RESEARCH ONLINE

University of Wollongong
Research Online

Faculty of Education - Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Social Sciences

2004

Analysing sportsmedia texts: developing resistant reading positions

Jan Wright
University of Wollongong, jwright@uow.edu.au

Publication Details

This book chapter was originally published as Wright, J, Analysing sportsmedia texts: developing resistant reading positions, in Wright, J, Macdonald, D and Burrows, L (eds), Critical Inquiry and Problem-solving in Physical Education, Routledge, London, 2004. Original book available here.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

RESEARCH ONLINE

From Wright, J. Macdonald, D. and Burrows, L. (2004) *Critical Inquiry and Problem-solving in Physical Education*. London: Routledge.

Chapter 13

Analysing sportsmedia texts: developing resistant reading positions

Jan Wright

The American educator Darryl Siedentop includes in his definition of a physically educated person the capacity to be 'involved critically in the sport, fitness and leisure cultures of their nations' (in Tinning 2002: 338). David Kirk uses the term *physical culture* to refer to the meanings, values and social practices concerned with the maintenance, representation and regulation of the body through institutionalised forms of physical activity such as sport, physical recreation, and exercise (Kirk 1997). He argues that in the process of their engagements with physical culture, young people do not merely 'participate' in physical activities, they are also consumers of the commercialised and commodified products of physical culture, ranging from foodstuffs, music, and sportswear to membership of exercise and sports clubs. These also include the cultural meanings and values associated with sport and physical activity as they are produced in a range of institutional sites, including schools, fitness clubs, sporting clubs, and most notably the mass media. It is through media coverage of sport and related activities and products that particular meanings and values associated with physical culture are produced and most widely disseminated both nationally and globally in contemporary societies. One important way, then of being involved critically in sport, fitness and leisure cultures is to be able to recognise the ways particular meanings and values (ideologies) associated with sport and physical activity are

produced and with what effects for the people who are participants in, and consumers of, these cultures.

MEDIASPORT

As a social institution sport has the capacity to both challenge and reproduce dominant social values. While some aspects of sport and physical activity do challenge stereotypical values, for instance, women playing rugby league, young Asian women playing soccer (as fictionalised in the film *Bend It Like Beckham*) and young men choosing to become ballet dancers, this has often been through considerable struggle by those who would want to push the boundaries and bring about change. In general, however, sport and other forms of institutionalised physical activity (such as dance, aerobics, adventure education) tend to be more conservative institutions where stereotypes are reproduced rather than challenged. This is particularly the case in media coverage of sport, although again the possibilities for challenging dominant social values still remain.

There is now a considerable literature which demonstrates how media coverage of sport in different ways serves to construct mainstream values which often privilege white heterosexual middle class men and marginalise female athletes, athletes of colour, gay and lesbian athletes, athletes with disabilities and so on (Burroughs *et al.* 1995; Kane 1996; Kinnick 1998; Lenskyj 1998; MacNeill 1998; Markula 2001; Mikosza and Phillips 1999; Pirinen 1997; Wilson 1997; Wright and Clarke 1999;). Media research also demonstrates how advertising through its global promotion of sport-related products, such as brand name clothing and footwear, promotes particular versions of western values to young consumers in developed and developing countries worldwide.

As McKay (1995) points out what these representations make invisible are the exploitative means by which much of the clothing and footwear has been produced by the poor in developing countries.

MEDIA, FITNESS AND THE BODY

The analysis of media coverage of physical activity has expanded in the last few years from mediasport to also examine the ways in which fitness and leisure cultures are represented in the media and what effects for those who watch television and film, and/or read newspapers, magazines and books. A quick glance at the 'Body and Soul' section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (and the equivalent in most large circulation newspapers in English speaking countries) or the front page of any of the magazines such as *Men's Health*, *Women's Fitness,* demonstrates the central messages about the body and the value of physical activity in maintaining a particular kind of body. Physical activity in this context is socially valued for its contribution to fitness, where fitness is indicated by a slim toned body. While the ideal male body can show more visible evidence of muscularity, ideal female and male bodies demonstrate evidence of the considerable work done on the body to rid it of fat and shape it in specifically desirable ways.

