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Gendered coverage and newsroom practices in online media: a study of reporting of the 2008 Olympic Games by the ABC, BBC AND CBC

Dianne M. Jones
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UNIVERSITY OF
WOLLONGONG



GENDERED COVERAGE AND NEWSROOM PRACTICES IN ONLINE
MEDIA: A STUDY OF REPORTING OF THE 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES BY THE
ABC, BBC AND CBC

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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SCHOOL OF ARTS, ENGLISH AND MEDIA
FACULTY OF LAW, HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

February 25, 2015

Certification

I, Dianne M. Jones, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Arts, English and Media, Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Dianne M. Jones

February 25, 2015

Abstract

Legacy media have been shown to routinely marginalise women in the sports news and to devalue their athletic achievements in language and images that stereotype, sexualise and trivialise them. This study provided the first known investigation of digital media sports coverage and reporting practices at three national public service broadcasters – the ABC, BBC and CBC. It examined how and why their online representation of sportswomen offered little change to how sports news has traditionally been defined, reported and framed by the media. A content analysis was conducted during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Using online reports of women's and men's sporting events as its context, written portrayals of athletic performances as the texts, and hegemonic masculinity and framing as its theoretical framework, this study identified differences in how women's and men's sports were framed on the three broadcasters' websites. The primary conclusion was that online sports journalism's male hegemonic agenda remained largely unaltered. These digital media reproduced and reinforced the broader, historically similar and dominant gender ideologies of Australian, British and Canadian society; that is, sport is a male domain. This was reflected in the disproportionate focus on men; inferences that the female body and mind were not well suited for sports requiring strength, endurance or mental toughness; frequent and gratuitous attention to women's marital and family roles, romantic and other relationships to men; and the absence of comparable coverage of men. At the same time, there have been significant changes and progress that challenges previous research in the areas of photographic portrayals of athletes and the language of sports journalism. The second stage of this mixed methods study examined the production of gendered sports coverage by the ABC, BBC and CBC. It drew on interviews with 15 sports journalists about the manufacture of sports news for online and broadcast audiences. It found that a cocktail of nationalism, success, opportunity and convenience propelled the profiles of female Olympians to record levels on the three public broadcasters' websites. Nationalism was apparent in the journalists' attention to a perceived national audience interest in their home country athletes. Success in the form of top performances by women and men and the expectation of it generated coverage, but so did failure. Opportunity, presented by the near parity in the number of Olympic sports open to women and men, if not the number of events, boosted coverage. It was also convenient for journalists when women's and men's same-sport events happened routinely and in close proximity to each other. The mostly male gatekeepers interviewed for this study maintained that their everyday or routine sports news selection was driven by the gender-neutral news value of their audience's perceived interest in men's sports. Based on the perceptions and attitudes of these newsmakers, while men remain in charge, and men retain the majority in the ABC, BBC and CBC's sports

newsrooms, the status quo will continue to preserve hegemonic masculine social structures in sports journalism in the Western world. This study's secondary findings should help sports journalists to understand how newsroom selection and production choices can devalue female athletes and privilege male athletes. By contributing to a longitudinal perspective of the consequences of that action, the findings can inform the wider public debate about women, sport and the media and calls for change.

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Some things we do because we want to; others because we have to.

I gratefully acknowledge the direction, encouragement and patience of my supervisor, Dr Eric Loo, University of Wollongong.

And, to my dear Paul, thank you for sticking with me all the way.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Love or hate them, there is no escaping the amount of space, time and money the media devote to sports. Boyle (2006, p. 1) has argued that sports journalism is “exploding in volume and range across the media”. Sports coverage is well ahead of global business coverage for a mass audience, and comparable with global political coverage (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). In newspapers, sports sections are often larger than news sections (Stovall, 2005). Despite downturns in circulation, in countries such as New Zealand they take up between 15 and 20 per cent of the daily news hole (Bruce, Falcous, & Thorpe, 2007). Sports news is commanding increasing amounts of coverage in broadcast news bulletins (Steen, 2014). Niche cable and pay TV channels – such as ESPN, once an “obscure cable outfit” (Schultz, 2005, p. xv) but now the world’s largest sports media conglomerate (Stein, 2013) – carry nothing but sports events, news and commentary, and sports are “right up there” in news site rankings of hits (Holmes, Hadwin, & Mottershead, 2013, p. 194).

Media empires own sports franchises. Recent acquisitions in Canada, for example, include the Toronto Blue Jays (baseball), Toronto Maple Leafs (ice hockey), Toronto Raptors (basketball) and Toronto FC (soccer) by “major conglomerates within the Canadian mass media oligopoly” (Naraine, 2014, p. 391). Pedersen (2012, p. 383) has identified the media’s influence, “in coverage provided, television rights fees paid, promotion and publicity offered”, as one of the prime reasons for the growth of the sport industry. The Associated Press’s former president and CEO, Tom Curley, contended that interest in sport has never been greater, sport has never been more global and the economics are stunning (Associated Press, 2012). Sport is not only big business; it has become the world’s currency:

To put it all in perspective ... from 2000 to 2009, sports’ spending has outpaced economic growth in country after country: two times GDP in the US, nearly four times higher in the UK, three times higher in Japan and more than eight times in Russia ... Media rights account for about \$30 billion annually, nearly a quarter of the total sports economy (2012).

The most sought after media rights property is men’s professional sports, simply because of the audiences it can deliver to advertisers (Scherer & Rowe, 2014). Caple et al. (2011b) summed up sport in Australia: It is played by men, run by men and funded by the men who run its leading corporations. In “mediasport”¹ (Bruce, 2008; Wenner, 1998), various studies confirm that

¹ Wenner (1998) is credited with coining the term “mediasport” to represent “the fusion of the two entities” (Billings, 2011, p. 2). In this study, “sport” describes the institution, single activities and these

men's sports rule, with commercial interests and advertisers steering sports journalism's agenda (Cokley, Patching, & Scott, 2006; Jones, 2010; Jorgensen, 2005; Lowes, 1999; Scott-Chapman, 2012). A media profile brings a sport to sponsors' attention, and brand exposure in the media is a primary motivator for sponsorship (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2011). Creedon (2014, p. 712), reflecting on the ongoing "paltry" level of women's sports coverage, noted her observation more than 10 years ago that women's sports would receive more coverage "when their audience attracted advertisers". Women's sport remains at a commercial disadvantage because sports coverage in traditional media remains overwhelmingly dominated by men's sport (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013). For example, between two and five per cent of media coverage in the UK goes to women's sports. A 15-fold increase in commercial investment in women's sports in 2010/2011, attributed to the 2012 London Olympics, took their share to just 1.5 per cent of all UK sports sponsorship. The clear leaders in investment are men's sports (61 per cent) and mixed sports – those played by both women and men – where, anecdotally, most of the money goes to the male versions of the sports (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2011). Not only does poor media coverage reduce sponsor and advertiser interest, it "perpetuates the dearth of visible role models" (Donohoe, 2003, p. 4) for young women and sportswomen of the future (House of Commons, 2014).

The sports media are well recognised for their socialisation influences and substantial role in defining events, issues and people worthy of coverage, shaping opinion about the appropriateness of women's participation, reinforcing the status quo, framing attitudes and reproducing images and messages that legitimate the dominant ideology that sport is a masculine preserve (Blinde, Greendorfer, & Shanker, 1991; Duncan, 2006; Kian, Bernstein, & McGuire, 2013; Yu, 2009). The association between sport and masculinity is ideologically entrenched and "so taken for granted that few people challenge the fact that media coverage is heavily weighted in favour of men" (Bruce, 2008, p. 56). A growing body of studies is exploring the scope of digital media offerings in gendered sports coverage,² and the results in sum, have pointed to some online media outlets challenging and others reproducing dominant gender ideology (LaVoi & Calhoun, 2014), but comparatively little is known about how online

activities collectively (Oxford Dictionary, 1996), while "sports", the more popular term in the United States, refers to various activities and organisations.

² There has been a shift away from the realm of online sports journalism, "before enough research was conducted to form broad generalization toward a plethora of scholarly studies of social media and networking" (Kian 2015, pers. comm.). See, for example, Clavio and Eagleman's (2011) study of gender and images in sports blogs; Petca et al.'s (2013) cross-national analysis of sports images on websites; Smith's (2011) study of athlete profiles on Twitter; and Tanner's (2011) comparison of TV and Twitter commentary about female athletes.

media frame sports events and their participants, especially over time in the relatively short history of mediated coverage on the Internet.³

Jones's studies of online reporting of three successive Olympic Games from 2000 to 2008 on Australia's ABC, and the BBC's reporting of the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games (Jones, 2004, 2006, 2006b, 2010, 2012b, 2013),⁴ showed the Games have been "boom times" for women's sports coverage. On the world's largest and most important sports stage (Tuggle, Huffman, & Rosengard, 2007), online media attention to women's sports jumped to levels well above the mainstream's usual fare that prioritises men's sports and relegates female athletes and their sports to the sidelines (Jones, 2004, 2006, 2006b, 2010, 2012b, 2013). The same studies revealed other differences between the treatment of female and male athletes, from descriptions of their physical and mental characteristics, strengths, weaknesses and personal relationships through to the reasons attributed to their wins and losses. Is this an isolated blip or an ongoing phenomenon? The results also raise questions about the decision-making processes in online sports coverage, such as: Who decides what is sports news in the newsrooms of public service broadcasters, in everyday reporting and during megasports events such as the Olympic Games? What guides this decision-making? What contributes to gendered coverage – both in its level and content – that can challenge the status quo or reproduce the patterns of traditional sports media coverage, including stereotypical, sexualised and trivialising depictions that privilege one gender over another and reinforce hegemonic conceptions that sport is a male preserve?

1. 2 Sport, its historical boundaries and the media

Sport is "institutionalised competition, physical prowess, and intrinsic and extrinsic participant motivation" (Coakley, 1994, p. 17). According to Horne et al. (1999), sport is a set of cultural practices with significant historical and sociological resonances. As an example, sport in 19th

³ Video streaming enables viewers to circumvent the sports media's "mediated" coverage. It only started with the winter Games in Turin in 2006, when the rights holder, NBC, streamed one ice hockey game. NBC streamed many events online from Beijing in 2008, but not the "popular sports" of gymnastics and swimming. They were recorded and replayed for television audiences; after a delay they were made available on-demand online. The BBC, too, used different modes of delivery for Beijing, including new web-based, interactive, high definition and on-demand services, live feeds via its website and a range of "catch up" opportunities via its iPlayer. For Vancouver in 2012, NBC limited video streaming to ice hockey and curling (Solsman, 2014).

⁴ Three of these articles about online reporting of the 2008 Olympic Games (Jones, 2010, 2012b, 2013) draw on the findings of the content analysis I conducted for this doctoral thesis. An indicator of the impact of my studies of Olympics reporting by the ABC, BBC, CBC and TVNZ from 2000 to 2008 (Jones, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2012b, 2013) is their citation in: national and international journals (see, for example, Billings et al., 2014; Bissell & Smith, 2013; Coche, 2014; Fink, 2014; French, 2013; Hardin, Whiteside, & Ash, 2014; Kian & Clavio, 2011; Kian, Mondello, & Vincent, 2009; LaVoi, Buysse, Maxwell, & Kane, 2007; LaVoi & Calhoun, 2014; Steph MacKay & Dallaire, 2012; North, 2012; Petca et al., 2013; L. R. Smith, 2014); and international text books on media sport (Billings, 2011; Billings &

century British public schools served the interests of elite groups and reinforced the values of a patriarchal society. Sport was seen as a vital form of moral character training for males. It produced the leadership and team work skills required by the dominant class, both domestically and in governing the Empire. Kidd (1987) agreed that sports should be understood as a particular approach to physical activity, developed by upper-class males in industrialising Britain, and:

... spread by 'rational recreation', immigration, imperialism and the emulation of like-minded elites elsewhere. They were only slowly taken up over the course of the ... [19th] century by the underclasses, females and non-Europeans, in the continual dynamic of social change and the renegotiation of practice and meaning. (1987, p. 1.3)

Sport in contemporary society still is not a universally accepted, everyday calling for females, even though records of ancient civilisations show graphic evidence of a precedent for female participation (Jeannotat, 1980; Jones, 2003).⁵ Cashmore (2010, p. vii) wrote that sports were "created to validate masculinity and a woman's role was to observe not compete – until the 1960s." Women's growing interest in sport posed a threat to traditional ideologies (Theberge, 2000). Historically, outright opposition to their participation in this male domain was based on notions about the natural state of the female body: women were seen as physically more delicate, emotionally less tough-minded, competitive and aggressive than men, and their relationship with men was one of dependence (Cashmore, 2010; Coakley, 2009). As Cashmore (2010, p. 206) pointed out, all these notions are "sexist and have been strongly challenged since the late 1960s, but their impact on the entire character of sport is still evident today." That impact includes the adoption of a modified form of sport for women, less strenuous and competitive than the "real" sport played by men. Shortened race distances in running and swimming, for example, are modifications that leave intact "the association between masculinity and sport ... confirm the 'myth of female frailty' and offer apparent confirmation of the essential differences between the sexes" (Theberge, 2000, p. 323).

Sports have co-existed with public media for thousands of years (Scanlon, 2006). The role that sports play in each culture, be it for "entertainment, political power, social status, religious authority" and so on, are indicated by the "exact form of media used, the expense given to the media presentation, the nature of the target audience for the media, the breadth of the

Hardin, 2014; Bruce, Hovden, & Markula, 2010; Hanstad, Parent, & Houlihan, 2014; Raney & Bryant, 2006).

⁵ One of the first female champions, Cynisca, won a chariot race in 396BC (Cashmore, 2000). She owned, trained and entered the horses, but was barred from attending and competing in any of the Panhellenic festivals of ancient Greece. Cynisca's experience as an outsider, not a participant, foreshadowed the role of spectator that women were to play for centuries in sport (2000, p. 165). For a timeline of women's participation, see <http://www.factmonster.com/spot/womeninsportstimeline.html>.

‘broadcast’, and other information” (2006, p. 4). We can find evidence of early sports coverage, even if “we cannot assume that Homer intended to be the world’s first sports reporter” (Potter, 2012, p. 13), in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the former, the poet described eight funeral games events: a chariot race, a foot race, boxing, wrestling, stone throwing, duels, archery and spear throwing.

Horne (2011) argued that the relationship between sport and the mass media “has always been an important one, and the media have helped to construct what is meant by sport”.⁶ By the mid-19th century, sports and fitness were crucial to the media revenue base (Horne et al., 1999). For example, North American print entrepreneurs “aggressively promoted sports in their publications as a way to prime public interest in sports, attract readers and, in turn, advertisers” (1999, p. xiv). In Britain, the circulation of *Bell’s Life in London*, a weekly journal founded in 1822, rose when sports were included. Sports were “hardly news, at least not in the hardest sense of the word, but reports of them had the desired effect” and sales continued to rise (Cashmore, 2010, p. 360). Sports journalism has always been part and parcel of popular culture (Bellamy, 2006; van Zoonen, 1998). In Edwardian Britain, like sport, journalism was predominantly a male controlled and defined domain. Horne et al. (1999, p. 162) said the sports pages served “to transmit and reproduce the dominance of those sporting institutions established by the public and Oxbridge-educated male Victorian bourgeoisie”. With its organisational goals “firmly aimed at maintaining popularity among large audiences” (Tunstall 1971, quoted in van Zoonen, 1998, p. 126), sports journalism’s orientation has been described as producing a frame of reference for journalists:

... characterized by interesting (as opposed to ‘important’) issues, convenient and practical information, commitment and emotionality (rather than objectivity and rationality) and a mode of address that assumes audiences as consumers. Consumer-oriented or market-driven journalism distinguished by its audience goals ... has a low social status but can be an enormous profit machine. (1998, p. 126)

The mass media, especially television, have been central in deciding “‘what is, and what is not, sport?’ ... pragmatically by what appears in the sport sections of newspapers or in radio or television broadcasts” (Horne, 2011, p. x). Kidd (1987) argued that the mass media’s production and distribution of reports, information and commentary on sports have been integral to two of the most important sporting developments of the 20th century: the triumph of sports over all other approaches to physical activity, and the interrelated triumph of the Olympics over other modern Games. Kidd (1987 p. 1.4) wrote that “the commodity production of sports information

by the mass media has been crucial” to worldwide participation in sports and competition at the “Coubertin Olympics”.

1.3 The Olympic Games

Just as they were barred from competition in the ancient Olympic Games, women were not seen at the first modern Olympics in 1896. Four years later, 11 women were permitted to compete in golf and tennis (Kinnick, 1998). The so-called father of the modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, wanted women excluded from competitions in which men were involved:

Marked by the morals of the age, but also influenced by a very personal conception of the role of women, he dismissed female sports as ‘exhibitionism’ and, as late as 1912, wrote ... ‘the Olympic Games should be open to men only’ (Jeannotat, 1980, p. 241).

The modern Olympic Games are “megasports” events (Billings, 2008a, 2011). They are among the major sporting contests in the contemporary world (Markula, 2009), not only in the number and calibre of their participants but also the size of their global audiences and the value of their media rights. Such is their visibility that an estimated 4.7 billion viewers or 70 per cent of the world’s population watched televised coverage of at least some of the 2008 Olympics Games.⁷ In the US where the average daily television audience was 27 million people, the NBC network paid \$US894 million for broadcast rights and sold \$US25 million worth of digital advertising for its Beijing Games coverage (Rowe, 2011). In 2014, NBCUniversal agreed to pay \$US7.65 billion for the rights to broadcast the Olympic Games in the US until 2032. The deal covers all media platforms.

As a highly visible global event, the Olympics can be “represented in multiple ways to multiple audiences around the world depending on the different cultural contexts”, to the extent that the media can “participate in the exclusion and inclusion of different sports” (Markula, 2009, p. 1), and the scheduling of different sports according to audience requirements, sponsor and advertiser agreements. Newspapers, magazines and broadcasting have been important sites for the representation of the Games (King, 2007; Tuggle & Davis, 2009), reaching large audiences interested in the Olympics and playing a significant role in shaping public opinion (Billings, 2008a; Markula, 2009), but their business models are under threat (Simons, 2007). As the “newest member of the sports media family” (Real, 2006, p. 171), the Internet offers more than new delivery mechanisms. Kian and Clavio (2011, pp. 55-56) pointed to the Internet’s increased

⁶ For example, in the early 19th century, “sport” described field sports and, later, “cruel” sports. At the end of the century, “the newly forming modern press assisted in boundary marking and boundary shifting of what was defined as sport, and even what a champion was” (Horne, 2011, p. ix).

⁷ An estimated worldwide television audience of 4.8 billion watched the 2012 Olympics.

popularity as a primary news source whose rivalry with newspapers and television “could represent major changes to the traditional ways ... sports news has been defined, covered, and framed by media”. A substantial difference between the sports news presented online and in legacy media would, as Maier (2010, p. 548) observed, amount to “more than an academic distinction”. It would add breadth to the media mix and the public’s access to diverse news perspectives. It would potentially pose a threat to dominant ideologies about female athletes and women’s sports and “traditional notions of masculinity that usually have been maintained and strengthened by coverage” in legacy sports media (Kian & Clavio, 2011, p. 61). Conversely, to paraphrase Maier (2010), if the online medium exhibited news consonance (Maier & Tucker, 2012) and basically covered the same sports stories as its traditional counterparts, sports journalism’s agenda setting role – focusing the audience’s attention on men and their sports – would be largely unaltered.

1.4 Research questions, purpose and significance of the study

Like newspapers, magazines, television and radio, online sites can provide a local or national “reading of the athletes in a global event” (Markula, 2009, p. 2). At the same time, online audiences need not be constrained by local or national circulation footprints or reception. A substantial body of research, referred to briefly in this chapter and discussed in detail in Chapter 2, shows that coverage in the mainstream or legacy sports media is heavily weighted in favour of men. Thus, it is pertinent to examine whether online sports media reporting represents a departure from such masculine hegemonic coverage. Guided by Markula (2009) and other cross-national studies of newspaper (Capranica et al., 2005; Vincent, 2000) and online sports reporting (Jones, 2004, 2006b), this study analyses the online media’s depiction of Olympic athletes in local and national contexts. It provides comparison points regarding the commonalities among the online sports media in three different countries, and it examines their production practices.

The primary questions guiding this research are:

1. What characterises sports coverage by online media?
 - 1.1. To what extent, if any, is the hegemonic masculinity, which is apparent in the framing of athletes in mainstream or legacy media, perpetuated in online coverage?
2. What drives gendered sports coverage in online media?

2.1. To what extent, if any, do sports journalists unknowingly or knowingly draw on the principles of hegemonic masculinity in describing and justifying their sports news decision-making?⁸

The study's quantitative phase examines the ways that the framing of athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games by three public broadcasters in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada differs for female and male athletes. It asks if there is any significant difference between female and male athletes in the amount and the nature of the coverage each gender receives in online Olympic sports reports.

For the qualitative phase, I will interview sports journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC about the procedures these editorial decision-makers use to select sports news. The interviews will explore participants' perceptions to canvass the similarities and differences that might exist among their sports news production processes, how the process at each news organisation might affect the online Olympics coverage devoted to each gender, and how the sports journalists feel about their respective production processes. Finally, I will consider how the themes mentioned by the sports journalists help to explain the level of coverage of female Olympians in Beijing in 2008 compared with male Olympians.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the research on online sports journalism on two fronts. Guided by theories of framing (Entman, 1993) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Plymire, 2005; Thomas, 2009), it first examines the product, the stories created by sports journalists, and the extent to which coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games on the online sites of three public service broadcasters in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada reproduces the "ideologies of gender that privilege men and devalue the activities of women" (Bruce, 2011, p. 1). Second, and because "the sports reporting process begins with the sports reporter" (Wayne Wanta, 2012, p. 84), it interviews the gatekeepers, the sports editors and journalists who have reported on elite contests such as the Olympic Games for Australia's ABC, the UK's BBC and Canada's CBC, about their routines, behaviours and attitudes.

One of the primary practical implications of this research may be to offer a vehicle through which to instigate social and attitudinal change. While mediasport can be used as a site of cultural reproduction of dominant ideologies and power relations, it can also be used to provide avenues for resistance, challenge, change and transformation at a personal level and within

⁸ The terms "sports journalists" and "editors" refer to those involved in the reporting, writing and production of sports news, although their job titles vary from country to country, as discussed later.

broader social structures (T. Taylor, 2000). Changing attitudes in newsrooms and sports news discourses will not be an easy task, as the literature in Chapter 2 indicates. Male hegemony is upheld at the source of news coverage (Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003), and industry responses to complaints about the media's treatment of women and their sports have most often been ignored or downplayed (Gallego, Altes, Canton, Melus, & Soriano, 2004; Lumby, Caple, & Greenwood, 2010). On the other hand, this research may help sports journalism practitioners to understand how news selection and production practices can frame female and male athletes differently. Such awareness may, in turn, help to achieve a fairer and more accurate media representation of female athletes, as well as a greater diversity in sports covered – each of which could benefit the sports media by attracting more listeners, viewers and readers to their coverage.

In addition, this study's findings should help to build a wider community understanding of what sports journalists do and why they do it, thus informing both the ongoing public debate about women, sport and the media and calls for change. As noted earlier, Jones's previous studies of gender representation in the ABC's reporting of the 2000 Olympic Games, the ABC and BBC's 2004 Olympic Games coverage (Jones, 2004, 2006), along with this study of online coverage by public broadcasters of the 2008 Games, have been cited in several peer-reviewed international and Australian academic publications (see Footnote 3). The wider significance of this research and the findings to sports organisations and administrators, to those who participate in sport and to government policy makers is confirmed by citations in government-sponsored and NGO inquiries and reports on mediasport internationally and in Australia (Australian Federal Government, 2006; Lumby et al., 2010; United Nations, 2007; Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation and SportScotland, 2008).

This study of 2008 Olympic Games coverage by three public broadcasters from Australia, the UK and Canada, along with journalists' accounts of the selection and production processes employed at those broadcasters, has the potential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender, sport and the media. It could further inform and may enable government policy on women's sport and the media, in each country and further afield, to better address the needs of the various stakeholders. This study may also give educators an idea of what makes good sports journalism, so they can do a better job of training the next generation of sports and general news reporters.

As with my previous studies, a central aim of the current investigation is to compare the quantity and quality (or representation and respect) in online coverage of female and male athletes and their sports. So that I would be able to comment on change or continuity over time

in the masculine hegemonic framing of sports news, I have been guided by Tuggle's body of work (Tuggle & Davis, 2009; Tuggle et al., 2007; Tuggle, Huffman, & Rosengard, 2002; Tuggle & Owen, 1999) on the NBC's televised Olympics reporting in replicating previous iterations of my study, as well as adding new dimensions to the methodology in 2008 – such as a greater frequency of sampling in response to the 24-hour online news cycle; but also taking into account the different time zones for Olympic competition in Beijing, and different peaks in online viewing times for national audiences in Australia, the UK and Canada. In response to the limited amount that has been written about sports coverage by the public broadcasting sector, the sample includes three public broadcasters, as well as interviews with the practitioners from those broadcasters about sports news gathering, writing and reporting.

This study addresses potential methodological shortcomings – that preclude a full assessment of the extent to which online media engage in gender under-representation or stereotyping – by gathering the top 30 stories published concurrently and daily on three different websites across the Olympic Games, to provide a detailed content analysis of the gendered framing of online coverage of a megasports event. It uncovers significant differences by gender in the amount and nature of coverage female and male athletes receive. It finds that some coverage amplifies traditional gender stereotypes. These results suggest that sportswomen experience differential news coverage and, in order to understand female athletes' representation in the sports media, studies – as is the case here – need to move beyond the product and talk to the producers to explore the extent to which masculine hegemonic practices influence their coverage of female athletes and women's sport. A measure of this study's contribution to the methodology of investigating gendered sports coverage is its recognition by researchers studying online and legacy media. For example, researchers have drawn on Jones's methodology for analysing online images (Keith, Schwalbe, & Silcock, 2010; Lumby et al., 2010; Petca et al., 2013), classifying sports by sex type (Cranmer, Brann, & Bowman, 2014) and quantifying equity by indexing gendered coverage against event participation (Pappous, Marcellini, & de Léséleuc, 2011).

The focus on the Olympic Games in this study's first stage is warranted, not only because of the event's prestige and significance on the international sports calendar, as previously described. Despite a history of exclusion of female participants, the modern Olympics now offer rough parity between the number of sports (if not the number of events) open to athletes of each gender (see Appendix A for an overview of events and female participation at the Olympic

Games).⁹ More than 4600 sportswomen competed in 2008, almost 12 times the number at the first post-World War II Games in 1948 (International Olympic Committee, 2009a). Who and what the media cover at the Olympic Games “is particularly important in regard to women in sports, because many of those athletes and the sports in which they participate routinely receive little coverage beyond Olympic competition” (Tuggle et al., 2007, p. 55). In 2008, many of the 1078 female and male athletes selected from Australia, the UK and Canada to compete in Beijing were already World or Olympic title holders or both.¹⁰ This coming together of elite athletes on a world stage provides the opportunity to investigate the cross-national media framing of home country and international sportswomen and sportsmen across multiple sports and events (unlike a study of the Wimbledon tennis championships, for example), in a shared, concentrated schedule of two weeks.

1.5 Limitations of the study

This study should be understood within the context of its purpose and how it was conducted. The findings on coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the descriptions and perceptions of sports news production processes, obtained later from interviews with sports journalism professionals from the three broadcasters, cannot be generalised to other sports media. In seeking information about what is published as sports news I did not interview photographers. Most photographs published on the three broadcasters’ websites were sourced from external providers, such as Getty Images. Photographers were not consulted in the public broadcasters’ editorial decision-making about visual material in their online sports news texts (see Chapters 3 and 5 for more details on this point). It is not within the scope of this study to examine how readers respond to gendered coverage in online sports reporting by public service broadcasters. The potential for studies of audience reception of these digital media texts is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Gough Yates (2003) described how, as an academic, she had difficulties getting access to industry workplaces for her study of women’s magazine production. My experience, as a former journalist employed by the ABC and since then as a journalism educator, potentially afforded me special access. It certainly helped to open doors to the “right people” to get my project underway. I was able to speak to all but one of those professionals who had initially agreed to an interview. Unlike researchers who have reported limited interest in the media industry in facilitating academic research, my experience has been very positive. At all levels of the ABC,

⁹ The UK Women’s Sports Foundation (2009) said women received more than 1000 fewer participation opportunities than their male counterparts in Beijing in 2008.

¹⁰ Australia named 435 athletes in its team (www.olympics.com.au). Team GB comprised 311 athletes (www.olympics.org.uk) and Canada sent 332 athletes to Beijing (www.olympics.ca/Beijing2008).

BBC and CBC, I encountered genuine interest in this project, its purpose and the publication of my findings. To my delight, those interviewed spoke willingly, at length, in detail and candidly about their jobs, workplaces and work practices.¹¹ I attribute this, in part, to assurances that all participants would have pseudonyms and other identifying information, including their gender, would be removed from my narrative, attribution and their direct quotes. My follow-ups with them, to check the accuracy of their interview transcripts and clarify information, as needed, have been received in the same spirit of professional interest, co-operation and respect for deadlines. As described in Chapter 3, distance and cost were factors in my decision to conduct telephone and Skype interviews for this study.

1.6 The ABC, BBC and CBC

The scope of this research is limited to the national public broadcasters in three countries but the focus on these public service broadcasters (PSBs) is justified.¹² Models vary according to political, technological and economic environments, but PSBs around the world have been developed essentially “due to the inherent weaknesses” of the two dominant broadcasting systems – the state-controlled broadcasting model and the profit-oriented commercial model:

The public-service model ... was based on mistrust: mistrust of the ability of market mechanisms to fulfil certain goals, and mistrust of the State's ability to achieve the same objectives, generally grouped under the broad expectations that still apply to public broadcasting today, which is to inform, educate and entertain. This vision of the role and importance of public broadcasting required a public organization at the service of citizens, culture and democracy ... Because it is not subject to the dictates of profitability, public broadcasting must be daring, innovative and take risks. And when it succeeds in developing outstanding genres or ideas, it can impose its high standards and set the tone for other broadcasters. (Banerjee & Seneviratne, 2005, pp. 13-14)

Arguably, the three public service broadcasters in this study set the tone for other sports coverage providers. Each has, at various times, held the rights to broadcast top shelf, international sports competitions such as the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and FIFA World Cup. Public service broadcasters are “a central part of national news media landscapes”

¹¹ I sincerely thank each and every sports journalist and editor interviewed for this study, the friends and contacts whose referrals got me in the door and the managers who allowed this to happen. You gave me a rare and special opportunity to learn more about the people and processes of sports journalism and why they matter.

¹² In this thesis, and in the literature, the terms “public service broadcasting”, “public service broadcasters”, “PSBs”, “public broadcasting” and “public broadcasters” are accepted nomenclature for electronic media whose role is one of public service, with funding to varying degrees by the national governments of their countries. The names of three national PSBs examined in this study, the ABC, BBC and CBC, include broadcasting. Each organisation has radio, television and online arms. Collectively and individually they are called broadcasters. The term is not to be confused with its usage, in countries such as North America, to refer to individual or collective on-air announcers in the electronic media.

(Soroka, Andrew, Aalberg, & et al, 2013, p. 719). In Australia, the UK and Canada, the ABC, BBC and CBC respectively are among the first choices of citizens as news providers. It is also the case with their sports coverage, as discussed below. The broadcasters' ethos is ostensibly one of public service over commercial imperatives, yet they could be termed semi-commercial due to varying degrees of reliance on the commercial revenue streams flowing to them from combinations of licence fees, public funding, retailing and advertising.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is Australia's first national public broadcaster. Funded by public monies apportioned by the Federal government, which is the source of more than 80 per cent of its funding, and overseen by and responsible to Federal parliament, the ABC has been described as "one of the most trusted sources of news and current affairs" (2014, p. 18), "the eyes and ears of Australia" (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, 2005, p. 2), "Australia's foremost institution of information and culture" (S. Cunningham & Turner, 1997, p. 59), and "unquestionably, the most important cultural institution in the country ... It has public trust. It is even loved." (Simons, 2007, p. 176) Its managing director, Mark Scott, called the ABC "a commons, a shared space ... a shared reference point within Australian life, a cultural experience that we all have in common, at a time when common cultural experiences are becoming harder to come by" (Spigelman, 2013).

The ABC's more than 80-year history started in radio. Eight out of 10 Australians use its radio, television and online services (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, 2005). Successive governments have acknowledged the ABC as an important public institution and "among the most trusted and beloved organisations in the nation" (Australian Government, 2008, p. 1). At the same time, government (under)funding of the broadcaster has remained a contentious issue. An international study by McKinsey on levels of public broadcasting funding per head of population ranked Australia and Canada at 16th and 17th respectively out of 17 countries, with the UK in fourth spot (Tiffen & Gittins, 2014). Prior to the Federal government's decision in 2014 to cut \$254 million from the ABC's budget over five years, the lobby group, Friends of the ABC, said the broadcaster's operational revenue had decreased in real terms by \$253 million or more than 20 per cent since the mid-1980s, leaving the ABC "grossly under-funded to fulfil all of its Charter responsibilities to a high standard ... when compared with other public broadcasters" (2013, p. 2). The group argued that the BBC, which has three times the potential national audience of the ABC, receives six times the ABC's level of funding.

In 1995, two years ahead of the BBC, the ABC officially launched its website which was, from the beginning, "intricately enmeshed with the ABC's free-to-air radio and television, and ... [carried] with it an ethic of public service" (Burns, 2000, p. 98). Its news site

www.abc.net.au/news consistently ranks among the most visited in Australia with an average of more than a million visits each month (Levine, 2010). In the 12 months including the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, an average of 2.6 million Australians visited *ABC Online* for up-to-date news, information and entertainment (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009). In August 2008, the ABC continued its “unbroken tradition” of Olympic Games coverage begun in 1936 (2009, p. 81).

In terms of the media landscape, the ABC has never had the dominance the BBC has always had, or the monopoly the BBC once had (Spigelman, 2013). The world’s largest, best-known and wealthiest public broadcaster (K. Taylor, 2011), the BBC was established by a Royal Charter in the 1920s (with a name change from the British Broadcasting Company to the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1927). It is “a historically highly influential public service broadcasting system” with its responsibilities “often framed since its inception ... as a requirement to inform, educate and entertain”¹³ (Wallace, 2009, p. 689) for the “greater good of ‘improving’ the population” (McClean, 2008, p. 68). It is funded by licence fees paid by households across the UK, its own commercial operations (BBC Worldwide), and the government. The latter supports the World Service. A report for the BBC by Deloitte LLP (2010) set the economic value of its contribution to digital and creative businesses across the UK at £7.7 billion, or more than two pounds of economic value for every pound of licence fee.

The BBC’s services include eight national television channels, 10 national radio stations, 40 local radio stations and the *BBC Online* website www.bbc.co.uk (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009). Its own “Future of News” project report called the BBC “the most important news provider for the whole of the UK” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2015, p. 45). While management flagged cuts of up to 25 per cent to its online editorial sites in 2010, *BBC Online* is the biggest online content destination in the UK with 22 million users each week (M. Thompson, 2010). A measure of the BBC’s international profile is its ranking of 19 in the top 25 websites in the United States (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009) and its inclusion in the top 50 in the world (Deloitte LLP, 2010). An estimated 40 per cent of the UK’s online population accesses the *BBC Sport* site each week (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009) and *BBC Sport* has the most visited sports web pages in Europe (Hudson & Rowlands, 2012).¹⁴

¹³ The BBC’s first head, John Reith, is credited with developing the charter ideal to inform, educate and entertain (McClean, 2008).

¹⁴ A critic of public broadcasting and the former chairman and chief executive of News Corporation (Europe and Asia), James Murdoch, has attacked the BBC as a competitor “too well-resourced and powerful” in sport and other domains of television (Scherer & Rowe, 2014, p. 18).

Among its milestones in Olympic Games coverage, BBC radio broadcast live from the 1924 Paris Olympics. The BBC was also the first broadcaster to purchase television rights for an Olympics. It paid £1000 for the 1948 Games in London and televised more than 60 hours of coverage to the 50,000 homes within range of the events taking place in Wembley Stadium (British Library, n.d.). In 2008, television audiences for the BBC's coverage of the Beijing Olympics reached 40 million (Conlan, 2008), and *BBC Sport* achieved a record reach with 8.5 million weekly unique users (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009).¹⁵

Considered among the world's finest news operations (Pritchard & Sauvageau, 1998), Canada's national public broadcaster became a fully-fledged crown corporation in 1936 (Beaty, 2008), modelled on the BBC. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC/Radio-Canada) broadcasts through a range of television, radio, Internet and satellite-based services. It is responsible to and reports to parliament. The corporation's primary source of income is government funding (K. Taylor, 2011), with advertising providing more than 20 per cent of its annual income (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2010). In fact, CBC Radio has been commercial free since 1974, but more than 50 per cent of CBC Television's budget comes from commercial revenue, not from the public purse (ABC Radio National, 2007).

The CBC has been described as "a mature, independent public voice" (ABC Radio National, 2006). This perceived independence and the CBC's public service orientation are "important components of its reputation for quality journalism", with Canadian journalists ranking it the Canadian news organisation they admired the most (Pritchard & Sauvageau, 1998, p. 375). A majority of Canadians polled in a national survey by the lobby group, Friends, rated the quality of CBC programming as either excellent, very good or good (J. Thompson, 2010). However, a former head of CBC news and current affairs, Tony Burman, said the network was "so under-financed" it had to rely on "essentially being a kind of semi-commercial broadcaster, [and] must make the kind of compromises that ... blur any distinction between a public broadcaster and a commercial broadcaster" (ABC Radio National, 2007).

A 2011 Nordicity audit on per capita funding for public broadcasters ranked Canada's spending of \$34 per person third from the bottom, ahead of New Zealand and Norway (K. Taylor, 2011; The Canadian Association of Journalists, 2014). Scherer and Whitson (2009) said the budgetary pressure from government stemmed, in part, from the readiness of Canadians to turn to US networks to get American programming and US sports, including the National Football League

¹⁵ The UK's 1996 Broadcasting Act lists the Olympic Games as a "nationally important" event for which free-to-air coverage must be guaranteed (Scherer & Whitson, 2009).

(NFL) and the National Basketball Association (NBA): “[T]his invites the argument – from private broadcasters, among others – that the CBC should stick to public affairs and the arts, and leave profitable sports programming, like NHL hockey and the Olympics, to the private sector.” (2009, p. 217) Management has since indicated its reluctance to walk away from Olympics coverage. CBC’s president and CEO, Hubert T. Lacroix, announced in 2014 that 657 jobs would go over two years to cut \$130 million from CBC/Radio-Canada’s budget. The size of sports newsrooms would be “substantially” reduced, Lacroix said, but the CBC would “still compete for sporting events of national significance, like the Olympics” (CBC News, 2014).

The CBC’s website averages 4.8 million unique visitors per month and is Canada’s most popular English language news and media site. Excluding foreign content providers and content aggregators, www.cbc.ca is Canada’s second placed online sports publisher. The CBC was the exclusive Canadian broadcaster for the Beijing Olympics (having paid \$US73 million for the rights for the 2006 and 2008 Games) and traffic on its Olympics site in 2008 was up by 56 per cent compared with the 2004 Athens Olympics site. The CBC’s annual report attributed an increase of \$39 million in total advertising revenue in 2008/09 to the Beijing Games (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009).

1.7 Summary

Sport is more than a game. It is such a vital part of contemporary popular culture – some say it is a microcosm of society (Eitzen, 2003) – that it cannot be dismissed as separate and distinct from society. It offers participants more than an understanding of the rules of the game (Stell, 1991). It can teach important life skills such as self-discipline, leadership and co-operation, while promoting health and wellbeing. A Frontier Economics (2010, p. 3) report on the economic contribution of sport to Australia listed the international success of elite Australian sportspeople “as one of the most significant measurable positive impacts on wellbeing”. Growth in the sport sector in England is such that it has outstripped the English economy as a whole over the past two decades, making an annual contribution of more than £16 billion (Sport England, 2010). Sport supports about 2 per cent of jobs in Canada. Sport spending is almost \$16 billion a year and, at 1.2 per cent of GDP, has “a significant impact on the Canadian economy” (Bloom, Grant, & Watt, 2005, p. iii).

At a time when it has high global visibility, thanks to “an enormous increase in the amount of sport on television and ... [coverage] in the press, radio and other forms of media throughout developing economies as well as the advanced capitalist economies” (Horne, 2011, p.x), sport remains a zone of exclusion and inequality. There is an important link between the participation of women in sport and their media representation (Women's Sports Foundation, 2009). Billings

(2008b, p. 107) noted that the mass media have served as “willing enablers of gender discrimination in sport”, via the print and broadcast media’s generation of a dual communication culture:

... one aspect of which is masculine, focusing on athletics being played at purportedly the highest level, and the other aspect of which is feminine, targeted to a niche audience, and continually reinforcing the ‘supposedly crucial biological differences’ between males and females (2008b, p. 108)

My study of online coverage of the 2000 Olympic Games suggested that the online reporting of women’s sport that reinforced stereotypes and trivialised women’s achievements could be more damaging to the truth about the facts of women’s sports and female athletes than no coverage at all (Jones, 2004). Quantitative data can provide specific evidence of a moment in time of sports coverage and, when conducted over time, such research can provide specific evidence of long-term trends and changes (Fountain & McGregor, 1999). Insights from the people inside the sports newsrooms that power such coverage can help “to fuse their practical experiences with scholarly analysis – to let their words breathe and then to test them empirically and to comment on them critically” (Billings, 2008b, p. 19) – to inform wider public understanding and discussion about, as well as industry practice of, sports journalism. These are the goals of this study.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical underpinnings of this study; that is, the use of framing theory (Entman, 1993) and hegemony theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) to examine sports texts and the practices of the producers of those texts. Then, it examines the results of research on media coverage given to sportswomen in print, broadcast and online media, before turning to studies in the field that consider the attitudes, routines and decision-making practices of sports journalists.

Chapter 3 explains the methodologies used in this research and the rationale for their selection. It explains how the two methodologies: (a) evaluate the performance of online news publications in terms of gender representation in their sports coverage (in the first, quantitative phase); and (b) explore the production of those texts (in the second, qualitative phase). The findings of the quantitative content analysis are presented in Chapter 4. It discusses and interprets them in relation to the research questions and previous research in the field.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the results of interviews conducted with the editorial decision-makers from the ABC, BBC and CBC. The interviews will explore the sports news decision-making processes used in each organisation, including the interviewees’ perceptions of the

attributes of sports news, their audiences, the state of play in women's sports coverage and its future. It then places the journalists' responses within a wider context of research in the area of gender and sports journalism. In Chapter 6, the results of this study will be used to offer insights into the drivers of gendered sports coverage and to make recommendations to address these issues. The chapter will conclude with a view to future research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to and discussion of the theories underpinning the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study – hegemony theory and framing theory – and how the two (the former is also called hegemonic masculinity) have been used to investigate and explain the status of women in sports media coverage (Curry, Arriagada, & Cornwell, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin & Hardin, 2005; Kian, Vincent, & Mondello, 2008; Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010), as well as to explain gendered sports media production practices (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kian, Fink, & Hardin, 2011). Then follows a review of studies of the media's portrayal of female athletes and their sports. It begins by defining two primary criteria used by scholars to examine gender representation in sports media content – recognition (the extent of coverage) and respect (the nature of coverage) (Kane, 1996; Kinnick, 1998). These primary criteria also provide the backbone, along with the research questions listed in Chapter 1, for this study's first phase, the quantitative examination using content analysis of gender in sports reporting on the online sites of three national public broadcasters. While content analyses are “informative and can serve as evidence of the extent to which media coverage is sexist, they do not explain why sport coverage is the way it is” (Knoppers & Elling, 2004, p. 57). Thus, the final part of this chapter reviews studies examining the production of sports news to set the scene for the study's qualitative phase – the interviews with sports journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC.

2.2 Hegemony theory and framing theory

One of the four categories of theories to have influenced sport-media studies is hegemony theory (Plymire, 2005), developed by the Italian social theorist Antonio Gramsci (1971).¹⁶ Hegemony theory describes how certain social groups exert their leadership and values on the majority (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Schell & Rodriguez, 2000), to the extent that the consensus makes the power of the dominant social groups seem legitimate (Holub, 1992; Thomas, 2009). The hegemonic image sees political, economic and cultural domination, and intellectual and moral leadership carried out, not by a single elite or ruling class, but by a complex of powerful and wealthy groups of historically privileged white-skin males (Sage, 1998).

Sage (1998) wrote that hegemony literally means dominance, but when it is used to refer to the social relations that tend to exist in modern capitalist societies, it has a less direct, autocratic

¹⁶ The other categories are: semiotics and structuralism, post-structuralism and feminism (Plymire, 2005).

meaning. Since successful hegemony is never complete, the ruling elite must always negotiate with other groups and factions to maintain it (Plymire, 2005; Sugden & Tomlinson, 2009). The dominant groups' ways of life and versions of culture and civilisation are accepted by the other classes of society through coercion and consent; that is, it is mostly a silent domination (Sage, 1998).

One way this is achieved is by shaping the awareness of the masses through the news media (Joll, 1983). Researchers (Daddario & Wigley, 2007; Greer, Hardin, & Homan, 2009; Jennifer Hargreaves, 1994; Kachgal, 2001) have applied Gramsci's concept of hegemony – described by Plymire (2005, p. 141) as “more useful to sport-media analysis than the deterministic readings predicted by vulgar Marxism” – to help explain the status of women in sport. Bryson (1987, p. 349) explained that “sport celebrates the dominant form of masculinity ... which excludes women from the terrain completely, or effectively minimizes their achievements”. Thus, sport's construction of gender provides an image of “idealized, or ‘culturally exalted’ masculinity” and because this is the dominant or most powerful image it is hegemonic (Theberge, 2000, p. 323). Because hegemony is historically constructed, within the context of particular social relations and institutional forms, hegemonic masculinity is “constantly challenged and open to reconstitution” (2000, p. 324), as Connell (1995, p. 77) described:

... hegemonic masculinity embodies a ‘currently accepted’ strategy. When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct new hegemony. The dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women. Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation.

Hargreaves (2002) also observed that male hegemony is not a simple male versus female opposition, which is how it is often presented. She argued that male hegemony in sport is not and never has been static and absolute. It is a constantly shifting process. Some men and some women support, accommodate or collude in existing patterns of discrimination in sport. Other men and women oppose them and struggle for change. Hargreaves (2002, p. 184) also asserted that sport is not an “all-or-nothing” phenomenon. It contains numerous contradictions. Male hegemony is incomplete and there is never an absolute incorporation of individuals into stereotyped gender roles or total rejection of them.

Connell (2012) and Schell and Rodriguez (2000) argued that hegemony presides over the institution of sport in capitalist society to the extent that men control its major factions – economic, political and cultural. Thus, hegemonic influence in sport “is rarely changed without the consent of men in power ... and men have long dominated all ranks of sport media personnel” (Kian & Clavio, 2011, p. 58). Culturally, sport reflects men's dominant values and

ideals about, for example, who can play and the ideal athlete. It is a domain for white, able-bodied, heterosexual men where women are often relegated to second class status (Schell & Rodriguez, 2000), and such “an important mechanism of gender hegemony in rich countries” that assumptions that “chicks are not as good as dudes, and if they are, they should not be ... and it is men’s sport that really matters” are the “default settings” (Connell, 2012, p. 177). Studies in the field of gender, sport and the media, that are concerned with the “mobility” of relations and the manner in which sport reproduces or challenges hegemonic masculinity (Theberge, 2000), have shown that media coverage confirms and reinforces such hegemonic masculine stereotypes by ignoring and marginalising sportswomen (Hardin & Hardin, 2005; Kachgal, 2001; Kian et al., 2008; Schell & Rodriguez, 2000; Toohey, 1997). Through the media, audiences receive notice that sports are for men. In an effort to dissuade women’s participation, the media portray female athletes as “Others” (Kian & Clavio, 2011), often pejoratively labelling them as lesbians, and interpreting their athletic participation as a source of gender role conflict (Cahn 1994, quoted in Schell & Rodriguez, 2000; Shugart, 2003).

Kachgal (2001, p. 162), who used the two frameworks of cultural hegemony and framing theory to investigate the representation of female athletes on sports media websites, argued that hegemony is helpful because it focuses on patriarchal ideology (the subordination of women to men) as “an all-encompassing influence on the content which supports the reality presented and reinforced through framing”. Framing theory considers how the media cover events and issues (Fountain & McGregor, 2003).¹⁷ Thus, online media coverage can be viewed as a frame, “a window on the world through which we can learn of ourselves and others” (Tuggle et al., 2007, p. 55). Bowd (2007, p. 81) noted how journalists, “in order to make meaning of information, and to enable large amounts of information to be rendered into what we recognise as news, utilise ideas of news frames and news values”. Framing, according to Entman (1993), highlights some bits of information, making them more salient or noticeable by placement or repetition:

Framing essentially involves *selection* and *salience*. To frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the term described. (1993, p. 52. Italics are original emphasis.)

In sports journalism, to paraphrase Schudson (2003), the editing or framing of sports news brings matters of human interest into a certain form in a particular cultural apparatus, the sports news. Sports news frames allow sports journalists to process large amounts of information

¹⁷ Another component of the approach considers “how individuals make sense of these events and issues, drawing partially (but not exclusively) on media representations” (Fountain & McGregor, 2003, n.p.), however it is not within the scope of this study to explore framing as a media effect.

quickly and routinely, “using principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters” (Gitlin 1980, quoted in Bowd, 2007, p. 81). In relation to such selection, emphasis and presentation, numerous authors have expressed concern about the relationship between sport and the mass media – beyond the media appearing “to simply ‘report what happened’” to the reality that they “actively construct news through frames” (Kane, 1996, p. 4) to offer a context for viewing or understanding an event (Duncan & Messner, 1998).

According to Goffman (quoted in McQuail, 2000), we need frames to organise otherwise fragmentary items of experience or information, to “build ‘the pictures ... in our heads’ – the stereotypes on which we base our thinking” (Tuggle et al., 2002, p. 362). The power of “presence and absence” in framing can influence audience understanding since “one meaning is conveyed by what gets covered, but another equally powerful meaning is conveyed by what does not receive media attention” (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004, p. 477). As a result, just as in news, in sports coverage “frames help portray who is in authority, and who is marginalized” (Billings, Angelini, & Eastman, 2005, p. 157). Those examining sports coverage have looked at how the media use frames, denoted by the choice and use of keywords, phrases, visual images, sources and the repetition of themes to actively construct gendered sports news (Billings et al., 2005; Hardin, Lynn, Walsdorf, & Hardin, 2002; Parker & Fink, 2008; Tuggle et al., 2007).¹⁸ If these elements persist over time, defining and structuring social relationships, their “versions of reality are powerful because they are the basis for the meaning assigned to events, identity, and other culturally significant topics” (Kian & Hardin, 2009, p. 188). The media’s framing of issues can affect readers’, listeners’ and viewers’ judgments on an issue, “and once an issue is defined, it is difficult to redefine it” (2009, p. 188).

Messner (1988, p. 197) has suggested that “the media framing of female athletes threatens to subvert any counter-hegemonic potential posed by female athletes”. Vodden-McKay and Schell (2010) noted there are many ways the media can achieve such subversion, both in the amount and nature of coverage allocated to female athletes. Studies of sports media portrayals have documented the “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman, 1978b)¹⁹ of female athletes, the “marked biases” in favour of male athletes and men’s sports (Billings et al., 2005, p. 156), and how female athletes are framed as fundamentally different from their male counterparts (Cooky et al., 2013; Crolley & Teso, 2007; Jones, 2004, 2006; Kane, 2013).

¹⁸ Gender theorists have also used the approach to explore the media’s framing of women politicians and women’s issues (Fountain & McGregor, 2003).

¹⁹ Gerbner’s (1976) theory of “symbolic annihilation” has been popularised by Tuchman (1978b) to refer to the media’s condemnation, trivialisation and omission of women from its coverage.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, in terms of their representation or the quantity of coverage they receive, sportswomen's achievements have been ignored altogether or "reduced to bite-sized mentions in all forms of media" (P. Smith, 2011, p. 37). Sportswomen have been grossly under-reported in the number and the placement of stories, the column centimetres or the minutes of airtime devoted to their achievements, the number, the size and the placement of photographs, and the range of sports depicted (see Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; Francis, 2003; Huffman et al., 2004; Jorgensen, 2005; Lumby et al., 2010; Tuggle et al., 2002). Even when coverage appears to represent gains in their mediated profile, such as in the lead-up to and during the Olympic Games (Capranica et al., 2005; North, 2012), studies have reported disproportionate attention to women's individual events compared with team sports (Hardin, Chance, Dodd, & Hardin, 2002; Jones, 2004, 2006, 2006b; Tuggle et al., 2002; Tuggle & Owen, 1999), and heavy emphasis on a select few female athletes and their sports at the expense of other women and a diversity of sports (Hardin, Chance, et al., 2002; Jones, 2004, 2006, 2006b; King, 2007; Tuggle et al., 2002; Tuggle & Owen, 1999).

