffith Joyner did not count as sex biased unless it was judged that the coverage was presented in such a way that undermined Griffith Joyner's athletic accomplishments or was blatantly viewed as being sex biased.

Another topic of concern when discussing female athletes is discussion about their parental status. In most cases it was not relevant to the story. But in several instances in the articles the recent pregnancies of such athletes as Valerie Brisco-Hooks in 1984 and Mary Decker Slaney in 1988 were discussed. Because sports are related to the physical condition of athletes and pregnancy will affect that

condition, the reporting of a recent childbirth could be considered questionable as to whether it is sex biased. The manner and closeness in time in which the pregnancy is mentioned are important when considering if it would be sex biased reporting.

The results of this study are important because the mass media are prevalent in today's society and their coverage, no doubt, affects many people's views. Participation in sports can have positive benefits for people and negative media coverage may prevent young women from entering sports.

From the results of this study it appears that the media are not performing up to the standards set forth by the Hutchins Commission. The social responsibility theory states that the media have an obligation to the public to provide media coverage that follows the standards set by the Hutchins Commission. The media may not be giving an accurate portrayal of female athletes in the sense that they do not give female athletes the same type of coverage as male athletes.

One theory of mass communications is that the mass media both reflect and also help shape our society. When this view is taken, the media have a greater responsibility to provide not only accurate representations but positive role models for people. Because athletes in our society have a great deal of influence on children, positive role models of female athletes can benefit young women in sports.

One important aspect of media coverage of female athletes that was not addressed in this study is the amount of coverage that is given to female athletes. Female athletes still receive less coverage than male athletes and some female sports such as women's basketball are virtually ignored by the media.

Because this study focused on a limited time period and media studied, the findings may not show a realistic interpretation of how female athletes are portrayed. The findings might have been different if there had been a larger sample, different media selection, more media analyzed, or different coders to analyze the data. This study focused only on print media and so any generalizations to the electronic media may not be valid.

This study showed that although sex bias in the coverage of female athletes was not as prevalent as expected, there was not a significant change from the 1984 coverage to the 1988 coverage. The study of language and sex and also the study of female athletes in the media are topics that have not been researched widely. This study adds to the limited research that has been done on the coverage of female athletes in the media.

Recommendations

Further research is needed on the language that is used to describe women in general in the media. Women have made

great progress in today's society but that progress should not be taken for granted. Research on the portrayal of women in the media would help monitor the media to determine if they are providing coverage that is not sex biased.

Research on the portrayal of female athletes, other than those involved in the Olympics, would also be warranted. The coverage of female athletes in high school and collegiate athletics could be a subject for further research.

Research on how different media, including the electronic media, portray female athletes would also be warranted. Studies that research different time periods would also be warranted. For example, although this study showed no change, the results may be different if Olympic coverage of the 1970s was compared to that of the 1980s (i.e., the 1976 Summer Olympics vs. the 1988 Summer Olympics).

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the coverage of female athletes involved in the Summer Olympic Games of 1984 and 1988. It was found that there were no significant differences between the 1984 and 1988 coverage. Sports can be beneficial to the participants and the media should give women positive role models. This thesis found that the media should improve their coverage of female athletes.

ENDNOTE

¹Will Grimsley, "Los Angeles Olympics Were Full of Firsts," The Daily Oklahoman, 13 August 1984.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Karen L., and Norma C. Ware. "Sexism and the English Language: The Linguistic Implications of Being a Women." Women: A Feminist Perspective, Ed. Jo Freeman. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984.
- Angione, Howard, Christopher W. French, and Eileen Alt Powell, Eds. The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. New York: The Associated Press, 1984.
- Benet, James, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and Gaye Tuchman, Eds. Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Blackwood, Roy E. "The Content of News Photos: Roles Portrayed by Men and Women." Journalism Quarterly, Fall 1984:710-714.
- Bosmajian, Haig, H. Lee Gershuny, Alleen Pace Nilsen, and Julia P. Stanley. Sexism and Language. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.
- Boutilier, Mary A., and Lucinda SanGiovanni. The Sporting Woman. Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1983.
- Busby, Linda J. "Sex-Role Research on the Mass Media." Journal of Communications, Autumn 1975:107-131.
- Butler, Matilda, and William Paisley. Women and the Mass Media. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978.
- Christians, Clifford G., William L. Rivers, and Wilbur Schramm. Responsibility in Mass Communications. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.
- Chu, Donald, and Jeffrey Segrave, Eds. Olympism. Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1981.
- Davis, Junetta. "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly, Fall 1982:456-460.