WHY DO MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS MATTER?

To understand the argument that the ways in which the media represent sport and physical activity (or any aspect of 'reality' for that matter) actually have important implications for individuals and for the nature of our society, we need to go back to some theory about how cultures and individuals come to be as they are. Not surprisingly

to do this we look to the work that has been developed in cultural studies and also critical literacy.

A starting point is the assumption that choices in language (or image, frames, camera angles etc) are not neutral but are motivated, not necessarily consciously, but certainly by particular social values or ways of thinking about the world; that is, meaning making needs to be understood as a social practice. Those who produce media texts (e.g.television coverage of sport, commentary and sports shows, newspaper, magazines articles, billboard advertising and even T-shirt inscriptions) do not only make choices about what sports are covered but how they will be covered. These choices are made at all of levels of the construction of an article or television show. For instance, writers, photographers, editors, directors and film makers are constantly making choices about what points of view are represented by certain articles, headlines, quotes, photographs, camera angles, interviews, sections of interviews and so will select from all of the material available to them to construct a position, to dramatise an event, to tell a story.

By definition, the choices in the mainstream media are likely to be, by and large, those which support mainstream or dominant values or points of view, that is, what they assess to be the range of values acceptable to their readers. Depending on the newspaper, magazine, or television channel and their anticipated audience, these values can vary. For instance, in Australia, SBS, one of the national government supported television channels has as its charter to 'deliver … multicultural and multilingual services that provide a credible source of international analysis for all Australian, reflect Australia's cultural diversity, and encourage a shared sense of belonging and harmony' (Special Broadcasting Service 2003: 1). SBS sport is thus more likely to carry a wider

coverage of international sport and is the only channel in Australia that covers international soccer on a regular basis (this may seem strange to readers of this chapter in the UK, but in Australia, soccer is regarded as an ethnic minority sport). There is now a considerable body of literature which demonstrates how particular choices in language produce texts that help to build local and national identity (Brown 1998) that reinforce social and cultural stereotypes associated with race, ethnicity and gender and that reproduce dominant social ideals about what good citizens of particular societies should be like. This last happens particularly through the ways in which leading athletes are talked about as good role models and heroes; or if they behave in socially inappropriate ways as bad role models and as undeserving of their elite status.

The saying that people believe what they read is even more likely to be the case when it comes to what people see. As Bassett (1990:2) points out, '(t)elevision creates images; it produces a reality in which particular knowledge, values and beliefs are constructed as natural, in ways that encourage the viewer to receive and uncritically accept the messages and meanings which it communicates'. The media then can not only represent particular social values, it also serves to confirm and thus maintain them. If social values which are limiting or oppressive to individuals and to particular social groups are to change then consumers of media messages (i.e. readers and viewers) will need to be able to recognise how meanings are constructed and to make visible social values which are taken-for-granted because they are written down or incorporated into visual images. This does not necessarily mean that such values will be rejected but rather they are available for scrutiny so that we can ask whom they effect and in what ways.

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT THIS?

If the meanings constructed in texts are ideological, how do we go about making these ideologies visible? The tools of textual analysis developed within the areas of critical literacy, critical discourse analysis, media literacy and cultural studies provide the means of critically analysing media texts to help make more visible the work they do in constructing social and cultural values. The following section will provide some examples of ways of working with the media from several of these positions.

As pointed out above, all media texts incorporate particular 'points of view' that are manifested in a variety of choices. In defining 'media literacy', The National Film Board of Canada provides the following questions to be asked about the work of the media in constructing meaning and reality. The first set of questions are those they suggest need to be asked at the point of production but they are also useful questions to guide an analysis of a media product as well.