Scholars (Bryson, 1987; Schell & Rodriguez, 2000) have theorised that the messages of male hegemony in sport are served up through media framing that trivialises women's sport. Methods by which this is done include "the very familiar ploy of treatment as a sex object and mother, thus implying that women's real role is in a subordinate relationship to men, not acting as a competent individual" (Bryson, 1987, p. 356). Studies in Australia and overseas, as shown later in this chapter, have indicated that references to female athletes' appearance, their relationships and family situations are commonplace (Bernstein & Galily, 2008; Bruce, 2008; Jones, 2004; Kane, 1996). Such references can downgrade the seriousness or importance of sportswomen. Framing women's sports as lesser or trivial contests devalues sportswomen and what they do (Kinnick, 1998). Chapter 3 outlines how this study uses content analysis to inform a framing analysis of the online media's depiction of female athletes during the 2008 Olympic Games.

Pedersen et al (2003) suggested that male hegemony is also upheld at the source of coverage, in sports departments, and note the upshot of restricted job opportunities for women as sports journalists, photographers and editors:

When the mass media limit – through formal and informal processes – the employment of female newspaper personnel and provide inequitable and limited coverage of females in sport, the cumulative effect is the systemic promotion of male supremacy and female subordination. (2003, p. 377)

At the same time, the literature has indicated a lack of sensitivity by the media to complaints about the ways in which women are represented in the media (Gallego et al., 2004), media

indifference to research showing under-reporting of women's sports and sportswomen (Fountain & McGregor, 1999; Wade, 2012), and media flippancy about concerns "frequently raised in academic and popular literature ... that female athletes are routinely trivialised, patronised and, in particular, sexualised in media coverage" (Lumby et al., 2010, p. 16). Journalists who cover sport have an inaccurate perception of the amount of women's sport presented to audiences (Donohoe, 2003; Fountain & McGregor, 1999), claim their selection processes that exclude women's sports are both neutral and fair (Knoppers & Elling, 2004), and maintain that if there were more successful female athletes, they would be reported on as extensively as male athletes (Bernstein & Galily, 2008).

2.3 Gender, sport and the media's coverage

This section provides a review of the literature on the media's portrayal of female athletes and their sports. In sports coverage, recognition refers to how much attention or representation female athletes receive compared with male athletes in the total number of articles and photographs, and their placement or prominence, and how much coverage sportswomen receive in gender-typed sports that are categorised as female-appropriate, male-appropriate and neutral (Kane, 1996). Lack of respect is when the media trivialise or downgrade the seriousness and importance of female athletes, devaluing them and what they do (Bruce, 2008). Sources of this bias are a focus on appearance in descriptions and in images, characterisations of weakness in words, and in passive, non-athletic poses in images, and linguistic sexism such as gender marking, hierarchical naming and martial metaphors (Duncan, 2006; Kinnick, 1998).

2.4 Recognition

2.4.1 Articles and airtime

Empirical studies support the view that women have been the subject of both overt and covert discrimination in the routine or everyday coverage that makes up the bulk of sports media content and excludes events such as the Olympic Games (Markula, Bruce, & Hovden, 2010). In print and broadcast media in the 1980s and 90s (1980; Phillips, 1997) and later in print, broadcast and online media (Donohoe, 2003; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Jorgensen, 2005; Kachgal, 2001; Kian et al., 2009; O'Neill & Mulready, 2014), routine coverage of sportswomen ranges from zero to infrequent peaks of 28 per cent. Most studies reviewed here have found that women receive less than 10 per cent of everyday coverage (Markula et al., 2010).

On sports websites in the US, the attention given to male athletes has outstripped that to female athletes by 4 to 1 (Kachgal, 2001). In Kian, Vincent and Mondello's (2008) study of print and online coverage of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball tournaments, the men's games received three times as much coverage as the women's games (76 per cent of

articles versus 23 per cent). Female athletes were portrayed as “the other” and frequently compared with men, helping to “reinforce the hegemonic notion that sport is a male domain even when articles focused on women’s basketball” (2008, p. 235). In tennis coverage, only one-fifth of online and newspaper articles about the 2007 US Open featured female players (Kian & Clavio, 2011).

Televised sports news in the US has allocated from 5 to 9 per cent of airtime to women (Duncan & Messner, 2000), “seriously under-reporting women’s sports” in proportions that reflect the findings of newspaper and magazine studies (Duncan, 2006, p. 235). Scholars, such as Kane and Greendorfer (1994, p. 34), noted that the lack of coverage or absence of women from mediated sports articles reflects who and what has value and prestige in society: “By their symbolic annihilation of the female athlete, the media tell us that sportswomen have little, if any, value ... particularly in relationship to male athletes.”

Research in the UK, New Zealand and Australia has yielded comparable results (Lumby et al., 2010; Mikosza, 1997). Matheson and Flatten (1996) reported inequity and unfairness in the British press where women’s share of sports articles was just 7 per cent. That figure fell to 5 per cent in O’Neill and Mulready’s (2014) study of UK national press sports coverage prior to and after the 2012 Olympics. Packer et al. (2014) also reported “continuing bias towards men’s sports” in their analysis of six British national newspapers. Women’s coverage in six New Zealand newspapers accounted for only 4 per cent of the space devoted to sports news (McGregor & Fountaine, 1997). Not everyone has an equal chance of being represented in Australia’s sports media (Rowe, 1991). More than 20 years of studies have shown that media coverage of women’s sport is only a tiny proportion of that devoted to men (Lumby et al., 2010; Menzies, 1989; Mikosza, 1997; Stoddart, 1994); most of the major sports in the media, particularly the football codes, are played mainly by men and even where women do play a media sport in large numbers, such as tennis, golf and cricket, their activities are treated as secondary (P. Brown, 1995); and sports dominated by women and with very extensive grass roots popularity, such as netball, are grossly under-represented in regional and metropolitan media (Alston, 1996). Canadian research (S. MacKay & Dallaire, 2009) has yielded an exception to this trend, in university-sponsored newspapers, where female athletes and their sports received half of all coverage (although male sports featured in 82 per cent of front page photographs).

2.4.2 Images of athletes

Readers of newspaper sports sections are more likely to see an image of a male athlete (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990; George, Hartley, & Paris, 2001). Photographic profiles for women

often fall well below half the number of images devoted to men and men's sports, rarely reflect their participation in sport (Alston, 1996), and are more likely to show athletes who compete in so-called gender-appropriate sports or women who offer sex appeal (George et al. 2001; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991). From capital city dailies in Australia to broadsheets in Britain, male bias in the choice of sports photographs has resulted in the publication of up to 17 times as many photographs of men's sports than of women's sports (George et al., 2001; Menzies, 1989). In US newspapers, men have received 13 times as many photographs as women (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990). Two studies, 20 years apart, of the leading US sports magazine, *Sports Illustrated*, found only 5 and 6 per cent of photographs respectively were of female athletes (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Gniazdowski & Denham, 2003). In its stable mate, *Sports Illustrated for Kids (SIK)*, female athletes featured in just one quarter of all photographs (Hardin, Lynn, et al., 2002). Duncan (2006, p. 234) argued that the underlying premise in such research is that visual images "are particularly persuasive" and "certain forms of media are politically or commercially motivated."

Unequal coverage is not confined to legacy media. Despite the introduction of anti-discrimination laws in the US in 1972, female athletes have been under-represented in online images. On sports websites sponsored by the NCAA, more than half of all baseball reports included photographs of players, but less than one-third of softball stories carried photographs (Sagas, Cunningham, Wigley, & Ashley, 2000). Images on commercial sports websites also highlight male athletes. In Kachgal's (2001) study of three leading US sports websites, men registered 86 per cent of photographs. The fewer images of women (22 out of a total of 162) meant more news items about women contained no photographs of them.

2.4.3 Olympics coverage

The quantitative differences between female and male athletes' coverage are less pronounced during the Olympic Games. This is because, in most Western countries, these Games provide one of the only venues where female athletes and women's sport receive not only extensive media coverage but enough to be statistically compared to coverage provided to male athletes and men's sports. The same cannot be said of other sports contests and events, such as professional men's and women's football. In that arena, comparisons of print, broadcast and online media representations are not possible because women receive little or no coverage.

Male sports are still in the ascendancy in the Winter Olympics, at times dominating television coverage by 2 to 1 (Billings, 2008a; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Daddario, 1998). Despite the balance also remaining in favour of men's sports during the Summer Olympics (Crolley &

Teso, 2007), spikes consistently occur in female sports coverage during this cycle (Capranica et al., 2005; Vincent, Imwold, Masemann, & Johnson, 2002).

North studied two Australian newspapers, a month out from the 2012 London Games. With 52 per cent of pre-Olympic sports stories and 86 per cent of general sports coverage, men remained “highly privileged in both areas”, but pre-Olympic coverage included more women’s sport than general sports news (North, 2012). Bruce (2006) noted a significant change in the New Zealand press’s focus when the Olympic Games are underway, with female athletes receiving almost twice as much newspaper space as male athletes. Knoppers and Elling (2004) observed a 10-fold increase in women’s sports coverage on television during the 1996 Olympics compared with non-Olympics periods. King (2007) also found a turnaround in coverage for female athletes in Olympics coverage in 2004, in both *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*. Women received greater article, headline and photographic coverage than men. Sportswomen appeared in 43 per cent of all photographs in six US, UK and Canadian newspapers during the 1996 Olympics (Vincent et al., 2002). Hardin et al. (2002) reported a similar result in US newspaper coverage of the 2000 Olympics. Women featured in 48 per cent of photographs, in line with the demographics for the US Olympic team (45 per cent female athletes, 55 per cent male athletes). Similarly, the 38 per cent of 2000 Olympics photographs of sportswomen in newspapers in Belgium, Denmark, France and Italy matched sports participation rates for those countries (Capranica et al., 2005).

Studies of Olympics coverage on the ABC in 2000, and on the ABC and BBC in 2004, showed a heavy emphasis on a select few female athletes and their sports in online stories and photographs (Jones, 2004, 2006). Women received almost half of the stories and more than one-third of the photographs in 2000 on *ABC News Online*. The 38 per cent of photographs devoted to women matched their medal success at the Games. On *News Online*’s “Top Stories” page, images of sportswomen in 2000 shared equal billing with men (Jones, 2003). In 2004, the number of lead story photographs of female athletes on *News Online* jumped to twice the number for men, but just under half of those photographs of women accompanied stories about “failure, conflict and controversy” (Jones, 2006, p. 122).

2.4.4 Prominence or story placement

In everyday coverage, women’s stories and photographs are rarely integrated into mainstream sports news, a trend New Zealand sports journalist, Tony Smith, acknowledged:

Media sports departments are often bombarded, with complaints that coverage of women’s sport is ghettoised to postage stamp-sized reports

buried in the inside pages or nanosecond sound bites at the rump-end of TV and radio news bulletins ... [I]n general, women's sport does deserve more coverage and kudos in this country. (T. Smith, 2005, p. F8)

Studies have confirmed that few women's sports make it to the prime locations of the newspaper front or back page – “the home of what is ostensibly the most important sports news of the day” (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005) – or above the fold. Instead, they are often positioned on the inner pages of the sports section, and at the bottom of pages (Duncan, 1990; Phillips, 1997; Women's Sports Foundation, 2003). Kachgal (2001) found only 18 per cent of top stories on the splash pages (the prime location) of sports websites featured women. In a similar vein, 10 per cent of images on the BBC sport website's “Pic of the day” page depicted female athletes (Women's Sports Foundation UK, 2004).

In 2004 Olympic Games coverage, Spanish newspapers gave far greater prominence to men and their sports by placing men's stories in prime positions on the page and almost always making them the lead (Crolley & Teso, 2007). However, other studies indicated that the sports agenda can shift away from coverage of predominantly male contests to produce a more divergent picture of sports during the Olympics, with women's achievements more often featured more prominently. Hardin et al. (2002) found women were shown in 44 per cent of dominant newspaper photos of the 2000 Games. Jones's online studies found the ABC gave more than half of its splash page lead stories to sportswomen in 2000 (Jones, 2004), a situation that improved in 2004 when two-thirds of lead stories and photographs on the website highlighted female athletes (Jones, 2006b). Women were the subjects of 58 per cent of lead photographs on the BBC's website in 2004 (Jones, 2006b).

2.4.5 Individual and team sports

Stories about and images of female athletes have traditionally focused on individual rather than team sports (Alston, 1996; Tuggle & Owen, 1999). This historical bias against women's team sports is a further “disturbing example of asymmetry and exclusion ... [that] fails to reflect the reality of [women's] sport participation patterns” (Kane, 1996, p. 6). In Australia, media coverage for the leading team sport, netball, is a fraction of the attention devoted to cricket, basketball and Australian Rules football (Australian Sports Commission, 2007). Higgs and Weiller wrote that the coverage of women's team sports is important because “it helps break stereotypes of women holding ancillary positions by showing them in active leadership and decision-making roles” (1994, p. 2).

Although women's team events received almost six hours less airtime and fewer press photographs than women's individual competitions in US telecasts and newspaper coverage of the 2000 Olympics (Hardin, Chance, et al., 2002; Tuggle et al., 2002), when compared with the US Olympic team's demographics (45 per cent female athletes, and 55 per cent male athletes) women received favourable newspaper pictorial coverage (48 per cent of images). Women's team sports, too, were well represented and were more likely to appear in an Olympic photo than were men's teams. This reflected, arguably, the greater number of team sports available to women in Sydney, or the high gold medal count for US women's teams (Hardin, Chance, et al., 2002). However, Jones's study of online coverage of the 2000 Olympic Games showed women in team sports received less coverage than women in individual sports and men in team sports (Jones, 2003).

2.4.6 Gender-appropriateness or sports and their sex-type

Researchers have observed a link between the media's coverage of female athletes and the degree of gender-appropriateness or social acceptance of the sports in which they compete (Metheny, 1965). The impact of these historical and sexist notions of women's physical and emotional delicacy, non-competitiveness, passivity and dependence on men is still evident in mediasport (Cashmore, 2010).

Mason and Rail (2006) found that individual and aesthetic sports, such as gymnastics, ice skating and ballet, have been portrayed as gender-appropriate for women. Team sports, sports requiring strength and power, and sports involving body contact have been portrayed as male-appropriate sports (Shugart, 2003). They include basketball, soccer and football. Neutral sports – such as golf, sailing, volleyball and tennis – do not involve body contact and are not judged by aesthetics; and “researchers argue that such sports do not incorporate physical tasks that have been culturally co-opted as masculine or feminine” (Greer et al., 2009, p. 176). The lines between categories are often blurred. In the above examples, tennis, volleyball and golf are called neutral sports. Daddario (1998), on the other hand, categorised tennis and golf as feminine sports, along with gymnastics, ice skating and swimming. Greer et al. (2009) argued, too, that sports often considered gender-neutral are not because “they still involve the use of skills and attributes that favor men” such as physical contact or lifting heavy objects. They pointed to the track and field events of shot put, discus and javelin as examples. Regardless of whether they are masculine or neutral sports, there is agreement that the media see such sports as inappropriate for women, “because they emphasize overt displays of strength” (2009, p. 176), with the result that female Olympians in these events generally do not appear during prime-time telecasts (Tuggle et al., 2002) or in online images (Jones, 2003, 2006).

Media coverage that reflects gender role expectations about gender-appropriate or feminine sports reinforces masculine hegemony (Greer et al., 2009), and largely ignores female athletes who cross over into more male-dominated sports (Duncan, 1990). The collective result of the dearth of coverage for women's sports in broadcast, print and online accounts is the marginalisation of women's participation, "rendering men's sports authentic sports and women's a pale imitation" (Duncan, 2006, p. 236).

Photographs in the leading US magazine *Sports Illustrated* have accentuated the traditional definition of femininity by frequently featuring women in the sex-appropriate sports of ice skating and gymnastics (Lumpkin & Williams, 1991). Women who compete in the socially acceptable or so-called feminine sports of gymnastics, diving and figure skating have also received disproportionate television airtime during the Olympics (Tuggle et al., 2007). Tuggle and Davis (2009) found NBC's coverage of women's events at the Beijing Olympics was confined to socially acceptable sports (which accounted for 97 per cent of female sports' airtime). Similarly, in three successive Olympic Games from 2000 to 2008, news stories about Asian female athletes competing in individual sports featured the female-appropriate sport of diving (15 per cent of stories) where women won 10 medals, compared with a combined total of 17 per cent of all stories for weightlifting and judo where Asian women won 32 medals and 31 medals respectively (Yu, 2009).

In contrast, photographic coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympics on *ABC News Online* showed a clear focus on female athletes competing in male-appropriate sports (64 per cent of photographs) (Jones, 2006). The ascendancy of male-appropriate sports could be attributed to intensive coverage of just two female athletes, one competing in track and field and the other in basketball. Between them, Jana Pittman (the most-photographed athlete of either gender) and Lauren Jackson received more than one-quarter of all photographic coverage for sportswomen. Of the two women, only Jackson won a medal, a team silver, but she received one-third of the number of photographs dedicated to Pittman (17 images). Just 28 per cent of female images on *News Online* were devoted to female-appropriate sports and 8 per cent went to neutral sports.

2.5 Respect

2.5.1 The content of photographs

With a small percentage of images of female athletes published, on average, what is depicted in them becomes even more important. Duncan (1990) argued that photographs are powerful tools for creating preferred meanings. Because of their "ability to project an aura of naturalness, realism and authenticity" (1990, p. 23), through "selection, composition and manipulation" (Rowe, 1999, p. 120) an apparently innocent record of events can frame female athletes "in

ways that clearly reflect and reinforce dominant stereotypic ideologies” (Kane, 1996, p. 3). Ways of maintaining male hegemony and suggesting “otherness” for women can include: an excessive focus on their physical appearance; poses with sexual connotations resembling soft-core pornography; emotional displays, such as tearful female athletes; and sexual difference in the portrayals of women as passive participants in sports and men as active competitors (Duncan, 1990; John Hargreaves, 1986).

As a staple of sports photography, the action shot reinforces and confers “status on an elite sporting body by showing it doing extraordinary things that so many people admire and envy” (Rowe, 1999, p. 123). Because “the action sports photograph is the premium sports image ... a considerable degree of cultural power attaches to being conspicuous in the sports media” (1999, p. 123). Female athletes portrayed as passive subjects are, by implication, sexually different – neither powerful nor capable of doing extraordinary things.

Hardin et al. (2002), Mason and Rail (2006) and Tuggle et al. (2007) reported on the perpetuation of sexual difference through newspaper and television portrayals of women as passive participants in sports considered “feminine”. Cover photographs on university-created media guides have portrayed women athletes in passive and traditionally feminine poses (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004). George et al. (2001) found the British media gave preference to male action shots (78 per cent of male photographs) over female action shots (52 per cent of female photographs), and women were twice as likely as men to be shown in passive shots.

However, Scott-Chapman (2012, pp. 329-330) reported a “remarkably similar” pattern by gender of sports action and sports-related photographic selection in New Zealand newspapers, despite “vast discrepancies” in coverage of sportswomen and sportsmen. Markula et al. (2010) also noted that several studies of the way female Olympians are represented in newspaper images suggest similarities to representations of male athletes. For example, Kinnick (1998) found little evidence of bias in newspaper photographs of 1996 Olympic athletes. Female athletes were more likely to be depicted engaging in sport than male athletes (58 per cent of images versus 53 per cent), and slightly less likely to be depicted in passive positions.

A similar, positive result emerged in Jones’s study of Olympics coverage on *ABC News Online* in 2004. Sportswomen were portrayed in action more often than in passive poses, and more often in active poses than male athletes (Jones, 2006). On the downside, the proportion of active images of women fell to 60 per cent compared with 69 per cent in 2000 (Jones, 2003). However, Jones’s concurrent analysis of the BBC’s online coverage of the 2004 Olympics showed women were twice as likely to be seen as passive participants than as active competitors. The website’s

images perpetuated stereotypes of physical and/or mental weakness when female athletes failed to achieve success. Seven passive images of British runner Paula Radcliffe, including shots of a tearful woman slumped on the ground, chronicled her distress during the marathon and after her withdrawal from the event. Accompanying text variously described her as “distraught”, “clearly in distress” and “tired and exhausted rather than seriously injured” (Jones, 2006b, p. 19). Bissell and Holt (2005) also found sexual difference in the framing of female and male athletes in online photographs of the 2004 Games. Men were much more likely to be shown in action; and photo angles emphasised male strength, superiority and masculinity, whereas two-thirds of photos showed women in feminine, weak poses (taken using downward or straight-on camera angles).

Wanta and Leggett (1989) found gatekeepers, newspaper sports editors, play a pivotal role in reinforcing gender stereotypes. After studying wire service photographs from the 1987 Wimbledon tennis tournament, the researchers concluded that although Associated Press photographers did not depict female players in “dominated” or “helpless” positions – prostrate, giving the impression of submissiveness – more often than male players, the sports editors of eight newspapers subscribing to the AP pool of photographs over-selected images of women in helpless poses. Wanta and Leggett suggested sports editors were “reinforcing the stereotype that women are more easily dominated than men. By portraying women as helpless, sports editors give readers the impression that women are less athletically inclined than men.” (1989, p. 112)

2.5.2 The language of sports coverage

There are many ways for the discourse of mediated sport, whether written, verbal, visual or a combination thereof, to frame contests and athletes’ performances and they are rarely, if ever, unambiguous (Duncan, 2006). A common feature is an insistence on sexual difference.

Journalists, sportscasters and commentators culturally construct differences between female and male athletes and address their audiences:

... as though these gender differences are natural and real. Since the masculine is the default position in our society, the feminine is seen as the Other. This is the logical extension of the oppositional binary...
(2006, p. 238)

The media have historically used several techniques “to represent women in line with cultural ideas about femininity” (Bruce, 2008, p. 60). These include but are not restricted to: downplaying sport, compulsory heterosexuality, appropriate femininity, infantilisation, martial language, gender marking and success/failure bias.

Downplaying sport occurs when the media focus on women's appearance in ways that devalue their sporting accomplishments or abilities (Bridge, 1994). Conventionally pretty or sexually attractive sportswomen (Bernstein & Galily, 2008) get more coverage, "which tends to deemphasize their athletic prowess" (Bissell & Duke, 2007, pp. 49-50). Coverage of tennis has been highly representative in this context. By 2003, Maria Sharapova had largely replaced Anna Kournikova as the sports media's "featured young sex symbol". Articles and commentary rarely report on Sharapova "without also commenting on her appearance ... [indicating] a continuation of the sexualization themes from past studies" (Duncan & Messner, 2005). For example, Britain's *Daily Mirror* called Sharapova's Wimbledon tournament match against Jelena Dokic the "Battle of the Babes" (Bernstein & Galily, 2008). The *Mail Online* also billed the 2008 Australian Open match between Sharapova "The Screamer" and Ana Ivanovic "The Shrieker" as the "Battle of the Babes" (Dickson, 2008).

Since women began competing in the modern Olympics, media coverage of them has ranged from "initial disinterest, to derision to desire" (Womensport Australia, 2002). Newspaper articles about female athletes at the 1996 Olympics commented on appearance, with the "good looks", "cuteness" or "beauty" of female athletes mentioned four times more often than the general good looks of male athletes (Kinnick, 1998). In contrast, there were fewer references to female athletes' appearance than to male athletes' physical attributes in a study of the ABC's coverage of the 2000 Olympic Games (Jones, 2003).

Compulsory heterosexuality results when the media define female athletes by their relationships and sexual orientations. Highlighting "women as sex objects or in heterosexually-prescribed roles" (Bruce, 2008, p. 60), such as wives, mothers or girlfriends (of boys and men), signifies feminine credentials (Stevenson, 2002) and provides "sexual markers" (Shugart, 2003, p. 8). Marital status was revealed for 35 per cent of female and 20 per cent of male athletes profiled in articles about the 1996 Olympics. Parental status was mentioned more frequently for men, but women were much more likely to be characterised as struggling to balance careers and families (Kinnick, 1998).

Kian and Clavio (2011) found newspaper sports writers were more likely than online sports writers to uphold hegemonic masculinity by minimising the athleticism of female tennis players in coverage of the 2007 US Open. Stories written for newspapers were significantly more likely to describe women's physical appearance, attire and personal relationships than stories written for online sites. The researchers noted that the differences between print and online stories about sportswomen could be due to "a desire on the part of the [online] writers to make a closer connection with the audience for their articles" (2011, p. 74). They pointed out that online

readers must actively select stories to read, so “authors may be more willing to extend their descriptions and accounts” in response to readers’ perceived interests and attitudes (p. 75). In an earlier study of online basketball coverage by ESPN and CBS SportsLine, Kian et al. (2009, p. 477) noted a “surprising” departure from the common stereotyping of female athletes through gender-related descriptors that “help to uphold hegemonic masculinity in sport”. They found a higher proportion of commentary about personal lives and appearance focused on men rather than women, whereas women’s skills, accomplishments and strengths were more often described in positive terms.

Appropriate femininity “emphasises stereotypically female characteristics such as emotional or physical weakness, dependence [on others, especially men], tears and concern for others” (Bruce, 2008, p. 60). The media often describe women in ways that stress emotional weakness, such as “dissolving into tears”, but when men confront stressful situations, they are applauded for their toughness (Phillips, 1997). The Dutch sports media have presented women as “emotional and as dependent on men (coaches and fathers) for their success, whereas men were often portrayed as stoic and independent” (Knoppers & Elling, 2004, p. 48). Studies also reported instances of women being compared with men as though the male was the model athlete, but never the reverse (Daddario & Wigley, 2007; Eastman & Billings, 2000).

Sport is a competitive, active, aggressive (male) activity that is seemingly incompatible with femininity (Messner, 1988). To resolve this incompatibility, sports media resort to ambivalence (Cranmer et al., 2014). This framing technique – where descriptions and images contain mixed or contradictory messages – is a common form of representation of sportswomen. It juxtaposes “positive descriptions and images ... with those that trivialise women’s successes” (Bruce, 2008, p. 60). Stories on the ABC in 2000 subtly undermined women’s athletic achievements by initially lauding them for winning and then accusing them of losing control and concentration when they “burst into tears” or “shed a few tears” (Jones, 2003, pp. 215-16). In confronting stressful situations, sportswomen were described in a way that trivialised their accomplishments and stressed emotional weakness.

Infantilisation leads to women being called “girls” while men are most often called “men” (Bruce, 2008) and rarely referred to as “boys” (Koivula, 1999). This is important because maturity infers social status and “one of the lingering stereotypes associated with women is their childishness” (Duncan, 2006, p. 241). Lumby et al. (2010) looked at the extent to which sports stories drew attention to gender and away from athletes’ performances through the use of gendered naming devices, such as first names, the pronouns “she” and “her”, and other gendered phrases such as “woman”, “girl” and “sister”. Duncan, too, wrote that naming is

important “because it conveys status and prestige” (2006, p. 242). Spanish newspapers used hierarchical naming of Olympic athletes in 2004 with men most frequently referred to, initially, by their first and last names and subsequently by their last name. Subsequent references to female athletes used their first name only (Crolley & Teso, 2007).

Often the imagery of war is applied to sport. Scholars have argued that sport-war metaphors valorise strength and aggression, and these characteristics are inconsistent with femininity. Because war is masculine activity, martial metaphors are used more frequently to describe men’s sports (Kinnick, 1998). A study of Olympic Games coverage on *News Online* in 2000 showed frequent use of martial language, such as “stunned”, “blew away” and “powered”, but these descriptors were used almost equally in association with each gender (Jones, 2003). In contrast, sports broadcasters in the US used twice as many martial metaphors for men’s tennis and three times as many for men’s basketball than women’s games (Duncan, Messner, Williams, & Jensen, 1990). For example, instead of one who “attacks” the hoop, a female would “go to” the hoop. Where men “misfire”, women simply “miss”. Verbal attributions of strength and weakness for men and women athletes also contrasted sharply. Where a man’s play was “aggressive”, a woman’s was “active”. Men “crash through” the defence, but women “move against” it. In tennis, the ratio of strength to weakness descriptors was 6 to 1 for men players, and 2 to 1 for women (1990, p. 3).

Female athletes are also marginalised through one-way or asymmetrical gender marking that identifies men’s events as “the” events (the universal or the norm) and those played by female athletes as “women’s” events, inferring they are inferior (Bruce, 2008). For example, television coverage of basketball games has called men’s games the “national championship” but women’s games were labelled as the “women’s national championship” (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990). Media explanations for success or failure can contain bias when they highlight women’s failures and men’s achievements. Studies show television commentators have more often attributed men’s failures to a lack of athletic skill, but when women failed, more often it was attributed to a lack of commitment (Eastman & Billings, 2000). Male Olympians have been described as more courageous than female Olympians (Billings & Angelini, 2007), and clearly placed above women through comparisons to Jesus Christ and Superman (Eastman & Billings, 2000). ABC stories about hockey during the 2000 Olympic Games introduced a pervasive element of heterosexuality by crediting male direction for female athletes’ success. As well as framing Australia’s women hockey players as emotionally dependent on their coach, “the Hockeyroos’ lord and master Ric Charlesworth”, the ABC attributed the Hockeyroos’ gold medal success in Sydney more to their coach than to the athletes (Jones, 2003, p. 219).

2.5.3 Coverage indices

Many content analyses are reality checks: the portrayal of “a certain group ... is assessed against a standard taken from real life”, followed by a discussion of “the congruence of the media presentation and the actual situation” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 137). It is the case with this study. However, one problem for researchers examining sports coverage, and for those wishing to compare the results of various studies, is the lack of a universal index for fairness or equity in coverage. Researchers have evaluated gender equity in sports reporting against the real world of national, institutional and event participation rates (Hardin, Chance, et al., 2002; Jones, 2004, 2006; Mack, 2000) and others have compared coverage with the success of athletes against their event population by gender and nationality (Jones, 2004, 2006; Toohey, 1997). In another model applicable to sports coverage, researchers examining television news coverage have tabulated airtime devoted to various geographical areas with the aid of an “attention ratio” to determine whether areas were under-reported or over-reported (Dominick, 1977; Whitney, Fritzler, Jones, Mazzearella, & Rakow, 1989).

In two previous studies (Jones, 2004, 2006), I have followed the lead of the scholars noted above and calculated a “representation ratio” as the mechanism for determining gender equity in sports coverage. As described in Chapter 3, I will use the “representation ratio” to compare online coverage of female and male athletes at the 2008 Olympics by each of the three public broadcasters with: (a) the number of medals won by each gender for their country, and (b) the gender make-up of the national team in common with the public broadcaster.

2.6 The influences on sports journalism

The preceding review and discussion show that a comprehensive body of literature highlights and outlines the inequitable media coverage of women participating in sport and how the amount and nature of that coverage can uphold and perpetuate male hegemony. However, these contributions have not examined all avenues of mediated sports coverage or representation. My research is building a picture, incrementally, of how sportswomen and men are depicted on the ABC, but little is known about the performance of the online arms of Canada’s and Britain’s national public broadcasters in sports coverage or what shapes the scope and nature of women’s sports coverage on the three public service broadcasters.

Of all the sports news occurring around the world each day, only some becomes news. Various influences on this process have been identified in the growing body of research on sports journalism and newsmaking. Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) hierarchy of influences and Preston’s (2009) typology of explanatory perspectives for understanding the influences on

journalism and news culture are useful in categorising the different theoretical and methodological perspectives that have been adopted by journalism and mediasport researchers.

These domains of influence on news, along with some citations of representative news and mediasport studies, are: Individual level influences and professional values, in which selection of content is influenced by individual communicators or gatekeepers (Nicholson, Zion, & Lowden, 2011; Whitney, Sumpter, & McQuail, 2004); communication or media industry routines, where institutional practices and “norms of selection that have evolved over the history of mass communication” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 52) shape daily news production (Fishman, 1980; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Tuchman, 1972, 1978a); organisational, where group news decision-making processes and factors operating at the level of specific media organisations affect content (Breed, 1955; Lowes, 1999); social institution (also called extramedia) (Keith, 2011) or political economy factors, where content is influenced by such factors as markets, audiences, advertisers and interest groups (Messner, Duncan, & Wachs, 1996); and cultural and ideological or social system influences, in which content is influenced by the social systems or ideologies of societies (Gee, 2011; Scott-Chapman, 2012).

As indicated in the following review of the literature on sports journalism and newsmaking, these shaping factors operate “simultaneously ... in the multiple actions, selections, treatments of events and other decisions undertaken in the daily routines” of sports journalism (Preston, 2009, p. 14). Various prior studies of newsmaking processes have recognised or engaged with the role and influence of two or more of these influences (2009). As well, as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) wrote, different levels in the hierarchy have stronger or weaker influences. Gatekeepers represent their respective professions and organisations. As such the occupational setting limits their decisions:

To understand these limits, we have to consider the media system within which people work, including the routines and craft norms that are so much a part of systematic information-gathering. The standardized, recurring patterns of news and entertainment content result in large part from those routine practices. These routines ensure that the media systems will respond in predictable ways and cannot be easily violated. They form a cohesive set of rules and become integral parts of what it means to be a media professional. (Keith, 2011, p. 2)

In this vein, explanations for the under-representation of women’s sports in the media have included the influence of: society’s views about women in general and appropriate female behaviour in a patriarchal sports culture; market forces, such as how much money is tied up in team ownership, sponsorship, advertising and telecast rights, and the imperative to attract and keep male audiences; the dominance of the sports journalism profession by men; as well as

newsroom cultures and practices that favour men's sports. These potential causes are explored in the following section.

2.6.1 Appropriate behaviour

Hall (1980) argued that there is a simple explanation for the failure of those writing about sport to recognise women: either women played no role in sport or it is believed that sport in itself possesses gender, preferably a masculine one. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, as discussed in Chapter 1, women were virtually excluded from sport. Men's competitions often have "long lores of history and tradition" (Kinnick, 1998, p. 219), giving them a more colourful context to write and talk about than newer women's events (Sports Journalists' Association, 2013). In a male-dominated society, it is "inevitable that the sporting qualities and achievements of the dominant sex tend to provide the absolute evaluative criteria against which women are judged" (Hall, 1980, p. 13), except in sports considered to be aesthetically pleasing, such as figure skating and gymnastics, where it often works the other way. As a result, Hall (1980, p. 13) wrote that women's sport is rarely evaluated "as something worthwhile in its own right without the illegitimate and irrelevant comparisons" to men's qualitatively different sporting achievements.

2.6.2 Market forces

Creedon (1994) argued that various approaches to defining news²⁰ do not address the role of the marketplace, directly or indirectly, in defining news or mass media content:

Journalists will steadfastly avoid any suggestion that market factors affect news judgment ... [but] the mass media are economic institutions competing in the marketplace for audiences and advertisers. [T]he relationship between marketplace considerations and mass media content is particularly obvious in sport. Sports sell newspapers ... [and] the power of the sports page to attract readers and advertisers can not be denied. (1994, p. 89)

In the aftermath of a survey of sports coverage in 10 countries on three continents, Jorgensen (2005) called the sporting press "the world's best advertising agency". He asserted that money

²⁰ Creedon (1994, p. 88) referred to approaches ranging from the "routinized and personified" where news becomes "whatever the editor says it is" to definitions that quantify newsworthiness in terms of timeliness, proximity, importance, impact or consequence, interest, conflict or controversy, sensationalism, prominence, and novelty, oddity or the unusual. Shoemaker et al. (1991, p. 783) categorised these indicators into general theoretical dimensions of newsworthiness: "[T]he deviance dimension is composed of novelty/oddity/unusual (statistical deviance), prominence (normative deviance), sensationalism (normative or pathological deviance) and conflict or controversy (normative deviance). The social significance dimension consists of importance/impact/consequence and interest, both of which are often positively correlated with deviance. The contingent conditions include timeliness and proximity." Under this model, Shoemaker et al. posited that the most prominent coverage goes to events of high deviance and high social significance.

interests and television programming determine the sports press's agenda. Women were "invisible" in the 10,000 articles surveyed from the sports pages of 37 daily newspapers, whereas coverage was "dominated by the particular types of [male] sport, sports stars and international events which create the biggest turnovers on parameters such as advertising, sponsorship, numbers of television viewers and spectators in the stadium" (2005, p. 1).

Cunningham and Sagas (2002), along with Messner (1988) and Messner et al. (1996) also suggested that economic and political forces possibly influence the representation of women's sports more than patriarchal ideology or other institutional forces. For instance, Cunningham and Sagas (2002) proposed that coverage of women's sports is dependent, not on their sex-appropriateness as Duncan and Messner (2000) posit, but on the brand equity of the particular sport, meaning the media cater to the needs and wants of the public by providing coverage of the sport the public seeks.

To explore this proposition, Cunningham and Sagas (2002) compared the amount and timeliness of coverage on university-sponsored websites of intercollegiate women's basketball to softball (both deemed sex-inappropriate sports for female athletes) and to men's basketball. Women's basketball, which had strong brand equity, received the same coverage as its male counterpart (also with strong branding) and more coverage than softball, which had weaker branding. The researchers noted the finding could be related to the concept of resource dependence:

[I]f the contributors to the athletic department exhibit increased interest in a certain sport, such as baseball, then in response to this interest, the athletic department would increase their coverage of that sport. This line of reasoning would also seem to refute ... [the] contention that 'media surrounding intercollegiate athletes do not contend with external economic, cultural or sociopolitical forces'. (2002, pp. 141-142)

2.6.3 Audiences for sport

The argument that the lack of profile is due to the fact that women's sport in general is less popular than professional male sport is "regularly mobilised by sports editors to justify their low coverage of women's sport" (Boyle, 2006, p. 144). Boyle also noted: "Significantly, they will often argue that this decision is simply based on lack of reader interest, although most editors have had little systematic contact with their readers to substantiate this opinion." (2006, p. 144) However, government-sponsored and independent academic studies along with limited (publicly available) in-house research by news/sports media organisations show there is interest in women's sports. Women watch other women play sport and "just as importantly, men watch women's sport as well" (Australian Federal Government, 2006). Successful coverage of women's sports, indicated by higher ratings during the Summer and Winter Olympics, "has been the impetus for television networks to increase the amount of women's sports they

broadcast” (Angelini, 2008, p. 16). As well, newspaper readership studies show upwards of 27 per cent of sports section readers are women (Hardin & Shain, 2005).

Research conducted for the BBC with women aged 25 to 44 years found they differ from men in their motives for engaging with sports coverage and their viewing needs (Rosenblatt MC&A Audience and Consumer Research, 2005). Three types of women watch televised sports on the BBC: heavy viewers, main eventers who are there for the big events but are less engaged with everyday coverage, and light viewers who feel compelled to follow some of the big events. The report found women followed sports through “a desire for social inclusion, the moments of high sporting drama and, in some instances, the love of sport”. In coverage beyond the big events, female main eventers looked for “the value of sport for their children over other forms of entertainment, inspiring them to lead healthier more rounded lives, and a bit of sex and glamour” (2005, p. 4). Internal BBC research indicated “considerably more women are watching sport on television than was previously thought to be the case” – up to 37 per cent of football’s *Match of the Day* audience was female and 45 per cent of the audience for BBC television coverage of the Six Nations Rugby Championship was also female (Boyle, 2006, p. 146).

Women also prefer condensed sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, to sports with longer seasons. Nielsen viewership data on the major sports events of the year in the US (Van Riper, 2012) showed the Olympics and the Kentucky Derby have a majority female viewing audience. Whiteside and Hardin (2011) found women like bite-sized chunks of televised sports coverage because they are easier to follow and convenient to watch. Even women who are not frequent sports viewers or do not have much time to watch sports say they prefer the Olympic Games because of the frequency of events and the omnipresent discussion around the Games on television and radio and in news bulletins.

Duncan (2006) challenged producers who say they are responding to market forces by not televising women’s sports or restricting their coverage. Rather than accepting that viewers do not watch women’s sports simply because they are not interested, Duncan took aim at the different and inferior production techniques (see, for example, Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999) used in broadcasts of women’s sports contests:

Whether women or men, few viewers are likely to watch games in which there are unsophisticated or missing graphics, poorly informed commentators, incoherent or overly sentimental narratives, few replays, and muffled sound. Few women readers will subscribe to magazines in which female athletes are mocked, sexualized, or trivialized. In addition, without intentional audience-building strategies such as promos and previews, the audience for women’s sports is not likely to

grow. Rather than blaming the market, producers should take a harder look at their own production practices and the ideologies that underpin them. (2006, pp. 247-248)

2.6.4 A gendered profession

Historically, journalism as an occupation is a skewed profession where most journalists are white men²¹ (Claringbould, Knoppers, & Elling, 2004; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Patterns of under-representation of women in sports journalism are reported around the world. In the international print media, sports journalism is a man's world; more than 90 per cent of writers and editors are male and white (Horky & Nieland, 2011; Morrison, 2014). Robinson and Saint-Jean (1998, p. 355) argued that status in the media is defined in two ways, "either through the kind of news one covers, or hierarchically, through the position one occupies in an organization". Round or beat assignments and positions are not linearly linked but "become infected by the multiple strands of gender, seniority, and trustworthiness". Although gender stereotyping of beats in Canada had decreased by the 1990s, the authors reported men still dominated the "hard news" area of sport (1998, p. 356).

Sports journalism is the biggest single specialty in Australia's mainstream news media, with more than three-quarters of sports journalists writing for newspapers (Department of Employment, 2012). As few as 10 to 11 per cent of Australia's sports journalists are women (Nicholson et al., 2011).²² Few women, if any, report on sport in regional newsrooms (Alston, 1996). North (2012, p. 9) has noted that despite an influx of female journalists into Australian newsrooms in the last 30 years, and female dominated university journalism courses, there appeared to be "no females in the influential role of sports editor at any of the major metropolitan newspapers in Australia".²³

In the UK, sports is the largest specialty among British journalists, involving 13 per cent (Hanna & Sanders, 2007; Henningham & Delano, 1998). The print sports media remain predominantly

²¹ Weaver and Willnat (2012) calculated the average proportion of female journalists is 35 per cent in the 29 countries surveyed for their "Global Journalist Project".

²² Hanusch (2013) noted it is difficult to determine the number of working journalists in Australia due to the different definitions of "journalist". He put the figure (for those with some editorial responsibility over news content) at 10,700, while the average number of "journalists and other writers" employed in Australia in the last decade is 22,500 (Department of Employment, 2012). Based on Henningham's (1995) and Nicholson et al.'s (2011) estimates that sports journalists comprise up to 11 per cent of the profession and 11 per cent of sports journalists are women (and assuming these proportions have remained steady since the 1990s), the number of female sports journalists in Australia could be from 118 to 272 (calculated from Hanusch's and the Department of Employment's figures respectively). The worldwide average for women sportswriters is 21 per cent (GMMP 2005).

²³ The "Women in the Media" project (Bacon et al., 2013b) did not provide figures on female sports journalists in Australia, but confirmed North's 2012 findings that Australia performs well below the global average in women's participation in media management (B. Hall, 2012).

male. Based on their visibility in the UK national press (measured by sports story byline counts, of which men received more than 98 per cent), Franks and O'Neill (2014) concluded that men outnumber women by 43 to 1. Of the 700 members of the UK Sports Journalists' Association, 10 per cent are women. The first female sports editor of a national newspaper was only appointed in 2013 (Sports Journalists' Association, 2013). In the United States where women make up 12 per cent of sports journalists, the sports departments at newspapers and websites remain nearly all white and male. Ninety per cent of sports editors and columnists, 82 per cent of assistant sports editors and 88 per cent of sports reporters are men (Lapchick, 2012). In the Netherlands, women account for 7 per cent of sports journalists, a figure that is comparable to other European countries (Claringbould et al., 2004).

With fewer women employed to write about sports than about any other popular subject (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010; Hardin & Shain, 2005), men's domination of the fastest-growing sector in the media of most English-speaking countries (Andrews, 2005) positions them "among the most visible of all contemporary writers" (Rowe, 1999, p. 36). Little wonder, then, that studies in Australia, the US, Canada, Britain and Europe (Alston, 1996; Bacon et al., 2013a; Horky & Nieland, 2011; Jorgensen, 2005; Rintala & Birrell, 1984; Vincent, 2000) have found a disproportionate number of male authors to female authors for sports stories in magazines, serious and popular metropolitan newspapers, and regional television, radio and newspapers.²⁴

An analysis of national newspapers in the UK in 2012 by the "Women in Journalism" (WiJ) project reported a continuing problem of horizontal segregation for women. Gender division by subject matter has women clustered around the "pink ghettos" of particular subject areas. Sport, politics and opinion writing still have very few women. Only 5 per cent of sports bylines in the WiJ survey were by women (Franks, 2013). Research in Australia showed a similar situation. Bacon et al. (2013a) found that 95 per cent of sports stories in national, state and regional newspapers in Australia carried male bylines. North (2012, p. 10) reported "a vast contrast" by gender in bylines from pre-Olympic stories published in 2012 by two Australian newspapers, the *Australian* and the *Herald Sun*. Male journalists reported exclusively for the *Herald Sun*. At both newspapers, men dominated the reporting of pre-Olympic stories by almost 2 to 1. Female sports journalists fared no better on assignments during the Games, with two Australian studies

²⁴ A report on one day in the news in Canada, for the "Global Media Monitoring Project" (Cross, 2010), noted that women are just as likely as men to cover stories about celebrity, arts, media and sports. However, it did not provide a breakdown of the percentage of sports stories in this category or the proportion of sports stories reported by female and male journalists.

showing women received just 16 and 6 per cent of newspaper bylines respectively (Hindson, 1989; Kinnick, 1998).

2.6.5 Cultures and practices

Scholars blame recruitment patterns in sports journalism and the resulting dominance of sports departments by men for under-coverage of women's sports (Jorgensen, 2005). While the authors of several submissions to the 2006 Federal Senate Committee inquiry into women in sport in Australia took this view, and called for the appointment of more female sports reporters as a means of increasing women's sports coverage (Australian Federal Government, 2006), the jury is still out on whether this would lift the media profile of women's sports. For example, Chambers et al. (2004) and Kitch (2014) noted that while some studies found that women brought new perspectives to news production, in general, there was no significant correlation between journalist gender and news content. However, Boyle (2006, p. 112) identified a link: "The enormous imbalance in the representation of sportsmen and women is not unconnected to sexual imbalances in the newsroom," he wrote.

Henningham (1995, p. 14), writing about the low number of female sports journalists in Australia in the 1990s, noted how "this helps to explain the gender imbalance in sports news". Although Nicholson et al. (2011) replicated Henningham's Australian study, and found no significant change in 15 years in the gender distribution in sports newsrooms, they did not postulate on a connection between reporter gender and sports coverage. Neither did North (2012, p.15), but she pointed to a hegemonic masculine or "blokey" newsroom culture as a "major impediment to women progressing into senior editing roles or even the lowest rungs of sports reporting". Caple et al. (2011a, p. 138) also noted that male dominance in sports journalism "is not only highly visible but arguably explicitly determines the nature and scope of coverage".

In contrast, Pedersen et al. (2003) concluded that both female and male reporters, photographers and editors are equally responsible for the under-coverage of female athletes in newspapers; in other words, imbalanced coverage happens irrespective of the gender and occupational position of the newspaper decision-makers (LaVoi et al., 2007). In New Zealand, an earlier study by McGregor and Fountaine (1997, p. 41) of sports reporter gender and the types of sports reported found so few bylines by women sports journalists (22 out of 220 articles) that "generalisation about the influence of reportorial gender in newsrooms on sports coverage [is] difficult". Eide (2002, p. 2) noted that the number of sports journalists in Norway is very low but observed:

“Experience shows that the existence of more women is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a more balanced gender representation in the media.”

Advocating an increased critical mass of female sports journalists in the hope it will increase coverage of women’s sports or, as Hardin and Shain (2005, p. 807) wrote, “add women and stir”, also ignores the socialisation of women journalists into a largely male defined journalistic culture (Eide, 2005) which discourages journalistic autonomy in the newsroom (McGregor & Fountaine, 1997). It also ignores another possibility: that journalists’ gender bias against female athletes, although unacceptable, is unintentional (Kinnick, 1998). In her study of Olympic athletes’ newspaper profiles, Kinnick could find no correlation between the gender of the reporter and instances of biased coverage, but suggested female reporters bore some of the responsibility for such stereotypical writing:

Based on my own journalism school experiences and the scant attention paid to gender bias in current journalism textbooks, I believe the most likely explanation is that the authors in this study – both male and female – were simply oblivious to the bias that entered their own reporting. (1998, p. 235)

A study by Hardin et al. (2006) supported Kinnick’s observation about the status of women in journalism textbooks. Noting that journalism students learn values about coverage, at least in part, from their textbooks, the researchers found sports journalism textbooks reinforce male hegemony and do not encourage aspiring journalists to address gender inequities in sports journalism. Instead, they promoted the gender stereotypes of sports, sports writing, and sports writers and, therefore, provided a model “for students to maintain those patterns rather than promoting the realities of women’s sports, the reporting and storytelling possible for men and women in covering women’s sports, and the opportunities for women sports writers” (2006, p.441).

Female sports journalists also resist the notion that it is their responsibility to promote or advance the coverage of women’s sports. According to well-known Australian sports journalist Jacquelin Magnay:

There is this assumption that because you’re a female journalist in sport that it’s our role that we should be promoting women’s sport and that’s not our job at all. I have an interest in women’s sport and I’m keen to see women’s sport in the paper but I am not going to cover women’s sport because I’m female. The cricket writer should be writing about women’s cricket. (Lumby et al., 2010, p. 16)

That sports journalism around the world is still strongly shaped and driven by men seems incontrovertible. If this male dominance causes bias against female athletes and their sports,

how is it manifested in newsroom cultures and practices? Few researchers have undertaken production studies – an “underdeveloped line of research”, according to Duncan (2006, p. 249), who wrote that sexism “is not limited to individual acts of prejudice, but [is] part and parcel of institutional structures that operate in taken-for-granted ways”. As an example, Duncan cited Theberge and Cronk’s (1986) classic study, “Work routines in newspaper sports departments and the coverage of women’s sports”.

Theberge and Cronk’s (1986) fieldwork at a US newspaper they codenamed the *Pioneer* explored the process of sports newsmaking and news production. After Tuchman (1978a) and Fishman (1980), who theorised that the content of news is socially constructed and constrained by the work routines of journalists, they examined how journalists sifted and selected stories and chose what would become news. The scholars concluded that production of newspaper sports sections relies on a number of practices that, employed collectively, “read women out of the sports news” by defining sports news as news about men’s sports (Theberge & Cronk, 1986, p. 197). Chief among these practices is beat coverage.²⁵

Beats or rounds – topical and geographical areas where news is most likely to happen – enable the delivery of news in a timely, regular and efficient manner (Becker, Lowrey, Claussen, & Anderson, 2000; Reich & Lahav, 2011; Venables, 2003). As Wu (2010) observed, sports broadcasting and reporting repeat themselves cyclically in highly institutionalised and routinised processes (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). A cycle of production can be a competition season, a calendar year or a four-year Olympic cycle. In these cycles of “serial narratives that are the sporting seasons” (Mair, 2007, p. 42), the work routines of the reporters’ beats create a powerful form of dependence (Becker et al., 2000). Journalists rely on frequent access to reliable news sources and their source choices are ideologically inscribed (Tuchman, 1978a). Established bureaucratic news sources “can best perform this service, and these sources predominantly support male sports” (1986, p. 198). Cramer (1994) agreed. She interviewed North American women sports journalists and found that the beat system, where journalists report regularly on a sport or a team, made it more difficult for women athletes and women’s sports to obtain coverage because “sports media organizations traditionally have determined that women’s sports are an area where news is least likely to be made” (1994, p. 167).

Thus, as Duncan (2006, p. 249) notes, and as Theberge and Cronk’s (1986) study demonstrated, routine ways of doing things, such as sportswriters’ methods of uncovering newsworthy stories,

“may have unintended consequences that result in the disadvantaging of some social groups and the privileging of others”. Lowes (1999) reported a similar finding from his fieldwork in the mid-1990s at a large Canadian daily newspaper. He found news industry economics – catering to a male audience, aged 18 to 49, in pursuit of advertisers – dictated that “metropolitan newspapers fill their sports pages almost exclusively with news from the world of major-league sport” (1999, p. 33). How to cover such a vast expanse? Use beats:

News beats are a way of providing *predictably available information* to reporters and, as such, are an important means of reducing the variability of news, of imposing a degree of order on the social world. In this sense, a news beat constitutes ‘the routine round of institutions and persons to be contacted at scheduled intervals for knowledge of events’. (p. 33)

Theberge and Cronk (1986, p. 292) and Lowes (p.35) noted how Tuchman (1978) likened this process of capturing news, in such a systematic (and ultimately) limiting manner, to casting a fishing net. The narrower the gaps in the mesh, the more fish can be caught, but:

... today’s news net is intended for big fish, the big news stories that attract and hold readers’ attention over long periods of time, and so the net is full of gaping holes as organizational resources are invested in a highly restricted and strategic fashion. Small fish are of little interest. This is especially the case with sports news. In casting the sports news net, newspapers aim to capture major-league sporting spectacles – those intense entertainments so useful for marshalling large male audiences.

This results in reporters becoming dependent on established bureaucratic sources for the bulk of their raw news material and favouring them as the subjects of their stories (Theberge and Cronk, 1986). In the US and Canada, this practice has favoured major commercial spectator sports, such as hockey, basketball and football, over non-commercial sports. Sources from the commercial sports almost invariably are athletes, spokespersons and organisations “with roots deep in the commercial world” (Lowes, 1997, p. 143). A more recent report (Horky & Nieland, 2011) showed a “closed shop” of sourcing in the international sports press with 60 per cent of reports dealing with sources direct from the (male) sport’s world of athletes, coaches and spokespersons. And so, as Lowes described more than 15 years ago, the cycle continues: the sports media gender their coverage in pursuit of advertising revenue, the sports sections remain a male domain catering to a male audience, and women’s sports and non-commercial sports are read “out of the news by omission” (1997, p. 143).