- Denlinger, Ken. "Blinded by Political Science." The Washington Post, 22 July 1984:5-8.
- Diemer, Dorothy, Diane Kravetz, and Alice G. Sargent. "A Short History of the Women's Movement." Beyond Sex Roles, Ed. Alice G. Sargent. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1984.
- Dyer, K. F. Challenging the Men. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982.
- Hamilton, Mykol, Nancy Henley, and Barrie Thorne. "Womanspeak and Manspeak: Sex Differences and Sexism in Communication, Verbal and Nonverbal." Beyond Sex Roles, Ed. Alice G. Sargent. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1984.
- Hogan, Candace Lyle. "What's in the Future for Women's Sports." Women's Sports and Fitness, June 1987:43-47.
- Kaplan, J. Women and Sports. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.
- Kramarae, C. "Perceptions and Politics in Language and Sex Research." Language: Social Psychological Perspectives, Eds. Howard Giles, W. Peter Robinson, and Philip M. Smith. New York: Pergamon Press, 1980.
- Lannin, Joanne. "Assignment: Sports." Women's Sports and Fitness, March 1987: .
- Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing. New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1980.
- Miller, Susan H. "The Content of News Photos: Women's and Men's Roles." Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1975: .
- Nixon, Howard L., Jr. Sport and the American Dream. New York: Leisure Press, 1984.
- Purnell, Sandra E. "Politically Speaking, Do Women Exist." Journal of Communications, Winter 1978:150-155.
- Rader, Benjamin G. American Sports. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983.
- Rakow, Lana F. "Rethinking Gender Research in Communications." Journal of Communications, Autumn 1986:11-26.
- Seiter, Ellen. "Stereotypes and the Media: A Re-Evaluation." Journal of Communications, Spring 1986:14-26.

- Silver, Diane. "A Comparison of Newspaper Coverage of Male and Female Officials in Michigan." Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1986:144-149.
- Sochen, June. Enduring Values. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987.
- Spears, B. "Tryphosa, Melpomene, and Nadia: The IOC and Women's Sports." Olympism, Eds. Donald Chu and Jeffrey Segrave. Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1981.
- Stambler, Irwin. Women in Sports. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1975.
- Stone, Anne J. "1987 in Review." The American Woman 1988-89: A Status Report. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988.
- Theberge, Nancy. "Sport and Feminism in North America." Women in Sports: Sociological and Historical Perspectives. Eds. Amy L. Reeder and John R. Fuller. Carrollton: West Georgia College, 1985.
- Trunzo, Tina, and Leslie R. Wolfe. "Like She Owns the Earth: Women and Sports." Beyond Sex Roles. Ed. Alice G. Sargent. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1984.
- Turk, Judy VanSlyke. "Sex-Role Stereotyping in Writing the News." Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1987:613-317.
- Twin, Stephanie L. Out of the Bleachers. New York: The Feminist Press, 1979.
- Ward, Jean. "The War of Words." The Quill, October 1980:10-12.

VITA

Beth Ann Chlouber

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: COMPARISON OF THE COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN THE
1984 AND 1988 SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES BY TWO DAILY
NEWSPAPERS AND TWO WEEKLY MAGAZINES

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Flagstaff, Arizona, March 9,
1964, the daughter of Dale and Carla Chlouber.

Education: Graduated from Stillwater High School,
Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 1982; received
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in
May, 1986; completed requirements for the Master of
Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May,
1989.

Professional Experience: Lab Assistant, School of
Journalism and Broadcasting, Oklahoma State
University, September, 1987 to May, 1988; Writer,
Arts and Sciences Extension, Oklahoma State
University, May, 1987 to July, 1987; Editor, Fire
Protection Publications, Oklahoma State University,
September, 1988 to May, 1989.