- What story will be told?
- From whose perspective will it be represented?
- How will it be filmed (camera placement, movement, framing)?
- How will it be edited?
- What sort of music will be used, if any?
- Whose voice will we hear?
- What will the intended message be?
-

To determine the point of view of view being presented they suggest asking:

- Who has created the images?
- Who is doing the speaking?
- Whose viewpoint is not heard?
- From whose perspective does the camera frame the events?
- Who owns the medium?
- What is our role as spectators in identifying with, or questioning what we see and hear?

(National Film Board of Canada, cited in Media Awareness Network 2003: 1)

These questions can take us beyond the critical analysis of texts themselves to also ask questions about the contexts of their production. Elizabeth Thoman suggests that in exploring the deeper issues of media production we ask questions such as: for what purpose was the media product created? who profits? who loses? who decides? (Thoman, cited in Media Awareness Network 2003)

Critical literacy and critical discourse analysis provide the tools to look closely at the language of written and spoken texts. These analytic tools provide the means to critically interrogate print, written and visual texts for the ways in which they both draw on particular social meanings to create texts and in doing so help to (re)produce and in some case transform those meanings. As is the case for the media literacy approach described above, these ways of working with texts generally involve a scaffolded process, using a framework of questions, to interrogate the social meanings constructed in the text. Fairclough (1992, 1995) suggests a three stage process to critical discourse analysis: description; interpretation and explanation. These stages are used below to structure a media analysis task that can be used with secondary or tertiary students.

By working with students in this way it both helps them to become more critical consumers of media texts as these are associated with physical activity and sport and also to more broadly develop the skills needed to resist and challenge the ways in which media texts would position their readers.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

It is rarely useful to tell or show students how media texts work to construct particular social values, particularly in many cases when these social values are very similar to those which they themselves currently hold. To see the world differently, as in most cases of critical inquiry, the students need to become 'active researchers in their worlds', interrogators of the taken-for-granted; that is, they need to be involved in raising questions, collecting data (description), coming to conclusions on the basis of their analysis of their data (interpretation) and explaining these in relation to other evidence of similar and different social and cultural patterns. In the case of media texts, they need to be helped to collect, explain, interpret and present their own data about media texts. There are many ways to do this and many resources in the field of critical literacy to assist with this task. In the first instance, it is about structuring tasks and asking 'thoughtful' questions to assist in the inquiry. What follows are some examples of tasks that I have developed over the years to work with tertiary students; they are equally applicable to secondary students and those working in critical literacy use similar activities very successfully with primary students (Luke *et al.* 1994)

Description

One way of starting is to ask students to collect quantitative data about media coverage of particular sports and/or physical activities. The sources of coverage can vary from the broadest sweep – for instance, calculating television coverage of sports as a percentage of total television time and the coverage of particular sports as a percentage of all sports coverage, by using a television guide. A similar but more focused approach could be to collect the coverage of different kinds of sport in a television show such as the *Wide World of Sport*. It is often useful to divide the collection of data from different media amongst different groups in the class, or different members of the class can take up different tasks related to the same media coverage. There are many different iterations of how the tasks can be organised depending on the experience and ability of the class. Data so collected can be represented in tables and/or graphs. The following questions are useful guides to collecting data.

Looking at newspapers/magazines:

i) What proportion of your newspaper/magazine is devoted to what broad topics - i.e. local news, international news, sport and so on? You might want to compare different newspapers and then focus in on one. Use column centimetres or inches to measure the amount of coverage.

ii) Looking specifically at the sporting sections of the magazine or newspapers: what proportion of the coverage is given to which sports? what proportion is given to men's sports as compared to women's sports; the sports played by cultural minorities in the community; the sports played by different social class groups? which sports are absent? which present? are there differences in the ways different sports are presented?