²⁵ Theberge and Cronk (1986) contended that reliance on wire service copy results in another form of pressure to reproduce male bias in newspapers, due to the copy’s high degree of focus on men’s professional sports.

In a later study, Knoppers and Elling (2004) looked beyond the structural factors that constrain the selection of sports stories to the scope for journalistic “agency” (what journalists do and their rationale for it). In interviews with Dutch journalists and editors from the sports departments of national newspapers, commercial and public television they examined how journalists used agency in their discourses to describe the gendering of the story selection process, especially the exclusion of women’s sports coverage. Several journalists insisted the choices made in sports coverage superseded gender and were based on neutral, objective evaluations of newsworthiness. Knoppers and Elling (2004, p. 67) pointed out that journalists can emphasise objectivity “as a strategic ritual to protect them from being accused of bias and to show that they are working in the public interest”.

Researchers also argued that despite the increasing prominence of women’s sports and female sports fans, women’s sports coverage is badly neglected because the mostly white, male sports editors (Oputu, 2014), sports directors and sports reporters base their news value decisions on topics with which they are most familiar and, therefore, most comfortable (Cramer, 1994, p. 167), as well as their perceived audience and that audience’s presumed, rather than directly assessed, interests (Boyle, 2006). Sports editors, on the other hand, have maintained that audience figures give weight to their argument that the interest in women’s sport is not there. The *Guardian*’s Ian Prior wrote:

It’s really easy to cover women’s sports during the Olympics ... It’s easy when Wimbledon comes along. But beyond that, it comes down to spending time and money to cater to a very small audience. We get flak for not covering women’s rugby, cricket and football enough, but it’s expensive to cover and the level of interest makes it hard to justify. (Harper, 2013)

Dutch journalists in Knoppers and Elling’s (2004) study used “interest” as a criterion for selection of coverage. The scholars argued this is an example of a hegemonic discursive strategy that reflects structural forces (where commercial logic dictates satisfying human interest, audience needs and desires) but its use can also be seen as a form of agency. Journalists who devote most of their time to coverage of professional sports because they are popular can then argue that it is just coincidence that these sports happen to be men’s sports. Knoppers and Elling argued that this also allows reporters to present women athletes in sexualised ways because the readers/viewers find that “interesting” and because the female athletes are presumed to prefer it.

The use of ‘interest’ as a criterion in the discourse of sports journalists about selection serves to enhance their self-representation as being ‘objective’ because it is the public (and female athletes), not they, who decide; their own biases and preferences do not enter into it at all. (2004, p. 67)

Asked if sports pages and programs would have a different look and content if only women worked in sports departments, the majority of Dutch journalists argued that the gender ratio of reporters has no influence on the content of the sports pages or broadcasts. However, they did acknowledge that a male culture predominates. “Of course it is a macho culture,” one journalist said. “It is a situation where men work with men: journalists and athletes.” (p. 65)

2.7 Limitations of previous studies

Duncan (2006) has called for more research on the work routines of editors of sports magazines and newspapers, sports photographers and writers, and producers and commentators of network and cable sportscasts. Given the impact of the Internet on the mediated sports production complex – in particular, changes in the ways in which sports media are produced, distributed and consumed (Billings, 2011; Mahan & McDaniel, 2006) – it seems logical to include the practices of online sports journalists in this area of investigation.

In addressing the deficit of knowledge about the making of online sports news, this study also addresses some of the limitations of the relatively few, previous studies of sports news production. The quantitative analysis of online coverage of the 2008 Olympics by the ABC, BBC and CBC that forms the initial phase of this study provides more than the first cross-national snapshot and international comparison of the gendered treatment of female athletes by any online sports media (and, in particular, public broadcasters). In the case of coverage on the ABC, it also allows comparisons across three successive Olympic Games.

Building an empirical profile of the coverage of sportswomen also provides a body of evidence about trends in the representation of female athletes on the three broadcasters that will be shared with sports journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC in the second phase of my study, the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The purpose of the interviews will be to examine the manufacture of sports news and the journalists’ perceptions of their roles in the production of gendered sports coverage.

Aside from Knoppers and Elling (2004), Phillips (1997) and Alston (1996), few other published studies have examined consecutively the gendered coverage of sport and its newsroom processes. As noted earlier in this chapter, several studies point to the quantitative differences between everyday and Olympics coverage for sportswomen – with Olympics coverage jumping, in some cases, by as much as 10 to 20 fold. Yet, female Olympians are consistently under-represented compared with male athletes. Wensing and MacNeill (2010, p. 172) summed up one line of thought about the source of these non-Olympic lows in mediated coverage of sportswomen. They observed a “perceived lack of commercial appeal attached to female sports

[that] has widely been assumed to be the main cause of low levels of day-to-day coverage of women's sport".

At the Olympics, women's sports have increased visibility through the growing number of events open to female athletes and their participation on an international stage. Markula et al. (2010) argued this creates a better market for women's mediated sport. They noted that some researchers credit nationalism and success as drivers of media visibility during elite international competitions. As a result, "women who are expected to win medals or who are successful will receive more attention in the media of the country they represent. In this sense, national identity overrides the athlete's gender identity." (2010, p. 12)

Compared with the attention paid to sports content, relatively few studies have sought explanations from sports media professionals, such as editors and/or sportswriters and reporters, of their decision-making and gendered coverage (Alston, 1996; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lumby et al., 2010; Phillips, 1997; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). The following is an indicative sample from that smaller pool of qualitative investigations.

Lumby et al.'s (2010) study quoted one senior sports journalist, Jacquelin Magnay from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, who described the main influences on day-to-day news judgments. Magnay blamed a cultural process, driven from the top by male sports editors, for determining "whether a journalist covers certain events and how they cover them ... there are no female sports editors". News values were "framed around well-known individuals who are able to 'brand' themselves for an interested public" (p. 16). Her statement lends support to Cunningham and Sagas' (2002) proposition, noted earlier, that brand equity determines the level of mediated sports coverage, and to Horky and Nieland's (2011) finding that sports coverage in the international print media is personality-driven. As Magnay has observed, there needs to be "a realisation that sport is a business and people are more interested in sports people and their lives than just sport itself" (Lumby et al., 2010, p. 16).

Bernstein (2000) found national interest, which translates to significant national pride when local athletes are successful and win Olympic medals, trumped any other criterion of newsworthiness in coverage of the 1992 Barcelona Games in Israeli and British newspapers. In follow up interviews, an Israeli sports journalist acknowledged the extensive attention given to Israeli athletes compared with their sporting performances and achievements (Israel's first medal at any Olympics was a silver won in Barcelona by a female judoka, Yael Arad), but explained that "the readers in a certain country are most interested in how their athletes performed" (2000, p. 361). Bernstein and Galily (2008, p. 185) have since noted that national

pride in 1992 allowed “‘even’ a woman – and even in a relatively minor sport like judo, which had been paid little media attention up to that point – to enjoy extensive coverage for having helped to foster it”. The scholars contended that the Arad case also indicates the level of achievement female athletes must reach in order to gain wide media coverage:

In interviews we have conducted over the years, editors in the different media maintained that if there were more successful female athletes, they would be covered as extensively as Arad was. However, what counts as ‘success’ for female athletes is judged by higher criteria than those applied to males. (p. 185)

Dutch (Knoppers & Elling, 2004) and Australian studies (Alston, 1996) have involved print and broadcast sports media, an approach that does not find favour with some researchers who have argued for like-with-like comparisons. For example, Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2003) argued that cross-media analysis can be misleading because different media have different characteristics of news production. Of the other studies that focus on gatekeeping or sports journalists’ practice, most have been located in the United States so “their findings are not necessarily equally applicable to other countries” (Bernstein & Galily, 2008, p. 181). Of these, one has interviewed female sports journalists (Cramer, 1994), others have surveyed newspaper sports editors (Hardin, 2005; Salwen & Garrison, 1998) and sports reporters at student newspapers (Schmidt, 2013), one has interviewed print sportswriters (Kian, 2007), two have involved observation in a single newspaper newsroom (Lowes, 1999; Theberge & Cronk, 1986) and one observed journalists’ practice at a niche sports magazine (Sefiha, 2010). Although these studies are valuable components of the literature, the data for the three North American investigations undertaken by Theberge and Cronk, Cramer and Lowes were gathered in the 1980s and 1990s. It is a similar case with interviews conducted with newspaper sports journalists in Canada (Valeriot, 1980) and a survey of female sports journalists in Australia (Baird, 1994). Thus, the present study of online sports reporting adds to the relevant research conducted elsewhere on gendered sports coverage by extending the focus to countries outside the US and incorporating their public broadcasters.

2.8 Summary

When we look to coverage of sportswomen, in the main the body of empirical evidence supports Kane’s (1996) criticism that female athletes and their sports are grossly under-represented in the sports media. An overview of the literature reveals female athletes remain second-class citizens who are trivialised, sexualised and demeaned in one of the most powerful institutions in western culture. As the preceding literature demonstrates, the mass media play a prominent role in reinforcing so-called natural gender differences. This has been achieved in a number of ways, by: excluding women from coverage or giving very little coverage to female athletes and their

sports; covering more frequently those events that reinforce stereotypical feminine images of female athletes; and minimising women's achievements through sports commentaries.

As Elueze and Jones (1998) noted, the problem for sportswomen is more than one of simple numerical under-representation in sports coverage. When media coverage of female athletes is presented in a manner that trivialises their performances, it creates and reaffirms patriarchal ideologies and promotes the perpetuation of masculine hegemony. Or, as Sage asserted:

Because the media are effective and powerful organisations for promoting hegemonic ideology media sport is also an arena for the advancement and reproduction of dominant interests. (1998, p. 186)

This chapter has explained the theoretical perspectives applied to this research. It has revealed the relatively limited knowledge about how sportswomen are treated by online sports media, especially over time, with the exception of my studies of online coverage of successive Olympic Games by Australia's public broadcaster, the ABC, since 2000. Also discussed were standards for assessing equity or fairness in sports media coverage. The chapter then reported the findings of various researchers who have interviewed news decision-makers in the traditional sports media or conducted field research in newspapers' sports departments in an attempt to understand why women are written out of the sports news. Many of the reasons put forward for the level of media attention to women's sports spring from comparisons with male standards (as the norm) to claims that audiences are only interested in men's sports and their high achievers. Such studies underscore the urgent need to extend the literature on gendered sports coverage by examining online sports journalism, its practices and the decisions that impact on the extent and nature of coverage given to women's sports.

Chapter 3 will describe the methodologies adopted to examine the performance of the three national public broadcasters in terms of gender portrayal in their online Olympic sports coverage, as well as the sports news production processes employed at each organisation.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the last five years, sport media scholars and sport sociologists “have begun to fill the research void” on digital media with studies of platforms including Twitter, Facebook, networked media and niche websites (LaVoi & Calhoun, 2014, p. 322). However, as LaVoi and Calhoun (2014, p. 322) noted, the growing body of digital media sports studies lacks attention, with just a few exceptions,²⁶ to “the ‘gender’ piece of the gender-sport-digital media triad”. Other scholars (Billings et al., 2008; Kane & Buysse, 2005) have noted the relatively small body of longitudinal research on digital media. Various techniques have been used to examine the content and production of mediated sports coverage in the print and broadcast media.²⁷ To my knowledge, though, no published studies have focused on online sports journalism’s messages across a number of years, or events, or the sports news production processes of the public broadcasting sector. This thesis examines both online sports content and the context of that coverage, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods – a content analysis and interviews with the content producers – to enable a comparison of three national public broadcasters at one point in time, and a comparison of content over time on two of those public broadcasters. The key questions being addressed are: What characterises sports coverage on the online sports sites of three national public broadcasters? What drives those editorial decisions?

3.2 The present research and precedents

Researchers investigating the sports media as sites of gender exclusion and reinforcement of stereotypes have used content analysis to study the recognition or amount of sports coverage allocated to each gender and the respect or actual content within that coverage (Knoppers & Elling, 1999). Kinnick (1998), Kachgal (2001) and my previous studies (Jones, 2004, 2006) have categorised and counted by gender the total number of sports articles and photographs, their placement and the gender-appropriateness of featured sports. Duncan et al.’s (1990) and Vincent et al.’s (2002) studies of newspapers, and Jones’s studies (Jones, 2004, 2006) of sports websites, have examined stories and photographs for their focus on athletes’ appearance,

²⁶ LaVoi and Calhoun’s (2014) review of studies of the perpetuation of gender ideology through online media corporations cited the following scholarship in relation to network-affiliated sports websites: Jones’s studies of gender representation in online coverage of the 2000 and 2004 Olympic Games (Jones, 2004, 2006), and the work of US scholars Kachgal (2001) and Kian and his colleagues (Kian et al., 2009; Kian et al., 2008).

²⁷ For example, researchers have conducted quantitative content analyses (Bissell & Holt, 2005; Cooky et al., 2013; French, 2013; Hardin, Chance, et al., 2002; Kian et al., 2009; North, 2012) and qualitative analyses of sports content (Daddario & Wigley, 2007; Shugart, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Surveys of sports journalists have been conducted by Hardin, Zhong and Whiteside (2009) and Salwen and Garrison (1998). Cramer (1994), Kian (2007), Knoppers and Elling (2004) and Sefiha (2010) interviewed sports journalists about their work practices.

characterisations of weakness and linguistic sexism. For an independent measure of equitable coverage of Olympic competition, Toohey (1997), Tuggle et al. (2002) and Jones (2004, 2006) compared coverage of female and male athletes with the gender makeup of national teams and medal tallies by gender. From Jones's studies of both the 2000 and 2004 Olympic Games (Jones, 2004, 2006), I have extended these equity measures to formulate a "representation ratio" which is discussed later in this chapter.

As noted in Chapter 2, only a relatively small body of literature deals with sports journalism work practices from the perspective of those who have knowledge about and experience in the area – the sports journalists and editors. To summarise, although these studies added substantially to the literature, the few that have interviewed sportswriters and/or editors:

- focused on journalists from only one newspaper (Lowes, 1999; Theberge & Cronk, 1986) and data were gathered up to almost 30 years ago;
- examined the practices of newspaper sports editors (Hardin, 2005) and sportswriters (Kian, 2007) in the United States, where the findings "are not necessarily equally applicable to other countries, even western ones" (Bernstein & Galily, 2008, p. 181); and
- were confined to the print and broadcast media (Alston, 1996; Knoppers & Elling, 2004) where such cross-media analysis can be "misleading" (Lavie & Leman-Wilzig, 2003) because of the different news production processes.

The purpose of this cross-national study's interviews with sports journalists and editors is to address the limitations outlined above.²⁸ It compares the sports news operations of three public broadcasters: Australia's ABC, the United Kingdom's BBC and Canada's CBC. That is, the online arms of the three public service broadcasters are compared to investigate gendered sports coverage. The interviews are also used to cross-examine and enrich data from the content analysis of Olympic Games reporting on each broadcaster's website (another first, to my knowledge, in comparative research in digital mediasport). The interviews explore the procedures used by editorial decision makers at the three broadcasters to select sports news and how they defend their choices. The sampled broadcasters also allow some further comparisons – with Jones's content analyses of online Olympics coverage by the ABC in 2000 and the ABC and BBC in 2004 (Jones, 2003, 2006, 2006b), and with studies in which researchers have

²⁸ As noted previously, the terms "sports journalists" and "editors" used throughout this thesis are in place of the many different job titles given to staff in sports journalism in Australia, the UK and Canada – such as sports reporter, senior network host of sport (who also reports on sports), chief sports writer, sportscaster (and writer of sports stories), sports broadcaster (and writer of sports stories), multi-platform sports journalist, sports writer and sports editor.

conducted interviews with print and broadcast sports journalists and editors about their news selection processes (Hardin, 2005; Kian, 2007; Knoppers & Elling, 2004).

3.3 The quantitative and qualitative phases of this study

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods used in this study echoes the design of Knoppers and Elling (1999, 2004), who employed content analysis to examine coverage by gender in the Dutch sports media, and followed up with interviews with sports editors and reporters about their editorial decision-making. However, unlike the Dutch study, this one asks the sports journalists about their organisation's reporting of an elite sports event, the Olympic Games, as well as everyday sports coverage. My research design also responds to scholars including Gratton and Jones (quoted in Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007) and Creswell (2009) who advocated using mixed methods research in a study because of its combination or association of both quantitative and qualitative forms. In this way, mixed methods research is "more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data: it involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research" (2009, p. 4). That is, the purpose is to bring together these different approaches to yield two types of intelligence about my study. On this point, Ritchie (2010) wrote:

We are of the view that there can be benefit in harnessing qualitative and statistical enquiry provided that the two methods, and the data they generate, can be clearly delineated ... Each of the two research approaches provides a distinctive kind of evidence and used together they can offer a powerful resource to inform and illuminate policy or practice. (2010, p. 38)

In this study, the quantitative research is concerned with the first research question, the measurement of levels of coverage of women's sports and the nature of that coverage on the three broadcasters' websites. Drawing on a series of indicators previously associated with gender biased coverage in sports journalism, as outlined in Chapter 2, the study uses content analysis to discover the presence or absence of messages (the recognition given to athletes of each gender), and the message characteristics (the respect accorded each gender) in online sports reports about the 2008 Olympic Games.

On its own, content analysis cannot identify what may have contributed to the outcome. The subsequent qualitative phase addresses the second research question about the manufacture of gendered sports news. Using semi-structured interviews with sports journalists and editors, and questions informed by the literature on gendered sports coverage and the findings of my earlier content analysis, it aims to discover the interpretative practices sports journalists and editors use to explain their production processes in everyday and megasports settings, and to seek

suggestions or strategies for improving the media's representation of sportswomen. This sequential conduct of the studies, with the statistical investigation preceding the qualitative research, optimises "the strengths of the two approaches in combination" to achieve "an extended understanding that neither method alone can offer" (Ritchie, 2010, pp. 39, 43). This form of research poses challenges for the inquirer, not the least of which are: the requirement to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative forms of research; the need for extensive data collection; and the time-intensive nature of analysing both numeric data and text (Basil, 2003; Weerakkody, 2009). The following sections discuss each of the methods adopted for this study, in order of their application.

3.4 Content analysis of the 2008 Olympics sports stories

As noted, the content analysis phase involves a systematic analysis of the amount and nature of the coverage given to female and male athletes during the 2008 Olympics by each broadcaster. This procedure follows that used in studies of print and broadcast sports journalism, but it also allows for the unique features of the Internet by incorporating some differences which are explained in the following sections. This section begins with a review of the literature on content analysis.

3.4.1 Quantitative content analysis: the research method

Content analysis has a long pedigree as a communications research method, dating back to the 18th century (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). It has been used to investigate the content of various media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).²⁹ Multiple analysis techniques are available under the term "content analysis" and it is "a popular and widely used method for the study of gender differences in media coverage" (Bruce et al., 2010, p. 19).

According to Riffe et al. (2005), the aim of content analysis is:

... the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption. (2005, p. 25)

²⁹ Examples include the number and type of popular songs played on European and German radio stations during World War II, as an indicator of German troop deployments on the continent. In the United States, content analysis of television programs has informed government policy on program labelling. Content analysis also has its limitations, especially in relation to claims about media effects (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000), but it is not the purpose of this study to examine the effects of the communication on an audience.

The research design of this study is “systematic”, according to Riffe et al.’s guidelines. I am seeking empirical evidence. I have determined in advance such issues as the study’s time frame, the kind of communication that constitutes the study’s focus, the variables and how precise the measurements must be. Each of these elements is described in detail in the following sections. The study is “replicable” and, therefore, addresses issues of reliability, objectivity and clarity by describing the research procedure: research definitions and operations used are reported clearly, exactly and fully so that readers can understand what will be and has been done. Along with the information contained in this chapter, the appendices contain definitions and a copy of the coding schedule, which lists the variables coded for each story or photograph and the values or possibilities for each variable (Hansen et al., 1998). As a result of this “exactness ... other researchers can evaluate [my] procedure and the findings and, if desired, repeat the operations” (Riffe et al., 2005, p. 59).

The “symbols of communication” selected for content analysis in this study are text and images. They are “manipulated” symbols from existing online content. In the following sections, the reasons for their selection, based on the research task and literature in the field of gender representation in the media, are specified clearly and without ambiguity (2005). The definition of content analysis specifies the use of measurement, with numeric values assigned to represent measured differences. Instructions for assigning values appear in the appendices. The rules for assigning numbers that accurately represent the content’s meaning are described in the following sections. In this way, the study has also developed and applied an empirical and reliable measurement of variables “traditionally viewed as individually variable (‘in the eye of the beholder’)” (p. 67), such as gender-related descriptors.

The goal of this study’s applied content analysis is to describe the communication and to draw inferences about its meaning. It assesses whether the patterns of sports media coverage that ignore, trivialise, devalue and often sexualise female athletes (Bruce et al., 2010) are replicated or disrupted online. Then, in the subsequent, qualitative phase of the study, the communication findings help to inform questions about the content of online sports news production on the ABC, BBC and CBC.

Wimmer and Dominick (2000) and Weerakkody (2009) described 10 steps to follow in content analysis and noted that the initial stages can be easily combined. The stages are: formulating research questions or hypotheses; defining the universe; selecting a sample; selecting the unit of analysis; constructing content categories; establishing a quantification system; training coders and conducting a pilot study; coding the content and conducting reliability checks; analysing the data; and reporting and interpreting the results and drawing conclusions. Guided by Wimmer

and Dominick's first nine discrete stages (since the final stage is not relevant to this chapter's discussion), I will now discuss the content analysis procedure I have undertaken for this study.

3.4.2 Formulating the research questions

Previous studies, including Jones's Olympics studies (Jones, 2003, 2004, 2006), guided the formulation of the research questions for the content analysis of 2008 Olympic Games sports stories on the three public broadcasters' websites. The first question asks whether the extent and nature of coverage differed for female and male athletes. The hypothesis is that, based on previous research into sports journalism in the traditional and online sports media, there will be differences in coverage of the two genders. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, content analyses of various sports media have found women are routinely written out of sports coverage (Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; North, 2012; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008) and female athletes are stereotyped, sexualised and trivialised (Duncan, 2006; Jones, 2003, 2006). The second research question, about the production of sports news, is explored in the qualitative phase of the study. It is discussed in sections 3.5 and 3.6.

3.4.3 Defining the universe

In this study of online sports coverage during the 2008 Olympic Games by three public broadcasters, the choice of units of observation involved purposive selection of the content sources, the dedicated Olympic Games website of each organisation:

- the ABC at <http://www.abc.net.au/olympics/>
- the BBC at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/olympics/default.stm> , and
- the CBC at <http://www.cbc.ca/olympics/> .

Two versions of the BBC's Olympics site were available during the Games – one for the UK and another for international audiences. The UK version was selected for this study because the aim was to see what home audiences were seeing. However, after the Games began I found that some content, while visible in the UK, was not available to me as an international user.

International users, identified by the BBC's (Geo IP) technology, were unable to view rights-restricted videos and instead saw a single freeze frame from the head of the video. There were no such problems with the ABC or CBC sites.

3.4.4 Sample size, definitions and sampling plan

Sample size for the content analysis was determined by the study's aim of examining how female and male athletes were represented in sports stories and sports photographs on the three websites during Olympic competition only, and by the study's definition of sports stories and photographs. Sports stories are those reports whose topics or themes are contests, achievements

or issues affecting individual Olympic athletes or teams. They do not include blogs. Although blogs are common features on sports websites, and appeared daily on the BBC's site during the 2008 Olympics, they were discounted because their key characteristics – frequently updated web pages with a series of archived posts, typically in reverse-chronological order, with messages posted by journalists and public users (Pedersen et al., 2007) – are not consistent with the format of conventional sports stories. Sports photographs are those images, including video freeze frames, featuring Olympic athletes and illustrating sports stories and/or blogs. The decision to include photographs accompanying the BBC's blogs is discussed in section 3.4.6.

The study excluded reports about the opening and closing ceremonies and focused on Olympic sports reports about athletes only. That is, unless a particular athlete or team was mentioned, the sample did not include reports about economic, political or social conditions affecting sport; or reports about coaches, venues, athlete payments or sponsorships and sports administration; or reports about performance enhancing drugs, drug-testing procedures and outcomes. For example, a story about an athlete's medal chances was eligible since the story was a preview or speculator about competition. A photograph of an athlete or team accompanying a story updating a country's medal tally was not counted since the story was essentially about medal counts, not the athlete or team whose portrait appeared as a generic illustration.

The traditional, print-prominence measure of photograph size was discounted due to variations in the size and orientation, within and among the websites, of photographs accompanying the lead or top story on the splash page (T1) and main stories (T2) accessed from the splash page. A small number of T2 stories on the ABC carried more than one photograph in a slide show, but there was no apparent connection between this format and the story's position within the bulletin. Only the first photograph in each slide show was categorised and counted because it was the only photograph on view when the story was first accessed. On the BBC, photographs were often stills from the video clips which accompanied stories. The stills were treated as conventional photographs and were categorised and counted, but the clips could not be examined because they were not available to users outside the UK. Graphics were not counted.

The requirement for rigour in drawing a sample can be a challenge in the web's dynamic environment. Websites have a high rotation of bulletins. As with broadcast news, online bulletins evolve during the day. Rather than posting them at hourly intervals, for example, ABC *News Online*'s 24-hour service produces about 10 bulletins per day with a few hundred story updates to the website throughout the day (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2002). In designing the sampling plan I consulted the competition schedule for Beijing and took into account: the different time zones in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and China; the peak

viewing times for local online audiences in Australia, the UK and Canada; my location in Australia, operating to Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST); previous research; and my experience of online data collection during two previous Olympics, in Sydney and Athens. Based on the Athens study experience, I had to allow for fatigue. It was not possible to personally collect online data from three separate sites every hour over a 24-hour period for 18 days; nor was funding available for research assistance to complete this task.

Staff at *ABC News Online* say there is a pattern of visits to their site, with peaks of activity around 4.30pm and 9pm (Alysen, 2000), indicating this is when the site has, potentially, its biggest news audience during the Olympic Games. However, Jones's previous Olympics studies (Jones, 2004, 2006b) showed early bulletins often carry over sports news reported the previous day, whereas later bulletins are progressively composed of more same day, top stories. Starting times vary across the Games, competition in some sports can last for several hours before there is a result, and uploads of new sports stories do not always coincide with normal peak viewing times.

With all of these variables in mind, the original sampling plan was devised with the aim of assuring that each unit had the same chance of being represented in the collection of sampling units. Consequently, sampling began two days prior to the official start of the Olympic Games to accommodate coverage of football (soccer) matches. Each day from August 7 to August 24, 2008, sports stories on the three websites were downloaded three times daily, between 12pm and 4pm AEST, 4pm and 8pm AEST, and 8pm and 12am AEST. From an 18-day period, 54 bulletins were collected from each website for a total of 162 bulletins. At 10 stories per bulletin, this produced 1620 stories, from which 1337 were categorised as sports stories and 1432 images were categorised as sports photographs.

3.4.5 Units of analysis

Defining units of analysis and coding units is a unique challenge in online research. No one standard for either measurement seems to have emerged for the web (McMillan, 2000). Based on Jones's previous studies of online sports coverage (Jones, 2004, 2006b) and Kachgal's (2001) work with sports websites, the top 10 story summaries or the headlines/blurbs on each site's splash page (T1) and the Tier Two (T2) full stories linked to them were deemed to be ideal units of analysis. The splash page headlines and summaries offered easy, one click access to the full versions of stories on T2. The problem of coding content and checking intercoder reliability for changing content on the websites was addressed by old technology. To ensure that

coders would be cross-coding faithful and identical data, hard copies of each bulletin's splash and main story pages were printed and archived.³⁰

3.4.6 Content categories and quantification

It was intended that by using content analysis certain trends would emerge to answer the original questions of whether female and male athletes were treated differently and whether the portrayals of female and male athletes were reflective of previously identified forms of gender bias. A primary goal of content analysis is to describe characteristics of the content of the mass media's messages. Berelson (quoted in Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992) advised researchers to study both the substance of the manifest content (what is said) and its form (how it is said). After Kinnick (1998), variables relating to both form and substance were observed when constructing coding categories.

The coding unit relating to form was the placement or prominence of a story as the lead item (or the first story, and not to be confused with lede which refers to a story's introductory paragraph) in the top 10 story headlines or summaries on a site's splash page (T1) and the placement of an athlete's photograph with the lead story on the T1 splash page. Story substance was examined for forms of bias identified in previous studies of sports reporting. These included: the gender of the athlete written about; the gender of the athlete pictured; the gender-appropriateness of the sports reported on; linguistic sexism; and mentions of athletes' appearance, relationships (including marital and parental status), emotions and dependence on others; and successes and failures. Accompanying photographs of female and male athletes were also examined for the frequency of depictions of athletes in certain poses.

A coding sheet was constructed to evaluate each online report.³¹

In terms of recognition (RQ1), each report about athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games from a site's splash page (T1) and the story's Tier Two (T2) or main page, was analysed as follows:

1. (a) Stories were categorised as being about one gender only.
1. (b) The number of stories referring to female athletes and their sports or to male athletes and their sports was counted. Blogs were not classified as stories, as previously discussed.

³⁰ Examples of each website's Olympics splash page and main story page are provided in Appendix B.

³¹ Examples of the coding sheet and coder instructions are provided in Appendix C.

For combined reports, where both genders were referred to, a story was categorised and counted as female or male according to the gender of the athlete highlighted (first-mentioned) in the headline, the summary/blurb or the story. This approach to coding reflects the inverted pyramid model of storytelling where the most important information appears first in a story. When stories in the T1 page rundown consisted of a headline alone or a headline and a summary but there was no indication of the gender of the athlete/s referred to (such as “Australia shoots past Greece in water polo opener”, “GB and US both out of sprint relay” and “Canadians expect taekwondo medals”),³² the T2 main story was examined for the gender of the first-mentioned athlete. Then, the story was coded accordingly. If the T2 story did not mention an athlete, it was classified as gender-neutral. Gender-neutral stories were counted originally, but were later discarded due to their low frequency. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) stated that less than five occurrences in a category, as was the case here, can sharply skew the chi-square distribution.

Captions for photographs and text with graphics were not counted. Stories in the majority of bulletins did not carry bylines and, for this reason, bylines were not considered when formulating the research questions. Story space and word counts, which are traditional measures in print studies, were not measured for online stories for two reasons. There was no indication on the T1 splash page of the T2 main story’s length – that is, whether the whole story could be read on one screen, irrespective of the size of the user’s monitor, or whether the user had to scroll to read a longer story. A user did not receive a visual clue about a story’s length until she/he connected to the T2 page. Thus, for splash page headlines alone or headlines and summaries and the T2 stories linked to them, the number of stories referring to female athletes and their sports or to male athletes and their sports was counted.

2. (a) Photographs showing individual athletes or more than one athlete were categorised as being of one gender only. There were no photographs where individual athletes of both genders were depicted together. If a team was the dominant visual element, the photograph was classified according to the gender of the team (female, male or mixed).
2. (b) The number of images depicting female athletes only and male athletes only was counted. Although they were categorised for counting, there were no photographs of mixed gender teams. On the BBC, a composite photograph (composed of two separate

³² ABC, “Australia shoots past Greece in water polo opener”, August 10, 2008; BBC, “GB and US both out of sprint relay”, August 22, 2008; CBC, “Canadians expect taekwondo medals”, August 20, 2008.

photographs placed side-by-side) showing a male shooter on the left and a female shooter on the right was classified and counted as one photograph for each gender. The number of athletes appearing in a photograph was not counted. The size of photographs differed from site to site and for this reason photograph size was not counted. Within sites there were differences in layout and design across T1 and T2 pages. The photograph accompanying the ABC's T1 top story and the photograph accompanying the BBC's T1 blog were up to three times the size of photographs accompanying stories placed second and third in the running order. On the CBC site, only the lead story carried a photograph and its size remained constant across the Games. The BBC's blog photograph, easily the dominant visual element on the T1 page, was coded and counted according to the gender of the featured athlete but the blog, as noted earlier, was not classified as a sports story. Thus, for T1 and T2 pages, the number of photographs of female athletes and the number of photographs of male athletes was counted.

3. (a) A story's ranking or prominence on each website is indicated by its leading position on the splash (T1) page. Lead stories were categorised as being about one gender only.
3. (b) The number of lead stories appearing on the T1 page and referring to female athletes and their sports or to male athletes and their sports was counted. As discussed in 1(b), at times lead stories on the T1 page did not mention a specific athlete or a team but the T2 main stories linked to them reported on one or more athletes and their sports. T1 leads were categorised according to whether they or the T2 story linked to them first-mentioned female or male athletes.
4. (a) Tier 2 main stories, categorised in 1(a) as being about female or male athletes, were also categorised according to the sport being contested and its gender-appropriateness. Stories about mixed gender teams were not classified or counted. However, a story about an individual from a mixed gender team was classified and counted according to the gender of the individual athlete and the gender-appropriateness of the sport. Sports were categorised as female-appropriate, male-appropriate or gender-neutral.³³

³³ As Rintala and Birrell (1984) noted, such implicit classifications underlie many studies in the field but few explicit systems for classification actually exist. For this reason, I devised a system for classifying sports by traditional standards of gender appropriateness (following Daddario's (1998) guidelines) and used it in my two previous Olympics studies (Jones, 2004; 2006b). Appendix C (Attachment 1) lists the Olympic sports reported on by the three online broadcasters and their sex-type classifications.

4. (b) The number of stories in T2 main reports about female-appropriate, male-appropriate and gender-neutral sports was counted.
5. (a) All photographs accompanying stories about female and male athletes were examined for depictions of passive or active poses.
5. (b) The number of times a female or male athlete was depicted doing nothing (passive) or doing something (active) was counted. A subject was defined as passive when she/he was either clearly posed for the camera, or was motionless (for example, recovering after exertion or suffering from an injury), or appeared only from the neck up (mug shots) or appeared celebrating (such as giving a victory salute). Active subjects were clearly doing something competitive; that is, they were shown competing in or about to compete in their sport (for example, diving into a pool, paddling a kayak or poised on starting blocks).

In terms of respect, each story about female and male athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games from the T1 and T2 pages was analysed as follows:

6. (a) All text was analysed to identify sources of bias along gender lines in sports reports.
6. (b) The number of times each of the following themes appeared was counted:
 - (i) appearance, (ii) relationships, (iii) emotions, and (iv) success and failure.³⁴ Any word or adjacent group of words, phrase, sentence or paragraph concerning the same theme was counted as one appearance of that theme, and sorted separately for women and men. Direct quotations from an athlete, coach or other eligible sources, such as an athlete's family member, were examined for expressions of emotion or emotional dependence, humility, confidence and explanations of competitive strategy or performance outcome. Direct quotations were included because, even though they were not the journalist's words, the journalist selected them to better frame her/his stories to support her/his narratives.³⁵ Neutral or factual descriptors, for example "disqualified for running out of his lane" in reference to a relay, were not counted.
7. (a) Language use was examined along gender lines for the method of naming the athlete, and the use of martial language and trivialising language. Stories were also examined for the presence of gender marking.

³⁴ For examples of descriptors relating to (i) appearance, (ii) relationships, (iii) emotions, and (iv) success and failure, see Appendix C (Attachment 2).

7. (b) The number of times the athlete was described by last name, first name or both was counted. The number of times martial language was used was counted.³⁶ The number of times trivialising language, such as “girl”, “young lady”, “boy” or “kid”, was used to refer to adult athletes was counted. The number of times sports were gender marked, for example “women’s hockey” and “men’s triathlon”, was counted.
8. (a) To aid interpretation of the coverage by gender on each online site, I applied a measure, a “representation ratio”, developed from Jones’s study of the 2000 Olympic Games (Jones, 2003) after adapting a method used by Whitney et al. (1989).³⁷ Each website’s gendered coverage in story numbers and photograph numbers (categorised in 1a and 2a) was compared with its national medal tally. Official Olympic medal counts for Australia, Great Britain and Canada were consulted for results by gender.³⁸ Then, each website’s gendered coverage was compared with the gender make-up of its national Olympic team.
8. (b) A “representation ratio” was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Representation ratio} = \frac{CG}{MWG}$$

CG is the percentage of coverage received by gender. *MWG* is the percentage of national medals won by gender. A second “representation ratio” was calculated by replacing the percentage of medals won by gender (*MWG*) with the percentage of female and male athletes in each national team or the team population by gender (*TPG*). The two measures provided an indication of whether each gender was represented equitably or whether it was over- or under-represented on each website.³⁹

³⁵ Such selection processes can reinforce dominant societal values, such as hegemonic masculinity.

³⁶ Examples of martial language include verbs such as blew away, trounced, obliterated, mowed down, pulverised, routed and dominated, and adjectives such as giant-killing, imperious, blistering and devastating.

³⁷ Whitney et al’s (1989) “attention ratio” indexed the percentage of a state’s news coverage divided by its population. The measure can be expressed as a percentage of over- or under-coverage relative to other states. It is standardised because it corrects for wide variations of population by state and region.

³⁸ Note the different name for national medal counts where Team GB represents Great Britain.

³⁹ For example, if female athletes received 70 per cent of coverage and won 45 per cent of their country’s medals, their representation ratio of 1.56 suggests that they were over-reported compared with their medal success.

3.4.7 Coder training, coding the content and reliability

As Wimmer and Dominick (2000) advised, careful training of coders is an integral step in any content analysis and usually results in a more reliable analysis. Since this study uses a coding sheet I had prepared, tested in a pilot study and used in an earlier study of online sports coverage (Jones, 2003), a pilot study was not deemed necessary. Content coding was performed by a qualified research assistant who was instructed, in general terms, on the purpose of the study and the classification procedure as outlined above.⁴⁰

The following process was used to code the sports stories and photographs. The independent coder and I coded separately a sub-sample of 23 per cent of stories from the 18 days of Games sampling for the purpose of determining intercoder reliability. Since each sampled bulletin on the three broadcasters was limited to 10 stories, a sub-sample of seven stories per bulletin per day from one broadcaster was selected for a total of 378 stories. These were stories 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10. This was deemed to be a fair and accurate representation of the main body of data. After Reinard (1997), intercoder reliability for each variable was computed using Scott's *pi*.⁴¹ The overall proportion of intercoder agreement was .91. The proportion of agreement on the most used categories was: gender of story .98; gender of photograph .99; gender of T1 lead story .98; gender-appropriateness of the sport .95; active or passive photograph .94; descriptive statements .79; hierarchical naming .88; martial metaphors .70; trivialising language .93; and gender marking .93. Next, the research assistant coded all Olympic sports stories from August 7 to August 24, 2008 inclusive. The sample yielded 1337 sports stories and 1432 photographs.

3.4.8 Analysing the data

For items 1 and 3 (stories), and 2 and 5 (photographs), a total measure according to gender was calculated. The measures for each gender category in items 1, 2, 3 and 5 were then converted to percentages. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, were used to compare the obtained

⁴⁰ The assistant was trained in coding using a representative sample of 10 stories from the online bulletins. We discussed the finer points of some of the story elements, in particular martial metaphors (these descriptors received the lowest agreement score in the subsequent intercoder reliability test).

⁴¹ Scott's *pi* is one of the most frequently recommended reliability tests for content analysis (Riffe et al., 2005). It provides a more conservative estimate of inter-coder reliability than does percentage agreement. Reinard (1997, p. 72) wrote that "prudent researchers" rely on Scott's *pi* because it compensates or corrects for the number of categories used and the rates of coder agreement that would be expected by chance alone. This study's scores of .70 for martial metaphors and .79 for descriptive statements are within the range of acceptable reliability coefficients for *pi* of .67 and above (Riffe et al., 2005) and "about .75 or above" typically reported in most published content analyses (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 154).

distributions from the categorical data, as outlined in items 1(b), 2(b), 3(b) and 5(b). The significance level (p) of 0.05 was selected to determine statistical significance.⁴²

For item 4, a total measure was calculated for each T2 sport contested by female and male athletes. The measures were converted to percentages. Next, observations in the sample of stories by sport sex-type were listed and ranked in order of magnitude from smallest to largest. Descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis H tests, were used to analyse variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness.⁴³ The thematic data, items 6 and 7, were also examined from a quantitative perspective and chi-square tests were used to compare the obtained distributions by gender. Again, the significance level of 0.05 was selected. For item 8, the number of medals won by each country's athletes in 2008 and the number of female and male athletes in that same nation's team were each compared with the percentages of coverage for each gender by their respective national broadcaster to determine a "representation ratio". A ratio less than 1.00 indicates under-reporting by gender compared with its success (medals won) or its population (within the national team).

3.5 Interviews with editorial decision makers and their limitations

The second research question is explored in the qualitative phase of the study. Interviews with purposefully selected participants – sports journalists and editors – sought to elaborate on the findings of the content analysis and examine what shapes newsroom decision-making processes at the ABC, BBC and CBC.⁴⁴ As seen in Chapter 2, only a small body of literature has reported on interviews with sports journalists and editors about their work practices and their reasons for differential coverage. No published studies appear to have interviewed sports journalists working for public service broadcasters in different countries.

⁴² The chi-square data analysis technique is among those used most often by researchers who analyse content (Riffe et al., 2005; Wimmer & Dominick, 2000) to detect group differences using frequency (count) data (Preacher, 2001; Reinard, 1997). See Lomax and Hahs-Vaughn (2012, pp. 236, 238 and 799) for details of the chi-square test for one variable. Kachgal (2001) used chi-square to assess the statistical relationship between gender and Top Story assignment on online sports sites. I have used chi-square and the Kruskal-Wallis H test to compare categorical data by gender in previous studies of the Olympic Games (Jones, 2004, 2006). Values of chi-square (X^2) become more significant as they increase in size. The mere chance probability of any particular value of chi-square is greater for a larger value of degrees of freedom (df), an index of the amount of random variability or mere chance coincidence that can be present in a particular situation (Lowry, 2002). If the calculated value of X^2 is smaller than the critical value of 3.841 (df = 1, p = 0.05), the difference is not significant for that given result; but if the calculated value of X^2 is equal to or greater than the critical value of 3.841, the difference is significant.

⁴³ The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a distribution-free, one-way analysis of variance based on ranks (Pagano, 1990; Parsons, 1978; Reinard, 1997). If the H statistic is greater than or equal to 5.99 (df = 2, p = 0.05), it can be concluded that there is a difference among the population distributions by gender (female-appropriate, male-appropriate and gender neutral sports); that is, the number of stories is not statistically equal with regard to "appropriateness". If H is less than 5.99, there is no difference in the population distributions.

⁴⁴ Throughout this thesis I often use journalist and editor instead of the many, different job titles that apply in sports journalism in Australia, the UK and Canada.

In qualitative research, in particular, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study (Creswell, 2009; Denscombe, 2010). These need not be detrimental to the research. My perceptions of sports journalism and broadcast newsroom practices have been shaped by my earlier career as a broadcast journalist, with practical experience of the sports round, and my continued professional interest as a tertiary journalism educator in the principles and practices of sports journalism. I believe this understanding of the context and the roles of sports journalists provided a positive stepping off point for the interviews. It enhanced my knowledge and awareness of the challenges, decisions and issues encountered by the journalists.

As well, I followed a journalistic approach in preparing for and conducting the interviews. I framed questions from: my reading of the academic literature and the findings of my previous content analyses of Olympic Games reporting in 2008, 2004 and 2000; reflection on my own experience as a journalist; and discussions with sports journalists over several years. In pilot testing for the interviews, I was assisted by former journalists who said they found the questions professionally relevant. The semi-structured interviews were focused yet flexible in terms of the order in which the topics were considered. Follow-up questions allowed interviewees to elaborate on points of interest or to make clarifications as needed.

I am aware that I bring certain biases to this study, but I have made every effort to minimise their impact and the effect of my (partial) insider status on how I gathered, viewed and understood the data I collected and how I reported my findings.⁴⁵ Denscombe (2010) wrote that the data are affected by the personal identity of the researcher, whether the interview is conducted face-to-face or online. By using telephone interviews and audio-only Skype, I attempted to reduce some of the “interviewer effect” by removing visual cues from the process.

There remains, though, the interviewees’ perception of the person who is collecting the data (in particular the sex, age, ethnic origin and professional standing) and this can influence their willingness to divulge information. Denscombe (2010) reminded researchers that good practice in interviewing includes considering the social status, educational qualifications and professional expertise of the people to be interviewed, and how these compare with one’s own. I followed his advice in relation to self-presentation (which gels with my previous professional practice as a journalist) by adopting a neutral stance. As a researcher, I tried to present myself in a light which was designed not to antagonise or upset the interviewees. Despite this, it was more

difficult to establish the same degree of rapport with two of the senior managers than with the lower ranking sports journalists. These differences in seniority (and power) may help to explain the fact that the men in charge were less inclined to explore, without several prompts, the negative consequences of the under-reporting of women's sport than were the journalists of both genders situated further down the organisational ladder. In addition, when transcribing an early interview with a female sports journalist, I found that I had inadvertently referred to "my research", rather than the more general description I had elected to use of "research in other countries", in seeking her opinion of women's sports coverage. I was concerned that the participant's response could have been affected by this level of intimacy, and resolved to remain neutral and non-committal in my questions and my responses to the statements made by the remaining interviewees. That early misstep does not seem to have affected the data, in terms of the interviewees' responses. The journalists at all three broadcasters made similar comments about the level of coverage of women's sports, while attributing it to a variety of different influences (see Chapter 5).

The following sections, guided by Creswell (2009), discuss interviewing as a qualitative research method. The section then details the data collection and recording procedures, data analysis and interpretation, and the reliability, validity and generalisability of the data.

3.5.1 Interviewing: the research method

One reason for conducting qualitative research is to seek a complex and thorough understanding of the topic, with the focus "on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue" (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). Such investigation "has long been recognized as a valuable method for exploring and analysing the nature of media organizations and institutional practice" (Gough Yates, 2003, p. 21). Interviews with sports editors and journalists are a way of unpicking editorial decision-making in sports departments at the ABC, BBC and CBC and eliciting the views and opinions of the decision makers.

In deciding to use interviews, I considered the advantages and the limitations of this type of data collection compared with surveys (including self-administered questionnaires), focus groups and direct observations. As Frey et al. (1992, p. 285) noted, the strength of interviews is the potential to "provide information about communication not accessible through other research methods ... [T]hey are essential for getting 'below the surface' and discovering what people think and feel." I used telephone and audio-only Skype interviews in this study in which I asked

⁴⁵ I subscribe to the view that everyone is biased. Because journalists can never be objective, their methods have to be: "[T]he news, like science, should flow from a process of reporting that is defensible,

mainly open-ended questions. For most of the subjects, their location and my limited budget meant the telephone and Skype were the best tools for gathering information from them. I did not regard telephone interviewing as an intrusive research tool given the professional experience of the people I interviewed. Journalists use telephones routinely for newsgathering, including conducting recorded interviews. In addition, the interviews, unlike a self-administered questionnaire, allowed me to develop unscheduled probe questions (Berg, 1995) when new themes emerged in the course of an interview. Thus, I was able to explore participants' responses and elicit new and rich data. By contrast, in a self-administered questionnaire, for example, the probes must be written in advance and would be tied to my preconceived ideas as the researcher (Amis, 2005). I would have had to anticipate a subject's responses, denying her or him "the flexibility to provide the most appropriate response without being constrained by narrow response categories" (2005, p. 107).

Frey et al. (1992, p. 285) note that interviews "help to enrich findings from other research methods". As discussed, the interviews with reporting staff from the three broadcasters were undertaken as phase two of a mixed methods study that sought to elaborate on the findings of the content analysis I had conducted previously. That analysis of Olympics sports coverage in 2008 on the ABC, BBC and CBC's websites revealed differential levels of coverage given to female and male athletes and stereotypical treatment of female athletes in the language and imagery of sports stories (see Chapter 4). Thus, a goal of the interviews with sports journalists and editors was to accumulate knowledge about what shapes newsroom decision-making processes.

3.5.2 The purpose of the interviews

Because professionals who work in sports media organisations influence how and what events are presented in the sports media, there is a great deal of interest in examining the factors that influence their decisions (Kane & Buysse, 2005). In order to explore what drives sports coverage by the ABC, BBC and CBC, the interviewees were asked to describe their work routines and to explain their sports news decision-making. Identifying differences between the news organisations in this area allowed me to compare interviewees' statements about selection processes with their organisation's coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games (based on the findings of my content analysis). The interviews also allowed me to explore how each broadcaster selects stories to cover and what each broadcaster's priorities are for Olympic and non-Olympic or everyday assignments.

rigorous and transparent" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 10).

3.5.3 Selecting the interview subjects

I sought to interview those editorial staff who organise and the reporters who undertake sports coverage for the three organisations' websites. Identifying appropriate people to interview at the ABC was fairly easy. I follow sports coverage and am reasonably up to date with "who's who" in broadcast and online sports reporting in Australia. I have a network of friends and contacts in journalism in Australia and overseas, thanks to the years I spent as a broadcast journalist and my subsequent career as a journalism educator. These people gave me invaluable and much appreciated help, especially with referrals to journalists at the BBC and CBC.

I sought out a non-random, purposive sample of both sports journalists and editors who were currently working in or had worked in the sports departments of the three public broadcasters because these groups play a key role in the sports news production process.⁴⁶ A relatively small number of 15 participants was interviewed because I was conducting cross-referenced interviews at comparable levels of editorial hierarchy – with senior and middle managers (editors) and those below (journalists) – and thus achieving a form of triangulation (Hansen et al., 1998). This approach to gathering information from three general levels in the editorial hierarchy draws from Henningham's research (1998) and the "Worlds of Journalism" study (Hanusch, 2008) where the levels were based on responsibilities in the newsroom: senior managers, middle managers (called junior managers by Hanusch) and non-management staff.

In Australia, the UK and Canada the titles vary for staff from each of the three editorial levels. These are listed in Chapter 5. In my study, senior managers are defined as those with the "power to shape the strategic goals" (2008, p. 100) of the sports newsroom, such as the national sports editor or the head of sport. Middle managers, whose titles include sports editor, represent the middle level of the editorial hierarchy and make operational decisions on a day-to-day basis. The non-management level consists of sports journalists with titles such as sports reporter and chief sports writer. They actively gather sports news and present it for publication (Baird, 1994). Their editorial input varies according to their employer's requirements and can extend beyond Hanusch's definition of little or no editorial responsibility.

A strict, formal process guides the undertaking of this research involving human participants. I have adhered to my university's guidelines throughout the conduct of this study and since its completion. As a first stage of the process, to recruit participants I began by contacting the

⁴⁶ Sports photographers were not interviewed for this study. The majority of photographs published on the three broadcasters' Olympics websites came from Getty Images and other external providers (see Chapter 5 for further details). As noted in Chapter 1, section 1.5, the photographers did not participate in the broadcasters' Olympic sports photograph selections or placements in stories.

broadcasters' senior managers and receiving their written permission to conduct my research in their organisations. Then I contacted current and former sports journalists I know and asked them (and the sports journalists and editors I subsequently interviewed) to refer to me other journalists who were willing to be interviewed (Frey et al., 1992; Weerakkody, 2009). To achieve some stability in the results I stipulated that the journalists must have been sports reporters for at least a year. The interviews were conducted over three months, from December 2011 to February 2012.

3.5.4 Conducting the interviews

Telephone interviews were held with all of the Australian and the majority of the overseas participants. One overseas interview was conducted by Skype. All but one interview was conducted away from the respondents' normal work environments, to minimise distractions and to allow them privacy in order to encourage full and frank disclosure. Qualitative researchers generally rely on face-to-face interviewing when conducting in-depth interviews (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) noted that conducting an interview by telephone has typically been seen as appropriate only for short interviews, structured interviews or in very specific situations. However, they argued that the issue of suitability of the method is "more complex than these simple guidelines suggest and suitability needs to be considered in the light of the particular research endeavour" (2004, p. 108). The scholars identified two issues central to mode consideration: sensitive topics and cost. Cost was an issue in my study, along with the interviewees' locations and time zone differences. In response to concerns that different interview modes can yield different results, Sturges and Hanrahan's qualitative study used both face-to-face and telephone interviews and they found "no significant differences in the interviews". They concluded that telephone interviews can be used productively in qualitative research.

I conducted the interviews. I used my industry experience to help develop a rapport with the participants. As a former broadcast journalist who has reported on sport for both television and radio, and as a person known to some of the journalists, I was able to garner rich information from the interviews. Frey et al. (1992, p. 289) advise that people "tend to confide more in others who are similar to themselves" in gender, age, ethnicity, language, occupation, marital or professional status. Having so-called "semi-insider status", I understand journalistic culture and jargon but was aware that when talking to journalists I had to refrain from comment and avoid becoming a participant in my research project. To begin the interviews, I introduced myself as a researcher and described the purpose of my study, "stressing its importance and crediting the respondents with being the experts on the topic" I was investigating (1992, p. 289).

After Yin (2009), the in-depth interviews were guided conversations rather than rigidly structured queries. Although I was pursuing a consistent line of inquiry, and the same general questions were put to each respondent, my actual stream of questions was fluid, depending on the answers given. The semi-structured interview approach offered flexibility and the freedom to pursue emerging issues and themes as the interviews progressed (Sefiha, 2010) by changing the order of questions or by adding other questions to explore each participant's response if it was necessary or useful (Weerakkody, 2009).

3.5.5 Recording the interviews and the validity of the data

The interviews ran from 50 to 70 minutes. Each was digitally recorded and fully transcribed to allow a comprehensive analysis. Since broadcast journalists commonly record the interviews they conduct, I expected and found them to be comfortable with the procedure. The veracity of the interview data was checked by returning the transcripts to the interviewees in a process of member checking (Amis, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This allowed the interviewees to point out any inaccuracies or misinterpretations and, in one case, to add some words that were garbled due to the telephone connection.