Looking at the electronic media:

i) Calculate how much of television coverage in one week is devoted to sport? As far as you are able to tell from a TV guide which sports receive the most coverage on which channels? What sports seem to be absent?

ii) Watch a general sports program such as the Wide World of Sport and note which sports receive coverage and calculate how much time is given to different sports. You might consider how much time is given to women's sports, men's sports, mixed sports as well as other categories of sport.

A further step is look more closely at how social meanings are constructed in the choices of language and of media images such as photographs and camera angles.

Choose one or two print texts and look at these more closely.

i) If it has a photograph, what images are portrayed? How does it seem to have been taken (what camera angles have been used? It is live or staged? How does it relate to the text? Is it an action shot taken during the game? Who else is in the photograph and what are they doing? What does the caption say? To what aspects of the player(s) does it draw out attention?

ii) How does the headline fit with the text (and/or accompanying photographs)? What metaphors or other language devices are employed to catch your eye? What does it promise?

iii) In the article(s) itself, who or what are the main protagonists? What words or phrases are used to describe them? What words are used to describe what they do and how they do it? Try to collect all the words and phrases for each of the

major participants. e.g. 'The Russian (Kournikova) looked lovely but played like a dog …' (SMH 28 Aug, 2002, p.38)

Interpretation

Having collected this information and organised it in ways which make patterns visible, the next step is to make sense of the data in terms of the implications for how we understand sport and the people who are associated with it (including spectators, officials, parents and so on). It is useful to ask:

i) What interpretations can you give to the data you have collected? What do the patterns in the data suggest about the place of sports and particular sports in (insert relevant country) society; how are sports, players, athletes, and other major participants in the texts represented? Do male and female athletes warrant the same amount of coverage? Are male and female players, represented in the same or in different ways? Are teams from (insert home country) represented in the same way as teams or team members from other countries and so on? Why might this be the case?

ii) How is the article written? What is assumed about the reader (in terms of prior knowledge, values, interests, understanding of technical language)? How does this serve to include or exclude certain groups of people?

And for the electronic media

iii) For what viewers does it seem intended; how do you know this? Look, for example, at the scheduled time, the advertisements. What viewers are excluded by the language, choice of sport, type of coverage etc.?

Explanation

For both print and electronic media, broader questions can then be asked. To more fully address the social implications of their data, students may need to read about and discuss issues associated with gender, race, ethnicity, nationalism and sport.

i) How do you explain what you have found? What point of view does it (do they) take about the sport, about the participants in the article, their performance, behaviour, relationships, appearance etc.

ii) Relate what you have found from your analysis of the text(s) to what you understand as the dominant discourses or sets of values and beliefs associated with social class, race, ethnicity, age, gender, nationalism and sport in your society.

iii) How are these dominant discourses (re)produced or challenged by these texts?

iv) What might TV or videos look like look like which challenged dominant ideological positions? Why has the coverage that you have analysed been produced in this way and not in a different way?

A final possible step is to support students in creating and producing their own media messages. In doing so they should consider what sets of meanings and values they which to incorporate into their representations of sport and to examine the likely effects on those who would watch their product.

A MEDIA ANALYSIS IN PRACTICE: THE 2002 US TENNIS OPEN

The following is an example from a task drawing on the questions above and used with a tertiary subject on socio-cultural perspectives of sport and physical activity. The idea

to examine the 2002 US Tennis Open coverage came from one group of students who took a qualitative approach to compare the nature of the coverage of female players as compared to male players across a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper for the duration of the event. I have not reproduced their analysis exactly but for convenience chose instead to focus on one newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, a broadsheet newspaper widely read across the state of New South Wales in Australia. Initially I intended to use quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection to provide the basis for an analysis of the ways in which the female and male players were represented. However as often happens in the close analysis of texts other themes emerged.