Denscombe (2010, p. 189) points out that there is no absolute way of verifying what someone tells you about their perceptions, thoughts and feelings, but when the interview is concerned with gathering factual information "the researcher can make some checks to see if the information is broadly corroborated by other people and other sources". To try to ensure the validity of the data obtained from the interviews, I checked responses against other interviews with staff from the same organisation, and have been careful not to take information or opinion at face value, without trying to confirm or dispute it using these alternative sources. Also, the journalists' perceptions of the amount of coverage given to female athletes during the 2008 Olympic Games could be compared with data from my content analysis (see this comparison in Chapter 6) – not so much for the purpose of disputing their opinions as to enable an informed discussion afterwards about their perceptions and the actual level of coverage. Finally, the testimony of these "key players" who know about how and why sports news is selected "carries with it a high degree of credibility" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 189).

3.5.6 The interview questions

Based on the findings of the content analysis (see Chapter 4) and research in the field (see Chapter 2), the following questions were put to the sports journalists and editors. They were asked to describe their work routines, professional ideologies and the manufacture of sports news.

1. From the potential sports stories on a typical day, how do you make decisions about what to cover (the attributes of sports news stories/sports news criteria)?
2. What other criteria play a role in sports news selection?
3. Who makes the decisions about what to cover? What is your role in that process?
4. What sorts of attributes get a story online? In the top spot?
5. What role do you believe sports news plays in the lives of your readers/listeners/viewers?
6. Generally, what type of feedback on your stories have you received from your audience?
7. When you cover sports, who do you imagine you're writing for?
8. What do you think interests your sports audiences? What gives you that impression?
9. What kind of interaction do you have with your editor/staff in terms of covering stories?
10. How does the ... [participant's organisation] approach covering sports at home compared with international competitions such as the Olympic Games? What do you do differently?
11. Research in other countries has shown that the sports media give women substantially less coverage than men. Do you think the same applies to ... [your country]? Why is that the case?
12. How do you account for the greater coverage of women's sports during the Olympic Games than at other times?
13. What initiatives can you suggest that would support better/increased media coverage of women's sports?
14. Some research suggests that a journalist's/editor's gender influences the sports they decide to cover/assign their reporters to cover. How would you respond to that suggestion?

Data relating to personal and professional attributes was gathered at the end of the interview:

15. The interviewee's job title
16. Age
17. Gender
18. Country of birth
19. Income range
20. Level of education
21. Years of experience as a sports journalist/editor

Follow-up or probe questions were asked according to the answers given. For example, respondents referred to various criteria for selecting sports news. My questions then explored the boundaries of each criterion mentioned. If a respondent said she or he chose to cover stories of interest to the public, I probed at this early stage – even though interest is the topic of questions later in the rundown. The probes explored who the public consists of, how the

participant knows what interests the public (the audience) and the role the participant thinks she or he plays in creating interest.

I also shared the major results of my content analysis with the respondents and asked them to react to and account for those results using the news criteria they had mentioned. However, in order to avoid any perception by the respondents that I had preconceived ideas about their professional practices because of my focus on their organisation, and thus avoid defensiveness in their answers, my question (in all but the one case, as previously described) alluded to research in general terms rather than to my research and their organisation specifically. The final section of seven questions was designed to elicit the participant's personal information, job description and history in her/his own words.

3.6 Data analysis – coding the interviews

Throughout the interview process, I made handwritten notes of my general and specific thoughts (Creswell, 2009) to which I referred during the coding process. This helped me to compare the tone and sense of the information obtained (while the interviews were in progress) with their subsequent, transcribed versions when I was compiling the list of topics from my reading of the transcripts. Transcribing the interviews was a laborious but valuable part of the research. The process allowed me to get “‘close to the data’ ... [bringing] the talk to life again” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 275).

I analysed the transcripts following Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of a thematic analysis, which has previously been used in research on women's sports media consumption (Whiteside & Hardin, 2008). As a method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data”, thematic analysis can (minimally) organise and describe a data set but also go further to interpret various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In conducting this applied research, I have been concerned with using the knowledge acquired to contribute directly to the wider understanding of a contemporary issue – the sports media's differential treatment of female and male athletes and the factors or influences that underlie such coverage – while acknowledging that the findings cannot be generalised to individuals, sites or places outside of those under study (Creswell, 2009). A theoretical thematic analysis requires engagement with the literature prior to analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once I had familiarised myself with the data, by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and reviewing my notes, I returned to the transcripts and manually coded the text paying attention to the themes identified in previous research on gender and mediasport. The analysis produced five themes based on previous literature and common sense, process and activity terms (Creswell, 2009) in sports journalism: sports news decision-making, attributes of sports news, the audience,

coverage and improvement, and initiatives. The codes generated were then analysed using the theoretical framework of masculine hegemony (in the context of previous literature on gender and sport in the media) as the instrument for interpretation.

I chose manual coding, even though it is time-consuming, because some commentators have suggested that the use of software packages “can distance the researcher from the data” (Amis, 2005, p. 130). I used colour coding on hard copies of the transcripts. Then, I duplicated this coding electronically, using simple copy and paste word processing to transfer text into electronic note cards. Amis (2003) cautions researchers about the inherent biases that they bring to the research site. In order to provide a check against some bias contaminating my analysis and to increase the credibility of my findings, I sought a peer debriefing (Amis, 2005; Creswell, 2009). A colleague who was a “disinterested peer” with no direct involvement in the research was given an explanation of the data collection process, and was asked to question my potential biases as a researcher, the logic of the research process and my subsequent conclusions. He did not identify any instances of data collection bias. After considering the rationale, he endorsed my decision to explore data garnered from the interviews using quantitative measures. To enable a comparison – between the journalists’ perceptions about and explanations for their lead story choices and the results from my content analysis of the 2008 Games – I entered the number and proportion of lead stories on the websites into tables and linked them to charts (see Appendix E). As discussed in Chapter 5, they show some discrepancies between the journalists’ recollections and their observed practice. I also applied member checking. Once writing was well underway, I had short, follow-up email and telephone conversations with an interviewee from each of the three broadcasters in which I cross-checked the accuracy of my accounts in Chapter 5 about the structure and hierarchy of their newsroom operations.

3.7 Summary

The mixed methods approach used in this study, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative research procedures, has been selected to examine sports coverage (the product) and sports news decision-making (the process) by three national public broadcasters and to explore the two research questions identified in Chapter 1. RQ1, relating to the extent and nature of gendered sports coverage, is explored through a content analysis of 2008 Olympic Games sports bulletins on each broadcaster. RQ2, which focuses on the context of sports news production, is addressed through interviews with editorial decision-makers from each organisation. Content analysis and, to a lesser extent, interviews with sports journalists are approaches that have been used separately in research into sports journalism. Adopting a mixed methods approach of content analysis and interviews to examine gendered coverage in online sports journalism augments the overall strength of the study (Creswell, 2009). The goal of this approach is to find out what

characterises and what drives gendered sports coverage on three websites and whether there are differences among the online sports news providers. Chapters 4 and 5 present the research findings. Chapter 4 details and discusses the results of the content analysis. The interviews with sports editors and journalists are presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 Results and discussion: The content analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the content analysis of coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games on the dedicated online sites of three national public broadcasters: the ABC, BBC and CBC. Olympic sports stories and photographs published on each site from August 7, 2008 to August 24, 2008 inclusive were sampled three times daily between 12pm and 4pm AEST, 4pm and 8pm AEST, and 8pm and 12am AEST. All were examined for the substance and form of their manifest content.

The two main characteristics under investigation are expressed in the first research question examining the framing of coverage by gender (both in its level and nature). Definitions of these criteria, their sub-questions and the precedent in sports journalism research for their selection and application appear in Chapter 2. The stages of the content analysis and the rationale for using it as part of a mixed methods study are provided in Chapter 3. Sports stories are defined as those reports whose topics or themes are contests, achievements or issues affecting individual Olympic athletes or teams. Sports photographs are those images featuring Olympic athletes and illustrating sports stories or blogs. Content analysis has been employed in this study to examine whether female and male athletes receive differential coverage collectively and on the individual online sites of the three public broadcasters.

In this chapter, the results of the content analysis for each characteristic are reported in sections 4.2 and 4.3. The whole of coverage or total result for the three broadcasters is presented first, followed by the individual results for each broadcaster. Then, the findings in relation to research question 1 are discussed in section 4.4. Chapter 5 reports on the interviews with sports journalism personnel that explore what drives the level and nature of sports coverage by each news organisation (RQ2).

4.2 Recognition: Levels of coverage⁴⁷

4.2.1 Number of stories

In all, 1337 Olympic Games sports stories from the T1 story summaries and the T2 main reports linked to them were categorised and counted across the three websites. Five stories about mixed gender teams were excluded from the sample. Female athletes featured in 568 stories whereas male athletes received 769 stories. The distribution of stories by gender for the three sites is

⁴⁷ Note: As indicated earlier, the combined total (for the three broadcasters) is reported first in each category, followed by the individual category total for each broadcaster.

shown in Table 4.1. Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of sports stories; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 30.22, p < .001$.⁴⁸

Table 4.1 Stories by gender of athletes on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Stories	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	568	42	769	58	1337	100

4.2.1a ABC stories

The ABC website yielded 464 stories. Of these, 216 were about female athletes and 248 stories featured male athletes. The distribution of stories by gender is shown in Table 4.2. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant difference between women and men in terms of the number of stories written about them; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 2.21, p = 0.14$.

Table 4.2 Stories by gender of athletes on the ABC

Stories	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	216	47	248	53	464	100

4.2.1b BBC stories

Of the 456 stories published on the BBC site, sportswomen featured in 181 and sportsmen in 275, as shown in Table 4.3. Three stories, categorised as mixed gender, were not counted. Analysis revealed a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of sports stories; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 19.38, p < 0.001$.

Table 4.3 Stories by gender of athletes on the BBC

Stories	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	181	40	275	60	456	100

⁴⁸ If the calculated value of X^2 is smaller than the critical value of 3.841 ($df = 1, p = 0.05$), the difference is not significant for that given result; but if the calculated value is equal to or greater than the critical value of 3.841, the difference is significant. The result for sports stories by gender is $X^2_{.05}(1) = 30.22, p < .001$, where the calculated chi-square value at .05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom is 30.22, and the probability level (p) of obtaining a chi-square value this large by chance is less than .001. Directly below the chi-square result, a table shows the number of stories and their proportions by gender, and the total number of stories in the sample (Warner, 2007).

4.2.1c CBC stories

The CBC site published 417 stories about Olympic athletes. Female athletes featured in 171 stories and 246 were about male athletes. Two stories about mixed gender teams were categorised but not counted. The breakdown of stories by gender is shown in Table 4.4. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of men in terms of the number of stories about athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 13.49, p < 0.001$.

Table 4.4 Stories by gender of athletes on the CBC

Stories	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	171	41	246	59	417	100

4.2.2 Number of photographs

A total of 1432 sports photographs were published on the three websites. The greater number of photographs than stories in this sample reflects slight differences in the presentation of both text and images on the individual websites, and the categorising of data that took these differences into account and mirrored the system employed in previous studies of online sports reporting (Jones, 2004, p. 216; 2006). As outlined in Chapter 3, the lead “story” on the BBC, a live blog (also called rolling text commentary), was accompanied by a large photograph. While the BBC photographs that depicted athletes were categorised and counted by gender, the T1 live blog summaries and T2 main blogs they accompanied were not counted since they were written chronologically rather than in the traditional inverted pyramid format. On the CBC, all lead story photographs on the T1 page were categorised and counted twice – once for T1 categorical analysis and once for T2 main story photograph analysis. Photographs accompanying the lead, second and third stories on the ABC’s T1 page were also categorised and counted twice – for T1 and T2 analysis. In addition, a number of combined gender stories that were categorised as female (according to the gender of the first mentioned athlete) carried a photograph of a male athlete; the reverse was rarely the case.

On the three sites, female athletes appeared in 578 photographs and male athletes featured in 854 images. The distribution of images by gender can be seen in Table 4.5. Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of photographs; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 53.2, p < 0.001$.

Table 4.5 Photographs by gender of athletes on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Photographs	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	578	40	854	60	1432	100

4.2.2a ABC photographs

The ABC published 400 photographs. One image, of the Australian equestrian eventing team, was categorised as mixed gender and was not counted. Photographs accompanied the first three story summaries on the site's T1 page. The distribution of images by location can be seen in Table 4.6 which displays the coverage given to male and female athletes. Men received 228 photographs and women featured in 172 images. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of sports photographs on the ABC; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 7.84$, $p = 0.01$.

Table 4.6 Photographs by gender of athletes on the ABC

Photograph location	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
T1 lead photograph	23	6	24	6	47	12
T1 #2 photograph	14	4	28	7	42	11
T1 #3 photograph	21	5	23	6	44	11
T2 photographs	114	29	153	38	267	67
Total	172	43	228	57	400	100

* Note: Percentages may not add up to the total due to rounding.

4.2.2b BBC photographs

The 603 photographs published on the BBC website do not include two photographs from the badminton competition, featuring athletes of mixed gender. Photographs accompanied the first three story summaries on the T1 page. The distribution of photographs by gender and location is shown in Table 4.7. Chi-square analysis showed a highly significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of sports photographs on the site (372 photographs of men to 231 of women); $X^2_{.05}(1) = 32.97$, $p = 1$.

Table 4.7 Photographs by gender of athletes on the BBC

Photograph location	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
T1 lead photograph	13	2	36	6	49	8
T1 #2 photograph	17	3	30	5	47	8
T1 #3 photograph	25	4	24	4	49	8
T2 photographs	176	29	282	47	458	76
Total	231	38	372	62	603	100

4.2.2c CBC photographs

A total of 429 photographs from the CBC site were analysed. Two mixed gender team photographs, in badminton and the equestrian events, were not included in the sample. Only the lead story summary on the site's T1 page was accompanied by a photograph. As shown in Table 4.8, sportswomen received 175 images and men appeared in 254 photographs. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of sports photographs on the CBC website; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 14.55, p < 0.001$.

Table 4.8 Photographs by gender of athletes on the CBC

Photograph location	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
T1 lead photograph	16	4	27	6	43	10
T2 photographs	159	37	227	53	386	90
Total	175	41	254	59	429	100

4.2.3 Story placement

The three websites carried 141 lead story summaries. Of these, 56 were about sportswomen and 85 were about men, as shown in Table 4.9. Chi-square analysis showed a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of lead story summaries on the three websites; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 5.97, p = 0.02$.

Table 4.9 Lead story summaries by gender on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Lead summary	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	56	40	85	60	141	100

4.2.3a ABC lead story summaries

The ABC published 47 lead story summaries. As Table 4.10 shows, sportswomen featured in 23 summaries and there were 24 summaries about sportsmen. There was no difference statistically between female and male athletes as the subjects of lead story summaries on the ABC site; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.02, p = 0.89$.

Table 4.10 Lead story summaries by gender on the ABC

Lead summary	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	23	49	24	51	47	100

4.2.3b BBC lead story summaries

Of the 46 lead story summaries published by the BBC, 16 were about women and 30 were about men. These results are reported in Table 4.11. Chi-square analysis showed a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of lead story summaries on the BBC site; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 4.26, p = 0.04$.

Table 4.11 Lead story summaries by gender on the BBC

Lead summary	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	16	35	30	65	46	100

4.2.3c CBC lead story summaries

Female athletes received 17 of the 48 lead story summaries on the CBC's T1 page. Male athletes featured in 31 summaries. These results are shown in Table 4.12. Chi-square analysis showed a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of lead story summaries on the CBC site; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 4.08, p = 0.04$.

Table 4.12 Lead story summaries by gender on the CBC

Lead summary	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	17	35	31	65	48	100

4.2.4 Sports by gender-appropriateness (T2 stories)

Across the ABC, BBC and CBC websites, the 1337 stories about female and male Olympians featured contests in 34 different sports. The most coverage went to sports categorised as male-

appropriate, where 19 sports generated 772 stories. Eight sports categorised as female-appropriate yielded 409 stories. Gender-neutral sports yielded 156 stories about seven sports. Table 4.13 reports the coverage of sports by their sex-type.

Table 4.13 Sports coverage (stories) by gender-appropriateness on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Sport*	Female-appropriate		Male-appropriate		Gender-neutral		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Swimming	266	19.90					266	19.90
Tennis	47	3.52					47	3.52
Diving	42	3.1					42	3.1
Gymnastics	34	2.54					34	2.54
Trampoline	11	0.82					11	0.82
Table tennis	4	0.30					4	0.30
Sync swim	3	0.22					3	0.22
Rhythmic gym	2	0.15					2	0.15
Athletics			217	16.23			217	16.23
Cycling			97	7.26			97	7.26
Canoe/kayak			59	4.41			59	4.41
Basketball			57	4.26			57	4.26
Rowing			57	4.26			57	4.26
Soccer			52	3.89			52	3.89
Boxing			47	3.52			47	3.52
Hockey			37	2.77			37	2.77
Softball			22	1.65			22	1.65
Taekwondo			19	1.42			19	1.42
Water polo			18	1.35			18	1.35
Archery			16	1.20			16	1.20
Triathlon			15	1.12			15	1.12
Baseball			12	0.90			12	0.90
Judo			12	0.90			12	0.90
Wrestling			12	0.90			12	0.90
Weightlifting			10	0.75			10	0.75
Fencing			9	0.67			9	0.67
Handball			4	0.30			4	0.30
Sailing					51	3.81	51	3.81

Beach vball			36	2.69	36	2.69
Shooting			28	2.09	28	2.09
Equestrian			16	1.20	16	1.20
Volleyball			12	0.90	12	0.90
Mod			7	0.52	7	0.52
pentathlon						
Badminton			6	0.45	6	0.45
Total n	409	772	156		1337	
Total %		30.59	57.74		11.67	100
Mean	51.13	40.63	22.29		39.32	
SD	88.74	49.26	16.78		56.05	

* Note: Sports classified in the above and following tables are named according to the Olympic movement's conventions (see <http://www.olympic.org/sports>) and are those that featured in the sampled bulletins only.

On the three sites, 568 stories from 32 different sports were published about female athletes. By far the most coverage went to 17 sports that were categorised as male-appropriate. These received 315 stories. A total of 181 stories were written about women competing in eight sports categorised as female-appropriate. Gender-neutral sports contested by women yielded 72 stories.

From Kruskal-Wallis H testing it appears the coverage of female athletes was statistically equal with regard to "appropriateness" (that is, there was no difference in the distributions); $H = 0.73$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.69$.⁴⁹ The mean ranks for appropriateness suggest male-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score (17.8), female-appropriate sports were next with a coverage score of 15.2 and neutral sports recorded a score of 14.8. Table 4.14 shows the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for female stories on the three sites.

⁴⁹ The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a distribution-free, one-way analysis of variance test based on ranks (Lowry, 2010; Pagano, 1990). Observations in the combined sample of stories by sex-type are listed and ranked in order of magnitude from smallest to largest. If the H statistic is greater than or equal to 5.99, it can be concluded that there is a difference among the population distributions for male-appropriate, female-appropriate and gender neutral sports. Pagano (1990, p. 422) has cautioned that the strongest statement that can be made is that the number of stories "is not equal" with regard to "appropriateness". If H is less than 5.99, there is no difference in the population distributions.

Table 4.14 Kruskal-Wallis H for female sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Handball	1	Male	1.5		1.5	
Table tennis	1	Female	1.5	1.5		
Rhythmic gym	2	Female	3	3		
Equestrian	3	Neutral	4.5			4.5
Sync swimming	3	Female	4.5	4.5		
Judo	4	Male	6		6	
Fencing	5	Male	7		7	
Badminton	6	Neutral	9			9
Triathlon	6	Male	9		9	
Volleyball	6	Neutral	9			9
Archery	7	Male	12		12	
Canoe/kayak	7	Male	12		12	
Modern pen	7	Neutral	12			12
Trampoline	9	Female	15	15		
Water polo	9	Male	15		15	
Wrestling	9	Male	15		15	
Weightlifting	10	Male	17		17	
Shooting	13	Neutral	18.5			18.5
Taekwondo	13	Male	18.5		18.5	
Diving	14	Female	21	21		
Rowing	14	Male	21		21	
Tennis	14	Female	21	21		
Gymnastics	16	Female	23.5	23.5		
Sailing	16	Neutral	23.5			23.5
Soccer	19	Male	25		25	
Hockey	20	Male	26		26	
Beach vball	21	Neutral	27			27
Softball	22	Male	28		28	
Basketball	25	Male	29		29	
Cycling	53	Male	30		30	
Athletics	91	Male	31		31	

Swimming	122	Female	32	32
		T_i	121.5	303
		n_i	8	17
		Mean rank	15.2	17.8
			14.8	

The 769 stories published about male athletes on the three sites highlighted 28 sports. The most frequently reported sports were those categorised as male-appropriate. Seventeen of these sports received 457 stories. A total of 228 stories were written about six sports categorised as female-appropriate. A total of five gender-neutral sports contested by men were reported in 84 stories.

Kruskal-Wallis H testing shows there was no difference in the distributions by a sport's sex-type. The coverage of male athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness; $H = 0.01$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.99$. The mean ranks for appropriateness suggest male-appropriate and female-appropriate sports received equal scores (14.6). Neutral sports recorded a score of 14.1. Table 4.15 shows the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for male sports stories on the three websites.

Table 4.15 Kruskal-Wallis H for male sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Trampoline	2	Female	1	1		
Handball	3	Male	3		3	
Table tennis	3	Female	3	3		
Wrestling	3	Male	3		3	
Fencing	4	Male	5		5	
Taekwondo	6	Male	6.5		6.5	
Volleyball	6	Neutral	6.5			6.5
Judo	8	Male	8		8	
Archery	9	Male	10		10	
Triathlon	9	Male	10		10	
Water polo	9	Male	10		10	
Baseball	12	Male	12		12	
Equestrian	13	Neutral	13			13
Beach vball	15	Neutral	14.5			14.5

Shooting	15	Neutral	14.5		14.5
Hockey	17	Male	16	16	
Gymnastics	18	Female	17	17	
Diving	28	Female	18	18	
Basketball	32	Male	19	19	
Soccer	33	Male	20.5	20.5	
Tennis	33	Female	20.5	20.5	
Sailing	35	Neutral	22		22
Rowing	43	Male	23	23	
Cycling	44	Male	24	24	
Boxing	47	Male	25	25	
Canoe/kayak	52	Male	26	26	
Athletics	126	Male	27	27	
Swimming	144	Female	28	28	
		T_i	87.5	248	70.5
		n_i	6	17	5
		Mean rank	14.6	14.6	14.1

4.2.4a ABC coverage of gender-appropriate sports

In all, 464 stories were published on the ABC. They featured 29 different sports. Table 4.16 shows that the most stories were written about male-appropriate sports. It reports on the number of stories written about each sport according to its sex-type.

Table 4.16 Sports coverage (stories) by gender-appropriateness on the ABC

Sport	Female-appropriate		Male-appropriate		Gender-neutral		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Swimming	110	23.71					110	23.71
Tennis	18	3.88					18	3.88
Diving	15	3.23					15	3.23
Gymnastics	6	1.29					6	1.29
Rhythmic gym	1	0.22					1	0.22
Table tennis	1	0.22					1	0.22
Athletics			72	15.52			72	15.52
Basketball			44	9.48			44	9.48
Cycling			30	6.47			30	6.47

Rowing	22	4.74	22	4.74	
Hockey	21	4.53	21	4.53	
Water polo	17	3.66	17	3.66	
Canoe/kayak	17	3.66	17	3.66	
Soccer	13	2.80	13	2.80	
Softball	10	2.16	10	2.16	
Triathlon	6	1.29	6	1.29	
Judo	5	1.08	5	1.08	
Taekwondo	4	0.86	4	0.86	
Weightlifting	2	0.43	2	0.43	
Boxing	1	0.22	1	0.22	
Fencing	1	0.22	1	0.22	
Handball	1	0.22	1	0.22	
Sailing		13	2.80	13	2.80
Beach vball		12	2.59	12	2.59
Shooting		9	1.94	9	1.94
Mod		5	1.08	5	1.08
pentathlon					
Volleyball		4	0.86	4	0.86
Equestrian		3	0.65	3	0.65
Badminton		1	0.22	1	0.22
Total n	151	266	47	464	
Total %	32.54	57.33	10.13		100
Mean	25.17	16.63	6.71	16.00	
SD	42.16	19.07	4.64	23.59	

ABC bulletins carried 216 stories about 26 Olympic sports contested by female athletes. The leading sex-typed sports were those categorised as male-appropriate. They yielded 116 stories. A total of 76 stories were written about six female-appropriate sports. Gender-neutral sports contested by women generated 24 stories.

Kruskal-Wallis H analysis shows no difference in the distributions by sex-type. The coverage of female athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness; $H = 2.99$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.22$. The mean ranks for appropriateness suggest male-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score (15.8), female-appropriate sports were next with a coverage score of 13

and the lowest score was recorded by neutral sports (9.6). Table 4.17 presents the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for female stories.

Table 4.17 Kruskal-Wallis H for female sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the ABC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Badminton	1	Neutral	3.5			3.5
Equestrian	1	Neutral	3.5			3.5
Rhythmic gym	1	Female	3.5	3.5		
Shooting	1	Neutral	3.5			3.5
Soccer	1	Male	3.5		3.5	
Table tennis	1	Female	3.5	3.5		
Taekwondo	2	Male	8		8	
Volleyball	2	Neutral	8			8
Weightlifting	2	Male	8		8	
Judo	3	Male	10.5		10.5	
Triathlon	3	Male	10.5		10.5	
Gymnastics	4	Female	12	12		
Mod pentathlon	5	Neutral	13.5			13.5
Rowing	5	Male	13.5		13.5	
Canoe/kayak	6	Male	16.5		16.5	
Diving	6	Female	16.5	16.5		
Sailing	6	Neutral	16.5			16.5
Tennis	6	Female	16.5	16.5		
Beach vball	8	Neutral	19			19
Water polo	9	Male	20		20	
Softball	10	Male	21		21	
Hockey	12	Male	22		22	
Cycling	14	Male	23		23	
Basketball	21	Male	24		24	
Athletics	28	Male	25		25	
Swimming	58	Female	26	26		
T_i				78	205.5	67.5
n_i				6	13	7

Mean rank	13	15.8	9.6
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The ABC reported on 23 Olympic sports contested by male athletes in 248 stories. Male-appropriate sports received the most coverage with 147 stories. A total of 75 stories were written about four female-appropriate sports. Six sports categorised as gender-neutral provided 26 stories.

From Kruskal-Wallis H testing it appears there was no difference in distribution by sex-type. The coverage of male athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness; $H = 1.58$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.45$. The mean ranks for appropriateness suggest female-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score (15). Male-appropriate sports were next on 12.1 and neutral sports scored 9.3. Table 4.18 presents the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for male stories.

Table 4.18 Kruskal-Wallis H for male sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the ABC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Boxing	1	Male	2		2	
Fencing	1	Male	2		2	
Handball	1	Male	2		2	
Equestrian	2	Neutral	6			6
Gymnastics	2	Female	6	6		
Judo	2	Male	6		6	
Taekwondo	2	Male	6		6	
Volleyball	2	Neutral	6			6
Triathlon	3	Male	9		9	
Beach vball	4	Neutral	10			10
Sailing	7	Neutral	11			11
Diving	8	Female	13.5	13.5		
Hockey	8	Male	13.5		13.5	
Shooting	8	Neutral	13.5			13.5
Water polo	8	Male	13.5		13.5	
Canoe/kayak	11	Male	16		16	
Soccer	12	Male	17.5		17.5	

Tennis	12	Female	17.5	17.5	
Cycling	16	Male	19		19
Rowing	17	Male	20		20
Basketball	23	Male	21		21
Athletics	44	Male	22		22
Swimming	52	Female	23	23	
T_i			60	169.5	46.5
n_i			4	14	5
Mean rank			15	12.1	9.3

4.2.4b BBC coverage of gender-appropriate sports

Twenty nine sports were featured in 456 stories on the BBC. More than half of these stories were about male-appropriate sports. Table 4.19 shows the coverage for each sport by sex-type.

Table 4.19 Sports coverage (stories) by gender-appropriateness on the BBC

Sport	Female-appropriate		Male-appropriate		Gender-neutral		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Swimming	100	21.93					100	21.93
Tennis	17	3.73					17	3.73
Diving	11	2.41					11	2.41
Gymnastics	9	1.97					9	1.97
Table tennis	2	0.44					2	0.44
Rhythmic gym	1	0.22					1	0.22
Athletics			90	19.74			90	19.74
Cycling			44	9.65			44	9.65
Boxing			37	8.11			37	8.11
Rowing			16	3.51			16	3.51
Hockey			14	3.07			14	3.07
Soccer			12	2.63			12	2.63
Canoe/kayak			11	2.41			11	2.41
Archery			8	1.75			8	1.75
Taekwondo			6	1.32			6	1.32
Triathlon			4	0.88			4	0.88
Basketball			3	0.66			3	0.66
Judo			3	0.66			3	0.66

Softball	2	0.44	2	0.44	
Weightlifting	2	0.44	2	0.44	
Baseball	1	0.22	1	0.22	
Fencing	1	0.22	1	0.22	
Sailing		34	7.46	34	7.46
Shooting		10	2.19	10	2.19
Beach vball		7	1.54	7	1.54
Equestrian		5	1.10	5	1.10
Badminton		2	0.44	2	0.44
Mod		2	0.44	2	0.44
pentathlon					
Volleyball		2	0.44	2	0.44
Total n	140	254	62	456	
Total %	30.70	55.70	13.60	100	
Mean	23.33	15.88	8.86		
SD	38.02	23.43	11.50	24.59	

The BBC reported on 24 Olympic sports contested by female athletes in 181 stories. By far the most coverage went to male-appropriate sports. Twelve male-appropriate sports were reported on in 94 stories. A total of 61 stories were written about five sports categorised as female-appropriate. Seven sports categorised as gender-neutral received 26 stories.

Kruskal-Wallis H analysis shows the coverage of female athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness (there was no difference in distribution); $H = 0.2$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.91$. The mean ranks for appropriateness suggest female-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score (13). Male-appropriate sports were next with a score of 12.9. Neutral sports scored 11.5. Table 4.20 displays the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for female stories.

Table 4.20 Kruskal-Wallis H for female sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the BBC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Diving	1	Female	3	3		
Fencing	1	Male	3		3	
Judo	1	Male	3		3	
Rhythmic gym	1	Female	3	3		
Volleyball	1	Neutral	3			3
Badminton	2	Neutral	8.5			8.5
Equestrian	2	Neutral	8.5			8.5
Mod pentathlon	2	Neutral	8.5			8.5
Softball	2	Male	8.5		8.5	
Triathlon	2	Male	8.5		8.5	
Weightlifting	2	Male	8.5		8.5	
Beach vball	3	Neutral	13.5			13.5
Rowing	3	Male	13.5		13.5	
Soccer	3	Male	13.5		13.5	
Taekwondo	3	Male	13.5		13.5	
Tennis	5	Female	16	16		
Archery	6	Male	17.5		17.5	
Shooting	6	Neutral	17.5			17.5
Gymnastics	7	Female	19	19		
Hockey	8	Male	20		20	
Sailing	10	Neutral	21			21
Cycling	21	Male	22		22	
Athletics	42	Male	23		23	
Swimming	47	Female	24	24		
T_i				65	154.5	77.5
n_i				5	12	7
Mean rank				13	12.9	11.5

The BBC reported on 23 Olympic sports contested by male athletes in 275 stories. The majority of the stories were about male-appropriate sports. There were 160 stories about men competing

in the 13 sports categorised as male-appropriate. A total of 79 stories were written about five female-appropriate sports, with 36 stories about five gender-neutral sports.

Kruskal-Wallis H testing shows the coverage of male athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness; $H = 0.3$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.86$. The mean ranks for appropriateness suggest female-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score of 13, followed by male-appropriate sports with a score of 12.1, and neutral sports in third place on a score of 10.7. Table 4.21 shows the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for male stories.

Table 4.21 Kruskal-Wallis H for male sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the BBC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Baseball	1	Male	1.5		1.5	
Volleyball	1	Neutral	1.5			1.5
Archery	2	Male	5		5	
Gymnastics	2	Female	5	5		
Judo	2	Male	5		5	
Table tennis	2	Female	5	5		
Triathlon	2	Male	5		5	
Basketball	3	Male	9		9	
Equestrian	3	Neutral	9			9
Taekwondo	3	Male	9		9	
Beach vball	4	Neutral	11.5			11.5
Shooting	4	Neutral	11.5			11.5
Hockey	6	Male	13		13	
Soccer	9	Male	14		14	
Diving	10	Female	15	15		
Canoe/kayak	11	Male	16		16	
Tennis	12	Female	17	17		
Rowing	13	Male	18		18	
Cycling	23	Male	19		19	
Sailing	24	Neutral	20			20
Boxing	37	Male	21		21	
Athletics	48	Male	22		22	

Swimming	53	Female	23	23
		T_i	65	157.5
		n_i	5	13
		Mean rank	13	12.1
				53.5
				5
				10.7

4.2.4c CBC coverage of gender-appropriate sports

The CBC reported on 32 different sports in its 417 stories about Olympic events. Male-appropriate sports received the most attention. Table 4.22 shows the coverage for each sport by sex-type.

Table 4.22 Sports coverage (stories) by gender-appropriateness on the CBC

Sport	Female-appropriate		Male-appropriate		Gender-neutral		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Swimming	56	13.43					56	13.43
Gymnastics	19	4.56					19	4.56
Diving	16	3.84					16	3.84
Tennis	12	2.88					12	2.88
Trampoline	11	2.64					11	2.64
Sync swim	3	0.72					3	0.72
Table tennis	1	0.24					1	0.24
Athletics			55	13.19			55	13.19
Canoe/kayak			31	7.43			31	7.43
Soccer			27	6.47			27	6.47
Cycling			23	5.52			23	5.52
Rowing			19	4.56			19	4.56
Wrestling			12	2.88			12	2.88
Baseball			11	2.64			11	2.64
Basketball			10	2.40			10	2.40
Softball			10	2.40			10	2.40
Boxing			9	2.16			9	2.16
Taekwondo			9	2.16			9	2.16
Archery			8	1.92			8	1.92
Fencing			7	1.68			7	1.68
Weightlifting			6	1.44			6	1.44
Triathlon			5	1.20			5	1.20

Judo		4	0.96		4	0.96	
Handball		3	0.72		3	0.72	
Hockey		2	0.48		2	0.48	
Water polo		1	0.24		1	0.24	
Beach vball				17	4.08	17	4.08
Shooting				9	2.16	9	2.16
Equestrian				8	1.92	8	1.92
Volleyball				6	1.44	6	1.44
Sailing				4	0.96	4	0.96
Badminton				3	0.72	3	0.72
<hr/>							
Total n	118		252		47		417
Total %		28.30		60.43		11.27	100.00
Mean	16.86		13.26		7.83		13.03
SD	18.43		13.11		5.04		13.35

The CBC reported on women's contests in 24 sports, publishing 171 stories. The most coverage was devoted to male-appropriate sports (14 sports yielded 105 stories). A total of 44 stories reported on six female-appropriate sports. Four neutral sports received 22 stories.

Kruskal-Wallis H analysis shows no difference in distribution by sex-type. The coverage of female athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness; $H = 0.14$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.93$. An inspection of the mean ranks for appropriateness suggests female-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score of 13.1, followed by male-appropriate sports on 12.6. Neutral sports recorded the lowest score of 11.4. Table 4.23 shows the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for female stories.

Table 4.23 Kruskal-Wallis H for female sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the CBC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Archery	1	Male	2.5		2.5	
Canoe/kayak	1	Male	2.5		2.5	
Handball	1	Male	2.5		2.5	
Triathlon	1	Male	2.5		2.5	
Badminton	3	Neutral	6.5			6.5

Sync swimming	3	Female	6.5	6.5	
Tennis	3	Female	6.5	6.5	
Volleyball	3	Neutral	6.5		6.5
Basketball	4	Male	9.5	9.5	
Fencing	4	Male	9.5	9.5	
Gymnastics	5	Female	11	11	
Rowing	6	Male	13	13	
Shooting	6	Neutral	13		13
Weightlifting	6	Male	13	13	
Diving	7	Female	15	15	
Taekwondo	8	Male	16	16	
Trampoline	9	Female	17.5	17.5	
Wrestling	9	Male	17.5	17.5	
Beach vball	10	Neutral	19.5		19.5
Softball	10	Male	19.5	19.5	
Soccer	15	Male	21	21	
Swimming	17	Female	22	22	
Cycling	18	Male	23	23	
Athletics	21	Male	24	24	
T_i			78.5	176	45.5
n_i			6	14	4
Mean rank			13.1	12.6	11.4

The CBC reported on 28 Olympic sports contested by male athletes in 246 stories. The majority of stories were about male-appropriate sports (17 sports received 147 stories). A total of 74 stories were written about six female-appropriate sports. Only 25 stories were published about five neutral sports.

Kruskal-Wallis H testing shows the coverage of male athletes was statistically equal with regard to appropriateness; $H = 0.67$, $X^2_{.05}(2) = 5.99$, $p = 0.72$. An inspection of the mean ranks for appropriateness suggests female-appropriate sports received the highest coverage score of 16.8. Male-appropriate sports were next with a score of 14.4, followed by neutral sports on 12.7. Table 4.24 displays the analysis of variance by ranks for gender-appropriateness for male stories.

Table 4.24 Kruskal-Wallis H for male sports coverage by gender-appropriateness on the CBC

Sport	Sport score	Gender-approp.	Rank	Ranks assigned to female-approp. $i = 1$	Ranks assigned to male-approp. $i = 2$	Ranks assigned to gender-neutral $i = 3$
Table tennis	1	Female	2	2		
Taekwondo	1	Male	2		2	
Water polo	1	Male	2		2	
Handball	2	Male	5		5	
Hockey	2	Male	5		5	
Trampoline	2	Female	5	5		
Fencing	3	Male	8.5		8.5	
Shooting	3	Neutral	8.5			8.5
Volleyball	3	Neutral	8.5			8.5
Wrestling	3	Male	8.5		8.5	
Judo	4	Male	12		12	
Sailing	4	Neutral	12			12
Triathlon	4	Male	12		12	
Cycling	5	Male	14		14	
Basketball	6	Male	15		15	
Archery	7	Male	16.5		16.5	
Beach vball	7	Neutral	16.5			16.5
Equestrian	8	Neutral	18			18
Boxing	9	Male	20		20	
Diving	9	Female	20	20		
Tennis	9	Female	20	20		
Baseball	11	Male	22		22	
Soccer	12	Male	23		23	
Rowing	13	Male	24		24	
Gymnastics	14	Female	25	25		
Canoe/kayak	30	Male	26		26	
Athletics	34	Male	27		27	
Swimming	39	Female	28	28		
		T_i		100	242.5	63.5
		n_i		6	17	5
		Mean rank		16.7	14.3	12.7

4.2.5 Coverage compared with medal tallies (stories and photographs)

A “representation ratio” was computed to compare the number of stories about female and male athletes and the number of photographs of female and male athletes on the ABC, BBC and CBC with the number of medals won by gender for Australia, Great Britain and Canada respectively. The results for each broadcaster are reported below.

4.2.5a ABC coverage compared with medal tallies (stories and photographs)

Australia won 46 medals at the Beijing Olympics. Of these, 23 went to female athletes who received 216 stories and 172 photographs. Male athletes won 22 medals and received 248 stories and 228 photographs. One medal was won by a mixed gender team but, as noted earlier, no stories or photographs featuring mixed gender teams were counted. Female athletes were under-reported relative to men in stories and photographs compared with medal tallies by gender.⁵⁰ Tables 4.25 and 4.26 report the results.

Table 4.25 Comparison of ABC coverage in stories with Australian athletes’ medals won percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of stories	Percentage of medals*	Representation ratio
Female	47	51	0.92
Male	53	49	1.08
Total	100	100	
Total stories	464		

* Based on 45 medals won by female and male athletes only; does not include mixed gender team’s medal.

Table 4.26 Comparison of ABC coverage in photographs with Australian athletes’ medals won percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of photos	Percentage of medals*	Representation ratio
Female	43	51	0.84
Male	57	49	1.16
Total	100	100	
Total photos	400		

⁵⁰ The representation ratio was calculated by dividing the proportion of coverage by gender by the proportion of national medals won by gender. A ratio below 1.00 indicates under-reporting. On the ABC, female athletes received 92 per cent of the stories and 84 per cent of the photographic coverage they warranted based on medals won by Australian sportswomen.

* Based on 45 medals won by female and male athletes only; does not include mixed gender team's medal.

4.2.5b BBC coverage compared with medal tallies (stories and photographs)

Great Britain won 47 medals in 2008. Of these, female athletes won 19, male athletes won 27 and a mixed gender team won one medal. The latter result was not counted in story or photograph tallies by gender. Female athletes were under-reported relative to male athletes in terms of stories and photographic coverage compared with medal tallies by gender. These results are reported in Tables 4.27 and 4.28.

Table 4.27 Comparison of BBC coverage in stories with Great Britain athletes' medals won percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of stories	Percentage of medals*	Representation ratio
Female	40	41	0.98
Male	60	59	1.02
Total	100	100	
Total stories	456		

* Based on 46 medals won by female and male athletes only; does not include mixed gender team's medal.

Table 4.28 Comparison of BBC coverage in photographs with Great Britain athletes' medals won percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of photos	Percentage of medals*	Representation ratio
Female	38	41	0.93
Male	62	59	1.05
Total	100	100	
Total photos	603		

* Based on 46 medals won by female and male athletes only; does not include mixed gender team's medal.

4.2.5c CBC coverage compared with medal tallies (stories and photographs)

Canadian athletes won 18 Olympic medals in 2008. Seven were won by women, 10 by men and one by a mixed gender team. Coverage of mixed gender competitions and medal wins was categorised but not counted in story or photograph tallies. As shown below, the coverage

devoted to women and men was equitable. Tables 4.29 and 4.30 report the results of coverage by gender on the CBC compared with medal tallies by gender.

Table 4.29 Comparison of CBC coverage in stories with Canadian athletes' medals won percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of stories	Percentage of medals*	Representation ratio
Female	41	41	0.0
Male	59	59	0.0
Total	100	100	
Total stories	417		

* Based on 17 medals won by female and male athletes only; does not include mixed gender team's medal.

Table 4.30 Comparison of CBC coverage in photographs with Canadian athletes' medals won percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of photos	Percentage of medals*	Representation ratio
Female	41	41	0.0
Male	59	59	0.0
Total	100	100	
Total photos	429		

* Based on 17 medals won by female and male athletes only; does not include mixed gender team's medal.

4.2.6 Coverage compared with team by gender (stories and photographs)

A "representation ratio" was used to compare the number of stories and photographs about each gender with the number of female and male athletes in the Olympic teams from Australia, Great Britain and Canada. The results for each broadcaster are reported below.

4.2.6a ABC coverage compared with team by gender (stories and photographs)

Australia's 2008 Olympic team of 435 athletes consisted of 199 female and 236 male athletes (Australian Olympic Committee, 2008). Relative to male athletes, women were under-reported in stories and photographs compared with the gender of the Australian Olympic team. The results are shown in Tables 4.31 and 4.32.

Table 4.31 Comparison of ABC coverage in stories with Australian athlete population percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of stories	Percentage of team	Representation ratio
Female	47	46	1.02
Male	53	54	0.98
Total	100	100	
Total stories	400		

Table 4.32 Comparison of ABC coverage in photographs with Australian athlete population percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of photos	Percentage of team	Representation ratio
Female	43	46	0.93
Male	57	54	1.06
Total	100	100	
Total photos	400		

4.2.6b BBC coverage compared with team by gender (stories and photographs)

The Great Britain team consisted of 311 athletes – 143 women and 168 men (British Olympic Association, 2008). Women were under-reported relative to men in relation to stories and photographs compared with the gender of the GB Olympic team. Tables 4.33 and 4.34 report the results.

Table 4.33 Comparison of BBC coverage in stories with Great Britain's athlete population percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of stories	Percentage of team	Representation ratio
Female	40	46	0.87
Male	60	54	1.11
Total	100	100	
Total stories	456		

Table 4.34 Comparison of BBC coverage in photographs with Great Britain's athlete population percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of photos	Percentage of team	Representation ratio
Female	38	46	0.83
Male	62	54	1.15
Total	100	100	
Total photos	603		

4.2.6c CBC coverage compared with team by gender (stories and photographs)

Of the 332 athletes in Canada's Olympic team, 147 were women and 185 were men (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2008). Women were under-reported relative to men in terms of stories and photographs on the CBC compared with the Canadian team's gender. The results are shown in Tables 4.35 and 4.36.

Table 4.35 Comparison of CBC coverage in stories with Canada's athlete population percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of stories	Percentage of team	Representation ratio
Female	41	44	0.93
Male	59	56	1.05
Total	100	100	
Total stories	417		

Table 4.36 Comparison of CBC coverage in photographs with Canada's athlete population percentage and as representation ratio

Gender	Percentage of photos	Percentage of team	Representation ratio
Female	41	44	0.93
Male	59	56	1.05
Total	100	100	
Total photos	429		

4.3 Respect: Nature of coverage

4.3.1 Photographs: Active and passive depictions

Of the 1432 photographs of Olympic athletes published on the three websites, 281 framed women as active competitors and 297 depicted them in passive poses, whereas male athletes

were pictured competing in 355 images compared with 499 shots showing them as passive subjects. These results are shown in Table 4.37. Chi-square analysis shows there was a significant difference by context in favour of passive images of athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 17.88, p < .001$.

Table 4.37 Depictions of active and passive athletes by gender on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Photograph context	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Active	281	20	355	25	636	44
Passive	297	21	499	35	796	56
Total	578	40	854	60	1432	100

* Note: Percentages may not add up to the total due to rounding.

The contextual breakdown of the photographs of Olympic athletes on each of the three websites is presented below.

4.3.1a ABC active and passive depictions

On the ABC, female athletes were more likely to be shown as passive subjects than active competitors, with passive shots accounting for 58 per cent of all female images. There was a significant difference by context in favour of passive female athletes as the subjects of sports photographs; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 3.93, p = 0.05$. For men, passive images outnumbered action shots. Passive shots made up 58 per cent of male photographs, resulting in a significant difference in favour of passive depictions of men; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 6.33, p = 0.01$. Table 4.38 shows these results.

Table 4.38 Depictions of active and passive athletes by gender on the ABC

Photograph context	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Active	73	18	95	24	168	42
Passive	99	25	133	33	232	58
Total	172	43	228	57	400	100

4.3.1b BBC active and passive depictions

Of the 603 photographs on the BBC site, 84 framed female athletes as active competitors and 147 depicted them in passive poses. There was a significant difference by context in favour of images of passive female athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 17.18, p < .001$. Men were shown actively

competing in their sports in 138 photographs, compared with 234 photographs of them as passive subjects. There was a significant difference in favour of images of passive male athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 24.77, p < .001$. These results are shown in Table 4.39.

Table 4.39 Depictions of active and passive athletes by gender on the BBC

Photograph context	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Active	84	14	138	23	222	37
Passive	147	24	234	39	381	63
Total	231	38	372	62	603	100

4.3.1c CBC active and passive depictions

The CBC published 124 photographs of women competing in Olympic events, compared with 51 shots of them in passive poses. There was a statistically significant difference by context in favour of active female athletes as the subjects of photographs; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 30.45, p < .001$. Male athletes were shown more often as passive subjects (132 images) than as competitors in their sports (122 photographs), but the difference in the number of images of active and passive male athletes was not statistically significant; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.39, p = 0.53$. These results are shown in Table 4.40.

Table 4.40 Depictions of active and passive athletes by gender on the CBC

Photograph context	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Active	124	29	122	28	246	57
Passive	51	12	132	31	183	43
Total	175	41	254	59	429	100

4.3.2 Descriptive statements: Appearance, relationships, emotions, success/failure

In terms of the occurrence of the following themes, according to gender, on the ABC, BBC and CBC:

- (a) the appearance of athletes was mentioned 998 times, with women receiving fewer references (415) than men (583);
- (b) athletes' relationships were referred to 132 times, with twice as many mentions for women as men (90 for women, 42 for men);
- (c) of the 645 references to emotions, the most references concerned male athletes who received 371 mentions whereas female athletes received 274;

(d) 789 references to success were most often about men (458 references for men, 331 for women); whereas male athletes' failures were reported more frequently than female athletes' failures (147 times compared with 92 times).

Chi-square analysis found:

- (a) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of references to appearance on the three websites ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 28.28, p < .001$);
- (b) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of female athletes as the subjects of references to relationships ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 17.46, p < .001$);
- (c) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of references to emotions ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 14.59, p < .001$);
- (d) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of references to success ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 20.44, p < .001$); and there was a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of references to failure on the three websites ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 12.66, p < .001$). These results are reported in Table 4.41.

Table 4.41 Descriptive statements by gender on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Descriptor	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Appearance	415	42	583	58	998	100
Relationship	90	68	42	32	132	100
Emotions	274	42	371	58	645	100
Success	331	42	458	58	789	100
Failure	92	38	147	62	239	100

The frequency of occurrence by gender for each of these themes on the individual websites is presented below.

4.3.2a Appearance references on the ABC

Of 225 references to athletes' appearance, men received the most (117 references) compared with 108 about women. This result is reported in Table 4.42. Chi-square analysis shows there was no difference statistically in the number of references to appearance by gender; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.36, p = 0.55$.

Table 4.42 Appearance references by gender on the ABC

Appearance	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	108	48	117	52	225	100

4.3.2aa Appearance references on the BBC

The appearance of male athletes was mentioned 263 times in stories on the BBC, compared with 156 references to women's appearance. This information is presented in Table 4.43. Chi-square analysis shows there was a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of references to appearance; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 27.34, p < .001$.

Table 4.43 Appearance references by gender on the BBC

Appearance	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	156	37	263	63	419	100

4.3.2aaa Appearance references on the CBC

There were more references to male athletes' appearance on the CBC (203 mentions) than to female athletes' appearance (151 mentions). This information is presented in Table 4.44. Chi-square analysis shows there was a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of references to appearance; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 7.64, p = 0.006$.

Table 4.44 Appearance references by gender on the CBC

Appearance	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	151	43	203	57	354	100

4.3.2b Relationship references on the ABC

Athletes' relationships were referred to 32 times on the ABC. Of these, 24 references were about sportswomen and eight were about sportsmen. This result is shown in Table 4.45. There was a significant difference by gender in favour of female athletes as the subjects of references to relationships; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 8, p = 0.005$.

Table 4.45 Relationship references by gender on the ABC

Relationship	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	24	75	8	25	32	100

4.3.2bb Relationship references on the BBC

Of the 43 references to athletes' relationships on the BBC, 26 referred to sportswomen and 17 referred to male competitors. This information is presented in Table 4.46. There was a significant difference by gender in favour of sportswomen as the subjects of references to relationships; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 1.88, p = 0.17$.

Table 4.46 Relationship references by gender on the BBC

Relationship	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	26	60	17	40	43	100

4.3.2bbb Relationship references on the CBC

Female athletes' relationships were referred to 40 times on the CBC, whereas male athletes' relationships were mentioned 17 times. This information is presented in Table 4.47. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of female athletes as the subjects of references to relationships; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 9.28, p = 0.002$.

Table 4.47 Relationship references by gender on the CBC

Relationship	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	40	70	17	30	57	100

4.3.2c Emotions references on the ABC

A total of 70 references were made to athletes' emotions on the ABC. Of these, 40 referred to men's emotions and 30 to women's emotions. This information is shown in Table 4.48. Chi-square analysis shows there was no significant difference in the number of references to emotions by gender; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 1.43, p = 0.23$.

Table 4.48 Emotions references by gender on the ABC

	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Appearance						
Total	30	43	40	57	70	100

4.3.2cc Emotions references on the BBC

References to male athletes' emotions occurred 168 times in coverage on the BBC, compared with 134 references to female athletes' emotions. This information is presented in Table 4.49. Chi-square analysis shows there was no significant difference in the number of references to emotions by gender; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 3.83, p = 0.05$.

Table 4.49 Emotions references by gender on the BBC

	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Emotions						
Total	134	44	168	56	302	100

4.3.2ccc Emotions references on the CBC

Emotions were mentioned 273 times in CBC stories – 163 times they referred to male athletes and 110 times they referred to female athletes. This information is presented in Table 4.50. Chi-square analysis shows there was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of references to emotions; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 10.29, p = 0.001$.

Table 4.50 Emotions references by gender on the CBC

	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Emotions						
Total	110	40	163	60	273	100

4.3.2d Success and failure references on the ABC

Of the 111 mentions of athletes' success on the ABC, 64 were about sportsmen and 47 were about sportswomen. There were 16 references to men's failures compared with five references for women. These results are presented in Table 4.51 and Table 4.52. Chi-square analysis shows there was no difference statistically in the number of references to success by gender; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 2.6, p = 0.11$. However, there was a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of references to failure; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 5.76, p = 0.02$.