Quantitative analysis

To illustrate the quantitative component of the activities described above, I asked a student to collect all of the coverage from *The Sydney Morning Herald* for the duration of the 2002 Open and to calculate the amount of coverage in column centimetres across the following categories.

i) articles covering female players only

ii) articles covering male players only

iii) articles which mentioned both female and male players.

iv) the size of photographs for male as compared to female players

The following figures provide an indication of the coverage of the 2002 US Tennis Open in the SMH for the period of 28 August to 10 September. In terms of the size of the articles (that is, the amount of space devoted within the articles), 44 per cent of coverage was devoted to male players, 33 per cent to female players and 22 per cent to

both. There was only one article difference in the number of articles devoted to male (twelve) players as compared to female players (eleven). In both amount of space and number of articles this compares very favourably to print coverage of sport in general which ranges from around 2 percent to 10 percent (Phillips 1997).

When the amount of space devoted to photographs of male and female players was calculated, 51 per cent of the total space given to photographs was devoted to photographs of male players and 44 per cent to female players, 5 per cent of the photographs contained images of female and male players. Thirteen of these photographs were of male players, seven of female players and one of both.

Qualitative analysis

As demonstrated above media coverage of tennis is an interesting choice for analysis, because it terms of quantity of coverage, particularly in the print media, it can often challenge the typical pattern of much smaller amounts of women's coverage compared to that of men. This raises questions about why is this the case? How is tennis different from, and the same as, other sports? Does it challenge the dominant discourses, the ways of thinking about the world, nations, sport, gender, race and so on which have been documented as being produced and reproduced in coverage of other sports? The amount of coverage suggests, for instance, that tennis is quantitatively different in its coverage of men and women from that of most other elite professional sports, does this carry through to the qualitative aspects of the coverage – to the content of the articles and photographs? What clues can be found in the nature of the coverage?

The headlines in *The Sydney Morning Herald* during the Open provide the first clue. This list of headlines suggests some of themes taken up in the coverage and the rather different focus on the female players as compared to the male players:

> Cat woman pounces but beaten prey is still a winner
>
> Capriati swears she's due respect
>
> Injury and insult: dodgy knee scuttles Scud, while Hewitt brands ATP liars
>
> Women win the skin game (Haas asked to change a sleeveless shirt)
>
> Frankly my games to blame, declares stoic Dokic
>
> Hewitt happy to forgive and forget (Hewitt accused of racist comments in previous game)
>
> Stalker arrested as police flush out Serena pest
>
> This kid is all fight (referring to Hewitt)
>
> Now the players have made their fashion statements when will charges be laid? (photos of 10 women players in different attire)
>
> Pistol Pete says Hewitt, Agassi will produce a baseline classic
>
> Defeated Hewitt proud of his efforts as the grand masters take centre stage

A closer look at the articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) during the period of the Open suggest other themes, such as nationalism and age, intersecting with those associated with gender. For instance, the majority of the articles in the SMH, on male players, certainly until his defeat by Andre Agassi in a semi-final were either partially or totally about the Australian player, Leyton Hewitt. In the lead up to the semi-final the relationship between Hewitt and Agassi is constructed as one between a much 'younger man', currently number one, with his future before him and the experienced veteran and

family man. An article titled and subtitled, 'The kid is all fight: An aging Andre Agassi's lost it and wants it back but Leyton Hewitt won't let the title slip without a struggle' begins with the sentence:

> The first time Andre Agassi played Leyton Hewitt, the Australian was 16, wearing oversized shorts with a safety pin to hold them up, and "looking like he had a couple of strings in his shoes"
>
> (Overington 2002c: 31)

The words used in the article to describe Agassi include 'swifter and leaner' , as 'being in great shape' (no matter what his age); he is quoted talking about his family and his responsibilities to his son and wife on the days before the match. Hewitt is described as having few responsibilities, he can 'relax a bit, have something to eat, and try to sleep before the match'. He is also described in terms of the pressure on him as current world number one, particularly when he has achieved this level at such 'a young age'. Hewitt (and Agassi) are written about in ways which allow for them to lose, at least from the perspective of the writers in the SMH, without disgrace. Both stories are acceptable – the older man who has years of successes behind him defeated by the young man who will replace him or the young man defeated this time by the veteran but who has many years more to make his mark.

This construction of the situation is confirmed by the headlines the day after Hewitt's defeat by Agassi: 'Defeated Hewitt proud of his efforts as the grand masters take centre stage: Andre Agassi's experience overcame Leyton Hewitt's youth'. The nationalistic theme continues as Caroline Overington writes about Hewitt's ordeal as he played under

difficult circumstances with an American crowd against him and against an experienced player (who is also described as having Hewitt's ex coach in his box). All of these themes are taken up in the following quote:

> Hewitt was beaten by Andre Agassi in Saturday's semi-final. There is no shame in that. After all it took some courage just to walk on court, where 23,000 foot-stomping, flag-waving fans had gathered to pray for his demise.
>
> Hewitt has few friends in New York. The stadium at Flushing Meadows was titled firmly against him. Enormous stars-and-stripes banners were swirling through the heat. The crowd was not so much cheering for Agassi as braying for the downfall of the world's No. 1. On particularly offensive man in a large orange shirt kept screaming: "Finish off the kang-a-roo!"
>
> (Overington 2002d: 19)

Those sections of the article, that are not about Hewitt's management of his defeat and his reactions to the American crowd are primarily a breakdown of the statistics of the match and a brief section on Agassi's feelings about the match and his preparation for the match with Sampras. The final two sentences point to a continuation of a theme which has been evident throughout the Hewitt/Agassi and now Sampras coverage: 'The final will be the first fought out between two men in their 30s. Wheelchairs are ready.' In terms of the wider world of sport, this sentence supports an assumption that sport is for young people, that is, people under 30, and not for the middle aged or elderly. Like any discourse, if oft repeated and if it fits with existing assumptions or beliefs, it becomes part of what is taken-for-granted. A point of view that sport is only for the

young serves to marginalise those who are not young, it leads them and others to assume that they cannot be active in the kinds of ways a vigorous sport demands.

As demonstrated above the amount of coverage dedicated to the female participants in the 2002 Tennis Open is not much less than that of the men. Indeed the largest photographs, often taking up half a page, are of women and these are mostly action shots. As suggested above the headlines that accompany the photographs and the choices of angles in the photograph suggest that the coverage does little to challenge both racial and gender stereotypes. The other major participant in the Open coverage besides Leyton Hewitt was Serena Williams. She was written about in relation to three main themes: her choice of clothing, the contest with her sister and the man who was stalking her. There are two large action photographs of Williams. The first is a three quarter shot to the upper thigh, taken from the side, her back arched as she prepares to serve. The angle of the first photograph is one very common in the coverage of Serena Williams, emphasising as it does the angle of her breast and buttocks. In this photograph the intention seems to emphasise the 'sexiness' of her 'oily blackbody suit (which) she called … a catsuit' (Overington 2002a: 38). Williams herself is quoted as describing the suit as 'sexy', but adds that it also makes her 'run faster and jump higher'. The headline that accompanies this article is 'Cat woman pounces but beaten prey is still a winner.' The headline is a play on the 'catsuit' that captured much of the attention of the press during the Open. The article is about 'poor Corina Morariu' who drew Serena Williams in the first round. The first four paragraphs are taken up with a description of the effects of her fight against leukemia on Morariu. She is described as 'blushing and holding up her racquet as the crowd gave her warm applause' and later in the article, as having now returned to the women's tour with 'a full head of soft curls and a pretty

determined look on her face'. In contrast to the fragility of Morariu, Williams is constructed here and elsewhere as tough, strong and forbidding. The author of the article uses Williams own words to write: 'She agreed it was "unfortunate" that she had to play Morariu but, hey, this is a grand slam, "and we're like animals out there"' (Overington 2002a: 38) This reference to 'animals' seems to be consistent with the way in which both Williams sisters are constructed as aggressively sexual rather than 'feminine', as voluptuous women who exhibit what are traditionally the characteristics in white western society associated with men.