Table 4.51 Success references by gender on the ABC

Success	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	47	42	64	58	111	100

Table 4.52 Failure references by gender on the ABC

Failure	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	5	24	16	76	21	100

4.3.2dd Success and failure references on the BBC

Of the 147 success references on the BBC, the majority (107) referred to male athletes and 40 referred to female athletes' success. Men's failures were mentioned 48 times, whereas there were half as many references (23) to women's failures. This information is presented in Table 4.53 and Table 4.54. Chi-square analysis shows there was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of references to success; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 30.54, p < .001$. There was also a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of references to failure; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 8.8, p = 0.003$.

Table 4.53 Success references by gender on the BBC

Success	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	40	27	107	73	147	100

Table 4.54 Failure references by gender on the BBC

Failure	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	23	32	48	68	71	100

4.3.2ddd Success and failure references on the CBC

Sportsmen's successes were mentioned 287 times on the CBC, compared with 244 references for sportswomen. Men's failures were referred to 83 times compared with 64 mentions for women. This information is presented in Table 4.55 and Table 4.56. The difference by gender in the number of references to success was not statistically significant; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 3.48, p = 0.06$.

There was also no significant difference by gender in the number of references to failure; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 2.46, p = 0.12$.

Table 4.55 Success references by gender on the CBC

Success	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	244	46	287	54	531	100

Table 4.56 Failure references by gender on the CBC

Failure	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	64	43.5	83	56.5	147	100

4.3.3 Linguistic sexism: Hierarchical naming, martial metaphors, trivialising language, gender marking

The breakdown by gender of instances of hierarchical naming of athletes on the ABC, BBC and CBC was: (a) 5481 references to male athletes by their last name only, compared with 3273 references to female athletes by their last name only; (b) 267 references to men by their first name only, with 154 references to women by their first name only; and (c) 6101 references to men by their first and last name, compared with 3950 references to women by their first and last name. The number of instances of martial language used in association with each gender was: 649 for male athletes and 349 for female athletes. There were 32 instances where adult male athletes were described in trivialising terms, and 22 instances where adult female athletes received trivialising references. The breakdown of instances of gender marked sports was: 974 for men and 934 for women. These results are shown in Table 4.57.

Chi-square analysis found: (a) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of last name references on the three websites ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 556.92, p = 0$); (b) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of first name references ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 30.33, p < .001$); and (c) there was a significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of first and last name references by gender ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 460.33, p = 0$). The difference in the use of martial metaphors by gender in favour of male athletes was statistically significant ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 90.18, p = 0$). There was no significant difference by gender in the number of trivialising references ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 1.85, p = 0.17$). There was also no difference statistically by gender in the number of instances of gender marking of sports contests ($X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.84, p = 0.36$) on the three websites.

Table 4.57 Instances of “linguistic sexism” by gender on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Descriptor	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Last name only	3273	37	5481	63	8754	100
First name only	154	37	267	63	421	100
First and last name	3950	39	6101	61	10051	100
Martial metaphors	349	35	649	65	998	100
Trivialising lang.	22	41	32	59	54	100
Gender marking	934	49	974	51	1908	100

The frequency of occurrence by gender for each of these themes on the individual websites is presented below.

4.3.3a Last name only references on the ABC

A total of 2093 references to athletes used last names only. Male athletes were referred to by their last name 1203 times, with 890 references to female athletes by their last name, as reported in Table 4.58. Chi-square analysis shows the difference in favour of male athletes as the subjects of last name references was statistically significant; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 46.81, p = 0$.

Table 4.58 Last name references by gender on the ABC

Last name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	890	43	1203	57	2093	100

4.3.3aa Last name only references on the BBC

A total of 3015 references to athletes on the BBC used last names only. Male athletes were referred to by their last name on 1920 occasions, whereas there were 1095 references to female athletes by their last name, as reported in Table 4.59. Analysis shows there was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of last name references on the BBC; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 225.75, p = 0$.

Table 4.59 Last name references by gender on the BBC

Last name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1095	36	1920	64	3015	100

4.3.3aaa Last name only references on the CBC

Of the 3646 last name references on the CBC site, the majority (2358) named male athletes and 1288 named female athletes. This information is presented in Table 4.60. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of last name references on the site; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 314.02, p = 0$.

Table 4.60 Last name references by gender on the CBC

Last name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1288	35	2358	65	3646	100

4.3.3b First name only references on the ABC

There were 100 first name only references on the ABC and little separated the genders. Male athletes were called by their first name only 52 times and 48 times female athletes were identified by their first name only. This information is presented in Table 4.61. There was no difference statistically in the number of first name references for female and male athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.16, p = 0.69$.

Table 4.61 First name references by gender on the ABC

First name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	48	48	52	52	100	100

4.3.3bb First name only references on the BBC

Of the 220 first name only references on the BBC site, the greatest number referred to men who were called by their first name 166 times. Female athletes' first names were used 54 times. This information is presented in Table 4.62. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of first name only references; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 57.02, p = 0$.

Table 4.62 First name references by gender on the BBC

First name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	54	24.5	166	75.5	220	100

4.3.3bbb First name only references on the CBC

As shown in Table 4.63, in the 101 first name references on the CBC site, women were called by their first names 52 times, compared with 49 references for men. The difference in the number of first name references for female and male athletes was not statistically significant; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.09, p = 0.77$.

Table 4.63 First name references by gender on the CBC

First name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	52	51	49	49	101	100

4.3.3c First and last name references on the ABC

A total of 2451 references were counted on the ABC, with men being called by their first and last name 1345 times and women 1106 times. This information is presented in Table 4.64. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of first and last name references; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 23.31, p < .001$.

Table 4.64 First and last name references by gender on the ABC

First and last name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1106	45	1345	55	2451	100

4.3.3cc First and last name references on the BBC

From 3155 references on the BBC site, men were called by their first and last name on 2040 occasions and women 1115 times. This information is shown in Table 4.65. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of first and last name references; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 271.2, p = 0$.

Table 4.65 First and last name references by gender on the BBC

First and last name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1115	35	2040	65	3155	100

4.3.3ccc First and last name references on the CBC

There were 4445 references to athletes by their first and last names on the CBC site. Of these, 2716 named men and 1729 named women. This information is shown in Table 4.66. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of sportsmen as the subjects of first and last name references; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 219.16, p = 0$.

Table 4.66 First and last name references by gender on the CBC

First and last name	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1729	39	2716	61	4445	100

4.3.3d Martial metaphors on the ABC

Martial metaphors were used 80 times on the ABC. Of these, 50 referred to men's sports and 30 to women's sports. The result is reported in Table 4.67 There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of martial descriptors; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 5, p = 0.03$.

Table 4.67 Martial metaphors by gender on the ABC

Martial metaphors	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	30	37.5	50	62.5	80	100

4.3.3dd Martial metaphors on the BBC

Of the 259 times martial language was used on the BBC site, 177 were in stories about male athletes and 82 instances referred to female athletes' contests. This information is shown in Table 4.68. There was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of men as the subjects of martial descriptors; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 34.85, p = 0$.

Table 4.68 Martial metaphors by gender on the BBC

Martial metaphors	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	82	32	177	68	259	100

4.3.3ddd Martial metaphors on the CBC

Martial language was used on 422 occasions in stories about male athletes on the CBC site, well ahead of the 237 instances in stories about female athletes. As shown in Table 4.69, 659 martial metaphors appeared in stories on the site. Chi-square analysis shows there was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of sportsmen as the subjects of martial descriptors; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 51.94$, $p = 0$.

Table 4.69 Martial metaphors by gender on the CBC

Martial metaphors	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	237	36	422	64	659	100

4.3.3e Trivialising language on the ABC

Of the 32 trivialising references on the ABC site, 18 referred to female athletes and 14 to male athletes. This result is reported in Table 4.70. Chi-square analysis shows there was no statistical difference by gender in the number of trivialising references to female and male athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.5$, $p = 0.48$.

Table 4.70 Trivialising language by gender on the ABC

Trivialising references	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	18	56	14	44	32	100

4.3.3ee Trivialising language on the BBC

A total of eight trivialising references were counted in stories on the BBC site. As shown in Table 4.71, male athletes received five references and female athletes received three. Chi-square analysis shows there was no difference by gender in the number of trivialising references to female and male athletes; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 0.5$, $p = 0.48$.⁵¹

⁵¹ This result should be treated with caution. A small sample (less than five occurrences in a category) can sharply skew the chi-square distribution (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

Table 4.71 Trivialising language by gender on the BBC

	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Trivialising references						
Total	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100

4.3.3eee Trivialising language on the CBC

As shown in Table 4.72, five references in stories on the CBC site described athletes in trivialising terms. All were associated with stories about male athletes. Chi-square analysis shows there was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of male athletes as the subjects of trivialising references; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 5, p = 0.03$.⁵²

Table 4.72 Trivialising language by gender on the CBC

	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Trivialising references						
Total	0	0	5	100	5	100

4.3.3f Gender marking on the ABC

A total of 534 gender marking descriptors were used by the ABC. Of these, 292 labelled women's sports and 242 identified men's sports. This result is reported in Table 4.73. Chi-square analysis shows there was a statistically significant difference by gender in favour of female athletes as the subjects of gender marked sports; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 4.68, p = 0.03$.

Table 4.73 Gender marking on the ABC

	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender marking						
Total	292	55	242	45	534	100

4.3.3ff Gender marking on the BBC

On 302 occasions on the BBC, sports contested by male athletes were gender marked, compared with 269 instances of marking of female sports. Table 4.74 reports this result. There was no statistical difference in the frequency of gender marking of sports contested by women and men; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 1.91, p = 0.17$.

⁵² This result should also be treated with caution due to zero occurrences in one category.

Table 4.74 Gender marking on the BBC

Gender marking	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	269	47	302	53	571	100

4.3.3fff Gender marking on the CBC

Of the 803 instances of gender marking in stories on the CBC, sports contested by men were marked 430 times and women's contests were marked 373 times. This result is reported in Table 4.75. There was a statistically significant difference in favour of male athletes as the subjects of gender marked sports; $X^2_{.05}(1) = 4.05$, $p = 0.04$.

Table 4.75 Gender marking on the CBC

Gender marking	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	373	46	430	54	803	100

4.4 Discussion: The findings

This section discusses the results of the frequency analyses related to the first research question, along with the findings from previous studies of gendered sports coverage. The discussion of each variable focuses initially on the collective outcome of the analysis. Then, conformity with and departures from this result are highlighted with reference to the individual broadcasters. The discussion does not follow the strict order of the earlier analysis of variables but references to the tables in sections 4.1 to 4.3 have been provided for cross-referencing.

The first part of RQ1 asked if, in their level of coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games, the ABC, BBC and CBC treated female and male athletes differently. Six variables were examined in relation to this question – the number of stories, photographs and lead stories by gender; the frequency of coverage for each gender in sex-typed sports; and the level of coverage by gender according to two measures (medal success and national team composition) expressed as a “representation ratio”. The second part of RQ1 asked if, in the nature of their coverage, the three broadcasters treated female and male athletes differently. Three sets of indicators of bias, identified by previous sports media studies, were examined – the content of photographs by gender; language use by gender; and instances of linguistic sexism by gender.

4.4.1 Stories in 2008

Overall, the content analysis showed there were considerable differences in the treatment of female and male athletes by the online sites. The majority of Games reports, 58 per cent, were concerned with male athletes' contests (Table 4.1). Women's sports coverage amounted to 42 per cent of the Olympics sports stories and the chi-square test showed there was a highly significant difference in favour of sportsmen in story numbers by gender. The worst result for women was almost a draw. On the BBC and CBC, women scored 40 and 41 per cent of stories respectively. Again, there was a statistically significant difference in favour of men in coverage by gender on both sites. Women fared better on the ABC where there was no difference statistically in the number of stories allocated to them and to men but, with 47 per cent of stories, they still finished six percentage points short of the total for men (Table 4.2).

Against the equity measures of medal wins and team population, women deserved far more coverage in terms of story numbers on the BBC. They were under-reported relative to men with a "representation ratio" of 98 per cent for stories compared with medal success (Table 4.27). For stories compared with team population, women were again under-reported relative to men, with a "ratio" showing a deficit of 13 per cent (Table 4.33). Women were also under-represented on the CBC compared with their team population (a "representation ratio" of 93 per cent), as shown in Table 4.35, but they received equitable coverage compared with their medal success (Table 4.29). The shortfall in coverage for women on the ABC signifies under-exposure when compared with female athletes' medal success (a "representation ratio" of 92 per cent) and over-exposure for men compared with their medal success (a "representation ratio" of 108 per cent), as shown in Table 4.25. However, based on the coverage-team population "ratio", both genders were treated equitably on the ABC (Table 4.31).

Studies of sports reporting by the broadcast and print media have recorded dramatic but short-lived spikes in women's sports coverage coinciding with the Olympic Games. For example, NBC television's coverage of the 1992 Olympics gave 44 per cent of same sport airtime to female athletes (Higgs & Weiller, 1994). Australian newspapers devoted 32 per cent of Summer Olympics stories to female sports (Toohey, 1997), compared with 5 per cent for the rest of 1992 (Stoddart, 1994). During the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, women's sports coverage reached 41 per cent of newspaper space, before dropping away again in 1997 to 8 per cent (Mikosza, 1997). The share of airtime for women's sports increased ten-fold on Dutch television during the 1996 Olympics compared with non-Olympic periods (Knoppers & Elling, 2004).

King (2007) reported a major turnaround in the British press during the 2004 Olympics when women received more articles than men. However, King noted that the success of one female

track athlete, Kelly Holmes who won both the 800m and 1500m, and the failure of a second, Paula Radcliffe in the 10,000m and the marathon, dominated articles in both *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*. An analysis of Olympics coverage by *ABC News Online* in 2000 (Jones, 2004) found sportswomen and men received almost equal numbers of stories on the website, but the result for women was inflated by the saturation coverage given to Australian indigenous athlete Cathy Freeman. Thus, in terms of story numbers across the three websites, and in comparison with other studies of Olympic Games reporting, the result for women in 2008 confirms a historic pattern – there is a glass ceiling in the range of 30 to 45 per cent of Olympics coverage, except at those times when the exposure of a select few athletes further boosts coverage. I will return to this point in the discussion of photographic coverage in 2008.

4.4.2 Lead stories in 2008

Just as women were less visible than men in stories in 2008, they were also relegated to secondary status as subjects worthy of leading a bulletin. Ostensibly, the lead is the location of the most important Olympic sports news of the online bulletin's cycle. Overall, 85 times stories about men took the top spots on the T1 splash pages, compared with 56 lead stories about women (Table 4.9). As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the number of leads allotted to men competing in individual sports far outweighs the proportion of medals won by individual male athletes from Australia, Great Britain and Canada during the Beijing Games. However, compared with their medal tally, women competing in team sports also appear to have received a generous proportion of lead stories across the Games.

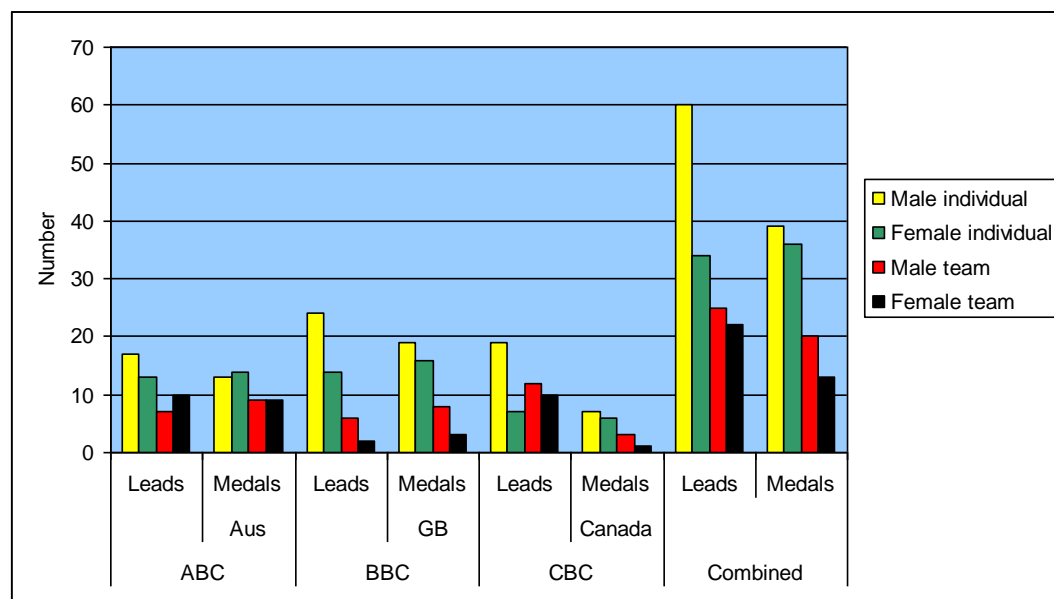


Figure 4.1 Lead stories and medal wins by gender and contest type on the ABC, BBC, CBC and overall

That women shared top billing with men in lead stories published on the ABC (see Table 4.10), as was also the case with the ABC's 2000 Olympics coverage (Jones, 2004), underscores the extent of the deficit for female athletes on both the BBC and CBC in 2008. There, despite comprising 46 per cent of Team GB athletes and 44 per cent of Canada's Olympic team, women received only one third of lead stories, a statistically significant result by gender (Tables 4.11 and 4.12). The biggest gap in lead summaries by gender, on any site, was the 12 story margin in favour of individual male sports on the CBC. Even though Canadian women competing in individual sports won six medals in Beijing (one short of the total won by Canadian men in individual contests), women received only a quarter of CBC's leads about individual events. And, in those seven leads, only three Canadian female athletes' medal performances were highlighted.

For women's achievements to grab the lead story position in 2008 on the BBC and CBC, on average as few as one in three times a day, still betters the usual fare for women outside of Olympic competition. Kachgal (2001) reported that only 18 per cent of top stories on the splash pages of three US sports websites featured female athletes. Sportswomen's stories rarely received the prime locations of the front or back pages of newspapers, or above the fold on any page (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005). When they did make it to air, more often than not women's sports were relegated to the tail end of sports packages on television and radio (T. Smith, 2005).

A further breakdown of lead stories in 2008 shows an unusually strong performance by team sports, as shown in Figure 4.2. Not only did stories about these contests lead 47 bulletins, for an average of one lead story per day across the sampling period, team sports were consistently elevated in the running order. They appeared most frequently at number 3 in the rundown. The location of the greatest number of reports about individual sports was a dead-heat between story 2 and story 4.

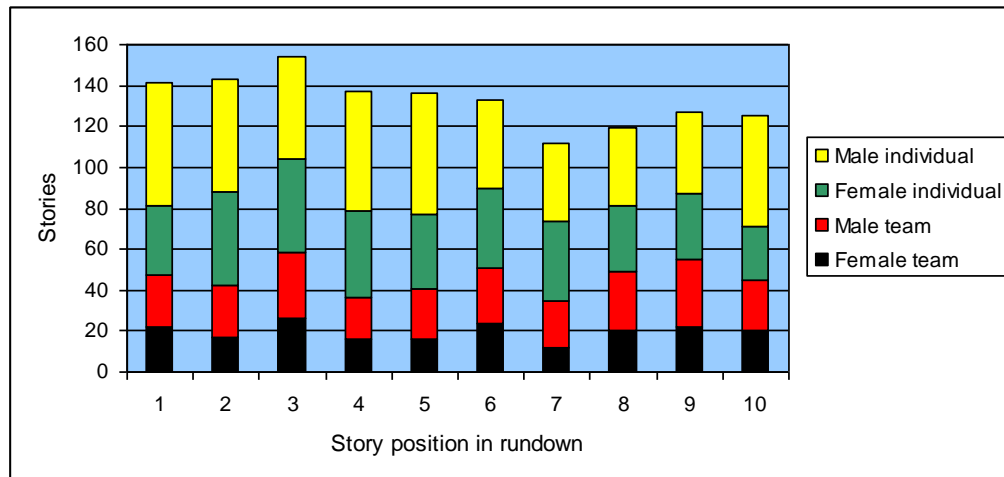


Figure 4.2 Location of team and individual sports stories by gender on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Traditionally a graveyard for female athletes in terms of media exposure (Rintala & Birrell, 1984), women's team sports at the Olympic Games have also received less coverage than individual sports for both genders and men's team sports (Tuggle & Owen, 1999). On *ABC News Online* in 2000, despite winning twice as many gold medals as women in individual competitions, women's teams received only half as much coverage as individual female athletes on the website (Jones, 2003). Tuggle et al. (2002) reported a similar deficit in television air time given to US women's teams on NBC in 2000, even though both women's and men's sides won gold medals in same-sport contests.

In 2008, the fact that team sports accounted for one third of all coverage of female athletes on the ABC, BBC and CBC is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, there are many more individual Olympic events than team events for women and men. In swimming, for example, 14 of the 17 events for women were individual contests, whereas only two out of 23 women's events in athletics, the relays, were team contests. So, the proportion of coverage directed to women's team sports by the three broadcasters is far higher than their number on the Olympic program would seem to warrant. Second, such incremental improvements in coverage can help to break stereotypes of women holding ancillary positions by showing them in active leadership and decision-making roles (Higgs & Weiller, 1994). At the same time, women's team sports were still well short of parity in coverage with men's team sports (264 stories about men, 195 about women), a result that can infer that women's contests are not as exciting or as worthy as men's sports (Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999).

Only the ABC gave the biggest share of the top spot on its splash page to women's team sports (10 lead summaries compared with seven for men's team sports). And only the ABC focused

exclusively on female teams from its (home) national Olympic team. The higher rate of coverage, proportionately, for Australian women cannot be attributed to a superior medal count in team sports. Both Australian women's and men's teams won nine medals each, including three gold medals each. Instead, the coverage for women may reflect both the success of these teams in the pool, in swimming in particular, as well as in water polo, along with how well they were expected to perform. Of the 10 leads about women, only six reported on medal wins; three were about gold medals in swimming relays and sailing, two featured silver medals in swimming relays and one reported on a bronze medal in water polo. The remaining four leads were about non-medal games in basketball (two stories) and hockey and a relay heat in swimming – all sports where Australian women's teams were tipped to earn minor medals at the very least, so their progress through the rounds was not only reported but elevated to the top spot in four bulletins.

In contrast, the leads about medal wins in male team sports were divided evenly between US and Australian athletes. Two leads were about gold medals in swimming for the US. The third reported on a rowing gold medal for Australia and a fourth featured a silver medal in sailing. Three non-medal match leads were exclusively about Australian men. Two referred to the Boomers, seen as contenders for a minor medal in basketball, and one was about the Kookaburras, the defending Olympic champions in hockey.

4.4.3 Sex-typed sports in 2008

Both women and men were more likely to appear in stories about traditionally male-appropriate sports. Overall, 58 per cent of stories reported on athletes competing in male-appropriate sports (Table 4.13). Of the 568 stories about sportswomen, 55 per cent were about sports categorised as male-appropriate. Almost 1.5 times as many stories were published about men competing in male-appropriate sports as about men competing in female-appropriate and neutral sports combined (457 to 312). Statistically, though, there was no difference in the coverage for female and male athletes with regard to appropriateness (see the K Wallis H test results in Table 4.14). This was also the case site by site. These results are similar to another Olympics study by Vincent et al. (2002) who found little difference in the attention newspapers gave to female athletes competing in appropriate and inappropriate sports at the Atlanta Olympics.

However, an inspection of the mean ranks for appropriateness on the online sites in 2008 shows women's contests in sports sex-typed as male-appropriate did receive the highest coverage score on one broadcaster. On the ABC, reports about women's sports (Table 4.17) produced a mean

rank for male-appropriate sports of 15.8.⁵³ This result on the ABC is not without precedent. In 2000, the ABC also focused its Olympics coverage of female athletes on those who competed in male-appropriate sports (Jones, 2003).

That more women were reported performing in sports of strength, hard contact and/or explosive speed on the ABC suggests that these women won more medals (for Australia) in 2008. They did not. Australian women competing in male-appropriate sports won nine medals, three in arrears of the tally for swimming alone, a female-appropriate sport where Australian women won 12 medals. Rather, the profile for male-appropriate sports can be put down to the collective impact of the ABC's consistent attention to several women's competitions, in both individual and team sports. For example, in 21 stories about basketball the ABC followed the Opals' competition preparations, noted injuries to key players, gave progress reports on recovery schedules, quoted team captain Lauren Jackson on game strategy, gold medal hopes and life after the Olympics and reported the results of every game. The Opals went to the finals and won a silver medal. Other male-appropriate sports to reach double figures were cycling (14 stories, one silver medal) and hockey (12 stories, no medals) whereas Australia's water polo team scored nine stories and a bronze medal. These are all sports in which Australian women had attained world championship status or Olympic success or were Olympic favourites, so their Olympic campaigns had obvious (national) news value. The exception was athletics, the most-reported of women's male-appropriate sports. Here, the majority of the ABC's 28 stories reported on outstanding female track and field athletes from several countries. From the modest offering of seven stories about Australian female athletes, four were devoted to 100m hurdles silver medallist Sally McLellan, the only woman to win a track and field medal in Beijing.

This trend on the ABC's website over two Olympic Games goes against that of newspaper and television studies (P. Brown, 1995; Higgs, Weiller, & Martin, 2003; Tuggle & Davis, 2009; Yu, 2009) where, typically, to garner coverage, women had to be involved in socially acceptable sports that emphasised aesthetics and beauty but discouraged physicality (Mason & Rail, 2006; Shugart, 2003). The ABC's departure, in covering more than a cluster of sports that have been portrayed as gender-appropriate for women, challenges gender role expectations. Female Olympians who crossed over into sports sex-typed as male-appropriate were not ignored, inferring that the participation of those women in male-appropriate events was just as valuable as men's involvement (Theberge, 1997) – at the Olympic Games.

⁵³ On the BBC and CBC, in coverage for both genders, female-appropriate sports received the highest scores. This was also the case for men's coverage on the ABC.

4.4.4 Photographs in 2008

Photographs played a vital role in the Olympics sports coverage of the three websites. Through their composition and the action taking place in them (Andrews, 2005), the drama and aesthetics of competition were highlighted in images published on the T1 and T2 pages. As with stories on their sites, the three broadcasters' collective use of photographs was clearly slanted towards enlivening, dramatising and drawing attention to male sports. There were 1.5 times more shots of men than of women, a statistically significant difference according to the chi-square test (Table 4.5). In the prime visual location of lead photograph, twice as many photographs of men were paired with lead stories across the three websites (Tables 4.6 to 4.8). Female athletes scored a T1 lead image just 37 per cent of the time. Again, the encouraging news in overall proportionate photographic coverage in the forties for female athletes (Table 4.5) is that it better the usual fare for women outside of the cycles of Olympic and Commonwealth Games – when the media's exclusion of women and their sports has corresponded to a symbolic annihilation (Kachgal, 2001; Kane, 1996). Chi-square tests also revealed a significant difference in the individual level of photographic coverage given to women and men by each site. Some features of that coverage warrant further extrapolation.

The greatest disparity in the profiles of sportswomen and men occurred on the BBC. Not only did women receive just 38 per cent of photographs – well below their team population with a “representation ratio” of 83 per cent (Table 4.34), and short of their national medal tally with a “representation ratio” of 93 per cent (Table 4.28) – they were also far less visible than men in lead story photographs (Table 4.7). In this leading position, shots of men outnumbered those of women by almost 3 to 1. Much the same pattern emerged in second story photographs on the T1 page, arguably the second most important photograph on the site's Olympics home page, where twice as many photographs were published of men than of women. And, within T2 stories, a gap of 24 percentage points separated the proportion of men's and women's photographs (282 compared with 176). Against the equity measures of GB team medals and team population, male athletes were over-represented in photographs on the site. They scored “representation ratios” of 105 per cent compared with medals won and 115 per cent compared with their team population (Tables 4.28 and 4.34).

In 2008, several women athletes from Great Britain featured in sports images on the BBC, among them gold medallists Rebecca Adlington (swimming) and cyclist Nicole Cooke. But neither reached the level of exposure given to runner Paula Radcliffe with 19 photographs and 8 per cent of female images, even though Radcliffe left Beijing without a medal. Compared with its coverage of female athletes at the 2004 Olympics, when half of the 35 per cent of pictures given to sportswomen featured just two athletes – Radcliffe and Kelly Holmes (Jones, 2006b) –

the BBC has maintained the status quo. In the BBC's 2004 coverage from Athens, women appeared in 58 per cent of lead story photographs, a far better outcome than four years later in Beijing.

On the CBC site, female athletes were also under-represented in lead story photographs (Table 4.8). This result has particular significance since only one photograph per bulletin was published on the site's splash page, limiting opportunities for exposure of Olympic athletes to 54 photographs across 18 days (compared with up to 162 photographs each on the ABC and BBC sites). From the 47 Olympic sports photographs published by the CBC, women and their sports were seen in the principal visual location on just 16 occasions, or a maximum of once in every three bulletins. In T2 stories, however, little separated the visual attention given to each gender. Stories about female athletes were just as likely to carry a photograph as T2 stories about male athletes, but there were far fewer T2 stories about women. The equity measure of team population figures compared with coverage indicates under-exposure of women's achievements in terms of the number of photographs devoted to them on the CBC. Their "representation ratio" was 93 per cent (Table 4.36). However, based on national medal success, both women and men were treated equally according to their respective ratios (Table 4.30).

In three consecutive Olympic Games studies, photographic coverage for women on the ABC's website has see-sawed: from numerical under-representation (38 per cent of photographs in 2000) (Jones, 2003), to more than half of all photographs in 2004 (53 per cent) (Jones, 2006), only to drop again in 2008 to 43 per cent. Unlike the two previous Olympics, in 2008 women's coverage fell well short of their contribution of 51 per cent of Australia's medals (Table 4.26). They were under-reported relative to men with a "representation ratio" of 84 per cent (a 16 per cent deficit). Women's photographic coverage was also below the proportion of women in the national team (46 per cent). As Table 4.32 shows, their "representation ratio" was 93 per cent. Several studies have indicated that sports photographs of women tend to be in less prominent locations in newspapers and on sports websites than those of men (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990; Kachgal, 2001; Women's Sports Foundation UK, 2004). Based on the total number of photographs accompanying lead stories on the ABC, women and men were given equal prominence (see Table 4.6), a similar result to *News Online's* coverage in 2000 (Jones, 2003) but well short of their 65 per cent of lead story photographs on the site in 2004 (Jones, 2006b). Sixteen of the ABC's 23 lead photographs of women from Beijing featured medal winners, although more than half of these were from one sport – swimming.

Photographic coverage on the ABC and BBC, and to a lesser extent the CBC, mirrors a pattern seen in the US news media's Olympic Games reporting in 2008 (Project for Excellence in

Journalism, 2008). It was heavily tilted towards just two sports, as shown in summary in Table 4.76.

Table 4.76 Top five sports in photographs on each site compared with national medals ranking by sport*

ABC				BBC			
Photos rank	Sport	Photos n	Medals rank	Photos rank	Sport	Photos n	Medals rank
1	Swimming	107	1	1	Swimming	142	4
2	Athletics	70	4	2	Athletics	113	5
3	Basketball	50	8	3	Cycling	62	1
4	Hockey	26	11	4	Sailing	48	2
5	Canoe/kayak	20	5	5	Boxing	46	7

CBC			
Photos rank	Sport	Photos n	Medals rank
1	Swimming	65	10
2	Athletics	52	9
3	Canoe/kayak	32	6
4	Soccer	25	0
5	Gymnastics	20	0
5	Rowing	20	1

* A breakdown of each nation's top sports by 2008 medal tally appears in Appendix D.

Swimming, which attracts virtually no attention outside of the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, swamped every other sport on the three broadcasters. On the ABC, it took up more than one quarter of photographs with 107 pictures; the only other sports to hit proportions in double figures were athletics with 17 per cent of photographs and basketball on 12 per cent. On the BBC, 142 photographs showed swimmers (23 per cent of images), well ahead of athletics with 19 per cent and cycling on 10 per cent. On the CBC, swimming and athletics were the only sports to register double figures in proportionate coverage, but the margin separating them was not as great as on the ABC and BBC. Fifteen per cent of the CBC's photographs showed swimmers and 12 per cent were devoted to track and field athletes.

This preoccupation with swimming reflects the emergence of one male athlete as a major news figure and his domination of coverage in the first week and a half of the Games – suggesting editorial decisions by each broadcaster that were independent of national achievement. US swimmer Michael Phelps left Beijing with a record haul of eight gold medals. He appeared in 87 photographs and 63 stories published on the three websites, as shown in Figure 4.3. As a proportion of coverage within sites, the greatest exposure for Phelps came from the ABC where his 29 images equated to 7 per cent of its photographs. He was the focus of almost three in every five photographs of men’s swimming. His campaign attracted five lead photographs alone, or one fifth of all lead images of male sports. Of Australia’s male swimmers, Grant Hackett’s silver medal in the 1500m freestyle was the only lead photograph on the ABC. Of Australia’s male gold medal winners, only kayaker Ken Wallace and rowing pair Drew Ginn and Duncan Free received two lead photographs and one lead photograph respectively.

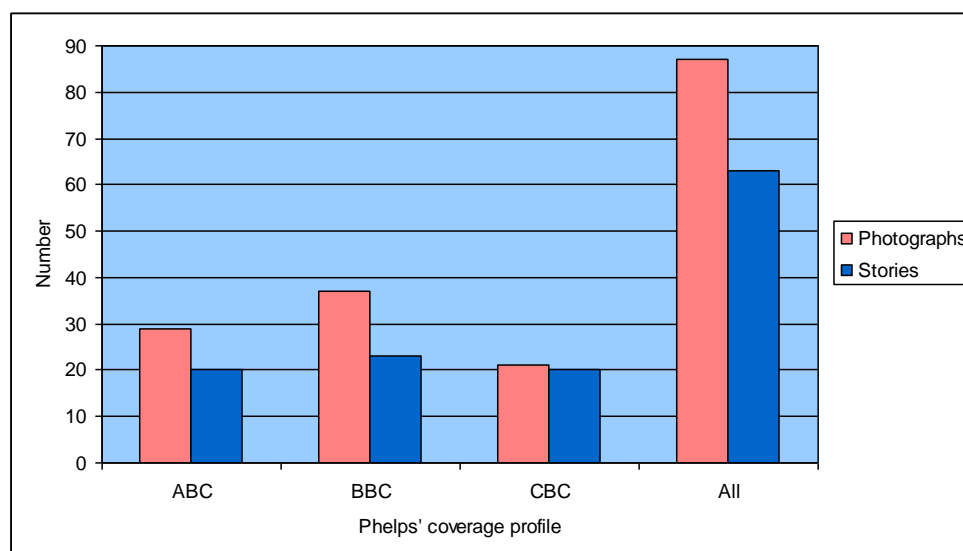


Figure 4.3 The Phelps factor in Olympic Games coverage on the ABC, BBC and CBC in 2008

The focus on swimming on the ABC also reflects the multiple successes of Australia’s female swimmers. They won six of the national total of 14 gold medals, and 12 of Australia’s 20 swimming medals, yet they featured in less than half of the 107 photographs of swimming – overshadowed by the attention devoted to Phelps. Also, a high proportion of T2 Olympic stories about women (31 per cent) were not accompanied by photographs, a finding that is comparable with Kachgal’s (2001) study of online sports reporting, but contrasts with the BBC’s 2008 spread of Olympics photographs across T2 stories about both genders.

Only five of the BBC’s 181 stories about female athletes lacked a T2 photograph. On average, it appears that every one of the 275 stories about male athletes on the site was paired with a

photograph. However, this was not the case. Instead, the count for men's photographs was boosted by the insertion of pictures of men in stories about women. For example, two stories in successive bulletins on August 9 were about a female shooter who became the Games' first gold medal winner. Both were accompanied by a composite photograph – the left half showing an unidentified male athlete and the right half showing the female gold medallist on the podium.⁵⁴ McGregor and Fountaine (1997) noted a similar practice in New Zealand newspapers where a story reporting the result of a dressage competition in which women took the top three places was illustrated by a picture of a male rider who finished twelfth. On the CBC, the site with the lowest number of T2 stories about female athletes, only 12 stories (7 per cent) about sportswomen did not carry a T2 photograph. There were no photographs with 19 reports about male athletes (8 per cent of male stories).

At first glance, the variety of athletes and their sports depicted in photographs on the three sites in 2008 is a positive outcome for sportswomen. The mean number of female sports highlighted in photographs was 21, only two behind that for men. The mean number of photographs per sport for male athletes was 12. Women, with fewer stories in total, averaged nine photographs for every sport they contested.

The best result for sportswomen was a mean of 12 images per sport on the ABC where 15 sports were represented in the tally of 172 photographs. Closer inspection shows a continuation in T2 photographs of the trend set in lead photographs on the website: a low level of exposure for all but three sports in which Australian women won medals. Only 25 photographs were allocated to the six sports of triathlon (one gold medal, one bronze), sailing (gold), canoeing/kayaking (silver, bronze), cycling (silver), diving (silver) and softball (bronze). At the same time, basketball (silver) received 27 photographs. As in 2004 on *News Online*, Lauren Jackson was again the “face” of Australia's Opals, this time with 12 photographs – an outcome, it could be argued, that reflected her domestic and international playing profile, but one that suggests the media are yet to accept female team sports such as basketball “as legitimate contests worthy of whole of team coverage” (Jones, 2006, p. 124).

4.4.5 Photograph content in 2008

Action shots of athletes in any sport were hard to find in 2008. There was a significant difference by gender in favour of passive shots of athletes across the three websites (Table 4.37). Before I discuss this finding in relation to each broadcaster, it is interesting to explore, briefly, the contrasting depictions of three high profile female athletes in 2008.

⁵⁴ BBC, “Czech Emmons claims opening gold”, Saturday, August 9, 2008.

Figure 4.4 shows active and passive photographs of three sportswomen – one each from Canada, Great Britain and Australia. Carol Huynh, Paula Radcliffe and Stephanie Rice were reported comprehensively by their home broadcasters but, unlike the collage in Figure 4.4, every photograph accompanying their online stories showed them as passive subjects. The ABC, BBC and CBC sourced the majority of their photographs of these women from the Getty Images online library. Each of the six images in Figure 4.4 is also from that library.⁵⁵ Based on the availability of a large library of active images of all three women, there appears to be no logical reason for them to be depicted exclusively as passive subjects. However, previous research has noted the sports media’s “lingering tendency to use [photographs of] women athletes ... without serious treatment of their activities” (Eastman & Billings, 2000), so the remainder of this discussion of photographic content will also examine how the publication of passive photographs by the broadcasters can serve to trivialise sportswomen’s athletic achievements.

⁵⁵ In 2008, the majority of Olympic Games photographs published on the ABC, BBC and CBC websites were supplied by Getty Images. After the Games, a search of the online library revealed there were approximately equal numbers of active and passive images of both Carol Huynh and Paula Radcliffe. While there were twice as many passive shots than active shots of Stephanie Rice in the archive, there were 80 active photographs of her swimming in individual and team events in Beijing. The broadcasters’ agreements with Getty and other agencies and photograph selection processes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.



Figure 4.4 Active and passive portraits of athletes: (clockwise from top left) Canadian wrestler Carol Huynh; Great Britain's marathon runner Paula Radcliffe; and Australian swimmer Stephanie Rice (Source: Getty Images)

The proportion of passive images of sportswomen on the ABC has risen in three consecutive Olympic Games, from a base of 31 per cent in 2000 to 40 per cent in 2004 and 58 per cent in 2008 (see Table 4.38). In lead photographs on the ABC splash page, only eight out of 23 female images from Beijing showed women in competition. The closer to the front of the bulletin, the more likely it was for a T2 photograph of a woman to show her doing nothing. Two thirds of story 1 photographs, half of story 2 and story 3 photographs and 82 per cent of story 4 photographs showed female athletes in passive poses. Passive images of men, too, were concentrated in the top half of the ABC's bulletins, as shown in Figure 4.5. However, the proportion of passive depictions of men remained steady in comparison with *News Online's* coverage in 2004 (Jones, 2006b).

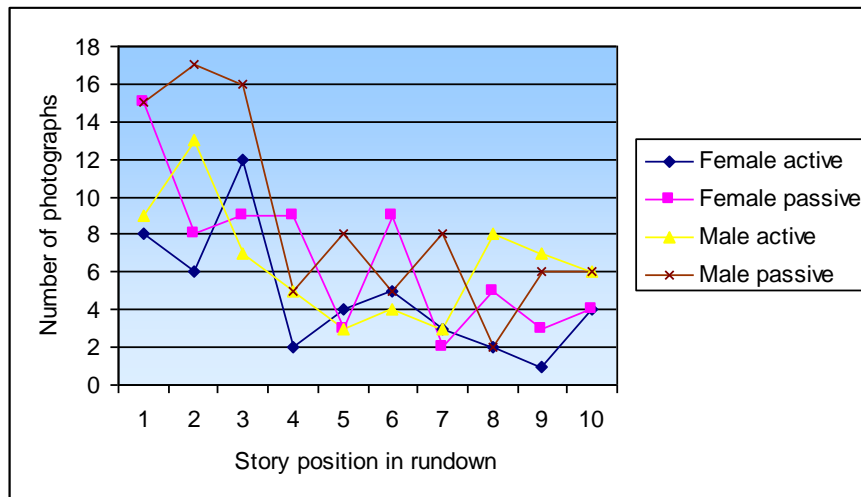


Figure 4.5 ABC T2 photographs by content and order in rundown

Treatment of the most photographed athletes on the ABC reveals a stark contrast by gender. Not one of the 19 shots of the most featured female Olympian, swimmer Stephanie Rice, showed her competing (as noted earlier), but there was an even split of action and posed portraits in the 30 images of the most photographed male athlete, swimmer Michael Phelps. Rice, who won three gold medals, was portrayed standing in her lane and saluting her supporters after winning the 400m individual medley (this photograph was used twice to lead successive bulletins, and appeared in a splash page slide show of highlights);⁵⁶ posing poolside with her second individual gold medal (this lead photograph also appeared in the splash page highlights, and was used again on August 23 in a lead story about Rice's selection as the Australian flag bearer for the closing ceremony);⁵⁷ and celebrating on the podium with her team mates after the freestyle relay (the same photograph was used twice as a lead).⁵⁸

The nature of Rice's exposure on the ABC, it appears, is as much about her nationality and achievements as her appearance. Rice fits the image of the ideal female athlete. Toned, strong, lean, conventionally pretty or sexually attractive sportswomen have been particular favourites of the media (Daddario & Wigley, 2007; John Hargreaves, 1986). Wanta (2012, p. 78) argued that photographers often try "to capture unusual photos and this can pan out in surprising ways". This may explain the propensity for close-ups of athletes, but not the reason why all of the individual photographs the ABC published of Rice were close-ups. Those showing her smiling for the camera are not "unusual" shots. They accentuate Rice's facial features and give no hint

⁵⁶ ABC, "Rice claims first Aussie gold", August 10, 2008.

⁵⁷ ABC, "Rice claims medley double", August 13, 2008. A copy of this photograph appears in Figure 4.4.

⁵⁸ ABC, "Aussie girls take shock relay gold", August 14, 2008.

of her athleticism. Such stereotypical portrayals, Duncan (1990) has noted, trivialise women's athletic performances.

Sexual difference, which “connotes the framing of cultural, societally constructed differences between men and women (e.g. woman as sex object, woman as emotionally less under control) as being natural and real” (Hardin, Lynn, et al., 2002), was also perpetuated in the ABC's depiction of Rice and other female swimmers in 48 out of 51 photographs as passive participants in a sport considered feminine. The high number of photographs on the ABC showing Rice and other female athletes motionless, or in posed, head only shots, corroborates traditional stereotypes about women by removing them from the sport setting (Centre for Gender Equality - Iceland, 2006) – thus suggesting they are not active contestants (NSW Sport and Recreation, 2001) – and serves to highlight their feminine rather than athletic qualities (Fink & Kensicki, 2002). Such strategies “reinforce the stereotypical and socially constructed, appropriate gender roles to which normal women should aspire” (2002, p. 331). Consistent with the theory of male hegemony, the ABC's most frequent depictions of sportswomen frame them only as females rather than powerful, talented athletes and “strengthen the ideological hegemony of male superiority” (p. 331).

On the BBC, where in 2004 only one quarter of shots of women depicted them as active athletes (Jones, 2006b), there was some improvement. The proportion of passive depictions of female athletes in 2008 fell by 10 points to 64 per cent (still one point more than the result for men), but here, too, there was a sting in the tail. With so few lead story photographs on the BBC showing women competitors – there were three times as many photographs of men – the nine leads given to GB female athletes across 54 bulletins offered rare opportunities to showcase those women's achievements. Instead, a lead photograph of British runner Paula Radcliffe delivered a passive portrait of a distraught woman, sobbing after finishing 23rd in the marathon (see Figure 4.4).⁵⁹ On its own, this picture may appear unremarkable; a frozen moment, a graphic but truthful record of reality. However, Radcliffe's passive photograph was paired with a summary lead and main story texts that combined to frame her, not as a strong and determined athlete but as a lesser competitor – weak, vulnerable, subject to bouts of self-doubt and prone to emotional outbursts. This point will be discussed further in language use in section 4.4.6.

On the BBC, another three lead photographs of gold medal winners from Great Britain showed those successful women doing nothing. Photographs of 400m swimmers Rebecca Adlington

(gold) and Jo Jackson (bronze) led successive bulletins.⁶⁰ Each time, the women were seen hugging in the pool. A post-race shot of the unnamed GB yngling crew (gold) showed the sailors posed, standing shoulder to shoulder, arms around each other and smiling.⁶¹ If such passive images stem from ocean racing's difficult or hostile conditions, this should have prevented photographers from capturing action shots of other successful sailors. But, the BBC's three lead pictures on August 19 and 20 of individual female and male competitors, Bryony Shaw (windsurfing, bronze)⁶² and Paul Goodison (laser class, gold),⁶³ showed both athletes and their craft in full flight.

In T2 photographs more than 60 per cent of shots of women and men showed them posed for the camera or motionless. As shown in Figure 4.6, passive photos of men were by far the most numerous and prominent, with the majority appearing in the first five T2 stories. The bulk of passive photographs of women (two-thirds of T2 female photos) were clustered in the second half of the rundown. It is unclear what caused this result for men, which is in contrast to several previous studies. It could be factors over which the journalists reporting for and editing the BBC's website have limited control. An analysis of passive and action shots in the photo library used by the BBC may address the question in part. Media access to events would also have an impact. Athletes' photographs from medal presentations will be, by definition, passive images.

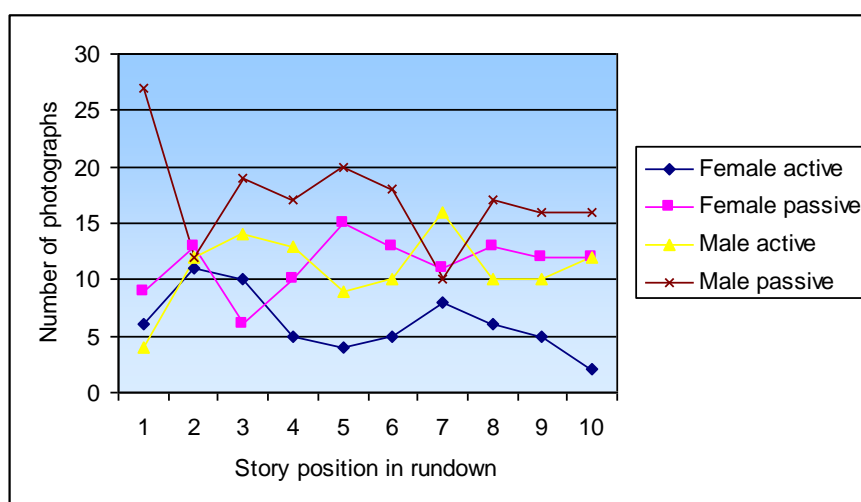


Figure 4.6 BBC T2 photographs by content and order in rundown

⁵⁹ BBC, "Live – Olympics", August 17, 2008. All 19 pictures of Radcliffe, the site's most-featured sportswoman, were mug shots except for the lead on August 17 that used a wider angle to show her being comforted by another runner.

⁶⁰ BBC, "Adlington snatches swimming gold", August 11, 2008.

⁶¹ BBC, "GB Yngling women breeze to gold", August 17, 2008.

⁶² BBC, "Live – Olympics", August 20, 2008.

The highest concentration of active photographs by gender occurred on the CBC site (see Table 4.40) where there was no statistical difference between women and men, according to the chi-square test. In contrast to the trends seen on the ABC and BBC prior to and in 2008, more than 70 per cent of the photographs of female athletes on the CBC showed them competing in their sports. At every level of coverage – from lead photographs on the splash page to photographs accompanying T2 stories – action shots of women outnumbered passive shots with the ratio as high as 12 to 1 in story 8 photographs (see Figure 4.7). At the same time, passive photographs of women and men were seen more frequently in stories towards the front of CBC bulletins.

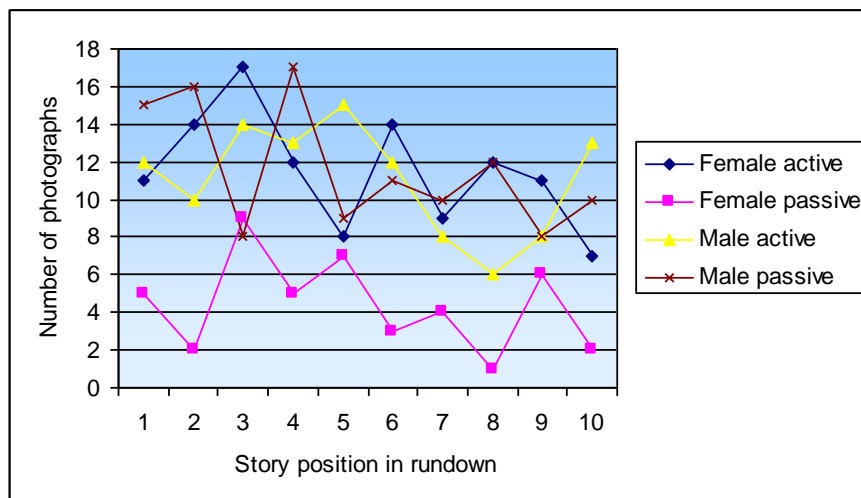


Figure 4.7 CBC T2 photographs by content and order in rundown

Readers had to wait until eight days after the start of competition to see a photograph of any description of a Canadian woman in the lead spot on the CBC's T1 splash page. An action shot of a Canadian softball player led the bulletin on August 14 when the team played the USA.⁶⁴ In contrast, passive shots of Canadian male athletes were given top billing on the splash page from day four onwards, even though the stories they accompanied were about athletes who withdrew from the Games or from particular events,⁶⁵ a team and an individual athlete who were unsuccessful in two finals,⁶⁶ and an athlete who was eliminated in a heat.⁶⁷ Of the 27 lead photographs of men, 40 per cent showed them competing in their sports. Successful Canadian women received just three lead photographs on the splash page and only one of these showed a

⁶³ BBC, "Live – Olympics", August 19, 2008.

⁶⁴ CBC, "Canada softball women up on U.S. before rain delay", August 14, 2008.

⁶⁵ CBC, "Quebec's Niemeyer withdraws from men's singles", August 10, 2008; "Hayden pulls out of 200m freestyle semi", August 11, 2008.

⁶⁶ CBC, "Canadian relay swimmers fall short", August 13, 2008; "Brown can't deliver Canada's first medal", August 14, 2008.

⁶⁷ CBC, "Canada's Christopher makes early exit in 400m", August 18, 2008.

woman in action (taekwondo silver medallist Karine Sergerie).⁶⁸ Although men were shown in action shots in fewer than half of all male photographs on the CBC, they were still seen competing almost as often as women by virtue of the higher number of male photographs published across the Games.

4.4.6 Language use in 2008

4.4.6a Appearance

While previous studies showed a greater likelihood of equitable coverage for women and their sports during the Olympic Games (Daddario & Wigley, 2007), coverage on all three broadcasters in 2008 still perpetuated certain stereotypes. The chi-square tests showed there was a statistically significant difference in favour of men in the number of appearance references to athletes by gender overall (Table 4.41) and on the BBC and CBC (Tables 4.43 and 4.44), but these results could be due to the greater number of stories about men compared with women. For this reason, the data for all three sites was analysed to reveal the number of stories containing appearance references. In this category, little separated women and men. Forty per cent of female stories and 37 per cent of male stories on the ABC mentioned athletes' physiological attributes. On the BBC, 69 per cent of stories about sportswomen and 67 per cent of men's stories mentioned physical characteristics. On the CBC, 55 per cent of female stories and 60 per cent of male stories referred to appearance.

The historical trend, where sports media have viewed female athletes' looks as relevant in coverage of their athletic performances (Bernstein & Galily, 2008; Donohoe, 2003; Hilliard, 1984), was not apparent on any of the sites. However, one might question the relevance of identifying US beach volleyball players Kerri Walsh and Misty May-Treanor as "the bikini-clad Americans" in a sport where bikinis have been the standardised uniform for women since the 1990s.⁶⁹ There were no pointed evaluations of women in terms of traditional standards of feminine beauty, such as body dimensions and attractiveness (Pirinen, 1997), and no criticisms of female athletes who did not live up to the ideals of beauty (Pfister, 1987). In common with Eastman and Billings' study (2000), there were no instances of men being compared with women in sports narratives, yet a story on the ABC praised US swimmer Katie Hoff by comparing her with fellow US team member Michael Phelps ("the female Phelps") as if Phelps, as a male, was the model athlete.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ CBC, "Canada's Sergerie wins taekwondo silver", August 22, 2008.

⁶⁹ ABC, "US beach volleyball queens extend their reign", August 21, 2008. No stories about the men's beach volleyball referred to the men's attire.