The second photograph supports this interpretation. It is a full front shot, again to the lower thigh, where she is making ready to hit a backhand shot. The photograph is taken from below, a position that is generally associated with increasing the 'power' of the person photographed (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1990). Williams' mouth is wide open and her whole body tensed ready for a powerful backhand. It is a photograph which makes her look like a warrior, ready for battle; it emphases her power, muscularity and toughness. The caption, however, for this photograph is 'A screamer: Serena Williams puts her all into a backhand return during the US Open final' (Overington 2002e: 19). Through the use of the word 'screamer' to sum up the image, it serves to minimise the power evident in the camera angles and choice of shot. There is something of a theme of describing female tennis players derogatively in terms of the noises they make: Monica Seles as 'a 'grunter' and Serena Williams as a 'screamer'. Such references serve to trivialise the power and effort behind their play. The article that accompanied this photograph is primarily about the relationship between the two sisters, particularly with Serena's defeat of Venus Williams in the Open.

The nature of the coverage of the other female tennis players in the Open is fairly predictable. One of the remaining large photographs (no accompanying article) is a mirror image of Hantuchova and Mauresmo with arms raised in a winning salute (SMH Sept 4: 40). The caption is 'Light and power: they may use different methods but Daniela Hantuchova, left, and Amelie Mauresmo share a similar taste for fashion and winning at the US Open'. An article on Jelena Dokic explores her 'poor performance' in relation to her 'troubled relationship with her father', despite quoting Dokic as saying that 'it wasn't a factor' (Overington 2002b: 29). The photograph accompanying the article has Dokic slumped in a chair eyes closed. A third extended article, from the Los Angeles Times, discusses the fairness of Haas being asked to remove his sleeveless shirt in the context of the 'revealing' clothing the women are permitted to wear. This again is accompanied by a side-on photograph of Serena Williams back arched and breasts and buttocks accentuated. The photograph of Haas has him sitting in a chair, taking another shirt out of his bag while an official looks on.

These examples of the coverage from a mainstream broadsheet newspaper point to a number of sets of beliefs and values which are being drawn on to make the texts interesting by connecting with what are anticipated to be readers' beliefs, values and points of view. So what beliefs, values and points of view are being both constructed and draw on to produce these texts? The first is the most obvious one and that is the ways in which what it means to be female and male in western society are constituted by the differences in coverage of the female and male tennis players. For tennis, unlike other sports such as soccer, rugby league, gridiron, rugby union, baseball and so on, there is very little difference in the amount of coverage. Tennis therefore seems to be a sport in which both men and women's forms of the game are judged to be equally of

interest to readers. A closer analysis of the nature of the coverage, however, suggests a set of themes that do little to challenge dominant discourses or mainstream points of view associated with nationalism, gender, race and sport. It could be argued on the other hand that the Williams sisters, through the ways in which they choose to represent themselves as strong and sexy, do challenge stereotypical notions of white femininity, and further that the media is challenged in the way in which they deal with this. However, other research (Davis and Harris 1998, cited in Denham, Billings and Halone 2002) suggests that black athletes in general are often described in terms of their physicality and their 'natural ability' rather than their strategic capacity or their intellect. The level of analysis here does not allow for these themes to be explored in detail but they certainly provide further possibilities for investigation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has endeavoured to provide an argument and a method for a critical analysis of media coverage of sport and physical activity. The example provided is only one way of working with media texts. Sports coverage is an obvious target for investigation, but media analysis in the context of physical education should go beyond a focus on sport. Physical education, as is often pointed out, is the only area in the school curriculum particularly concerned with the body. This should not be limited to the sporting body either in the physical components of physical education or in the more theoretical components. A media analysis then should also look at the many different ways the media takes the active (or inactive) body as its focus, including the meanings constructed about health, fitness and body shapes, the representations of different kinds of physical activity and the people who engage in them, the ways in which the body is constructed in and through the advertising of the fitness industry and so on. The

advantage of the media is that students are avid consumers and much more than we often imagine quite critical consumers; these talents and interests can be drawn on and extended to help produce students who can engage critically with the barrage of information and entertainment in the 'information age'.

REFERENCES

Bassett, G. (1990) 'Masculinity and the representation of sport on television'. A paper presented at the Commonwealth Conference on Sport, Physical Education and Leisure, Auckland, New Zealand.

Brown, P. (1998) 'Representations of place: imaging Newcastle through media coverage of the 1997 Australia Rugby League Grand Final', *ACHPER Healthy Lifestyles Journal* 45, 4: 5-9.

Burroughs, A., Ashburn, L. and Seebohm, L. (1995) '"Add sex and stir": homophobic coverage of women's cricket in Australia', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 19, 3: 266-84.

Carson, D. and Freidman, L.D. (1995) *Shared Differences. Multicultural Media and Practical Pedagogy,* Urbaua Chicago: University of Illinois Press

Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995) *Media Discourse*, London: Edward Arnold.

Kane, M.J. (1996) 'Media coverage of the post title IX athlete: a feminist analysis of sport, gender and power', *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* 3, 95: 95-127.

Kinnick, N.K. (1998) 'Gender bias in newspaper profiles of 1996 Olympic athletes: five contemporary major dailies', *Women's Studies in Communication* 21: 212.

Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (1990) *Reading Images,* Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Lenskyj, H. J. (1998) '"Inside Sport" or 'On the Margins"? Australian women and the sport media', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 33, 1: 19-32.

Luke, A., O'Brien, J. and Comber, B. (1994) 'Making community texts objects of study', *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 17, 2: 139-149.

MacNeill, M. (1998) 'Sex, lies and videotape: The political and cultural economies of celebrity fitness videos', in G. Rail (ed.) *Sport in Postmodern Times*, New York: SUNY Press.

Markula, P. (2001) 'Beyond the perfect body: women's body image distortion in fitness magazine discourse', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 25, 2: 158-79.

McKay, J. (1995) '"Just do it": corporate sports slogans and the political economy of enlightened racism', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 16: 191-201.

Mikosza, J. M. and Phillips, M. G. (1999) 'Gender, sport and the body politics: framing femininity in the "Golden Girls of Sport" Calendar and the "Atlanta Dream"', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, 1: 5-16.

Media Awareness Network (2003) 'What is media literacy?' http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/bigpict/mlwhat.htm (24 January 2003).

Overington, C. (2002a) 'Cat woman pounces but beaten prey still a winner', *Sydney Morning Herald,* Aug 28: 38.

_____ (2002b) 'Frankly games to blame, declares stoic Dokic', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Aug 30: 29.

_____ (2002c) 'The kid is all fight', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sept 6: 31.

_____ (2002d) 'Defeated Hewitt proud of his efforts as the grand masters take centre stage', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sept 9: 19.

_____ (2002e) 'Serena's streak leaves Venus waning', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sept 9: 19

Pirinen, R. (1997) 'Catching up with men? Finnish Newspaper coverage of women's entry into traditionally male sports', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32, 3: 239-49.

Phillips, M. (1997) An Illusory image: A report on the media coverage and portrayal of womens sport in Australia 1996, Canberra: Australian Sports Commission.

Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) (2002) SBS Triennial Funding Submission 2003-2006 http://www.sbs.com.au/sbscorporate (23 March 2003).

Tinning, R. (2002)

Wilson, B. (1997) '"Good Blacks" and "Bad Blacks": media constructions of African-American athletes in Canadian basketball', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32, 2: 177-189.

Wright, J. and Clarke, G. (1999) 'Sport, the media and the construction of compulsory heterosexuality: a case study of women's rugby union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, 3: 227-43.