⁷⁰ ABC, "Pelligrini wins 200m free in WR time", August 13, 2008.

No site carried sexist references to women's revenue-producing ability or to their hair or eye colour (Bryant, 1980). Nor was there evidence of a focus on the age of female athletes compared with rare descriptions of men by age (Eastman & Billings, 2000). Rather, age references were used with the same frequency in stories about both genders. In contrast to previous studies where male athletes have been described as "having a magnificent physique" or a "well-proportioned body" (Lumpkin & Williams, 1991), there were few body references for men. Instead, and as Jones (2003) found in Olympic stories on *News Online*, reports about both genders generally contained factual information about injuries or physical characteristics pertinent to the athlete's discipline.

Of all references to appearance, athletes' height, weight and age were most mentioned on the three sites. The frequency of their occurrence can be linked directly to coverage of four sports – boxing which scored 47 stories, diving with 42 stories, wrestling with 12 stories and trampoline with 11 stories. In boxing, for example, a man's weight (the sport was "men only" at the 2008 Olympics) not only determines the division he will contest but whether he will fight at all. Failure to make the weight by being too heavy will prevent a boxer from competing at the Olympics if his country already has a representative in the weight division above his nominated limit. On the BBC, British gold medal prospect Frankie Gavin's weight was reported in the context of his failure to make the 60kg weight division:

Gavin, 22, would have needed to weigh in at 60kg (9st 6lb) on every day he competed in Beijing but was 3lb (1.36kg) over that mark on Thursday. ...BBC boxing commentator Mike Costello said he had struggled to make the weight all year.
'For the first time in his life he has been training like a professional not an amateur, and he has been getting bigger as a result and fighting a running battle with his weight.'⁷¹

In both diving and gymnastics, a particular athletic physique is a critical element at the elite level of competition. Women and men competing in the trampoline – sex-typed as a female-appropriate sport and one of three disciplines in gymnastics – need a small frame, flexibility and strength in order to perform routines requiring combinations of skills from somersaults to bounces, landings and twists (BBC Sport Academy, n.d.).⁷² With such an emphasis on the human body, it would not be surprising if stories about the sport contained factual references to contestants' physical features. Of concern, however, would be differences by gender in stories

⁷¹ BBC, "Medal hope Gavin out of Olympics", August 7, 2008.

⁷² The Academy quoted physiologist Dr Kevin Thompson who described female gymnasts as small and light, while men were closer to average size. "Being light helps the gymnast to achieve a high strength-to-weight ratio and being small helps with rotational skills (for example, somersaults)," he said.

within the sport. This was the case with coverage in two stories published on successive days on the CBC.

The first story canvassed the gold medal chances of Canadian gymnast and dual Olympic medallist Karen Cockburn.⁷³ Five paragraphs in, the story described Cockburn as “five-foot-three, 121-pound”. At 27 years of age she was “older and wiser than the teenager she was at her first Games”. Two paragraphs later, the story reported that Cockburn “is now married” to “fellow Canadian trampolinist, Mathieu Turgeon, whom she met ... when she was 11”. As the story described Cockburn’s main rivals for the gold medal, it listed the vital statistics and/or age for each woman: first, the Russian Irina Karavaeva, 33, “five-foot-five, 115 pounds”; then China’s He Wenna, the “five-foot-three, 108-pound athlete”; fellow Canadian Rosie MacLennan, “the 19-year-old” student; and German Anna Dodonadze, 35, “the oldest competitor in the Beijing event”.

The next day, a second story of similar length previewed the medal prospects of Canada’s three time national trampoline champion Jason Burnett.⁷⁴ Burnett, too, was described in terms of his age, height and weight. No such information was supplied about his main rivals from China, Japan, Germany, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Only the men’s names were listed along with their best performances. Also in contrast to the story about the female trampolinist, there was no mention of any man’s wisdom acquired with age or his marital status.

The ABC’s preoccupation with the physique of Australian triathlete Emma Snowsill started before the Games. Although outside the sampling period for this study, it is worth noting a story published on the website in July 2008 because it appeared to set the tone for coverage in Beijing. Describing 27-year-old Snowsill as “standing at only 161cm and weighing in at a slender 48kg”, the writer observed “it is hard to imagine that Emma Snowsill will be competing in one of the most gruelling and challenging events at the Olympic Games.”⁷⁵ The profile piece framed her as an anomaly in a male-appropriate sport, but also simultaneously stressed Snowsill’s femininity by describing her “diminutive” stature. Coverage of Snowsill’s race in Beijing continued this theme, identifying her as “pint-sized” and “the 1.61m ‘Snowy’”.⁷⁶ Hours later, in a second story the focus shifted to the personal tragedy that motivated Snowsill: “[She]

⁷³ CBC, “Canadians going for gold in trampoline”, August 18, 2008.

⁷⁴ CBC, “Canada has daredevil in men’s trampoline final”, August 19, 2008.

⁷⁵ ABC, “Emma Snowsill: diminutive but full of heart”, July 23, 2008.

⁷⁶ ABC, “Snowsill storms to triathlon gold”, August 18, 2008.

was just 19 when her boyfriend and fellow triathlete Luke Harrop was killed in a hit-and-run while bike training on Queensland's Gold Coast."⁷⁷

4.4.6b Relationships

As the coverage of Emma Snowsill on the ABC and Karen Cockburn on the CBC demonstrates, and as several studies have shown (Daddario & Wigley, 2007; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Jones, 2003), the sports media see females' relationships (familial, romantic and other relationships to men) as relevant in descriptions of sportswomen. In 2008 Olympics reporting, despite the smaller number of stories about sportswomen on each website more women than men were represented in references to athletes' relationships, to the extent that on the CBC women's relationships were more than twice as likely to be mentioned as men's and the difference in mentions by gender was statistically significant (Table 4.47).

Aside from the CBC's identification of trampolinist Karen Cockburn in terms of her marital status, the parental status of tennis player Lindsay Davenport was noted in coverage of her scratching from the singles. Three stories mentioned "the birth of her son, Jagger", an event with no connection or relevance to the knee injury that caused Davenport's withdrawal from the Olympics.⁷⁸ Two stories about Canadian mountain biker Marie-Hélène Prémont wove "a previous boyfriend" into the narrative.⁷⁹ Pitcher Lauren Bay Regula was described as "one of the world's top hurlers and sister of Boston Red Sox outfielder Jason Bay", as though her standing in softball was linked to her brother's career in baseball.⁸⁰

In coverage of Australian swimmer Stephanie Rice's win in the 400m individual medley, the BBC's reference to a male figure undoubtedly reflected an effort to play up a human interest angle. The story devoted 60 out of 275 words to Rice's personal life, highlighting a former boyfriend and her profile on a social networking site:

Before heading out to Beijing, Rice was making headlines away from the pool in Australia.

Just before the Olympics she broke up with fellow Aussie swimmer Eamon Sullivan, who is competing in the 50m freestyle, and was previously asked by Swimming Australia to block public access to her personal facebook page which had pictures of her in a policewoman's uniform.

⁷⁷ ABC, "Snowsill turns tragedy into triumph", August 18, 2008.

⁷⁸ CBC, "Lindsay Davenport pulls out of Beijing Olympics", August 8, 2008.

⁷⁹ CBC, "Marie-Hélène Prémont: Nervous rider", August 8, 2008.

⁸⁰ CBC, "Canada hammers Chinese Taipei in softball", August 12, 2008.

After this slide into tabloidese, the story then noted, “But she put all that behind her to claim glory in Beijing with a stunning performance in world record time.”⁸¹ Rice competes in a sport sex-typed as appropriate but one where the (male) traits of physical strength and explosive power are on show. As Stevenson (2002, p. 212) has observed, “Media references to a sportswoman’s feminine credentials, such as boyfriends ... are commonplace and reassure audiences of gender priorities.” Thus, reporting (contextually irrelevant) snippets of Rice’s love life reassures audiences of her traditional femininity centred on her heterosexuality.

Shugart (2003, p. 8) also noted how references that define female athletes by their roles, particularly as wives or mothers, served as sexual markers, “reminding the public that female athletes are not only women but specifically heterosexual women, thus sexualizing them in a particular manner that renders them consistent with rather than threatening to existing concepts of gender.” Although this strategy is commonly applied to women who compete in sports that are culturally defined as masculine, it was very much in evidence in coverage by all three broadcasters of Czech shooter Katerina Emmons.⁸² Emmons was news because hers was the first gold medal awarded at the Beijing Games. Her story was in the top three in bulletins across the sites. On the BBC and CBC it was accompanied by a close-up photograph (Emmons is also a conventionally attractive woman). In every story she was identified as a wife. The ABC noted that:

Emmons, who met and married United States shooter Matt Emmons after winning bronze at the 2004 Olympics, equalled a world record score of 400 in the qualification round and was near flawless in the final round to win the gold medal with a score of 503.5 – a new [sic] Olympic record.⁸³

The BBC reported that the “24-year-old Czech wife of American shooter Matt Emmons shot a near flawless 103.5 in the final”,⁸⁴ whereas the CBC’s story noted, “Emmons, who is married to American shooter Matt Emmons, equalled the world record with a perfect 400 in qualifying and broke the Olympic record”. If a reader missed the first marital reference, two sentences later there was the reminder, “Emmons, nee Kurkova, hit the bull’s eye on all 40 shots”,⁸⁵ as though her ability to hit a target consistently was somehow related to her marital status.

⁸¹ BBC, “Rice sees off Hoff for shock gold”, August 10 and August 11, 2008. The story ran three times in all.

⁸² Shooting is sex-typed as a gender neutral sport.

⁸³ ABC, “Emmons wins first gold of Olympics”, August 9, 2008.

⁸⁴ BBC, “Czech Emmons claims opening gold”, August 9, 2008.

⁸⁵ CBC, “Czech shooter wins 1st gold medal of Games”, August 9, 2008.

There were no parallel references to his successful wife when Matt Emmons won a silver medal a week later. The ABC merely reported that “American Matthew Emmons took the silver medal”.⁸⁶ On the BBC, Emmons was described as “defending champion Matthew Emmons”⁸⁷ and the result was not reported on the CBC. When relationships were mentioned in stories about male athletes they served as markers of men’s mental strength in the face of personal loss. For example, stories about equestrian silver medallist Ian Millar accounted for 70 per cent of all male relationship references on the CBC.⁸⁸ They referred to Millar’s wife who had died five months earlier and quoted his reaction to winning a medal. “I had an angel riding with me,” he said. In the same story, the CBC reported Millar was aiming for London in 2012 and this time he was characterised as a successful father:

Though his journey to Olympic glory has been long, Millar has no plans to ride off into the sunset. In fact, he’s got ample inspiration to make a run at the 2012 Olympics, where he’d be 65. Millar hopes to be joined on the Canadian team by son Jonathan, 33, and daughter Amy, 31, both accomplished riders with aspirations of competing in the Summer Games.

4.4.6c Emotions

Proportionately, stories on all three sites carried more references to men’s emotions than to women’s emotions. Chi-square tests showed the CBC was the only site with a statistically significant difference in the frequency of these references by gender (Table 4.50). Once again, the greater number of references to men’s emotions could simply be a product of the higher story count for male athletes. To test this, the data was broken down to reveal the number of stories that contained references to athletes’ emotions. The pattern held on the BBC and CBC. On the BBC, 83 per cent of male stories mentioned men’s emotions compared with 78 per cent of female stories. On the CBC, there was a much wider gap between genders. Two thirds of the stories about men (68 per cent) and just over half of the stories about women (52 per cent) referred to their emotions. In contrast, not only were emotions much less likely to be mentioned in stories on the ABC, little separated women and men with only 14 per cent of women’s stories and 15 per cent of men’s stories referring to their emotions.

The result contrasts with Kinnick’s (1998) print study which found that articles about Olympic athletes commented on females’ emotions more often than men’s emotions. It also contrasts with a study of *ABC News Online*’s Olympics coverage in 2000 where females’ emotions were 1.7 times more likely to be mentioned than males’ emotions (Jones, 2003). Then, the ABC

⁸⁶ ABC, “Potent claims shooting bronze”, August 15, 2008.

⁸⁷ BBC, “Ayvazian claims gold for Ukraine”, August 15, 2008.

⁸⁸ CBC, “Late-blooming Ian Millar just hitting his stride?”, August 19, 2008. The story was run in successive bulletins.

described sportswomen in ways that stressed emotional weakness. Coverage of Cathy Freeman's 400m win in Sydney presented her as "an emotional Freeman who fell to the ground in relief after crossing the finish line to win" and "collapsed on the track ... fighting tears". In confronting a stressful situation, "Freeman was framed as a vulnerable woman, a theme that echoed that of the traditional sports media where women's character flaws, such as emotional vulnerability, have been emphasised as a critical part of their performance" (2003, p. 216).

This theme of denying power to women through gendered commentary (Daddario & Wigley, 2007) may have had fewer outings in 2008 due to the smaller number of stories about sportswomen, but it was still apparent in coverage of them. On the BBC, gold medallist Victoria Pendleton was described as "in a class of her own" after winning the track cycling sprint final. Three paragraphs later, the story's focus shifted to Pendleton's psychological state and her dependence on the team psychiatrist who had "lifted her [Pendleton's] spirits after she failed to win a medal at Athens 2004".⁸⁹ The shedding of tears was a common topic for sportswomen. On the three sites, emotional descriptors for women focused on athletes who "fled ... in tears",⁹⁰ "fled weeping",⁹¹ were "tearful",⁹² "broke down in tears",⁹³ "burst into tears and had to be consoled"⁹⁴ or were seen "wiping tears" from their eyes.⁹⁵

Men's character flaws, although reported more frequently, were described in less graphic terms than women's and were less likely to be characterised as faults. By implication men who were "distraught",⁹⁶ "devastated", "aghast"⁹⁷ or "furious"⁹⁸ responded to disappointment with more stoicism than women who lost control and cried (Knoppers & Elling, 2004). When a man did cry, he had reason because his "plucky [team's] dream of snaring its first ever [sic] Olympic gold in any sport [had been] shattered":

After the match, six foot six inch (1.98 metre) Icelandic pivot Sigfus Sigurdsson sat on the floor and wept, prompting his French counterpart Didier Denart to haul him to his feet and give him a consoling hug.⁹⁹

⁸⁹ BBC, "Briton Pendleton wins sprint gold", August 20, 2008.

⁹⁰ BBC, "Czech Emmons claims opening gold", August 9, 2008.

⁹¹ ABC, "Emmons wins first gold of Olympics", August 9, 2008.

⁹² BBC, "Tearful Manaudou ponders future", August 12, 2008; BBC, "Jones eases to breaststroke gold", August 12, 2008.

⁹³ BBC, "Brits miss out on archery bronze", August 11, 2008.

⁹⁴ ABC, "Aussie gymnasts qualify for women's team final", August 11, 2008.

⁹⁵ BBC, "Olympic shooters appeal for peace", August 10, 2008.

⁹⁶ BBC, "DeGale sparkles on way to final", August 22, 2008.

⁹⁷ BBC, "Iran's Saei takes taekwondo gold", August 22, 2008.

⁹⁸ BBC, "Barnes loses light-fly semi-final", August 22, 2008.

⁹⁹ ABC, "France downs Iceland to win men's handball gold", August 24, 2008.

In the main, stories about swimmer Michael Phelps' eight gold medal wins in Beijing were clinical accounts of the athlete's march towards Olympic glory. A rare reference to Phelps' emotions (and self-control) appeared in the BBC's coverage of his first gold medal in the 400m individual medley:

On the medal podium he choked back tears, before a technical glitch brought the US anthem to a premature end, and he laughed and called the other medallists onto the top step with him.
'I'm pretty emotional after that race,' said Phelps.
'I wanted to go (for the record) but I wasn't sure if I should. But then, in the warm-up room, I kind of got these chills in my body and started getting excited.'¹⁰⁰

4.4.6d Successes and failures

By its nature sport generates media coverage about success and failure. That there were many more mentions on all three sites of male athletes' wins and losses than females' results could be linked to the competitive opportunities available to each gender. In 2008, women were still shut out of competing on equal terms with men with only 137 or 45 per cent of Olympic events open to them (International Olympic Committee, 2009b). In addition, because more stories were published about men on the three sites there were more opportunities to mention men's successes and failures.

The biggest gap by gender in mentions of success occurred on the BBC where only 27 per cent of these references were about women. The difference was statistically significant, according to the chi-square test (Table 4.53). There was also a significant gap in the frequency of references to men's failure compared with women's failure (Table 4.54). On the CBC there was no difference, statistically, in success and failure mentions (Tables 4.55 and 4.56). On the ABC, there was no statistical difference in the frequency of references to women's and men's successes but the difference by gender in failure references was significant (Tables 4.51 and 4.52).

In light of these mixed findings, a comparison by gender of the ratio of references to success to those of failure by gender is instructive. On the three sites, success references for women outnumbered failure references by 3.6 to 1 (331 mentions to 92). A similar finding presents for male athletes with their success more than three times as likely to be mentioned as their failure (458 mentions to 147). For both genders, this can be attributed in part to each broadcaster's focus, predominantly, on home and international athletes who won medals or turned in their best performances. This result echoes the findings concerning *News Online's* coverage in 2000 of the

¹⁰⁰ BBC, "Phelps claims first Beijing gold", August 11, 2008.

Sydney Olympics (Jones, 2003), but stories on the three sites in 2008 contained no evidence of the bias that occurs when media coverage highlights women's failures and men's achievements (2001).

This is not to say stories were free of bias. Bias also exists when men's failures are attributed to a lack of athletic skill, but women's failures are put down to a lack of commitment, a lack of courage or poor judgment (Billings & Angelini, 2007). In 2008, there were instances of overt bias when stories about women's successes were tempered by criticism of previous failures or disappointments. The lead for an ABC story about Libby Trickett's swim to make the 100m butterfly final contained this admonition:

Australia's Libby Trickett has atoned for her lax performance last night, qualifying fastest for the final of the women's 100m butterfly at the Beijing Olympics.¹⁰¹

When Trickett won the event the next day, the report of her gold medal swim also rehashed her lack of success (and commitment) in Athens in 2004:

Trickett who was a favourite at the Athens Games but failed to produce her best when it counted most, said she just wanted to do her best.¹⁰²

When cyclist Nicole Cooke won the road race, she "finally lived up to the lofty expectations she set as a junior", according to the CBC. The rest of the story failed to substantiate the sting in the lead, other than to report that the "victory erases her disappointing result at the Athens Games four years ago when she finished fifth" (with no indication of who was disappointed).¹⁰³ Farrell (1989), quoted in Daddario and Wigley (2007), has argued that athletes who fall short of media-hyped expectations are often the targets of media criticism. As noted earlier, world champion and high profile runner Paula Radcliffe attracted plenty of attention from her home broadcaster. Radcliffe, whose preparation for Beijing was hampered by a stress fracture in her leg, was, in journalism parlance, a running story. When she confirmed she was a starter in the marathon, much of the BBC's story examined Radcliffe's rationale for competing "despite admitting she was yet to fully recover":

And she admitted she might not have embarked on her desperate race to get fit had she realised how serious the injury was at the time ...
'But then I'd go to bed and think "No this is the Olympics, I'm not going to give up".
'And Gary (Lough, her husband and coach) said to me "Someone is testing you to see how much you want it".'
And Radcliffe admitted that her experience in Athens had left a scar.

¹⁰¹ ABC, "Trickett, Schipper power into 100m fly final", August 10, 2008.

¹⁰² ABC, "Trickett takes gold in 100m fly", August 11, 2008.

¹⁰³ CBC, "Brit Cooke cycles to gold in downpour", August 10, 2008.

‘It certainly means I have a lot of unfinished business with the Olympics.’¹⁰⁴

When she finished 23rd, the BBC called her “gutsy” but ran the story with a lead picture of a distressed Radcliffe being comforted by a team mate (Figure 4.8).¹⁰⁵



Figure 4.8 Marathon runner Paula Radcliffe (right) and team mate Liz Yelling¹⁰⁶

As in 2004, the BBC framed Radcliffe’s disastrous Olympic campaign in ambivalent terms (Jones, 2006b). It criticised her “lack of preparation” as she “limped across the finish line in 23rd”. Then it praised her “achievement” in making it to the start and her “valiant effort”. It simultaneously published still images that framed Radcliffe as a vulnerable woman unable to keep her composure in the face of disappointment. In the post-mortem of her 2008 defeat, Radcliffe’s lack of success in Athens in 2004 was also reprised:

She was determined to make amends for her performance four years ago in Athens, where she dropped out after suffering dehydration, but despite a valiant effort she failed to keep pace with the leaders finishing in a time of two hours 32 minutes and 38 seconds.

The theme of Radcliffe’s proven inability to successfully complete an assignment continued in a follow-up story, illustrated this time by a frontal close-up of her wiping away tears:

Having only confirmed her participation days before the marathon, Radcliffe was determined not to repeat her performance in Athens four years ago where she dropped out after suffering from dehydration. The Bedford athlete started comfortably enough as she kept pace with the early pace setters. But she started to tire just after the halfway mark ... Radcliffe battled to stay in contention, but she had no response to the breakaway pack and she appeared visibly shattered.¹⁰⁷

Losses were also rehashed in coverage of male athletes’ performances but, unlike women, men were lauded for their courage and determination to put the bad times behind them. This finding

¹⁰⁴ BBC, “Radcliffe ready to ‘give it a go’”, August 12, 2008. (Photo source: BBC, Getty Images)

¹⁰⁵ BBC, “Gutsy Radcliffe finishes marathon”, August 17, 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Source: BBC, “Gutsy Radcliffe finishes marathon”, August 17, 2008.

is similar to Billings and Angelini's (2007) study showing male Olympians were described as more courageous than female Olympians. In line with Dutch television's ambivalent representations of female Olympians (Knoppers & Elling(2001), the BBC's coverage is congruent with the structure of hegemonic masculinity. In 2008, CBC stories about the Canadian men's eight reminded readers of the rowers' previous Olympic failure. Coverage of its opening race in Beijing reported that the team "took its first step toward redemption with a first place finish". The same story said the crew was "seeking redemption after a crushing fifth-place finish at the Athens Games."¹⁰⁸ When the men won the gold medal six days later, the headline announced their "redemption". The story confirmed they had "finished the job they started four years ago [and since] their disaster in Athens, the crew has toiled under the single-minded focus of winning in Beijing."¹⁰⁹

4.4.7 Linguistic sexism in 2008

4.4.7a Hierarchical naming

Naming is important because it conveys status and prestige (2006). Crolley and Teso (2007) note that asymmetrical patterns in terms of address are one of the most effective power tools in gender relations. They include using the more informal first name for a woman but reserving last names for men, which suggests that men are privileged over women (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990) and belittles female athletes' participation, abilities and achievements (Koivula, 1999). Men were called by their first name far more often than women on all three sites in 2008 (267 references compared with 154), and the difference was statistically significant (Table 4.57). A combination of factors contributed to the naming counts for each gender. Of course, for men there were more opportunities for all forms of address (first and last name, last name only and first name only references) simply because of the higher number of stories about them. For athletes with common family names/surnames, the first or given name was used to distinguish between them. This occurred in stories about equestrian events, boxing, water polo and tennis.¹¹⁰ Also, as is the convention, several soccer players from Brazil were referred to by one name only, such as Ronaldinho, Diego, Rafinha,¹¹¹ Marta and Daniela.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ BBC, "Tearful Radcliffe looks to 2012", August 17, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ CBC, "Men's 8 takes 1st step to podium", August 11, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ CBC, "Gold-medal redemption for Canadian men's eight", August 17, 2008.

¹¹⁰ The athletes called by their first names were: Australian riders Lucinda Fredericks and Clayton Fredericks, GB boxers Bradley Saunders and Billy Joe Saunders, Australian water polo team members Melissa Rippon and Rebecca Rippon, GB tennis players Andy Murray and Jamie Murray and Americans Venus Williams and Sarina Williams.

¹¹¹ CBC, "Brazil reaches quarter-finals of Olympic soccer", August 10, 2008.

¹¹² CBC, "Canadian women's soccer team earns draw with China", August 10, 2008.

The majority of first name only references for both genders appeared in direct quotations from coaches and fellow athletes, as was the case for male athletes in 2004 (Jones 2003). When asked about the result of a fitness test on gymnast Brandon O'Neill, his coach said, "Brandon struggled but he did well enough."¹¹³ Canadian pitcher Lauren Bay Regula was twice referred to by her first name by her coach.¹¹⁴ Sailor Ben Ainslie said of his rival in the Finn event, "Zach [Railey] is sailing really well."¹¹⁵ However, there were instances – aside from soccer and the Brazilian players mentioned earlier – where journalists referred to female athletes by their first name only. For example, on the CBC, an analyst twice referred to Canadian weightlifter Christine Girard by her first name.¹¹⁶ On the ABC, swimmer Bronte Barratt was called by her first name.¹¹⁷ The BBC used the more familiar "Becky" in reference to swimmer Rebecca Adlington.¹¹⁸ Such instances, although few in number, draw attention to gender and away from female athletes' performances (Lumby et al., 2010). They also suggest the existence of or create a different, less socially distant relationship between female competitors and readers than that with male competitors (Crolley & Teso, 2007) who were never referred to by their first name only by ABC, BBC or CBC journalists.

A further breakdown of the data for each broadcaster shows little difference between genders in the frequency of use of particular naming references (as shown below in Table 4.77). The most frequent form of address for both women and men was the athlete's first and last name in the story's first reference to her/him, with subsequent references using the athlete's last name only. In contrast with previous studies, the findings in 2008 indicate no reluctance on the part of journalists to employ the last name only when referring to female athletes. This suggests that changes in newsroom staffing could be working positively to correct historic gender distinctions in sports reporting and that the conventions for naming athletes in first and subsequent references, taught in university journalism courses and set out in house style guides,¹¹⁹ are more readily adopted as sports newsrooms become infused with and "academised" by more tertiary-educated recruits (Hanusch 2013). This trend is discussed further in Chapter 6.

¹¹³ CBC, "O'Neill gets approval to compete in Beijing Games", August 8, 2008.

¹¹⁴ CBC, "Canada sent packing after softball loss", August 20, 2008.

¹¹⁵ CBC, "American Railey leads in Finn sailing; Toronto's Cook 3rd", August 11, 2008.

¹¹⁶ CBC, "Pak Hyon Suk wins gold in women's weightlifting, Girard bumped to 4th", August 12, 2008.

¹¹⁷ ABC, "Barratt makes 200m free final, Mackenzie bows out", August 12, 2008.

¹¹⁸ BBC, "Adlington tipped to add to gold", August 12, 2008.

¹¹⁹ For example, this university style guide (<http://www.uq.edu.au/sjc/docs/SJC-style-and-production-guide-2012.pdf>) requires student journalists to avoid honorifics for all names involved in sport, whether they are the names of sports competitors or officials. The BBC *News Style guide* (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/news-style-guide/article/art20131010112740749>) states: "Mr, Mrs, etc. should be used, except for convicted criminals and also journalists, sports people, authors, actors, artists, musicians and entertainers in their professional capacity."

Table 4.77 Naming references by form and gender on the ABC, BBC and CBC

Descriptor	ABC		BBC		CBC	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	n (%) [*]	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
First and last name	1106 (54)	1345 (52)	1115 (49)	2040 (49)	1729 (56)	2716 (53)
Last name only	890 (44)	1203 (46)	1095 (48)	1920 (47)	1288 (42)	2358 (46)
First name only	48 (2)	52 (2)	54 (2)	166 (4)	52 (2)	49 (1)
Total	2044 (100)	2600 (100)	2264 (100) [#]	4126 (100)	3069 (100)	5123 (100)

* Note: Indicates the proportion of use by gender; that is, 54 per cent of female references on the ABC used the first and last name, 44 per cent used the last name only and 2 per cent used the first name only.

Note: Percentages do not add up to the total due to rounding.

4.4.7b Martial metaphors

Across the sites, martial language was almost twice as likely to be used in references to male athletes than to female athletes (Tables 4.67 to 4.69) and the chi-square tests showed there was a significant difference by gender. The fewer martial references for female athletes (one third of descriptors) in 2008 Olympics coverage could be connected to the fewer stories published about sportswomen. When the data are broken down to reveal the number of stories containing martial metaphors little separates the genders on the BBC and CBC. On the BBC, 38 per cent of female stories and 43 per cent of male stories contained martial metaphors. On the CBC, an identical proportion of female and male stories (73 per cent) contained martial references. The gap is widest between genders on the ABC, where 17 per cent of male stories and 10 per cent of female stories contained martial descriptors.

Sport-war metaphors venerate strength and aggression, characteristics that are inconsistent with femininity. Media scholars have identified the use of martial metaphors either exclusively or predominantly in association with male sports (Kinnick, 1998). The absence of martial language from women's sports coverage, it is argued, is sexist because it sets female athletes apart from the normal (men are aggressive), presenting them as anomalies. Against this background, and given the dominance in 2008 of swimming (considered a female-appropriate sport) in female coverage, it is surprising that so many women's sports stories contained martial references. This shift could reflect swimming's brand equity (Cunningham & Sagas 2002) in all three countries,

and its effect on the blurring or eroding of the traditional boundaries between female-appropriate, gender neutral and male-appropriate sports.

Previous studies have shown that verbal attributions of strength and weakness for women and men have contrasted sharply (Duncan, Messner, Williams, et al., 1990), so it is interesting to compare coverage of same-sport contests in Beijing. The ABC gave extensive coverage to the campaigns of Australia's basketball teams. The men's quarter-final against the United States was likened to the biblical battle between David and Goliath.¹²⁰ No such analogies appeared in descriptions of the women's matches. When both teams lost to the United States, the Boomers were "blown away" and "comprehensively thrashed",¹²¹ but the most emotive and highest number of sport-war images were reserved for the women's "failure", perhaps because it was the final and a game widely tipped as winnable by the Australians who were the reigning world champions:

The United States has *swept* to a fourth successive Olympic women's basketball gold medal with a *crushing defeat* over world champion Australia in Beijing.

The predicted fireworks failed to materialise as the Americans *obliterated their fierce rivals* 92-65 in a totally one-sided Beijing final to win their sixth Olympic title.

Not even Australia's NBA trio of Lauren Jackson, Penny Taylor and Erin Phillips could *stem the US tide*.¹²²

Sports sex-typed as male-appropriate (such as basketball, hockey and athletics) are characterised by strength, power and aggression. On the ABC, as the preceding paragraphs from the Opals' story show, the women's plays were described in these terms. Nor was the language of war reserved for the Opals' final. Earlier, the team was credited with "*pulverising* the Czech Republic 79-46" to advance to the semi-finals¹²³ and "*crushing* China 90-56" in the semi-final. In that game, the Australians "*blew* the game open" and "*exploded* for a series of easy buckets".¹²⁴ This result contrasts with Duncan's (1990) study where strength descriptors heavily favoured men. In 2008, in another male-appropriate sport, triathlon, women and men received similar attributions of strength. Gold medallist Emma Snowsill's "*dominant win*" was characterised by her ability to "*burn off*" a rival,¹²⁵ whereas Germany's Jan Frodeno "*mowed down*" his rivals and "*put on a devastating burst of speed to run [them] down*" to win.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ ABC, "Boomers not ruling out Rocky-like miracle", August 20, 2008.

¹²¹ ABC, "Boomers blown away by US", August 21, 2008.

¹²² ABC, "Opals humbled in gold medal match", August 24, 2008. Italics are my emphasis.

¹²³ ABC, "Taylor injury dampens Opals rout", August 19, 2008. Italics are my emphasis.

¹²⁴ ABC, "Opals cruise into gold medal match", August 22, 2008. Italics are my emphasis.

¹²⁵ ABC, "Snowsill storms to triathlon gold", August 18, 2008. Italics are my emphasis.

¹²⁶ ABC, "Frodeno wins triathlon, Aussies miss out", August 19, 2008. Italics are my emphasis.

Kinnick (1998) has noted the use of vivid descriptions of male aggression in stories about diving and gymnastics. She proposed that these macho descriptors functioned to offset the view that “real men” did not participate in female-appropriate, non-contact sports. Across a range of sports in 2008, and with no apparent correlation to a sport’s sex-typing, corresponding metaphors were used to describe successful female and male athletes’ performances – suggesting a greater willingness among sports journalists to overlook the sex-appropriateness of a sport when a home country athlete of either gender mounts the podium. Both genders were “dominant”, “stunning”, “powerful” and “strong”; they “shattered”, “crushed”, “demolished”, “smashed”, “pulverised”, “absolutely obliterated” and “devastated” their opponents during “blistering” performances and “thumping” victories. However, there were no male parallels to a “delicious showdown”, the condescending descriptor used in a story about the semi-finals in the women’s 100m backstroke.¹²⁷ Explanations for winning relating to commitment characterised men as “holding their nerve” and being “resolute” and “plucky”, whereas women showed their commitment to “wear down” an opponent or mount a “stunning fightback”. Descriptions of success attributed to athletic consonance described women as “bouncing back” against their opponents and men as “outlasting” them. Athletes whose leadership resulted in success were “the driving force” in their team (male) or they “led the charge” (female). Explanations for losses by women and men were just as likely to be attributed to a lack of athletic skill or strength. Men were “swept aside” or were “found wanting”. Women were “bundled out” or “bowed out” when they “failed to produce” or were “unable to summon a coherent effort”. Both men and women who failed were accused of lacking athletic consonance. Men “could not maintain the pace” and women “failed to keep pace”.

4.4.7c Trivialising language

Scholars have noted that maturity infers social status, but the sports media have a history of stereotyping women by associating them with childishness (Duncan, 2006). A total of 54 infantilising descriptions were recorded in this study, but they were relatively few in number on the BBC and CBC and, as noted earlier, the statistical significance of differences by gender should be treated with caution (Tables 4.71 and 4.72). Stories on the ABC had the highest proportion of trivialising references (Table 4.70), but across the sites the majority of descriptors were contained in direct quotes from coaches or fellow athletes who identified men as “young kids” (the so-called kids were aged 20 and 21),¹²⁸ “this kid”,¹²⁹ “young man”¹³⁰ and “the

¹²⁷ CBC, “Coventry sets world record in 100m backstroke”, August 11, 2008.

¹²⁸ CBC, “Canada battles China in Olympic baseball opener”, August 13, 2008.

¹²⁹ CBC, “US boxers bowing to rest of the world”, August 16, 2008.

¹³⁰ CBC, “Rogge says Bolt should ‘show more respect’”, August 21, 2008.

boys”¹³¹ and women as “girls”.¹³² On the ABC, and as observed in previous studies (George et al., 2001; Koivula, 1999), journalists described women as “girls”¹³³ but they never called men “boys”. Aside from these instances of bias, the findings suggest that such terms which devalue sportswomen’s status and their performances (Wensing & Bruce, 2003) are slowly disappearing from the lexicon of sports journalists, if not from the wider community.

4.4.7d Gender marking

Across the three sites, there were more instances of gender marking for male sports than female sports. Events were identified as the province of one gender or the other, for example the “women’s 400 individual medley”¹³⁴ and the “men’s cycling”,¹³⁵ whereas teams were also referred to by gender, for example “China’s male gymnasts”.¹³⁶ The differences by gender on the ABC and CBC were significant, according to the chi-square tests (Tables 4.73 and 4.75). Since this result could be due to the greater number of stories about men, the data was broken down into two sub-sets: the incidence of gender marking in the lead, the dominant text element on each site’s splash page, and the mean number of gender marking references per T2 story for women and men.

On the ABC, 26 out of the 47 leads (55 per cent) contained gender marking descriptors (see Figure 4.9). Readers were far more likely to see a gender descriptor in a lead about a female athlete than a male athlete. This result contrasts with *News Online*’s coverage in 2000 when occurrences of gender marked sports for female and male athletes were evenly distributed in splash page headlines and summaries (Jones, 2003). In 2008, 70 per cent of the ABC’s leads (16 out of 23) about sportswomen contained gender descriptors compared with 10 out of 24 leads about men (42 per cent). Women who competed in team sports were more likely to have their contests gender marked than women competing in individual sports. However, there was no difference in the frequency of marking of individual and team sports according to sex-type, with an even distribution of descriptors between women’s individual and team contests. For men,

¹³¹ BBC, “Pinsent’s golden hope for rowers”, August 8, 2008; ABC, “Boomers not ruling out Rocky-like miracle”, August 20, 2008.

¹³² BBC, “Athletics boss rues missed medals”, August 24, 2008; ABC, “Chinese quinella denies Schipper gold”, August 14, 2008; ABC, “Saville not happy with walk performance”, August 21, 2008. While headlines on the ABC and CBC were not categorised or counted in this study, two headlines on the ABC contained the condescending descriptors ((Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990)), “Aussie girls” (ABC, “Aussie girls take shock relay gold”, August 14, 2008) and “golden girls” (ABC, “Golden girls smash medley relay record”, August 17, 2008).

¹³³ ABC, “Four-goal burst helps Hockeyroos win a thriller”, August 11, 2008; ABC, “Double gold for Australia in 470 sailing”, August 18, 2008; ABC, “Argentina heaps further hockey misery on Germany”, August 22, 2008; ABC, “Hockeyroos defeated by Dutch double”, August 16, 2008.

¹³⁴ ABC, “Rice claims first Aussie gold”, August 10, 2008.

¹³⁵ ABC, “Rogers falls short as Sanchez claims gold on road”, August 9, 2008.

¹³⁶ CBC, “Chinese gymnasts clinch team gold”, August 12, 2008.

stories about individual sports were four times more likely to be gender marked than stories about team events. Leads about male-appropriate individual sports contained half of all the gender descriptors for men.

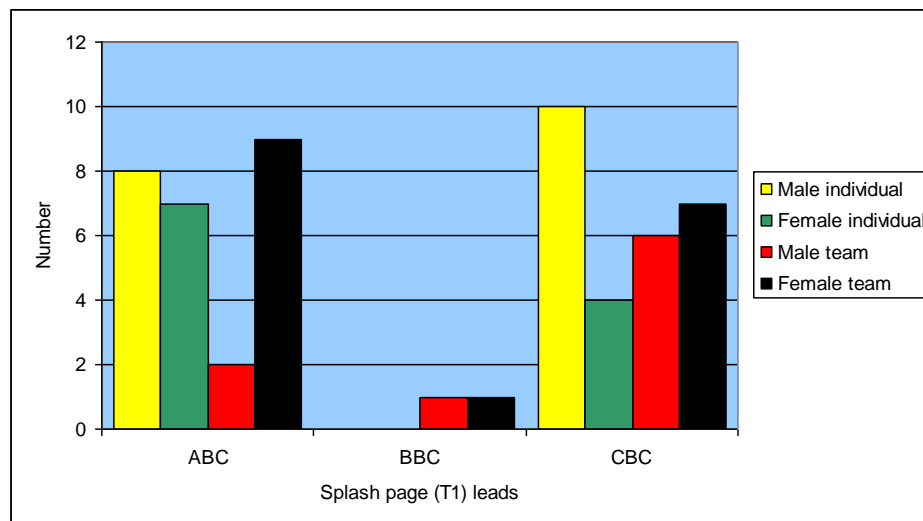


Figure 4.9 Gender marked leads by gender and contest type on the ABC, BBC and CBC

The BBC site had the lowest number of gender marked leads. Only two out of 46 leads contained gender descriptors – one for each gender in stories about team events in sailing (a gender neutral sport). The low frequency of gender markers reflects the format of leads on the BBC which used headlines only on the T1 page, thus reducing the capacity for inserting adjectives; whereas leads on the ABC and CBC consisted of both headlines and summary blurbs of one to two sentences in length.¹³⁷ Of the 48 leads on the CBC site, 27 or 56 per cent contained gender marking references. Women’s lead stories were more likely to be gender marked than men’s. Two thirds of women’s lead stories (11 of 17) contained gender descriptors compared with half of all male leads (16 of 31). The most frequently marked stories for women were about team contests in male-appropriate sports, whereas for men the most frequently marked stories were about individual events in male-appropriate sports.

As has been noted in several studies, the media’s tendency towards asymmetrical gender marking of sport emphasises it as the natural domain of male rather than female athletes (Duncan, Messner, & Williams, 1990). The frequency of labelling of “women’s contests” in splash page leads on the ABC and CBC infers they are inferior to the contests of “their male counterparts who play the version of the sport that ‘really counts’” (George et al., 2001, p. 99). This trend was also observed in T2 stories on all three websites. On the ABC, stories about

¹³⁷ See Appendix B for examples of T1 leads on the ABC, BBC and CBC.

sports with female participants contained an average of 1.4 references whereas stories about sports with male participants had an average of .98 references each. On the BBC, there were 1.5 references per story about women and 1.1 references per story about men. T2 stories on the CBC contained the highest concentration of gender markers. For women, there were 2.2 instances per story compared with 1.8 per story about men.

On each of the sites, in leads and T2 stories, the marking count was inflated by superfluous references. At times, despite a clear indication of the athlete's gender (by the use of the person's name and/or personal pronoun and/or the inclusion of a photograph of the subject) the contest was marked. Figure 4.10 shows two examples of superfluous gender descriptors. In the first, a T1 lead on the ABC, Australian swimmer Stephanie Rice is clearly identifiable as a woman. The clues include her photograph, the use of her first and last name in the summary blurb and the personal pronoun "her" in the photograph's caption. In the second example, a T2 story from the CBC, the redundancy of "women" in the headline and intro is all the more notable given softball's classification as a women-only Olympic sport.



Gold for Australia... Stephanie Rice reclaimed her 400 IM world mark after taking Olympic gold.

Rice claims first Aussie gold

Stephanie Rice has claimed Australia's first medal at the Beijing Olympics, winning gold in the women's 400 individual medley in a world record time of 4:29.45.

Rice blitzed her American rival and former world record holder Katie Hoff, reclaiming the record she set at the Australian trials earlier this year by 1.67 seconds. [More](#)

Headline: Rice claims first Aussie gold

Stephanie Rice has claimed Australia's first medal at the Beijing Olympics, winning gold in the *women's* 400 individual medley in a world record time of 4:29.45.

Caption: Gold for Australia... Stephanie Rice reclaimed her 400 IM world mark after taking Olympic gold.

Canada softball women up on U.S. before rain delay

Last Updated: Thursday, August 14, 2008 | 6:11 AM ET Comments 6 Recommend 19
CBC Sports



Erin McLean of Canada prepares to run from second base against the United States during their preliminary softball game at the Fengtai Softball Field on August 14, 2008. (Mark Dadds/Getty Images)

play a scheduled game against China before returning to the field 30 minutes later to complete the game against the U.S.

The Canadian women's softball team was beating the powerhouse of the Olympic tournament before being interrupted by rain.

Canada was up 1-0 on the American squad when a thunderstorm rolled after three innings on Thursday. Dione Meier was Canada's starting pitcher.

The game will resume on Friday in the fourth inning, where it left off on Thursday. Canada will first

Headline: Canada softball *women* up on U.S. before rain delay

The Canadian *women's* softball team was beating the powerhouse of the Olympic tournament before being interrupted by rain.

Caption: Erin McLean of Canada prepares to run from second base against the United States during their preliminary softball game at the Fengtai Softball Field on August 14, 2008.

Figure 4.10 Examples of gender marking of women's sports ¹³⁸

4.5 Key findings of the content analysis

The findings of the content analysis indicate varying degrees of imbalance in the coverage of female and male Olympic athletes by the three public broadcasters. The picture that emerges is complicated, nuanced and different for each site, in several respects. At the same time, the findings mirror numerous studies that have noted the sports media's tendency to accord lower news value to the participation of women in sport.¹³⁹ For this reason, the following section summarises the results, for each broadcaster, in relation to the research question concerning the

¹³⁸ ABC, "Rice claims first Aussie gold", August 10, 2008; CBC, "Canada softball women up on U.S. before rain delay", August 19, 2008. Italics are my emphasis.

¹³⁹ As an example, Daddario and Wigley (2007), Duncan (2006) and Donohoe (2003) alluded to coverage that typically comprised only 5 to 10 per cent of any newspaper, magazine or television sports broadcast; denigrated women; and compared their achievements and abilities with those of men through referring to women as girls, identifying them by first name and/or familial roles, or describing them through the use of feminine terms.

recognition and the respect (RQ1) afforded to sportswomen and sportsmen in reporting of the 2008 Olympic Games.

4.5.1 The ABC's Olympics reporting in 2008

On the ABC, women were the subjects of fewer stories than men (216 compared with 248), although they shared the top spot of lead story with men. Female athletes received exceptional coverage of their team sport competitions (compared with the results of previous Olympics and non-Olympics studies) in both lead stories and the number of stories per bulletin. Women competing in male-appropriate sports had the highest mean rank for coverage of all female sports. Women received 47 per cent of stories on the ABC, well short of their national medal success (51 per cent), resulting in a negative “representation ratio”, but their story count was on a par with their team population (46 per cent).

Female athletes appeared in fewer photographs than male athletes on the ABC, receiving 43 per cent of photographs. They were also under-reported relative to male athletes in relation to the “representation ratio” for their medal count and their team population. They were most often shown posed or motionless in a photograph and they were rarely seen in action in the top spot of lead photograph on the site's splash page. Women competing in swimming received the most photographic coverage but the most photographed female, swimmer Stephanie Rice, was never shown competing in her sport.

Women were just as likely as men to have their physical characteristics mentioned in stories but were singled out when their stature appeared to be at odds with the media's perception of the physical and mental toughness required in a male-appropriate sport. Women's achievements and abilities were compared with male athletes as though the male was the benchmark. Female athletes received disproportionate emphasis on their family roles, romantic and other relationships to men. Even though they were the subjects of few references to their emotions, they were stereotypically characterised as emotionally weaker than men and less accountable for their successes. They were nine times more likely to have their successes highlighted than their failures; but they were more likely to be criticised for making mistakes than were men.

Only women were identified by their first names by journalists. They were most often identified by their first and last name and, like men, were most often identified by their last name in subsequent references. They were less likely than male athletes to have their performances described in martial language. Only women were referred to by journalists as “girls”. They were more likely than men to have their sports gender marked in splash page lead stories; and they were almost 1.4 times more likely than men to have their T2 stories gender marked.

On the ABC, men were the subjects of more stories than women but they shared equal billing with women in the top spot of the site's lead story. Male athletes were well ahead of female athletes in team sports coverage even though they received fewer lead stories than women's team sports. Men competing in male-appropriate sports had the highest mean rank for coverage of all male sports. Male athletes received 53 per cent of stories on the ABC, well above their national medal count of 49 per cent but on a par with their team population of 54 per cent. In terms of medals won, the "representation ratio" indicates they were over-reported relative to female athletes. Compared with their team population, men were under-reported relative to female athletes.

Men appeared in more photographs than women. They received 57 per cent of photographs, well above their national medal count and their team population. They were most often shown posed or motionless in a photograph except for lead photographs on the T1 splash page where they were most often depicted as active participants. Men competing in swimming received the most photographic coverage. The most photographed male, swimmer Michael Phelps, was shown in an even split of active and passive photographs.

Men's physical characteristics were only ever mentioned in the context of injuries or height/weight statistics pertinent to their sport. Men were never compared with female athletes (as though the female was the model athlete). They received few mentions of their family roles, romantic or other relationships to women. They were rarely identified or characterised by references to their emotions; and the few emotional descriptors used by the ABC characterised men as emotionally stoical. The ABC reported on men's successes four times more often than their failures. Journalists never identified men by their first names. As was the case with female athletes, male athletes were identified by the first and last name with the last name used for subsequent references. Men were more likely than women to have their performances described in martial language. Journalists never referred to male athletes as "boys". They were less likely than women to have their sports gender marked in splash page leads and in T2 stories (.98 mentions per story compared with 1.4 mentions for women).

4.5.2 The BBC's Olympics reporting in 2008

Sportswomen were the subjects of far fewer stories than men (181 compared with 275) on the BBC and they received just one-third of lead story summaries on the site. Women competing in female-appropriate sports had the highest mean rank for coverage of all female sports. Women received 40 per cent of stories on the BBC, on a par with their national medal success (41 per cent), but below their team population (46 per cent). They were under-reported relative to men, registering a deficit for the "representation ratio".

Female athletes appeared in far fewer photographs than male athletes on the BBC. They received 38 per cent of photographs, lower than their national medal count and well short of their team population. This resulted in under-coverage relative to male athletes according to the “representation ratio” for each equity measure. Almost two-thirds of female photographs showed them posed or motionless, whereas only half of the lead photographs of women on the site’s splash page showed them actively competing. Lead photographs of women were outnumbered by photographs of men by 3 to 1. Female swimmers received the most photographic coverage but the most photographed woman, runner Paula Radcliffe, was not shown competing in her event, the marathon.

Stories on the BBC were just as likely to mention women’s physical characteristics as men’s. Both genders received a high proportion of factual references related to injuries and/or physical characteristics pertinent to a sport. Female athletes received far more irrelevant references to their relationships than men (60 per cent v. 40 per cent) despite the far higher number of stories about men. Although they received fewer references to their emotions than men, women were stereotypically characterised as emotionally weaker than men and in need of guidance in order to achieve success. They were twice as likely to have their successes highlighted as their failures; but they were more likely to be the targets of media criticism for falling short of media expectations.

Only women were identified by their first names by journalists. Female athletes were most often called by their first and last name and were just as likely as men to be identified by their last name in subsequent references. They were less likely than male athletes to have their performances described in martial language. Journalists never infantilised women by referring to them as “girls”. Women were just as likely as men to have their sports gender marked in splash page lead stories (one each), but they were almost 1.4 times more likely than men to have their T2 stories gender marked.

On the BBC, men were the subjects of more stories than women. They also dominated lead stories on the site’s T1 splash page, receiving two-thirds of all leads. Men’s team sports received almost twice as many stories as women’s team sports, and their stories outnumbered women’s by 3 to 1 in splash page leads. Men competing in female-appropriate sports had the highest mean rank for coverage of all male sports. Male athletes received 60 per cent of stories on the BBC, on a par with their national medal count (59 per cent) but above their team population (54 per cent). According to their “representation ratio”, they were over-reported relative to female athletes.

Men also appeared in more photographs than women. They received 62 per cent of photographs, above their national medal count and well above their team population. Again, their “representation ratio” shows male athletes were over-reported relative to female athletes. They were most often shown posed or motionless in a photograph except for lead photographs on the T1 splash page where there was a 50:50 split of active and passive images of men. Men competing in swimming received the most photographic coverage on the BBC and the most photographed male was swimmer Michael Phelps with 37 images.

A high proportion of mentions of men’s appearance concerned injuries, withdrawals or results in sports where weight and/or height are critical elements of the contest. There were fewer mentions of men’s family roles, romantic or other relationships to women than women’s relationships. Men were frequently characterised by references to their emotions but their flaws were described in less graphic terms than women’s. The BBC reported on men’s successes twice as often as their failures. Journalists never identified men by their first names. Men were introduced using their first and last name, with the last name only used in subsequent references. Journalists never called male athletes “boys”. Men were more likely than women to have their performances described in martial language. They were just as likely as women to have their sports gender marked in splash page lead stories (one each); but they were less likely to have their T2 stories gender marked (1.1 references per story for men compared with 1.5 for women).

4.5.3 The CBC’s Olympics reporting in 2008

Women were featured in fewer stories than men on the CBC (171 compared with 246), whereas only one third of leads on the site were about female athletes and their sports. Women competing in team sports received the smallest proportion of coverage (14 per cent) compared with men’s team sports (20 per cent). Female-appropriate sports had the highest mean rank for coverage of all female sports. With 41 per cent of stories on the CBC, female athletes were well represented in terms of their national medal success (41 per cent) but below the level of coverage warranted by their team population (46 per cent). On the latter indicator’s “representation ratio”, they were under-reported relative to male athletes.

Female athletes appeared in fewer photographs than male athletes on the CBC. They received 41 per cent of photographs, on a par with their national medal count but short of their team population. Their “representation ratio” for team population shows they were under-reported relative to male athletes. Women were most often shown competing in their sports (71 per cent of female images) and were seen in action in the top spot of lead photograph in more than half of all female lead photos. The most featured female in lead photographs, softball pitcher Lauren

Bay Regula, was shown in action in each shot. Women competing in athletics received the most photographic coverage, just ahead of soccer and swimming.

Women were less likely than men to be identified by their appearance but, in same type sports sex-typed as feminine, there were instances of disproportionate emphasis on women's age, height, weight and their relationships to men. Female athletes were also disproportionately identified by their romantic and sibling relationships. Women were the subjects of far fewer references to their emotions than men but were more likely to be characterised as nervous competitors. They were almost four times more likely to have their successes highlighted than their failures, but they were more likely than men to be criticised for not living up to the CBC's build-up.

On the CBC, women were identified by their first names twice by journalists (this is in addition to stories about soccer where some Brazilian players are known by their first names only). Typically, women were most often identified by their first and last name and were subsequently called by their last name only. They were just as likely as male athletes to have their performances described in martial language and a high proportion of their stories contained martial descriptors. Two-thirds of lead stories about women were gender marked and women's sports were more likely than men's sports to be gender marked.

Men received more coverage than women on the CBC (59 per cent of stories) and they dominated lead summaries on the site, receiving two-thirds of the top stories. More than 58 per cent of stories about team sport competitions featured male athletes. Male team sports also scored more leads than female team sports. Men competing in female-appropriate sports had the highest mean rank for coverage of all male sports. The proportion of stories about men's sports was on a par with their national medal count (59 per cent), but higher than their team population (56 per cent). Their "representation ratio" indicated they were over-reported relative to female athletes.

Male athletes appeared in more photographs than female athletes. They received 59 per cent of photographs, equal to their medal count but above their team population. Again, the "representation ratio" for team population indicates men were over-reported. They were more likely to be seen posed or motionless in a photograph. In lead photographs on the T1 splash page, where men appeared as passive participants 60 per cent of the time, their proportion of action shots was still above that of female athletes. Men competing in swimming received the most photographic coverage. The most photographed man, Canadian kayaker Adam van Koeverden, was shown as an active competitor in 80 per cent of his lead photographs.

One in six CBC stories about men referred to their appearance in the context of injuries, scratchings from events and height/weight statistics pertinent to their sport. Men received few mentions of their roles as fathers or husbands and no references to their romantic relationships with women. Far more stories contained references to men's emotions than to women's emotions. Men's successes were mentioned 3.5 times more often than their failures, whereas male athletes who reversed poor results in heats or previous Olympic finals were said to have achieved redemption. Journalists referred to some male athletes by one name only, but this was in accordance with convention (for example, soccer players Diego and Rafinha), and they never called men "boys". The typical naming practice on the CBC introduced men by the first and last name and used the last name for subsequent references. Although a high proportion of their stories contained martial metaphors, men were just as likely as women to have their performances described in martial language. Male athletes were less likely than female athletes to have their sports gender marked in splash page leads. The highest concentration of markers occurred in T2 stories, but men were still less likely than women to have their stories gender marked (1.8 mentions per story for men and 2.2 mentions per story for women).

4.6 Summary

The message from this study is that men and their sports were *the* story in Beijing in 2008. At the same time, there have been significant changes and progress that challenges previous research in the areas of photographic images and the language of sports journalism. Male athletes were clearly the focus of coverage by the three broadcasters, collectively and individually. Overall, on 16 out of 18 days of Olympics reporting, stories about male sports outnumbered those about female sports and men's photographs led two out of every three bulletins. As Kinnick (1998, p. 215) has argued, the absence of women from the sports media is not inconsequential. The implicit signal is "that female athletes either do not exist, or have no achievements that are newsworthy". In the worst result for women, the ABC published just one story and no photographs of them on August 8, yet women also fared best in coverage on the ABC which gave them 47 per cent of stories and showed them in 43 per cent of photographs. Bias in favour of male sports was most obvious on the BBC where 62 per cent of stories and 60 per cent of photographs were devoted to them. Women were hardest to find on the CBC where they received only 171 stories and 175 photographs (out of the total sample of 1337 stories and 1432 photographs).

Scholars have also noted how the sports media employ the framing technique of ambivalence – the use of contradictory messages – to compensate for the seeming incompatibility between traditional conceptions of femininity and the masculinity associated with competitive, active and aggressive sports (Messner, 1988). One way ambivalence is achieved is to construct and

accentuate sex differences that undermine and trivialise the achievements of female athletes (Bruce, 2008), and then address sports audiences as though such differences are natural and real (Duncan, 2006; Kane, 1996; Kane & Buysse, 2005). Ambivalence often encompasses themes of femininity, vulnerability, dependence and sexuality, “all of which are suggested to trivialize women’s sport” (Cranmer et al., 2014, p. 148). A particular strategy observed in 2008 Olympics coverage was the gratuitous attention devoted by each broadcaster to female athletes’ family roles (as wives and mothers), romantic and other relationships with men, and the noticeable absence of comparable coverage of male athletes. This practice mirrors the findings of other studies (Daddario & Wigley, 2007; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Kinnick, 1998). It is unambiguous, defines sportswomen in terms of their “other” orientation (the default position in our society is the male/masculine) (Duncan, 2006), certifies that even though “women may be athletes ... they are primarily females” (Koivula, 1999, p. 603) and reminds readers that female athletes are not only women but specifically heterosexual women (Daddario, 1998). Shugart (2003, p. 8) argued that sexualising women in this manner “renders them consistent with rather than threatening” to existing concepts of gender and hegemonic masculinity. Such attention and coverage “not only accommodate but reinforce and even cultivate established gender types” in the media at large.

A further strategy that constructed sexual difference in 2008 Olympics coverage was the stereotypical characterisation of sportswomen as emotionally and physically weaker than men and far more dependent on others (mostly men) for their success and psychological well-being – descriptions that “introduced a pervasive element of heterosexuality” and “diluted the image of strength, high level performance and ability” of female athletes (Knoppers & Elling, 2001, p. 291). This emphasis is similar to the biased treatment of female athletes in coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games (Higgs et al., 2003; Kinnick, 1998). In several instances in 2008, the ABC, BBC and CBC characterised female athletes as emotionally vulnerable and prone to bursting into tears; compared them with male athletes whereas the reverse was never the case; questioned their physical and mental capacity to compete at elite level in sports considered masculine; intimated that they needed third party guidance (from a male coach, a psychiatrist or a family member) in order to overcome nerves and achieve success; and questioned women’s commitment and athletic consonance when they failed to live up to media predictions or expectations. Other constructors of sexual difference were asymmetrical infantilising (calling women girls but never referring to men as boys), the exclusive use of the more familiar first name for women, fewer instances of martial descriptions of women’s contests and a higher incidence of gender marking in sports contested by women than in sports contested by men.

Many scholars (Bryson, 1987; Duncan, 2006; Schell & Rodriguez, 2000; Shugart, 2003) have asserted that mediated coverage of women's sports, both historical and contemporary, perpetuates male hegemony. They note this has been achieved in myriad ways, including those observed and described in this study which resulted in disproportionate recognition and indicated a lack of respect for female Olympians and their achievements. However, in spite of the stereotypes observed in the coverage of sportswomen, there were positive signals for women's sports. On the ABC, for example, women competing in team sports, generally portrayed as inappropriate for them (Tuggle & Owen, 1999), were neither under-represented nor ignored. They featured in just under half of all stories and photographs. This marks a major turnaround on the ABC. In its 2000 Olympics coverage, women's team sports featured in less than half of the stories about female sports (Jones, 2003). In 2004, women's teams received fewer than one third of photographs of female sports (Jones, 2006).

As has been noted, researchers contend that sport has been a major site for reinforcing gender stereotypes, by restricting media coverage to appropriate female sports. In a rare exception, Vincent et al. (2002) reported a similar amount of newspaper coverage went to women competing in appropriate and inappropriate sports at the Atlanta Games. The ABC bettered this mark in 2008, giving the most female coverage by a clear margin to the so called inappropriate or male sports of athletics, basketball, hockey, water polo and cycling – all sports in which Australians achieved or were expected to reap significant successes. By extension, the “double whammy” for sportswomen is participation in a male-appropriate team sport. Not so in 2008 on the ABC. The most frequently photographed women lined up in male-appropriate team sports. And they were seen, most often, playing their sport.

The steady climb on the ABC towards gender parity in photographic coverage for women's sports, observed in my content analyses of two previous Olympics in 2000 and 2004 (Jones, 2003, 2006), faltered in 2008. Although well short of the levels of marginalisation experienced by sportswomen beyond Olympics coverage, a clear pattern of differential and inequitable photographic treatment resurfaced on the ABC. Female athletes and their sports were under-reported on three key measures – frequency by gender, medal counts and participation rates (expressed as a “representation ratio”), although women did take an equal share of lead photographs on the site.

Publishing far fewer stories and photographs of women in total, and showcasing a limited selection of women in them, potentially increases the power of both “presence and absence” (Entman, 1993; Huffman et al., 2004), or who is featured and who is ignored by the sports media. Based on previous studies, the ultimate framing of sexual difference in visual coverage

would be a focus on the posed female athlete who engages in an individual, socially acceptable female-appropriate sport. She was there on the ABC in 2008, in second place on the coverage table, by virtue of the attention devoted to Australia's successful female swimmers and the overwhelming majority of passive shots of those women, particularly Stephanie Rice.

Even so, male-appropriate sports remained, proportionately and in their mean value, the primary focus of textual and visual coverage for women on the ABC and in the combined story total for the three broadcasters. In view of this finding, is the sex-type of women's sports a dead issue? Vincent et al. (2002) suggested that such classifications, devised in the 70s, adapted in the 80s, and still in use, may be dated. Or this result may be "reflective of a cultural shift towards a greater social acceptance of female athletes competing in sports and events requiring speed, strength and power" (2002, p. 327), such as basketball, hockey and water polo which, under the current definitions, are considered female-inappropriate.

Alternatively, that female athletes on the ABC were reported on and seen so frequently in action in male-appropriate team sports may not be as encouraging as it first appears. It could be that the media catered to a perceived peak in public interest in women and their sports during the Olympic Games. A further reason for their popularity could be connected to old media habits. Women who have a stereotyped feminine appearance (good-looking with a slender, well-proportioned, not too muscular body) have been particular favourites of the sports media (Duncan, 1990; Mikosza & Phillips, 1999) and do not threaten the hierarchical gender order in sport (Pirinen, 1997). Or the increased coverage could merely reflect the success of Australian women's teams (they were responsible for nine of the 23 medals won by Australian women) and the media's tendency to highlight the achievements of their home country athletes.

Looking a little deeper, a clear bias that is evident in the ABC's photographic coverage of women's team sports cannot be justified or explained by medal success alone. A third of all images of team sports, 27 out of 81, went to basketball where Australia won a silver medal. Just under half of these photographs focused on the Opals captain, Lauren Jackson. In contrast, water polo – another male-appropriate team sport in which Australia's women also won a minor medal and which, like basketball, runs over several days and rounds of competition – featured in 13 photographs, less than half of the attention devoted to basketball. The Stingers most featured player, Gemma Beadsworth, was the subject of just four photographs. The news value of prominence helps to explain the greater degree of attention given to basketball. Several female players are contracted to overseas clubs and, unlike water polo, their sport has strong brand equity.

This content analysis of coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games on the sites of three public broadcasters has provided more than a snapshot of the gendered treatment of female and male athletes. In the case of the ABC, it has allowed comparisons across three Olympic Games. Building a longitudinal, empirical profile of the coverage of sportswomen has provided a body of evidence about trends in the under-representation of female athletes on the website. At the same time, this analysis has revealed that the limited exposure afforded female athletes on the BBC's website in 2004 continued in 2008. For the CBC – where women's sports were also relegated to secondary status – it represents the first study, to my knowledge, of the national broadcaster's online sports reporting. A goal of the quantitative phase of this study was to discern similarities and differences, across multiple empirical measures, among the three broadcasters. The probable causes of the under-representation of sportswomen in regular sports coverage and the relative improvements noted during this analysis of Olympic Games reporting were then explored in the study's second phase, the qualitative interviews with sports journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC, via the questions listed in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 presents and discusses the findings of those interviews.

Chapter 5 Results and discussion: The interviews

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of interviews conducted with three levels of sports news staff, from senior and middle managers to rank and file journalists, including national editors, sports editors, senior network hosts of sport, chief sportswriters, sportscasters, sports broadcasters, multi-platform sports journalists, sportswriters and sports reporters¹⁴⁰ at three national public broadcasters: Australia's ABC, the United Kingdom's BBC and Canada's CBC.

The earlier, quantitative phase of this study, the content analysis, answered the first research question about the characteristics of sports coverage by online media. It examined the level of coverage by gender, on the ABC, BBC and CBC's websites, of athletes competing at the 2008 Olympic Games. It also examined the nature of gendered sports coverage during the Games. The results of the content analysis, as reported and discussed in Chapter 4, set the scene for this subsequent, qualitative phase, the interviews.

The purpose of the interviews was to answer the second research question: What drives gendered sports coverage in online media? However, the scope of the interviews was not limited to the ABC, BBC and CBC's Olympics coverage per se. Rather, the aim was to cast the net wider to explore the manufacture of sports news in each organisation.

5.2 The journalists' profiles

Fifteen participants were interviewed (10 of whom reported on the 2008 Games): six from the ABC, four from the BBC and five from the CBC. The majority of interviewees did not wish to be named; some also declined to give details of their age, education and income. Sport is a relatively small cog in terms of overall staff numbers in each organisation's news machine and there is the likelihood that a person's gender or job title, particularly if it is linked with a place of employment, will point to her/his identity. So, several steps have been taken to accommodate the interviewees' requests for anonymity and confidentiality.

A single, family name pseudonym has been randomly assigned to each person. Irrespective of gender, the pronoun "he" is used to refer to individual journalists. Personal data is reported by

¹⁴⁰ These descriptions reflect the variety of job titles encountered during this international study. In response to requests for anonymity, the general titles of sports journalist and editor are used for the interviewees. The journalists' personal and professional details (such as years of experience) are as at late 2011/early 2012 when the interviews were conducted.

gender across the sample only, with no disaggregation by news organisation except to say that at least one female journalist was interviewed from each of the broadcasters. Further, there are no references to journalists' opinions or perceptions by gender within news organisations, but – where relevant – the discussion section will refer to journalists' opinions or perceptions by gender across the sample. In reporting the comments of various journalists, I was also mindful of Lewis's (2010, pp. 67-68) warning that confidentiality can be compromised by indirect attribution (by reference to a collection of characteristics that might identify an individual). Following Lewis's recommendations, I have omitted contextual details from some of the journalists' specific comments, changed minor details to disguise identity and made some points in general ways even though this has sometimes reduced their power. Omissions, changes and generalisations are identified by italicised notes in square brackets, such as [*details removed*].

The sports journalists' characteristics are summarised in Table 5.1. Figures from previous studies of Australian, UK and Canadian sports journalists have been included in the right-hand columns for information only. They do not enable a direct comparison. For example, both Henningham (1995) and Nicholson et al. (2011) surveyed sports journalists across various Australian media and platforms rather than those employed specifically by the ABC.¹⁴¹ Nor are the data from the various other studies concerned specifically with sports journalists and editors from public broadcasters, or with those whose professional credentials extend to the Olympic Games and other prestigious international events assignments, or with sports journalists who have been in the job for more than a year (as is the case with this study).

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of ABC, BBC and CBC sports journalists (n=15)

ABC, BBC and CBC				1995 ^A	2011 ^B	2005 ^C	2013 ^D	2002 ^E
Gender	Female	33%		11%	10%	9%	10-25%	4-7%
	Male	67%		89%	90%	91%		
Age ¹	Female	24-51 (range)	37 (median)					
	Male	27-62 (range)	46 (median)					
	All	24-62 (range)	46 (median)	32 (median)	36 (median)			
Educ ²	Secondary	7%		39%	30%			

¹⁴¹ Nicholson et al (2011) provided the most recent national data on sports journalism in Australia, but including Henningham's (1995) findings has enabled a comparison across the intervening 16 years. It shows a decline in the proportion of female sports journalists in Australia since 1995. Henningham also provided some data that is not available in the 2011 study.

Years in sports jrn	Some tertiary	7%		13%	
	Tertiary	57%		30%	61%
	Postgrad	29%		1%	7%
	Female	1-22 (range)	15 (median)		
	Male	4-31 (range)	18.5 (median)		
Income ³	All		16 (median)		
			16.6 (mean)	12.4 (mean)	
	Female	\$US78 - \$US205k (range)			
	Male	\$US81 - \$US242k (range)			
Working in cob ⁴	All	100%		90%	88%

Notes 1, 2 and 3: Fourteen journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC gave these details.

Note 4: The journalist works in the country of her/his birth.

Note A: Australian sports journalists' characteristics (Henningham, 1995).

Note B: Australian sports journalists' characteristics (Nicholson et al., 2011)

Note C: National UK press sports journalists only (Boyle, 2006).

Note D: UK newspaper sportswriters only (SJA 2013); and the BBC's estimate that 25 per cent of journalists, producers and editorial staff in its sports department are women (UK Sport, 2006).

Note E: Canadian top 12 daily newspapers sports journalists only (M. A. Hall, 2002); and Canadian newspaper sports personnel only (Depatie, 1997).

Two-thirds of the journalists interviewed work or have worked as sports reporters or writers (10 out of 15). The remaining five hold or have held middle or senior management roles such as sports editors and national editors. All but three have reported on the Olympic Games, and 10 reported on the 2008 Games, as noted earlier. All of the journalists were born in their country of employment. As is the case in sports journalism in Australia, the UK and Canada, the majority are male (10 out of 15). At 33 per cent, the proportion of female sports journalists in this study's sample is far higher than in sports journalism in the three countries in which the journalists work, but – as has been noted – this study does not claim to be representative of the wider sports media in those countries. Fourteen of the 15 journalists revealed their ages. They range from 24 to 62 years. Men are slightly older. Their median age is 46 years compared with 37 years for the women. Of those who revealed details of their education, 12 (four women, eight men)

completed a university undergraduate degree before entering journalism and, of these, 25 per cent (one woman, three men) hold Masters' qualifications.

Eleven sports journalists began their careers in news; one worked as a researcher and producer before moving to sport; two started in sport, moved to news and then returned to sport; and one has worked entirely in the sports department. Collectively, the men have 177 years' experience on the sports round. The longest serving man [*details removed*] has worked for 31 years in sports journalism, whereas the newest recruit has been in the job for four years. All but two women have more than 10 years' experience in sports journalism. The most experienced woman has 22 years on the round. The least experienced has been a sports journalist for just over 12 months [*details removed*], but at the time of the interview she had already reported on several national and international competitions, at home and abroad.

The nine men who revealed their annual incomes earn from \$US81,000 to \$US242,000.¹⁴² The five female journalists earn from \$US78,000 to \$US205,000 annually. Proportionately, more male than female journalists (56 per cent of men compared with 40 per cent of women) are clustered at the higher end of the income range, earning from \$US100,000 to \$US150,000 or above annually, which reflects the male dominance of senior roles within the three organisations. Only one woman had held a senior management position at the time of the interviews.

5.3 Sports news decision-making

This section presents details of the organisational structures of the broadcasters' sports newsrooms. It reports on the degree of control or autonomy the journalists perceive they have over their copy and outlines the decision-making process in each broadcaster, as revealed in the interviews with their respective journalists. It also notes additional arrangements that the journalists say are put in place for coverage of the Olympic Games.

5.3.1 The ABC

Sport has three national newsrooms at the ABC: one each for radio, television and online (with sports copy from radio and television reporters filed on the internal wire accounting for a high proportion of the ABC's online content). Reporters confer with each other and their respective newsroom coordinators who then make pitches up the line to their respective national editors of

¹⁴² Journalists were asked to state their income range, in their national currency. For convenience, the figures were then converted to US dollars, based on these exchange rates: 1 AUD = 1.0384 USD; 1 GBP = 1.6132 USD; and 1 CAD = 1.0226 USD.

sport. The ABC sports journalists gave relatively similar descriptions of the news selection process on a typical day, as indicated by Jacobs.

Jacobs pointed out that theirs is a small group at the ABC, especially when compared with newspaper sports departments where three or more journalists cover (men's sports) rounds such as the AFL and cricket. At the ABC, the final say on sports coverage rests with the national editors (all of whom are men), but Jacobs said the decision-making process is "very much a two-way street" with fairly constant interaction between editors and their staff:

The editor is responsible, ultimately, for what goes to air [or online], so it's in his interest to have a thorough understanding of the story as it progresses and give his input into what he thinks is the primary angle or the way it should be reported. Conversely, the reporters will have the opportunity to suggest what they think should be reported and why it should be done that way.

Only occasionally are reporters assigned to stories other than those they pitch:

In sports coverage, the path ahead is often pretty clear. You have a fairly good idea of what you are going to cover, either through the sports that are being played or the club executive meetings being held that day. You'll have a fairly strong idea of upcoming events, training sessions – so the tide of things is fairly well set out.

Jacobs said things can get cloudy if fleshing out the lead on a story requires a lot of ground work in terms of time and resources. Then, journalists have to weigh up whether to pursue that story or go to a (more convenient) scheduled event, such as a training session to report on a key player's injury or suspension. As for the role or function of sports journalists: "We're basic news gatherers," Jacobs said. Although there is some scope within online sports news for a level of analysis and deeper reporting, he said the primary function of sports journalists at the ABC remains to gather the news of the day and broadcast it.

The ABC's approach to covering the Olympic Games differs from the processes it has in place for major national sports events and international events staged in Australia. For the latter group, small teams of local sports reporters will cover an event (such as the Australian Open tennis) and extra sports reporters or broadcasters are brought in as needed. For the 2008 Olympic Games, Jacobs said ABC news marshalled "a fairly big team" of 12 reporters, but only one was a sports journalist. Jacobs said this was because a lot of the stories surrounding the Olympic Games, especially in the lead-up, are outside the realm of sport. When the Games get underway, Jacobs said stories tend to shift in focus and revolve more around the sports competitions. In Beijing, this staffing decision had an impact on the ABC's sports coverage:

We didn't have sufficient experience in sport amongst the news reporting team. There was no insight into where these athletes had

come from to get to the point they were at. There was purely the ability to report on what was seen on that day and broadcast it to the audience. What was missing was the experience of sports reporters who had been following these athletes for four years leading up to it and were able to add that extra layer of depth to our reporting.

The ABC ramped up the numbers in its web team in Brisbane to handle both the coverage of the 2008 Olympics on its dedicated website and the usual business of online reporting on national and international competitions in non-Olympic sports. The online sports teams were assisted by general news journalists with the capacity to check content. Teams were rostered according to the spread of Olympic event times and worked for 16 hours each day across the Games. Grant said the four-person teams would “caucus among themselves” about what to run, but the final decisions on lineups rested with the online shift leaders. Decisions about how to illustrate stories (including wire service copy and stories taken from the ABC’s internal wire and repurposed for online) were the province of the online team members.¹⁴³

5.3.2 The BBC

BBC Sport has its headquarters in Salford. All national television, radio and online sports news, as well as sports news for the global channels BBC World (TV) and the World Service (radio), is coordinated from the one main newsroom. A head of sports news oversees the three platforms. Each platform has its own editor to manage day-to-day operations.

Journalists at the BBC describe a two-way process in sports news decision-making, as well as an expectation that, on all stories, they will file material for multiple outlets. As an example, Blackmore, who reports on four different sports for online but also files for radio and television, said he comes up with ideas for what he might cover and how. Then, he discusses them with his editor: “We might take an idea and fine tune it,” he said. A story might get “knocked around and then binned” if it is no good, or it might be expanded to cater for the different needs of multiple platforms: “Some of the editor’s job is to look at it from a pan BBC perspective and say, ‘How can we make maximum use of this story or this info we’ve got?’”

During an Olympics, Blackmore said a lot of discussion goes on between the various editors who decide what to cover. While the BBC sent a small team of sports journalists to Beijing in 2008, much of its online coverage stemmed from live streaming from the various venues. Holt said web sports journalists in London “watched what was going on and had all of the information sources there” to write stories. They also drew on the talent presenting and

¹⁴³ Getty Images was the main source of photographs for the ABC’s Olympics site.

commentating on events and repurposed stories filed by BBC sports journalists for radio and television.¹⁴⁴

Staff on the dedicated Olympics website teams worked with front page editors – senior journalists who (theoretically) decided story placement. Kelly said, in practice, the process was more inclusive and team members would bat ideas back and forth about the most important story. Online team members also decided how to illustrate stories. Kelly said all BBC online journalists are expected to have the skills to select the photo that best fits a story and to crop it to fit the site’s standard image sizes.¹⁴⁵

5.3.3 The CBC

CBC Sports has one national newsroom, located in the main broadcasting centre in Toronto. All sports coverage generated from there for radio, television and online is overseen by a senior producer of sports content. The newsroom delivers sports news content to many regional CBC centres and is also the hub for the production of live sporting events.

Sports journalists at the CBC describe slightly different hierarchies of editorial decision-making and degrees of consultation, depending on the medium and region in which they work and the event being reported. Some journalists, such as Roberts who is the only sports journalist in a general newsroom in a regional area [*details removed*], exercise a large degree of editorial independence. “I’m pretty-much self-assigning,” he said. He will talk over story ideas with his editor, but because sport is Roberts’s area of expertise “they kind of leave you alone”. He said there is always enough airtime, within his sports segments in news broadcasts, to do what he really wants. The only restrictions are resources: having enough time to set up stories, do the appropriate research, secure the camera time to shoot them and get the stories out.

However, Porter spoke of a higher degree of editorial input into his daily routine [*details removed*]. Where once all the stories he reported for national dissemination were generated by his own ideas, nowadays it is more of a balancing act “where the editors are saying, ‘OK, we

¹⁴⁴ The website also ran a live blog written by online journalists who watched events telecasts, listened to commentators on radio and television and monitored tweets and blogs from other journalists at the Games. Tweets from the BBC audience were included in the mix.

¹⁴⁵ The BBC has agreements with a range of agencies to use their photographs, among them Getty Images, the Press Association and the Associated Press. Kelly said photos are kept on an internal server, known as “Elvis”. Journalists and production staff choose photos from the pool. The aim is to illustrate every sports story with a photograph, using fresh images from the event in question. If this is not possible, due to the lack of a current image or legal restrictions, a stock photo will be used with acknowledgement in a caption or “alt tag”. Videos are inserted at the top of a story. During the 2008 Games, instead of

want a story on this', and you have to go and figure out what is the story." Porter blamed his reduced independence on the ubiquitous news cycle. As editors try to stay on top of every story, it is sometimes hard to sell his ideas because they don't want him to be out of the mix and potentially missing the next big story. In the CBC's integrated news environment, journalists are also expected to file sports stories and updates for each medium, to tweet and to write blogs: "It seems you're constantly being asked for all of this stuff to happen and that will affect the [range and] quality of what you're doing in general for each of those places," Porter said.

For the Olympic Games in 2008, CBCSports.ca had three to five writers, crew chiefs and a senior producer working on the dedicated website from its base in Toronto. The crew chiefs set a rough agenda for each day's coverage, including the events to watch. Porter said the higher the chance of a Canadian success, the more likely a journalist in the field would be assigned to cover the event: "A lot of thought goes into who is expected to do what and when and that's how the decision makers determine what to put the most emphasis on," he said.

Across the Games, the crew chiefs also assigned events to the staff writers, identified stories to be updated and suggested ideas for features. Senior online writers selected, downloaded and edited all photos, with the aim of having a photo with every story, whether it was an original write or a wire story.¹⁴⁶ Lineups were also the province of senior writers, in consultation with the senior producer or crew chief.

5.4 Attributes of sports news

This section reports on the attributes journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC said guide their decisions about what to select from the range of potential sports news available each day and how they prioritise that coverage. It also reports on the additional factors the journalists said are at work in their coverage of the Olympic Games.

5.4.1 The ABC

Among ABC journalists, the most frequently cited and first mentioned driver of sports news selection is public interest in the sense of "that which is interesting to the public" (also referred to by the journalists as audience interest and the significance of the sport to the audience).

videos viewers abroad saw still images (freeze frames from the videos) because the BBC did not have worldwide rights to Olympics footage.

¹⁴⁶ In 2008, the CBC had rights to photographs from Getty Images and the Canadian Press. On rare occasions, senior writers used screen grabs from the broadcaster's television coverage. When no photos were available, generic graphics were used as fillers. A standard ratio of 4 to 3 applies to all photos appearing at the top of a story above the text. In top, important or lengthy stories, smaller images might be used in the body of the text.

Jacobs equated a sport's public interest to its following – by its fans and the media. For example, in Melbourne minor news about AFL, such as a player's drunken behaviour, still makes a big wave whereas major happenings in some minor sports may not get the coverage they warrant. Jacobs said a sport's fan base and its participation rates are not the same thing. High participation rates in grassroots, lower level competitions do not translate into public interest in a news sense.¹⁴⁷

What generates the public interest in a sports event, issue or person is a key decider of newsworthiness for Jacobs. Controversy is the top value because it incites passion in readers, listeners and viewers which encourages them to consume more of what is reported, but limited resources affect the ABC's coverage:

If there is a big story in a sport that usually does not gain coverage, and it will have interest to the general news public ... we have to weigh up whether it's worth assigning our scant resources to cover it or whether our audience will be better served by us covering a slightly less important story in a sport that has much wider appeal.

Edwards cited the amount of interest in a sport, borne out by crowd numbers at events and audiences for telecasts, as well as the audience's location, as the foremost determinants not only of what he reports but its running order in wraps for radio news.¹⁴⁸ As a result, he said, for the morning's main radio news bulletin during the football season, journalists write two versions of the sports wrap – leading with rugby league for the states in the north and with AFL for the states in the south, followed by international sport (if there is an Australian performance) and English Premier and Champions League results.

The time of the week also influences what Adams thinks will be of interest to an audience: "A lot of the major sport action happens on the weekend," he said. "Certainly, in a football season, you tend to look at [cover] the major football areas, but during the week is a time when you can look at other sports as well."

Decker said public interest gets back to the ABC's role under its Charter. Its journalists are well aware of their responsibility to try to provide coverage that is as broad in interest as possible to as many Australians as possible. As a result, he said, the ABC covers a wider range of sports

¹⁴⁷ Jacobs said in the "public interest" test, netball, with only 10 teams in its top tier competition, the trans-Tasman series, does not match the football codes (also with strong participation at lower levels). The AFL and NRL have 18 teams each in their national competitions with more players, more contests and more people turning out to watch games.

¹⁴⁸ Wraps are usually pre-recorded and report on two or more sports. In the ABC's flagship bulletin at 7.45am they can be up to two minutes long.

than the commercial broadcasters that tend to concentrate on the main (men's) sports, such as cricket and football. Jacobs said the ABC is obliged to make sure it is "filling the gaps" and looking at niche and minor sports that do not get coverage in other areas, but "it can't be token coverage". In television news, where sport takes up around 10 per cent of a 30-minute bulletin, it must warrant that time. Grant agreed. He said a sports event might be significant on a local level, but unless it has broad public interest it is difficult for the ABC to justify the resources to cover it – despite some unrealistic public expectations that, because the ABC is publicly funded, it should cover every sporting event.

ABC journalists also refer to how story choices stem from ways of doing things or tradition. In the "very rugby league oriented state" where Foster is based, he covers the NRL round daily during the season. Foster prioritises his day according to what is in the diary (a game, a media conference, a training session and so on), the logistics of travelling to and from these stories and what "pops up on Twitter that you need to worry about covering".

Other news criteria ABC journalists draw on to decide sports coverage include geographic and/or cultural proximity (and, if it happens overseas, the degree of Australian involvement), the prominence of the athlete/sports character, conflict, the contest's outcome (including the magnitude and/or nature of a win or loss) and human interest (such as triumph over adversity). Adams said the time available for the sports segment and other medium specific factors have a big impact on coverage:

You're talking about the appeal to the audience. Therefore, it might be sound in radio, it might be vision in television, but it also comes down to the strength of the story. You have to weigh up all of those different things when you weight a story as to whether it might lead your bulletin, or come later or be left out.

Those who have reported on the Olympic Games from the field said even though the wide number of sports on offer creates the potential for a variety of coverage, the same guiding principles or criteria of sports news selection kick in. Stories tend to revolve around events. Jacobs said discussions centre on: Is an Australian competing? Is she/he a medal chance? If Australians are not doing well or not competing, Jacobs looks for "amazing performances" from international athletes and teams. The cult of celebrity also plays a part: "There are some athletes who are bigger than the sports themselves, whose performances – whether good or bad – warrant coverage," he said.

Decker said because Australia wins relatively few gold medals "you tend to be able to feature gold medal victories". When Australians win multiple medals in a session, such as in

swimming, he said it is more difficult to pick the best performance. Other news values apply, regardless of an athlete's nationality. They include multiple gold medals to the same athlete, courageous performances and who has been grabbing the headlines leading up to the Games.

Grant said the capacity to rotate stories on the ABC's dedicated Olympic Games website allows some room to manoeuvre in selecting stories and assigning leads. Deciding on the top story is "always a subjective decision", but being able to lead "with lots of different things means you can share the limelight around". Stories that are not necessarily leads, but deserve a longer shelf-life, can get more time up in the more prominent parts of the site: "It comes back again to those news values and the prominence of the event, the proximity of the event and human interest," he said.

Shift leaders have the flexibility to change the lineup regularly, but Grant said some coverage decisions are prescribed by the Games schedule:

By the time it gets to the pointy end, you know whether there's Australian interest in any of those events. That does help us make decisions about how we're going to run stories, what order we're going to run them in and how much prominence we're going to give them. In a situation where an Australian is a big chance of winning a gold medal late in the day, that might prompt you to run other stories earlier in the day because you know you are likely to be going to the one ... [about the Australian athlete] later on.

5.4.2 The BBC

As with their ABC counterparts, the BBC journalists were most likely to cite "the audience" as their first point of reference in general sports news selection. They described various factors at work in this broad sphere, including what is important to the majority or has the wider audience appeal, what interests the audience, what can be made interesting to a mainstream audience and what engages them.

Blackmore said part of making a call on what to cover and its priority is to understand the degree of importance of certain sports to the majority of people. He has a rule of thumb:

If you were to pop into the pub at the end of the day and see your friends who were sports fans and they said, 'What's been going on?', what's the first thing you would tell them? That should be your main story that day. What's the next thing you would tell them? I often find [that helps] you get a handle on what's important that day.

Blackmore said the BBC has to look beyond commercial considerations. It has to cover a very broad range of sports across the British Isles, including those with regional importance, such as Scottish football and Welsh rugby. Blackmore said he has the capacity to dig down into stories

that newspapers would not be so keen on because of the BBC's responsibility under its Charter to educate, to inform and to entertain. "Those are three key words you should always have in your head, as someone who works for the BBC," he said.

According to Holt, a lot of sports news is defined by the sporting calendar. The BBC has always tried "to be terribly audience-focused" and he knows the events that are going to interest its audiences. Holt said personal experience also helps him to define what resonates with sports audiences. He was never a great player, but he watches, reads, listens to and loves sport. "I think you can get to understand it, pick it up subconsciously from other people's values," he said. Other pointers are the stories reported by rival sports media and comments on social media. Holt said it is captivating to follow Twitter, for instance, to see the things that engage people.

At the time of their interviews, Kelly and Cash were on long term assignments to focus on Olympic sports and athletes,¹⁴⁹ so some of the decisions about what to include were already made for them. Kelly said the Olympic sports he covers are generally not mainstream sports but are ones people are likely to be interested in by default: "It's my job to decide how I make those sports and the personalities interesting to a mainstream audience," he said.

Kelly described his approach as "far more nuanced" than coverage of the big sports, soccer in particular. When looking for newsworthiness in Olympic sports, he asks: Is it going to catch the eye of somebody who would not normally care about and traditionally does not engage with this sport (for example, field hockey, modern pentathlon, slalom canoeing and so on)? Is the story important? Does it affect someone's Olympic qualification chances? Is there a big rivalry developing that people will care about during the Games? Is it quirky or funny? Does it show off a side of the sport that people would not realise exists and might find interesting?

Cash, too, sets out to find stories his audience would not otherwise have known about. He looks for new information to enrich the audience's knowledge of the Olympic sport and inform them about its characters. He said even though much of his reporting is personality-led, the coverage must be warranted. Such triggers include the significance or magnitude of an athlete's achievement. Despite not having any footage, Cash said he recently reported on a young British athlete [*details removed*] breaking the national record for a second time, "because it was such a momentous occasion it warranted a news story. She's British so obviously it's of utmost importance to our audience."

¹⁴⁹ Both journalists began reporting on Olympic sports for BBC television, radio and the web more than 12 months before the 2012 Games.

During an Olympics, the BBC operates two distinct Olympic Games websites – one is UK-facing, catering to a domestic audience, whereas the other is an international-facing site geared towards overseas audiences. Each site has its own front page editor.

Journalists agreed the top stories on the UK-facing site¹⁵⁰ reflected a preference for the best or most notable British performances. Cash said the shift in focus to sports the British are good at and have success in, rather than audience interest, explains why stories about athletics, cycling, rowing and sailing – sports that are not widely followed outside the Games – took top billing online. Blackmore agreed British success took precedence in the BBC’s online Olympics coverage but attributed it to the audience’s desire for good news rather than bad news. Beyond that:

You have a certain number of stars who are of a certain cachet or importance. So Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt are obviously huge draws ... People are fascinated by everything they do. A rolling text commentary or a live blog will often be the lead story. Certainly, while events are going on that will be the top story because that’s what people want to know, what’s happening now, what just happened.

Holt, who holds a senior editorial position, said it is rare for there not to be a consensus on what is important. Strong stories people will talk about make it into the top spot on the Games website. “In this day and age, they’ve got to be good picture stories,” he said. “They’re probably personality-driven or they’re something quirky enough to become viral.”

5.4.3 The CBC

Canadian journalists pointed to audience interest as the major decider in their sports news selection. However, outside of assignments to cover Olympic/high performance sports, it is a specific, narrow field of audience interest – defined by men’s professional team sports. As a journalist who tries to champion Olympic/high performance sports coverage, North said it is difficult to raise public knowledge about them when:

... you turn on the radio and sports talk shows and the sports channels are completely dominated by hockey, by professional sports. For example, tomorrow is Kitzbühel, one of the biggest races in the alpine ski season, and if a Canadian was to win Kitzbühel it still wouldn’t lead the sportscast because hockey, professional sports still rule.

In the region where Roberts is based, several forces combine to deliver the top sports spot to ice hockey by a clear margin. He said the local team is the leading sports story every day – regardless of the season. He described a market so dominated by ice hockey “everyone feels

¹⁵⁰ The UK-facing site was selected for the content analysis of the BBC’s 2008 Olympic Games coverage.

compelled to cover it 24/7, 365 days of the year”. Roberts said the pro sports are adept at feeding the 24-hour news machine. They have the money, the resources including professional media relations staff, and the knowhow to get their stories out there. When he gets the brief to cover high performance sports, Roberts said he reports on high achievers and applies “the classic storytelling rules that anyone looks for in a good story”: compelling characters, good pictures and sound, and a little bit of drama or conflict.

Long, once “a pack rat” following the pros around in the “very limiting, tightly controlled” arena of men’s professional sport, now specialises in high performance sports coverage¹⁵¹ where there are “myriad possibilities in subject matter”. He said a key decider is the story’s significance to Canadians, based on the gravity of the event and the gravity of the result from a Canadian perspective. As consumers of sport, Long said, Canadians also like winners. When one of their own succeeds on the world stage in winter high performance sport, people tend to pay attention. An exception is tennis player, Milos Raonic: “There’s a lot of news value, a lot of importance attached to his developing story,” Long said. “Canadians like to see their own succeed.”¹⁵²

In his role as a specialist sports reporter [*details removed*], Porter focuses on stories to attract the interest of the “more or less non-sports audience” for mainstream newscasts: “Any time I see a sports story that I think may resonate I say to the editors, ‘I think we should do this and here’s why’.” As an important part of popular culture, Porter said sport offers:

... some of the most fascinating stories out there because they have an element of drama right from the get go. The stories that people want to hear have drama; they have conflict – sports is rife with that kind of thing – so they’re natural stories for people to gravitate towards, but you have to do it in a way that makes it accessible and interesting for people who may not be as immersed as I am, or as others are who like sports.

As with their counterparts at the ABC and BBC, CBC journalists pointed to an overriding interest in the achievements of their country’s athletes ahead of all others during the Olympic Games. Aside from medals won (success), the drivers of coverage included: Does this matter to Canadians? Is the world talking about this? Is this inspirational?

As well as the accomplishments of Canadian athletes, the journalists said world records and big names make news. Usain Bolt setting a world record in the most watched race at the Games was a top story (or in the top two if a Canadian also won gold on the same day). Online writers also

¹⁵¹ Canadian journalists used the terms high performance, amateur and Olympic interchangeably to refer to elite level sports other than the professional leagues (ice hockey, basketball, football and baseball).

¹⁵² Raonic was playing in the Australian Open when the interview was conducted with Long.

“Canadianise” stories about international athletes by adding quotes from the CBC’s on-air commentators. North said other contenders for top stories were those involving controversy. Should two Canadians win equivalent medals in different sports on the same day, the higher profile athlete in the better known and “more understood” sport would get the higher spot online: “A swimmer with a gold medal would get the nod, whether male or female, over a judoka with a gold medal,” he said.

5.5 The sports audience

As indicated in the preceding section, journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC most frequently refer to audience interest as the key criterion in their sports news selection. The following section reports on the journalists’ knowledge of their respective audiences and how they have acquired this information.

5.5.1 The ABC

Its journalists point out that the ABC is not a niche broadcaster. Rather, its remit is to provide content for all Australians and that, according to Grant, is “a very difficult one for us to nail down”. He described the ABC as a generalist media organisation that targets a broad range of (chiefly) Australian people. Most journalists said the ABC’s general audience is older (40 to 45 years and over, with the majority aged 60 years and over) and better educated than audiences for the commercial broadcast media. The demographic for sports audiences echoed that range, although Decker thought its core age group was around 50.

Decker said ratings for ABC radio and hits on its website confirmed the role sport plays in the lives of its audiences:¹⁵³

You’d have to say that there is a very large demand out there for sport. Especially in radio, no other station does the breadth of sport we do. No one else does cricket. Other stations of course do rugby league and AFL, but we also do rugby union, soccer, netball, golf, tennis. We’re often in a unique position as the only ones providing coverage of these events.

Adams had no doubt there is enormous interest in sport in Australia and, like the wider community, ABC listeners, viewers and readers engaged with it to varying degrees. Adams said he wrote for the gamut, from the occasionally interested to the avid sports nuts who talk about

¹⁵³ Decker said the same used to apply to television, but the ABC could no longer afford the rights to “the high profile, big audience sports”. He said more than one million people tuned in to *Grandstand* at the weekends, via 60 local radio stations around Australia, and the ABC’s online sports pages got in excess of 100,000 hits per day.

little else other than what is happening in sport and how their local team is doing. Foster wrote for listeners who knew nothing about sport – so they would understand the story.

The journalists pointed to various sources of information about what interests ABC sports audiences. They ranged from intuition to knowledge gained from formal research. Foster was in the first group: “A lot of it is what I’m interested in and what I think they’ll be interested in,” he said. “When you sit down at the end of the day, you want to know the top four or five things that have happened, whether it’s city, state, national or international sport.” Edwards cited anecdotal evidence: “You just hear people talking, general hearsay,” he said. “You don’t get issued with reports.”

Grant relied on hits for online stories and feedback via email, Facebook, Twitter and other social media to provide qualitative information about what people were interested in. The quick feedback from Twitter audiences gave Jacobs a pretty good feel for their likes and dislikes: “It isn’t as easy [to gauge] when you’re broadcasting on a radio or TV news bulletin,” he said. However, Decker described a formal process of regular ratings reports for radio, online and television that indicated the strengths of various sports with their audiences. The information was either circulated by senior staff or was available to all staff via intranet distribution lists.

The journalists agreed the common themes in feedback were pitches from sports bodies for coverage of their sports and public complaints about an inappropriate level of coverage of some sports. Jacobs said:

The majority of the time, it’s their interest in that sport that is creating the feeling their sport should be covered. And, sometimes they’re right. We don’t give smaller sports the coverage they probably deserve, but the majority of the time we do need to put the argument that the wider audience doesn’t have the same interest in that sport as the person making the complaint.

5.5.2 The BBC

Journalists at the BBC said they were well aware of their target audiences and their interests, thanks to staff briefings on BBC-commissioned research, including surveys and focus groups, direct feedback from their audiences (increasingly via Twitter), anecdotal evidence and personal experience.

Holt described three types of audiences, characterised according to the role sport plays in their lives: the sports nuts or aficionados, the main or big eventers and the sports objectors. He said the first group was the BBC’s core constituency. The sports nuts will watch, read and listen anyway. The second group went to the big events. Holt said main eventers were interested in the

Australian Open tennis but not necessarily in the Sydney Open. They would be there when the medals come out – for the Olympics, but not necessarily for a World Championship:

The ones who are really tough to get are sports objectors. They don't get sport and they don't understand it. [It's] ... better for us to attract the harder-to-reach audience. Some people will come to it anyway and we don't need to work too hard for them.

Cash covers Olympic sports. He said the audience is primarily sports fans (because they are visiting the BBC's sports website). However, they were not necessarily fans of Olympic/"minority" sports. Cash knows it is often the quirky or unusual things that get the most hits, so he tries to balance those types of stories with reporting that informs his audience:

While we do aim to please our audience and give them what they want, it's also about giving them stuff they don't know they want or they don't particularly want, but would still find interesting once they've read it.

Kelly talked about main eventers as well as an audience that is reflected in his life. They were a broad range of people, he said. And he had to get them to care enough to pick his stories and read them:

I've got the sense in the years I've been in this industry for what will engage people on a broad scale. You hear a phrase or see something about a sport and you think, 'That's what we need to tell them. That's what we need to bring out in this story.' Everyone I've met has sort of rubbed off on me a little bit as to what their interests are and how I can tap into that.

Who Blackmore is writing for depends on the sport, the medium, the story format and even the time of day. Up to 70 per cent of BBC website users are based in the UK, but the broadcaster's reach extends around the world and the user DNA varies:

If it's test cricket, the majority of people will be male, but Wimbledon brings a lot of female users to the BBC sport website. When you're dealing with very big events, like an Olympics or an athletics World Championship, you have to bear in mind that it will bring people who aren't so obsessed with the day-to-day minutiae of sports.

Blackmore attributed his knowledge of what interests an audience to intuition, made up of things he has read, heard or talked about with people. From the BBC's website statistics pages he can see who is reading what, although they are not an entirely accurate indicator of interest "because a story that has top billing occupies a better piece of real estate on the site than a story that's lower down, so it naturally gets more hits". From the BBC's regular user testing he knew the sorts of stories people wanted and their preferred format for consuming sports news. Blackmore publishes most of his work in a blog and he is on Twitter as well. The beauty of these formats is their "Comments" sections:

Having grown up with it, I am a huge fan. I love the interaction between the journalist and the user that you didn't have in the days of print journalism. And that interest and feedback mechanism I find really, really useful in determining what else I'm going to do.

5.5.3 The CBC

The types of audiences for CBC sports coverage also range across the spectrum, according to sport's role in their lives. Journalists said the diehards or "total geeked-out fans" who typically consumed all-sports television and radio were attracted to the broadcaster's online services at CBCsports.ca. The audience for high performance/Olympic sports coverage was, potentially, all Canadians. This group tended to be a little older and comprised of more women than the diehards. For sports segments broadcast within news bulletins, it is a more general news audience.

Porter writes for the latter group. Years of trial and error have helped him to gauge what will interest his audience. He said he listens to what people who are not big sports fans talk about – from his family to people on public transport. He tried to keep abreast of the stories people were reading online, what they were tweeting about and the stories other journalists were doing. "More than anything else, it's just experience," he said. "And over time, observing and paying close attention to things gives you a better idea of what works and what doesn't." At the same time, Porter said he performed a delicate balancing act because his editors expected him to respond quickly to the breaking sports news of the day.

Roberts said consultants had told the CBC their audiences are only interested in hockey and "a little bit" of Canadian football, except for stories in the style of the NBC's Olympics sports profiles – "amazing pieces on certain American athletes that are beautiful and compelling, dramatic and really expensive to produce" – which, Roberts said, CBC journalists did not have the time or resources to do. "I have no idea how they come up with the numbers," Roberts said. "They say they do focus groups and whatever, that's what we're told."

When the journalists described the feedback they got from audiences, most referred to the benefits of being able to interact with their readers, listeners or viewers via social media. Long said comments on Twitter and in emails were generally positive and reinforced his conviction about the importance of covering high performance sports: "We have a substantial constituency out there for this kind of sport," he said. "The one thing about people who follow high performance sport is that they are not afraid to express their opinion."

5.6 Women's sports coverage and accounting for relative improvements during the Olympic Games

This section considers the journalists' perceptions of the amount of everyday coverage given to women's sports in their own countries and what contributes to that result. Then, it reviews the factors the journalists say kick in during an Olympics to alter the balance in the media's gendered sports coverage.

5.6.1 The ABC

The ABC journalists agreed that, just as studies point to the international sports media's under-reporting of female athletes and women's sports (Duncan & Messner, 2005; Jorgensen, 2005; Kian et al., 2008; Messner & Cooky, 2010), the same disparity existed in Australian media coverage. In the ABC's defence, Foster said, it covered "a lot more women's sport than other organisations in Australia". Edwards attributed the difference by gender in domestic media coverage to a reflection of the level of public interest in men's sports or the number of "bums on seats":

Women's sport also gets far less *attendance* [interviewee emphasis] than some of the other sports and male sports – male team sports or individual sports. I think that research reflects the fact that there's just not as much public interest in them. Rightly or wrongly, it's not for me to say, the public interest in those sports is reflected in the coverage.

Jacobs estimated that the big men's sports of Aussie rules, rugby league, cricket and rugby union racked up 75 per cent or more of coverage in Australia, but it would be higher in the southern states where AFL was a "very suffocating sport to compete against". He said the dominance of soccer globally (the "world game") and of football, baseball and basketball in the US also skewed the media's focus in those markets towards men's sports: "If you took the major men's professional sports out of each news market I think you'd find the numbers were still in favour of men but by nowhere near the [current] ratio."

Money fuelled the dominance of men's sports, according to Grant, who described their cycle of coverage in Australia as a self-fulfilling prophecy:

Because men's sport has all the money, that's where the focus is, and because it has the money it gets the attention, and because it's got the attention it gets the media coverage. And women's sport is left playing catch-up.

ABC journalists attributed the comparative spike in women's sports coverage during the Olympic Games to the event's profile, the elite level or quality of competition and the athletes' achievements – regardless of gender or nationality. Decker said there was less gender discrimination in coverage at the Olympics because women's performances were part of such a

huge event, whereas outside the Games there were fewer top level women's sports contests week in, week out, compared with men's competitions in cricket, rugby league and AFL. Grant said their equal billing at the Olympics provided the opportunity for "the achievements of the women athletes ... [to be] shown on an equal playing field with the men". Foster referred to the effect of "concentration", where "you've got athletes there and their stories are there all the time and it's all about the Olympics".

Other factors are also at work to boost sportswomen's profiles during the Olympics, according to Grant. Because the Olympic Games transcend sport, they magnify the news values of cultural proximity (or parochialism), prominence and interest. "There's a whole issue about national identity and the fact that you're competing for your country," he said. "I think that really resonates."

Jacobs said results and not bias explained the sports media's continued emphasis on the deeds, trials and accomplishments of male Olympic athletes. Men, being "more capable of amazing performances", were more likely to be covered:

One thing I guess that would skew the numbers in favour of men is purely a physiological one in that men are more physically able to run faster, jump higher, throw further and ... that would then add to the spectacular nature of the results they were putting up there. Certainly, the men's and women's events may have similar drama, so to speak, but it would be purely the men that have the physiological advantage that might make their results more interesting to the public than the women's.

5.6.2 The BBC

Three of the four journalists at the BBC had similar perceptions of the amount of coverage the media in the UK and their employer devoted to women's sports. Holt said newspaper sports coverage in particular was very male biased. He attributed the BBC's "far more balanced" web, television and radio sports coverage to the number of female presenters, experts and reporters among its diverse staff who "represent all groups in society". At the same time, Holt acknowledged the BBC still had a way to go to provide a fair reflection of sporting achievement across the board:

A lot of it is about tradition and heritage and I think people have gone along with it for far too long. The most expensive [media] rights we acquire are things like football/soccer. I mean football just so dominates the agenda over here ... It's a vicious cycle and it needs more events like the Olympics to change it.

Cash is familiar with the statistics of gender bias in UK sports coverage. He has reported on the issue and he quoted official figures that showed only 5 per cent of the UK sports media's

coverage was focused on women. At the same time, Cash said, the BBC was leading the way in reporting on women's sports. Examples included the purchase of telecast rights for the women's European basketball championship and coverage of women's football, as well as so-called obscure, minority women's sports that might not have widespread popularity but were followed by "a fanatical audience" that appreciated what the BBC was doing. "It's not perfect," Cash said. "We definitely need to cover more, but in terms of what our competitors do, we're doing far more."

Blackmore said if there was inequality in the UK media's coverage of sportswomen and men, he hoped the BBC, which is meant to be impartial and impeccably fair, wasn't part of the problem. In his time [*details removed*] with the BBC, the journalist said he had never seen a decision made on the basis of: "This is men's sports, let's put it above women's sports." Blackmore agreed there was more interest in some women's sports than others (tennis and athletics compared with rugby, for example), but said his reporting gave just as much prominence to successful female athletes as their male counterparts.¹⁵⁴

Blackmore attributed the higher degree of media attention to female Olympians to the event's status (only in tennis, he said, is a Grand Slam title more prestigious than winning at the Olympics). People responded to the lure of the big event with a willingness to watch sports – both men's and women's – that, in the intervening years, they were not interested in. "It's almost like the Olympics is the point where people get interested in things like slalom canoeing or kayaking because it feels like it matters," Blackmore said. And, part of why the Olympic Games mattered around the world was the event's history, its meaning and the stories it threw up. Blackmore recalled reporting from Olympics Park in Beijing in 2008 and the "incredible feeling" that he was at the centre of the world's focus for two weeks:

You get a sense that it's the ultimate in sport, that it's various national identities ... [and] national pride being represented through sport, of old rivalries taking place on sporting courts and fields, whereas before they might have been in more violent terms. So I think the Olympics does have a unique hold and a unique interest to people.

For the sports media, gender becomes irrelevant once athletes step out at the Olympic Games, according to Cash. Sportswomen got more attention, every four years, because there was a general consensus within the media that they deserve to be reported on – as successful *sportspeople*. "It's more about that medal table and how many medals we can rack up, rather than whether they're male, female, alien, whatever," Cash said.

¹⁵⁴ He referred to the number of hits as one indicator of online audience interest in a sport.

Holt agreed gender was not a consideration at an Olympic Games – for either the sports media or the public. Rather, the elite competition and the public’s appreciation of it increased the sports media’s coverage:

The Olympics has top class sports being played by men and women at absolutely the highest levels and people ‘get’ the Olympics. People get medals being hung around athletes’ necks, whether they’re men or women.

Kelly said the availability and ease of access to most sports at the Olympics, both on air and on the ground where the venues are usually in relatively close proximity to the international broadcasting centre, were key factors behind the greater attention given to female athletes:

It’s put in front of people on a plate – certainly news editors and certainly the audience – in as much as it’s there happening on television in front of them. The story’s plain for everyone to see. ... [Tied] in with that is the Olympics makes women’s sport ‘interesting’. To a wider audience and commissioning editors across newspapers and television, the word ‘Olympics’ and the Olympic competitive environment adds a level of intrigue and audience engagement that they feel wouldn’t otherwise be there.

5.6.3 The CBC

When asked about the state of sports coverage in Canada, journalists at the CBC generally agreed there was no contest. Thanks to a heavy focus on male, North American-centric professional sports throughout the year, men’s sports dominated in the general sports media and ice hockey (the NHL) was the clear favourite. It rules on CBC Network Sports where, North said, it was the broadcaster’s “bread and butter ... [and] front and centre on the website”.¹⁵⁵

Long observed that hockey is a national obsession to the extent that communities in the major cities – Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver – follow it so closely that “the rhythm of the seasons” is determined by the local hockey team’s success:

People wake up in the morning and if the team has won the city has a good day. If the team is on a losing streak, you know things are not going well in Calgary or Winnipeg. It’s just that subliminal feeling that the hockey team and its success or failure can create.

The journalists agreed that the bulk of the coverage time and space left over after hockey went to the three other professional men’s team sports of football (the NFL), baseball and basketball, but their estimates varied regarding the amount of attention female athletes and women’s sports received in the Canadian media. Porter, who thought under-reporting of women’s sports was not necessarily occurring at the CBC, agreed it happened in other media but was not sure of the

¹⁵⁵ After 60 years, CBC lost the media rights to NHL Stanley Cup games at the end of the 2014 season.

extent. Roberts said the CBC's Olympics coverage adhered to the values of equity and inclusiveness, but these went out the window in the intervening period when the pressures to make money from coverage of the more commercial men's professional sports took over. Long said outside the Olympics the Canadian media's focus favoured men's sports by 3 to 1. Mason said the gap is wider, particularly on television where about 90 per cent of reports were about professional men's sports "before they ever get into amateur sport".

One of the reasons women's sports are overlooked, journalists said, is the dearth of professional leagues. Those that were running, such as the women's soccer league, were struggling to survive. Canadian women's hockey, with its semi-professional league, was lucky if it got a story written about it a few times a year, Porter said, whereas "the NHL players are on the front page of the sports pages every day and there definitely is a lack of equity". In its defence, North said, the CBC was the only network that comprehensively packaged and presented amateur high performance (Olympic) sports:

... and we certainly don't have any gender bias. In fact, a lot of Canada's best high performance athletes are female, so you might see even more coverage of the female competitions than you will of the males just because, especially at the [winter] Olympics, most of Canada's medals have come from women.

Roberts said the commercial media not only largely ignored women's sport, what little coverage there was trivialised female athletes:

Looking at newspapers and especially online coverage there is now more coverage of things like the lingerie football league, *Sports Illustrated's* swimsuit edition and cheerleader photo montages than actual women's sport. I can't understand why, other than to think that editors have found it's a way to attract eyeballs from the traditional male sports audience.

Canadian journalists linked the greater media interest in women's sports during the Olympics to the event's spectacle, the coming together of "the best of the best" and opportunity – the latter due to an almost-equal number of events for women as men at the summer Games, although Mason argued that there were still gender inequities with men's events and finals getting more prominent scheduling and prime time slots on television. Other than these instances, he said, the equality of genders was handed on a plate to the broadcast media that had bought telecast rights to the Games. "It's easy to cover," Mason said, "because they have paid for all this stuff." With newspapers, it was different:

The major papers here would send about six reporters these days, not a lot. So that's a lot of things these newspapers have to cover, and when you travel distances for events you have to make judicious decisions about what you cover. I would say print reporters are covering what they would define as the best story, and the best story is defined by

who's likely to win a medal. And in Canada, without question for the past 20 or 30 years, our women have demonstrably won and performed higher and had better success than our men.

Other journalists agreed the spike in coverage for sportswomen during the Olympics came down to medal success. North said the sports media were “just responsive to how well female Canadian athletes do”. Long said when Canadian women won Olympic medals, “we’re going to cover them and we’re going to cover them heavily”. He said the timing of that success and the circumstances also affected coverage. In 2008, wrestler Carol Huynh’s win eight days into the Games broke a gold medal drought for Canada. It made a big splash and carried the day, Long said. Her “back story” (Huynh is the daughter of Vietnamese refugees) created a great deal of interest too: “It really moved her up [on all of the CBC’s platforms], made her an important Canadian on that day and it was really quite significant.”

Like North and Long, Porter said an athlete’s gender did not really matter: “It’s what they’ve done and the barriers and hurdles they’ve overcome that have been the story and the reason they got the attention.” Roberts believed novelty kicked in too, giving the Olympics appeal beyond the traditional male sports audiences in Canada. He said CBC research showed “a huge percentage of women and men who did not normally consume sports paid attention to the Olympics, probably because the Games only came around every four years”. Roberts said the Olympics put female athletes on an equal stage with the men, for the most part, and allowed for unique storytelling. As well, the aesthetic sports, such as figure skating in winter and gymnastics in summer, were prominent Olympic sports and the female stars in them were probably better known than their male counterparts.

5.7 Initiatives to support better coverage of women’s sports

This section reports on initiatives the journalists considered would facilitate a higher media profile for women’s sports in their respective countries.

5.7.1 The ABC

Those campaigning for more coverage of women’s sports have to be proactive in promoting their sports in order to attract greater public interest and must acknowledge that the sports media are not solely responsible for their predicament, according to ABC journalists. Foster said of course the ability to self-promote came down to money, sponsorship and expertise. He used netball in Australia as an example of what other organisations should be doing: creating a spectacle around the game and hyping the excitement to draw sell-out crowds. “More money and more sponsorship – a lot of it comes down to that, that’s the shame of it,” Foster said.

Edwards said the problem was more than one of under-funding and a lack of sponsors. Women's and some men's sports needed to improve the standard of their competitions. Edwards said netball and basketball had landed free-to-air television coverage because they had pushed hard and achieved some good results. "Everyone likes teams that are winning," he said. "Rightly or wrongly, they've probably sexed it up a little bit too to appeal to male audiences. Getting on TV attracts the sponsors and their product [is seen] on their uniforms."

Adams said even though social media now provided the opportunity for sports bodies and athletes to circumvent sports journalists and media gatekeeping, the fight against the traditional supremacy of certain men's sports would always be tough:

If you look at the history of Australian media covering sport ... there's almost a pecking order that's come down. Because of that it's where the interest is in the audience and that's what sells the papers and that's what gets you the audience on TV.

There are mixed perceptions among ABC journalists about the degree to which reporter gender affects the selection of sports for coverage. Jacobs said it made sense that gender played a role. So did personal experience and there was no surprise in the product if the sports reporting team was predominantly male:

Maybe men feel more comfortable covering men's sports because they have that knowledge either through experience, through having played that sport, or having at least some recognition of what those athletes are going through. Certainly I would feel more comfortable covering a men's football tournament than covering a women's gymnastics tournament, purely because [having played the game] I feel I have more insight.

In Foster's experience, the popularity of a sport, more than the gender of the person assigning the story, determined what was reported. And, the more live television coverage a sport got, the greater its public popularity. Jacobs doubted that it would "completely correct the imbalance that we currently see", but said it was fair to assume that employing more women in reporting and editorial roles would boost women's sport coverage. Grant, however, was leery of such suggestions and averse to such practices. Reporters were reporters, he said, and they should be able to be assigned to any sport:

Sport is just another genre of news in the same way that politics and business are genres of news. A reporter should never look at you and say, 'Sorry I don't do politics' if you asked them to cover a political story. But there seems to be this attitude they can say that about sport.

5.7.2 The BBC

All sports, whether played by women or men, have a duty to be proactive if they want to attract more media coverage, according to the BBC's Kelly. In the lead-up to a home Olympics in

London in 2012, Olympic sports in Britain had a unique opportunity for media coverage, engagement with people participating in sport, sponsorship, athletes' development and funding from UK Sport. Kelly said equestrian and hockey led the way, employing a former newspaper journalist to dig into them and find the personalities and characters to make their sports a saleable asset.

"Feeding the chooks" is not new, but Kelly said it might have to be the broader template for raising women's coverage profiles – where sports organisations did some of the legwork for sports journalists by "excavating interesting personalities for stories" that would make good copy:

I'm firmly of the belief that journalists should be doing that job, not sport governing bodies, but in a 21st century environment where funding and resources for journalism and time allowed to work on stories ... are shrinking, I can understand why sport governing bodies and newspapers would welcome giving journalists a hand.

As well as information subsidies from sports organisations, Kelly said the public must demand change from the media to bring women's sports out of the shadows. Every generation started, he said, from a base where it first becomes aware of what sport is and what is available to it. It needed a number of that generation to say, "Hang on a minute, there should be more of this sport or that sport", for that balance to shift, and successive generations to keep up the momentum before "you start to get on a more even keel".

Blackmore said for women's sports to make headway in the competition for media attention required a combination of attitude change in society, away from preconceived and dated ideas about sports that were appropriate for female athletes, as well as a steady supply of female sports characters and success stories to attract the public's interest. Holt's advice for those trying to boost the profile of women's sports was to be more flexible in targeting the media, more pragmatic and a bit "cute" (as in clever) or strategic. Live sports telecasts were not the be-all and end-all: "They're not going to do it [for any sport] unless that sport pays for itself and then it will be on Sky probably," he said. A multi-genre approach was better value. Getting guests into slots on breakfast shows and early evening magazine programs (in front of audiences in the millions) and "working" new media could help to publicise a sport and generate stories. So, too, could opportunism. In the UK, Holt said, the Football Association had leveraged negotiations for TV coverage of men's football to include women's games.

Journalists at the BBC, like their ABC counterparts, had different views about a link between the gender of reporters and editors and their sports news choices. Blackmore said he hoped

sexism and ignorance would not influence such decisions, and BBC journalists covered sports on their merits not on the gender of the athletes. Holt would like to think BBC journalists were so focused on what interested their audience that gender was irrelevant.

Kelly said the BBC sport newsroom had “a pretty large” number of women working in it, yet not much had changed in the balance of sports being reported:

Now, you could say that’s because the balance of sports is reasonably correct at the moment. I’m not sure it is. If more staff come on board who are deeply engaged with women’s sport and understand where stories are and how to make those stories interesting ... I suppose it would affect the balance of coverage because you’d have them queuing up at the news editor’s desk every day saying, ‘Look, this is a great story’, in a way that doesn’t happen now.

Cash said there was little use appointing women to lead newsrooms and expecting women’s sports would get more attention as a result. Male dominated newsrooms and their attitudes were a reflection of society: “Women aren’t necessarily valued in society, so why would they be valued in sport?”

5.7.3 The CBC

Like their counterparts at the ABC and BBC, CBC journalists had country-specific and broader ideas for improving the lot of women’s sports coverage. Porter said several things had to come together at the same time. Male sports leagues had to step up to help female sports get off the ground. One model was basketball and the NBA’s initiative to create the WNBA. “It makes good business sense,” Porter said, “to try to show female sports fans you’re interested in them as well and in trying to help female athletes get to the top of their sports like the men do.” As well, female athletes must continue to campaign for greater media attention, despite the belief among some sportswomen that “they don’t necessarily have all the history as professional athletes as the men do and it’s just going to take time”. Finally, Porter said, corporate sponsors that had yet to recognise the benefits of potentially aligning themselves with female sports and female athletes had to get on board.

In a similar vein, Roberts said women’s sports needed a critical mass of interest and smart people to make a business case for their coverage: “Ultimately the media are in it to make money, to get eyeballs and to get advertisers. Given the way it exists right now ... it’s not going to happen in television.” Online was one promising avenue, Roberts said, pointing to the work

of espnW.com where highly polished and well-produced segments highlighted the accomplishments of female athletes.¹⁵⁶

Long saw a direct link between gender and sports coverage decisions, and proposed the appointment of more women sports journalists and presenters as one way to get better coverage of female sports. At the same time, he noted women presenters on Canada's all-sports networks were still presenting male-dominated professional sport – an outcome he attributed to the almost exclusively male decision makers (sports editors) in Canada's sports broadcasting media. He also sympathised with female journalists who attached more prestige to the men's sports round: "I understand that completely and that's why the presenters here who are female see it as a real plum to be able to cover national hockey league action."

Roberts did not regard covering women's sports as a demotion, but said that probably stemmed from his background [*details removed*]. He was always interested in covering women's sports where there was a good story or a really good competition and trying to bring the event to life or create something compelling for the viewer. Roberts said he understood the argument that there is more prestige attached to covering the big men's sports: "Getting your face involved in that is good for your own profile as a reporter. It depends on what you're in the business for."

Mason said female reporters were right to think covering professional men's teams was the way to get ahead: "If they want air time, they follow the events the assignment editors are going to put to air." He suspected, too, that female journalists got tired of carrying the mantle for women's sports. They could become tainted or labelled for coming up with "another women-in-sports story or idea", so it took somebody with a lot of backbone and diplomacy to pitch and defend those ideas. Against these odds, Mason said women's sports would make coverage headway only if there were major, systemic changes. They needed champions and support from the top within the media – decision makers prepared to buck the group-think of tradition and who understood that it was important to give greater exposure to women and girls competing in sport.

Women's sports also needed equity in the inception of events, from domestic to international competitions, to enhance coverage opportunities. Mason said at the Olympic Games, sports such as soccer had more men's teams than women's, so there were more men's games. The scheduling of women's events and finals in different sports often overlapped or clashed,

¹⁵⁶ espnW, founded in 2010 by Laura Gentile, appears on digital and broadcast platforms (www.linkedin.com/in/gentilelaura).

preventing their sports from being showcased.¹⁵⁷ Mason said host broadcasters do have the influence to achieve better scheduling for women's sports. Along with sports governing bodies and the International Olympic Committee, they just needed the will.

According to Porter, female and male sport journalists should be assigned to stories on merit, not (their or the sport's) gender. Yet he also believed female sports reporters could bring a different perspective and voice to stories and would have a better feel than men for what women in the audience were thinking about:

That's why it's so important to have a broad base of people working in organisations, male and female, disabled and multi-ethnic ... you have a better sense sometimes of what is happening in your community and you can bring that to the table and let people know about stories that they otherwise might not know about.

5.8 Discussion: Factors that influence the production of sports news

Interviews with sports journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC, along with findings from the content analysis of coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games on the three broadcasters, have suggested that legacy sports media newswork practices, in particular casting the "news net" (Tuchman, 1978a) and selecting news items, continue to be reconstituted online (Kachgal, 2001). In line with other studies of online and legacy media (Cooky et al., 2013; Fink, 2014; Kian & Clavio, 2011; Messner & Cooky, 2010; North, 2012; O'Neill & Mulready, 2014; Scott-Chapman, 2012), female athletes appeared not to be considered as newsworthy as male athletes by the ABC, BBC and CBC.

The lesser news value of sportswomen – characterised by the lower levels of coverage they received on all three broadcasters compared with sportsmen (in story and photograph numbers) and the discourses within those texts that stereotyped sportswomen, focused on their gender role characteristics and devalued their achievements – suggested that online sports journalism at the three broadcasters is shaped by the same influences affecting legacy sports media. Based on the interviews with the sports journalists and their rationales for sports news choices that favour male athletes and men's sports, these hierarchies of influence on sports newsmaking at the ABC, BBC and CBC include media routines, organisational pressures, social factors and ideologies (Preston, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The sports journalists' descriptions of their newswork are discussed in the following sections and within the wider context of newsmaking in the field of gender, sports and media.

¹⁵⁷ Mason said sportswomen have also been disadvantaged by the allocation to men's competitions of superior venues, in terms of capacity and facilities.

5.8.1 Autonomy and sports news decision-making

The same organisational structures and processes that make daily production of legacy sports news possible were evident in the sports newsrooms of the three public broadcasters. The daily cycles (and deadlines) of the three broadcast newsrooms required them to set up systems to regularly and efficiently (both in terms of time and cost) gather and deliver information (Tuchman, 1978a). Rounds or beats were among the “factory-like practices and processes” used at the ABC, BBC and CBC to “standardize, naturalize and streamline newswork, thereby rendering it more predictable” (Reich & Lahav, 2011, p. 240). As the sports journalists targetted particular areas for news, events rather than issues were favoured since the former were an easy peg on which to hang a story (Venables, 2008); most sports news was about individuals (often as members of teams); and the sports journalists at all three broadcasters tended to use sources that deliver required information or comment quickly or reliably (Becker et al., 2000).

At the ABC, BBC and CBC, the journalists described their rounds and the routines of sports newsmaking in terms of collaboration and individual initiative, enacted via a series of conversations between senior and middle managers, middle managers and their reporters and between reporters. Story ideas for everyday coverage came from various sources: the newsrooms’ daily diaries of scheduled events such as matches, media conferences and club executive meetings, and follow-ups, the journalists’ own knowledge of the sports round in general or the specific sports or events to which they have been assigned, the editors (and often in response to breaking news), other sports/news media, social media and tip offs. Across the newsrooms, the majority of journalists indicated they would like more time and more resources to pursue more stories – based on original story ideas as well as follow ups and tips from contacts and the wider public – within and across a range of men’s and women’s sports.

In her study of newsmaking, Tuchman (1973, p. 112) suggested that in the “routinization” of newswork the form of organisational control was “generally consensual” and relatively free of efforts at control by management. Breed’s (1955) research, highlighting organisational constraints on news, suggested that journalists’ stories reflected newsroom policy more than their personal beliefs. He also argued that beat reporters had more control over their stories than did general assignment reporters, a point supported by the majority of sports reporters at the ABC, BBC and CBC who, irrespective of their gender, said they had a high level of autonomy in their organisation’s regular sports news selection. As an example, one journalist said: “Ninety-five per cent of the time you’d be chasing stories you have thought of yourself or been fairly clear as to what you are going to chase.”

This contrasted with the findings of two studies – one in Australia, the other in the United States – showing female sports journalists lacked control over the stories they covered. Baird (1994) found male editors in Australia had the final say on stories assigned to female sports journalists. Women journalists in newspaper sports departments across the United States, while generally happy with the assignments they had been given, also indicated they were assigned to cover female sports more than their male counterparts (Miloch, Pedersen, Smucker, & Whisenant, 2005). However, in interviews with Kian (2007), five out of six US newspaper sportswriters (two women and three men) claimed a great deal of autonomy in deciding what events and athletes to write about. Kian (2007, p. 11) noted his findings were supported by Hardin and Shain (2005) who concluded that researchers “cannot simply blame the lack of coverage given to women’s sport on newspaper management or on the mostly male writers who permeate the industry, since women are just as likely to aspire to cover men’s sport as male writers”.

The journalists in this study were not asked specifically to nominate the sports they aspired to cover, but the majority of women and men expressed satisfaction with their current rounds and assignments. Nor did the female journalists say they were more likely to be assigned to cover women’s sports than to cover men’s sports. In the absence of bylines with online stories published about the 2008 Olympic Games, it is difficult to confirm that the male-dominated newsrooms at the ABC, BBC and CBC reward male journalists with what is considered a prestigious round in sports reporting.

From the interviews it was clear that men made most of the decisions about coverage at the ABC, BBC and CBC simply because they dominated each of the three levels of sports news staff at each organisation. Thus, the results regarding this aspect of the broadcasters’ sports journalism personnel and their newsmaking appeared to support the concept of hegemonic masculinity, where the sports media continued to be the domain of men (Pedersen et al., 2003) and, as a consequence, women and men at the ABC, BBC and CBC wrote in the main about men’s sports for mostly male audiences.

From the interviews it is also clear that this is not uncontested terrain. At the ABC, BBC and CBC, the women and men I spoke to expressed varying degrees of awareness and frustration at being “locked in” to the everyday coverage, in and out of season, of men’s professional team sports, and the resulting exclusion of both women’s and other, lower profile men’s sports. At one end of the spectrum, a BBC journalist described how football, cricket and rugby still dominated coverage because, “at the end of the day, as the saying goes, ‘You do what sells the papers’, don’t you? You know, what audiences want to see, read, listen to.” In contrast, a CBC journalist expressed frustration at the daily bombardment from men’s professional sports

coverage, led by ice hockey. He said this “onslaught” stimulated audience and public interest which, in turn, reinforced the sports media’s perceptions about the level of interest in ice hockey: “It’s just like a great big, ugly snowball rolling down the hill,” he said. “They are spoon-fed professional sports.” As a result, audiences were better informed and more knowledgeable about the men’s leagues and less tolerant of or interested in coverage of anything outside the status quo.

Another CBC journalist described how he was expected to cover the local ice hockey and football teams, almost on a daily basis. Because they are the big pro sports and draw big crowds, they take up most of his reporting time. “I don’t feel like I have a lot of freedom in my job,” he said.

These accounts are not unexpected. They echo Hargreaves’s (2002) observation that masculine hegemony in sport is never static and absolute. In the three sports newsrooms at the centre of this study, it can be seen as a “currently accepted” (Theberge, 2000, p. 322) but shifting process where some journalists accommodate or collude in existing patterns of discrimination in sports coverage, whereas others oppose them and struggle for change. In terms of a counter-hegemonic push against the lop-sided equation favouring everyday men’s sports coverage on the ABC, BBC and CBC, awareness among female journalists and some of their male colleagues, and their ongoing advocacy for change, would seem to be positive and important steps.

However, they may be inadequate steps. Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) theoretical framework of news hierarchies showed that editorial gatekeepers (or individual content producers) – situated at the core of the five tier model, but with influence in each successive level – represented both their profession and their news organisation. As such, the occupational settings of the sports journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC limit their decisions (Keith, 2011). The “routines and craft norms that are so much a part of systematic information-gathering” at each broadcaster and deliver standardised, recurring patterns of men’s sports news “cannot be easily violated” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 106). In those words, Shoemaker and Reese’s model suggested that in most cases (and, potentially, in the newsrooms that are the focus of this study), the power of sports rounds or news routines to influence sports news content was “inherently greater than the power of individuals to influence [it]” (Keith, 2011, p. 2). Or, as Craft and Wanta (2004, p. 125) observed, a chorus of sports news “routines and professional expectations can mute the individual voices of journalists”. This suggests that individual sports journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC generally would not be able to consistently exert idiosyncratic influence on sports news unless there was no established routine governing sports newsmaking.

By their own accounts, the sports journalists at the three broadcasters in this study were locked in to a predictable, repeating cycle of men's sports news production (Lowes, 1997, 1999; Tuchman, 1978a) – most of them willingly. Wu (2010) has noted how sports stories that were produced in a previous season, year or four-year cycle of the Olympics were usually similar either in content or pattern to those being produced in the next cycle. Similarities in both content and pattern were apparent in Jones's studies of the ABC's online reporting of the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games, the BBC's online coverage of the 2004 and 2008 Games, and the ABC, BBC and CBC's online coverage in 2008 (Jones, 2004, 2006b, 2013). The focus was clearly men's sports.

Wu (2010, p. 189) said combining cycles of production and processes of scheduled planning, both of which might “be thought of as a sports media ‘habitus’ – that is, the unconscious patterning of everyday behaviour” – can have two important consequences. Encoded messages about gender were reinforced; in the case of Olympics coverage on the three broadcasters I have studied, those messages provided “powerful support for an ideal of gender that ascribes different natures, attributes and interests to men and women” (Theberge, 2000, p. 322). Sports that can guarantee a sufficient and predictable supply of news will be reported more extensively than those that cannot (Lowes, 1999). As an example, a CBC journalist described how the administrators of men's professional sports, who understood reporter deadlines and knew when to make players available, employed “capture theory” on his round:

Not only do they practise during office hours – which is really good for people [reporters] who want to work a regular week – but they feed you stuff. They're available every day. You can get pictures every day. You can talk to them every day. They play every second day. Their in-house broadcasting department will give you a lot of material if you ask. They're there to service and to make your life easier and they do.

Outside the Olympics cycle, as their employees' descriptions indicated, the three broadcasters “undoubtedly and overwhelmingly” (Crolley & Teso, 2007, p. 152) constructed sport as a male domain, whereas professional male sports were viewed as “the pinnacle of sporting value and achievement” (Wensing & Bruce, 2003, p.387). Not only did the journalists' accounts point to the dominance of men's professional team sports in Australia (rugby league, AFL, cricket), the United Kingdom (soccer) and Canada (ice hockey), they also indicated endorsement of that situation by the majority of male and one of the female journalists. Billings (2011) argued that “no one can deny the impact factor” the sports media exert, a sentiment echoed by Crolley and Teso (2007) who said the sports media's power to shape public consciousness about gender should not be understated. Wanta (2006) said the lack of coverage of women's sports cultivated audiences into thinking that women's sports were not important or non-existent. The majority of the sports journalists I interviewed appeared to be constructing and perpetuating “a sense of

reality which is culturally encoded” via their news judgments that favoured men’s sports and achievements over women’s. Their prejudices, apparently “based on patriarchal ideologies”, were being “reproduced, consciously or sub-consciously” (2007, p. 152).

Sports journalists know months and even years in advance that a particular Olympic competition and its events will take place at a particular time. Therefore, their sports reporting, including accreditation to attend the Games (to cover particular events and get access to athletes at media conferences) has to be planned well in advance. No matter whether an event or match is exciting or not, or is won by a home country or international athlete, a reporter from the ABC, BBC or CBC must file a story in order to justify the resources already committed to the story.

Several of the ABC, BBC and CBC journalists talked about being under pressure to produce stories for multiple media platforms. As a result, they reported being constrained in the number and variety of sports stories they could file as well as the time available to research and fashion those stories. This appeared to be particularly relevant for the ABC which, according to Jacobs, sent only a small team of reporters to Beijing in 2008, only one of whom was a sports journalist. It is also the case that, at the modern Olympics, journalists tend to speak to the same sources because they have little choice. As Denham and Cook (2006) observe, with tightened security journalists are allowed to talk with athletes at specified times only:

If access to these athletes is, in fact, becoming more restricted in both national and international competitions, one can expect to observe little variance across major media outlets in terms of future coverage, as journalists may only have access to what they and their peers glean from a 30-minute post-game press conference. (2006, p. 14)

Given these restrictions, we might expect to see little difference between female and male reporters from the ABC, BBC and CBC in their selection of female and male sources and the prominence given to those sources. However, the influence of reporter gender on this element in sports news coverage could not be investigated in the content analysis of the 2008 Olympic Games because, as noted earlier, the online stories sampled did not carry reporters’ bylines. On the basis of this study’s findings, of under-reporting of women athletes and qualitative differences in their representation compared to men on the three broadcasters, we can only assume that the female sports journalists covering home country and international athletes did not offer a perspective any less influenced by male hegemony than the male reporters.

From everyday to Olympics reporting assignments, sports journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC described how they were constrained in their story choices by the same media routines that also made it possible for them to consistently deliver sports news to deadline for multiple media

platforms. With so little time to pursue stories, they described how they kept returning to those events and actors that personal experience and workplace norms confirmed were reliable, regular sources of the information that interested their audiences. How the journalists knew what interests their audiences is discussed in the following section.

5.8.2 Winners, audiences and tradition

During the Olympics, as the content analysis of 2008 Games coverage by the three broadcasters shows, different sports received different coverage in relation to their established, national connection (badminton, for example, barely featured on any of the sites, whereas swimming was the most reported sport of the Games),¹⁵⁸ home nation achievement and participation. According to the interviewees in this study, their organisations' and their own coverage decisions were heavily influenced by expectations of athletes' medal chances, irrespective of gender or nationality. Own country athletes who were successful were most likely to be reported on. The journalists readily referred to the "impartial" (as in, objective) standards of a higher level of competition, along with the athletes' form going into the Olympics and the sports that had previously produced or were likely to yield home country medal winners. As one journalist explained: "It truly is all about the winning."

The reality is a little different. The tables and figures in Appendix E show discrepancies between the journalists' recollections and explanations and their practice. In 2008, sportswomen from Australia, the UK and Canada won 50, 40 and 41 per cent of their countries' medals respectively. Even though own country women were far more visible than men on the ABC and just as visible as men on the BBC, in the prime position of the lead story on the sites' splash pages, Olympics coverage is not *all* about winning. Failure made the news too – especially when it was accompanied by descriptions and photographs of the losing athletes' lack of composure in defeat. The tables and figures in Appendix E show that the ABC and BBC gave noticeably more coverage in 2008 to own country female athletes who put in top performances and won medals for their country, but there was also news value for the ABC and CBC in Australian and Canadian women who failed to live up to the media build-up.

Men's coverage across the three broadcasters also contrasted with the journalists' perceptions of the amount and type of attention they and their colleagues gave to men's Olympic performances. International rather than home country athletes received a large proportion of lead stories on the three sites (half of all male leads on the BBC), in particular swimmer Michael

¹⁵⁸ There were six stories about badminton on the three sites, 266 about swimming and 217 about athletics.

Phelps who featured in 54 per cent of all male lead stories. On the CBC, the focus was closer to home but slanted in favour of Canadian men who did not return top performances. Instead, Canadian men were more likely to be in the news for failing to win medals or for withdrawing from competition because of injury or ill health. They were the subjects of more than half of all male lead stories on the CBC.

The comparatively better treatment of women in coverage during the 2008 Olympics, and the sports gatekeepers' partially corroborated perceptions that the impartial, results-led news value of success guided their decision-making may not be as encouraging as they seem. Instead, the credit could go to the reduced autonomy reported by the ABC, BBC and CBC journalists covering the Olympics, the resources invested by the three broadcasters in obtaining coverage of the Games, and the sufficient, predictable and conveniently located supply of news from women's sports across the Games fortnight. The usual structures put in place around sports stories and their deadlines, that reinforced an organisational allegiance to a certain way of going about creating sports news and legitimated the status quo, were temporarily fractured during the Olympic Games. Rather than representing a reversal or softening of masculine hegemonic insistence that sport is a male domain, the comparatively greater coverage of sportswomen during the Olympics appeared to be a *de facto* benefit of their brief inclusion in the "news net's" (Tuchman, 1978a) catch from the commercial sports arena.

The ABC, BBC and CBC journalists also referred to audience interest and national interest or nationalism as major determinants of everyday sports and Olympics coverage respectively. Both female and male journalists spoke of having an innate "feel" for, or sense of, who are their audiences and what they want; in one case this was informed by personal observations made while riding on public transport, in another the journalist relied on the highly gendered British pub scene to "get a handle on what's important that day". This indicated a process of "*constructing* reality on the basis of an *imagined* understanding of it" – which is "problematic in and of itself" (Tamir & Galily, 2010, p. 106). Both female and male journalists observed that audiences like winners, especially during the Olympics. None admitted to being influenced by personal feelings of national pride or patriotism but several alluded to the presence of these feelings in their audiences. To report on home country athletes' achievements, challenges and disappointments is to enact a gender neutral, impartial journalistic response to what interests their patriotic Australian, British and Canadian audiences.

Of the interviewees who say they were aware of formal audience research conducted by their employers, only some made use of it. Journalists at the CBC openly challenged the credibility and reliability of organisational research that showed audiences for regular sports coverage want

only men's professional team sports. However, at each broadcaster, several journalists who mentioned receiving audience feedback that is critical of their organisation's under-coverage of certain sports articulated and justified their sports news choices in terms of a professional knowing – theirs was a common sense response to a perceived wider audience interest in men's sports and limited resources for covering "obscure sports".

Although they may be constrained by structural forces of power, influence and control in their work, including the pressure to conform to corporate style and culture (Breed, 1955), sports journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC are also social actors. Their agency affects the gendered sports story selection process (Knoppers & Elling, 2004). In their discourses about newsworthiness, the journalists described their selection processes that regularly demoted women's sports to the sidelines as common sense, detached, gender neutral evaluations of newsworthiness. They regularly offered top performances as a benchmark, but the reality in everyday sports coverage is that those performances are limited to the ranks of men's professional sports because, as one journalist explained, they are "the stronger competitions with a greater following". He said journalists should apply the same test to every story:

A news bulletin should contain the most newsworthy elements, not be balanced along gender lines just for the sake of it. It's the role of journalists to report the sports that are of interest to their audience.

The journalist's comment contained the most frequently mentioned news value in the 15 interviews. That is, a sport must be interesting to an audience to receive coverage. However, this study's findings suggest that the gatekeepers' conceptions of audience interest are essentially intuitive and potentially flawed (Hardin, 2005). Bruce (2009, p. 154) has noted that when decisions about who and what sport gains coverage are made on "the basis of intuition, anecdotal evidence, historical precedent and taken-for-granted beliefs about what the public wants ... [t]hese assumptions tend to result in coverage that either ignores females ... or reinforces gendered cultural discourses".

Male journalists nominated a key third factor in sports news selection – tradition. They mentioned it only in relation to men's sports. One journalist said growing up in Australia had been the biggest influence on his reporting:

In a lot of ways it is decided for you [by tradition]. Some things are handed to you that you just have to cover. You don't need to be told to cover the State of Origin. You just go and do that. There are the major sports you think most of the audience wants to hear about and it tapers down to the lesser known sports.

Two journalists' views of cricket associated only men with the sport. Both constructed their views as gender neutral, explaining that, by virtue of the public's interest in cricket, it deserved an automatic entrée to coverage.¹⁵⁹ As one of them said, it is quite simply a "no-brainer".

Only one male journalist specifically noted the role tradition played in the media's marginalisation of sportswomen:

I would say it's a very long tail of an historical hangover where men's sports were pretty much the only sports available. These are ingrained traditions in people's minds [that support] ... the illogical supposition that men's sports should be the dominant ones. The accepted norm is that these are the sports that are interesting.

This was one of the few explanations from men about the sports selection process that was at odds with the "gender role conservatism" expressed by several interviewees and identified by other researchers (Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Rowe, 1999) in their discussions with sports journalists. Knoppers and Elling (2004) reported that Dutch journalists referred to objectivity, audience interest and tradition/conservatism as the dominant factors in their news selection to justify the exclusion of women's sports. In doing so, journalists shifted attention away from themselves, which is "an excellent example of Gramscian hegemony and discursive strategy" (2004, p. 69). Hardin (2005, p.72), too, referred to the "use of 'audience interest' as a cloak for hegemonic decision making", which could explain the instances of sexualised, stereotyped and trivialised representations of female athletes in the ABC, BBC and CBC's 2008 Olympics coverage but not, necessarily, their lower frequencies on the three broadcasters compared with the legacy media's everyday sports coverage.

A reason for this apparent inconsistency could lie in digital media's capacity to enable a high degree of interactivity or intervention and choice by audiences. Kian and Clavio (2011, p. 74) posited that the traditional journalistic mores that emphasised hegemonic practices in sports writing, editing and publishing could be reconfigured in the online sphere "due to a desire on the part of writers to make a closer connection with [a different, younger target] ... audience for their articles". None of the journalists I interviewed talked about proactively seeking younger audiences (who may be less tolerant of stories containing sexist or trivialising language or stereotypes about female athletes). However, as I have noted, several of the sports journalists also wrote blogs. The majority used social media to promote their stories, monitor their competitors, keep up with the topics athletes, coaches and fans are talking about, and connect with their audiences. Fans who detect sexism or other characteristics of hegemonic masculinity

¹⁵⁹ One interview was conducted on the eve of the second test between Australia and India in 2012.

in online sports coverage are often quick to post and tweet very public criticisms. Their actions could cause journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC to rethink their attitudes and approach the topics of women's sports, issues and events "in a manner that satisfies the needs of [those] readers" (2011, p. 76).

There is also the prospect that new recruits entering the public broadcasters' sports newsrooms will (need to) be more responsive to audience feedback. Journalists are now "being socialized to be aware of market considerations in many aspects of their work" – the choice and presentation of stories, contact with readers on the Internet, and so on – and public service media are experiencing the pressures of change along with private media companies (Hjarvard, 2009, p. 503). In this cross-national study, the median age of the journalists in middle and senior management positions at the ABC, BBC and CBC was 54 years, compared with 37.5 years for the reporters. In general, the findings suggested a generation gap between some senior gatekeepers who appeared indifferent and at times dismissive of "unrepresentative" audience feedback, and younger journalists whose stories went out on multiple platforms. The latter group claimed to be more responsive to feedback and emphasised the potential of digital media for connecting with audiences and tapping their interests. At the same time, as this BBC journalist indicated, responses to comments on blogs and social media were still in line with traditional journalistic norms and practices:

I love the interaction between the journalist and the user that you didn't have in the days of print journalism. And that interest and feedback mechanism I find really, really useful in determining what else I'm going to do and how I'm going to do [it].

This way of using audience comments reinforces the traditional journalistic practice of gatekeeping, where the journalist indicated he used audience comments "as the start of an idea" (Sherwood & Nicholson, 2012, p. 953) but then exercised his expertise to tell the public what was news.

5.8.3 More women in the newsroom?

ABC, BBC and CBC journalists were split – but not along gender lines – over whether employing more women would have a positive impact on women's sports coverage. Based on their experiences as either players or followers of men's sports, two male journalists contended that men were more comfortable covering men's sports and women were better able to cover women's sports, indicating a gendering and "othering" of the news values contained in women's sports.

The journalists also returned, repeatedly, to the “impartial” or gender neutral criterion of a sport’s popularity as a key determinant of its coverage, indicating that for women’s sports to achieve coverage now, and in the future, they must fall within this dominant news paradigm. Because the criteria they used for story selection were absolute and independent, or as another male journalist put it, their decisions were “based on what the public is interested in”, the journalists saw these norms as independent of a reporter’s or editor’s gender. They saw the job of attracting or boosting public interest in women’s sports as firmly within the remit of women’s sports, not the media. Such an “adherence to objectivity” (Knoppers & Elling, 2004, p. 66) pre-empted any concern among the journalists about the lack of gender diversity in their sports coverage. They were not troubled about gender inequities “because they do not perceive them as such” (2004, p. 68).

A male journalist’s response reflected an endorsement of the status quo – men were and would continue to be the focal point of sports coverage – regardless of whether or not more women join the newsroom:

If you’re a female reporter on the sports desk, it shouldn’t follow that you get to cover all the female sport. I think having more women on the sports desk would probably raise perceptions about women’s sport as being important, but that shouldn’t mean they get *pigeon-holed* as the people who cover it. (Italics are my emphasis.)

At two of the interviewees, women who attributed the dominance of men’s sports coverage to the male culture of sports newsrooms, were unequivocal about the impact of employing more female journalists at all levels to make decisions and inform content. They agreed there would always be women who thought reporting on men’s sports had more prestige. One said:

If that’s what we’ve been fed for years and years and years, whether it is subliminal or quite overt, [when] we’ve been told that men’s sport is better, deserves more coverage and gets bigger accolades, then it just seems obvious that women will have that point of view, unfortunately.

A male journalist who reported on women’s sports, but “understands” why women journalists would want to cover high profile men’s sports (for potential career advancement and networking), also laid some of the blame for the under-reporting of women’s sports with his female colleagues. “If I was a female journalist on sport,” he said, “I would certainly want to delve into women’s sport and reflect why those athletes are of at least equal significance.”

This type of comment reflects a simple reality, according to Creedon (1994): the hegemony of the gendered media system. An “infrasystem of values” (1994, p. 93) about men’s sports overshadows media and public awareness and helps the dominant group maintain power. The sports coverage hierarchy model is a manifestation of it (Keith, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese,

1996). As a result, the discourses of the ABC, BBC and CBC journalists suggested that even if women did achieve critical mass in all levels of the three broadcasters' sports newsrooms, little would change in how the organisations defined or gathered sports news.

As Breed's (1955) work on social control in the newsroom tells us, new recruits adopt the norms and performance characteristics of their peers and superiors. Creedon (1994) noted how reporters were trained to use "official" sources that have institutional relationships for statements of "fact". Horky and Nieland (2011) confirmed that these sources are predominantly from the male sports world. Deadlines, time and space limitations affect what is presented as sports news. Work routines (in this case, rounds assignments) privilege certain types of sports news (Lowes, 1999; Theberge & Cronk, 1986) – a reality confirmed by sports journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC who variously referred to the "supremacy" of men's professional sports in their countries, their "suffocating" effect on other sports competing for attention and their "front and centre" treatment from the sports media.

As scholars including Duncan (2006) have noted, these journalistic norms, including assumptions about audience interest in sports, privilege a patriarchal world view (Creedon, 1994; Tuchman, 1978a). The journalists I interviewed confirmed that the practical result of the everyday sports coverage hierarchy is that women's sports are generally considered to be of lesser interest to audiences and are well down the pecking order in their sports departments.

5.9 Summary

Just as the findings of the content analysis for this study indicated variations across the three broadcasters in the treatment of female and male athletes, the journalists interviewed from the ABC, BBC and CBC did not present a uniform perspective on how they did sports news or why sports news was the way it was in their employers' publications. However, the degree of commonality in their descriptions and explanations about sports journalism and their views on sports news reinforced "the notion [of] a shared professional culture" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 367) and shared ideals. The few challenges that did arise posed little disruption to the dominant ideal and discourse of masculine hegemony in their sports news, newsrooms and organisations. Irrespective of their country or newsroom, the journalists' ideologies and collective sports news practices still promoted and reaffirmed the dominance of men's sports. These practices pointed to an ongoing, "critical marking of sport as a male territory" (Bruce, 2013, p. 128) with only minimal disruption of the status quo during the Olympic fortnight.

This chapter has summarised and presented the interviewees' personal and professional details. Then, as revealed in the interviews where the questions were informed by the literature in the

field and the findings of the preceding content analysis of 2008 Olympic Games coverage by each broadcaster, it reported on: the perceived sports news selection processes operating at each organisation (the hierarchies of decision-making at the ABC, BBC and CBC, and the journalists' own priorities in story selection); the journalists' perceptions of the state of play in women's sports coverage in their countries and the contributors to those situations, as well as their opinions on what might account for relative improvements in women's sports coverage during the Olympic Games; and the journalists' suggestions of ways to foster better coverage of women's sports outside the Olympics cycle. The chapter drew from the interview material to discuss and compare sports news production at the ABC, BBC and CBC and highlighted a number of issues. The issues have been placed within a wider context of research in the area of gender and sports journalism. The significance of the study's findings, in relation to the content analysis and the interviews with sports journalists, is discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored the practice of online sports reporting by considering the coverage of a major international event, the 2008 Olympic Games, and the processes of sports news selection during and outside times of Olympic competition. The online arms of three national public service broadcasters were selected for this study: Australia's ABC, the United Kingdom's BBC and Canada's CBC. In line with previous research that has focused on legacy media (see, for example, Caple et al., 2011b; Crolley & Teso, 2007; Kinnick, 1998; North, 2012), online media (Jones, 2004, 2006; Kachgal, 2001) and cross-media reporting (Kian & Clavio, 2011; Kian et al., 2008), this study has compared the extent and nature of the coverage given to sportswomen by the three national broadcasters. Then, after the work of Knoppers and Elling (2004), it has explored the potential drivers of gendered sports coverage.

The product of the three broadcasters was examined by content analysis of their online coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games. The gender gap in story and photograph numbers on the broadcasters' websites favoured male athletes by 3 to 2, representing a sharp improvement in the level of attention usually given to female athletes over more than three decades by legacy and, more recently, online media (Bryant, 1980; Cooky et al., 2013; Crolley & Teso, 2007; Kian et al., 2008). At the same time, there were marked differences in the treatment of female athletes compared with their male counterparts. The content of photographs and the language of online stories perpetuated gender stereotypes and sexual difference. Women's accomplishments were trivialised by ambivalent framing that de-emphasised their athleticism (Cranmer et al., 2014) and constructed them as emotionally weak or dependent and less committed than their male counterparts.

The production process at each broadcaster was then explored in interviews with sports news decision-makers from the three public broadcasters, from those in senior management or editorial positions through to those whose rounds or beats include international megasports contests. The major findings of the qualitative phase of this study seemed to be that, in the sports newsrooms of the ABC, BBC and CBC, while coverage was constrained to varying degrees by the limitations of time and staff, reporters claimed a higher level of autonomy in their everyday sports news choices than during the Olympic Games. In line with previous research in the US (Hardin, 2005) and the Netherlands (Knoppers & Elling, 2004), sports journalists at all three broadcasters determined content based more on their own sense of audience interests than on the audience itself and, during the Olympic Games, they pointed to

national interest as a key driver of coverage that focused on the performances of their home country athletes.

The journalists' perceptions of audience interest seemed to be driven, at least in part, by personal beliefs and hegemonic ideology about women's sports (Hardin, 2005). The journalists were aware of the lower status of women's sports in everyday media coverage but viewed it as a natural consequence of impartial, gender neutral decision-making based on the so-called public interest test (Knoppers & Elling, 2004); and, more than anything else, they said success in elite level (and preferably international) competitions increased the chances of – but still did not guarantee – sportswomen's coverage by the media (Bernstein & Galily, 2008).

Chapters 4 and 5 have discussed the implications of the findings of the content analysis and the interviews with sports news gatekeepers. The following section details the significance of the study's contribution to theory and practice in the field. The chapter then looks to the future and the prospects for women's sports coverage, before concluding with suggestions for further research in the gender-sports-digital media field.

6.2 Implications of the study

Although there were differences across the three public broadcasters, they have much in common – indeed, homogeneity – in their coverage of women's and men's sports and in their journalists' opinions about the purpose and their perceptions of the practice of sports news. In relation to the first research question, this study finds little disruption online of the traditional, dominant sport narratives of white, male, heterosexual supremacy that continue to be confirmed and reproduced in legacy sports media (Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan, 2006; Schell, 2000).

Hegemonic masculinity was apparent and perpetuated in the framing of athletes in online coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games on the ABC, BBC and CBC – both in the extent of coverage that clearly focused on male athletes and their achievements, and in the nature of coverage where the language or discourse of the broadcasters' reporting mirrored instances of culturally constructed sexual difference that have been identified previously in legacy and some online media (Bissell & Holt, 2005; Clavio & Eagleman, 2011; Duncan, 1990; Jones, 2006; Kane, 2013).

This thesis has enabled content comparisons, not only among the three public broadcasters, but also within the ABC across three successive Olympic Games and within the BBC in 2004 and 2008, to provide evidence of the ongoing under-representation of female athletes in these digital sports media. The larger implications from this study relate to the issues of gender (in)equity and the framing of gender in digital media. One of the main effects of framing within sports

media research is its ability “to make social myths into social realities” (Pedersen et al., 2007, p. 317), shaping our perceptions, attitudes and opinions. Differences in the equity of coverage by gender and the characterisations of female and male athletes have been examined previously, as social issues or realities through the lens of framing in mediasport (Billings, 2008a; Kian & Hardin, 2009; L. R. Smith, 2014; Tuggle et al., 2007), due to their capacity to shape the manner in which the sporting public and society in general perceive the myths of sport (Billings & Eastman, 2003). The need for equality (or at least a bigger share in the amount and improvements in the type of coverage given to sportswomen) has become increasingly important, as documented by the large body of sports literature highlighting patterns of biased and unequal coverage (Burch et al., 2014). The link between their media representation and the visibility of role models for girls’ and women’s participation in sport is acknowledged in calls for increased media coverage of female athletes and their sports by scholars (Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Rintala & Birrell, 1984), national sporting organisations (Australian Sports Commission, 2011; Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2011) various government inquiries (Australian Federal Government, 2009; House of Commons, 2014) and government initiatives to promote these outcomes (Australian Government News, 2011). However, the results of this study, in particular the under-reporting of female athletes and the similar use of ambivalent frames in coverage on all three broadcasters, could imply a lack of knowledge (Kinnick, 1998), or an absence of or little interest (Gallego et al., 2004) by both female and male gatekeepers in the perceived importance of gender equality.

In relation to journalism’s agenda setting role, consonance in news content across these digital media occurs through featuring the same athletes with international branding on all three sites. It also occurs in relation to home country athletes. While faces and names differed on the three websites, the levels of visibility of home country athletes by gender were substantially the same on the ABC, BBC and CBC. The broadcasters’ types of (male-focused) online sports stories were essentially the same as each other and their legacy media counterparts, thus “representing little more than a move to an all-digital format” of sports news that adds “little breadth to the mix – or the public’s access to diverse [sports] news perspectives” (Maier, 2010, p. 547). As a result, on the three broadcasters, sports journalism’s agenda setting role, focusing audience attention on a small number of athletes, most of whom are male, was largely unaltered. So, too, was the sport’s audience’s world view if it was largely based on online sports news as represented by the ABC, BBC and CBC (Maier, 2010).

As Cranmer et al. (2014, p. 159) noted, such findings are troubling, given “the suggested influence of sports coverage on audience perceptions, sponsorship, advertisements, revenue, the growth of a sport, and societal norms”. A small but increasing body of evidence based on

audience reception research has demonstrated “quite clearly and consistently” (Kane, 2013, p. 234) the influence of media framing and the sorts of meanings audience members and athletes make of the ways women’s sports are portrayed. For example, Daniels and Wartena (2011) found sexualised portrayals of female athletes were associated with the depreciation of their athleticism in teenage boys, prompting the viewers to focus on the appearance and attractiveness of the woman in the photograph rather than on what she did (sport).

Based on this and other findings (Kane, LaVoi, & Fink, 2013) about audience reception of the media effects of framing, it is possible to conclude that providing the same level and nature of coverage online to sportswomen and men could influence public opinion about the issue of gender equality and the importance of sportswomen and their achievements. It is also possible that, despite the body of evidence that ignoring women’s sports and stereotyping, trivialising and sexualising women athletes are major issues that have negative effects on audience members, the practice is evident on the three public broadcasters because their journalists and editors are unaware of the common use of these frames in their coverage (Cranmer et al., 2014; Kinnick, 1998). If this is the case, the continuation of frames associated with the old rules (Wensing & Bruce, 2003) “provides evidence of the pervasiveness of these ideologies and indicates that correcting media portrayals of female athletes may be a difficult goal to reach” (Cranmer et al., 2014, p. 160) in online environments. However, if these frames are knowingly used to attract audiences, it speaks to the broadcasters’ desire “to profit at women’s expense and illustrates a steep hill still to climb” (2014, p. 160).

It should also be noted that topics of coverage may alter the manner in which female athletes are depicted and received (2014). For example, the journalists I interviewed readily and variously referred to national pride, national identity and national interest as perceived drivers of sports news selection during the Olympic Games. This increase in the salience of nationality as an identity (Bernstein & Galily, 2008; Cranmer et al., 2014; Wensing & Bruce, 2003) may explain why some of the common frames based on the sex of athletes (that is, sexualised, stereotyped and trivialised descriptions and images of women) were not as visible in Olympics coverage on the three broadcasters compared with legacy media coverage (as noted in Chapter 5, section 5.8.2).

In relation to the second research question, this study finds an overall trend of resemblance (Reich, 2014) among the female and male sports journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC in performing, describing and justifying the serial selections and narratives of their sports news production. Despite pockets of resistance, as alluded to by the interviewees, in the main, sports newswork at the three broadcasters was driven by the principles of hegemonic masculinity. The

(male) gendered structures of the three sports news organisations were such that a male as norm ethos or bias that ignored “the quality of the athleticism or the popularity of the sport with spectators” (Caple et al., 2011a, p. 138) was built into the processes and hierarchies of the newsrooms (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009). It was justified by the journalists’ enactment of seemingly gender neutral (Knoppers & Elling, 2004) newsmaking they said was based on target audience interest and top performances. This bias was evident in the actual amount of coverage afforded female and male sports (Caple et al., 2011a). To paraphrase Hartley (quoted in Reich, 2014, p. 77) and Bruce (2013), sports news on the ABC, BBC and CBC is for, about, by and through the eyes of men, even when written by women.

At the same time, the interviews with sports journalists and editors provided an insight into why there was a relative improvement in the profile of women’s sports during the Olympic Games. A cocktail of nationalism, success, opportunity and convenience propelled online media coverage of female Olympians to record highs. Nationalism because the media support a perceived national audience interest in their home country athletes; success (top performances by women and men), and the expectation of it, generates coverage, but so does failure; opportunity because, finally, there is near parity in the number of sports open to women and men, if not the number of events; and it is also convenient for journalists when women’s and men’s same-sport events happen routinely and in close proximity to each other.

Seen from this angle, the three broadcasters’ sports coverage during the Olympic Games was at best a temporary challenge to the dominant gender ideology. When the Games are over, its effect recedes along with its momentum. Are there opportunities for reinvigorating and extending this challenge to achieve change in sports journalism practice at the broadcasters and positive results for women’s sports coverage?

The media’s job is to reflect society, putting aside how much the media can or should influence society (O’Neill & Mulready, 2014). It can be argued that the broadcasters’ coverage of sportswomen from Australia, the UK and Canada falls short of reflecting their achievements in Beijing in 2008. However, as Kian and Hardin (2009, p. 185) noted, although hegemonic masculinity was constantly challenged it was “rarely altered without the consent of the men at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy”. Furthermore, Reese (2001, quoted in Cranmer et al., 2014) has suggested that frames are culturally ingrained and persistent over time. The achievement of equity for female athletes in the quality of media coverage after a long history of ambivalence – that accentuates sex differences in its messages and images (Duncan, 2006) – “seems almost too good to be true and is in direct contradiction to framing theory” (Cranmer et al., 2014, p. 148). Based on the attitudes of the (mostly male) gatekeepers interviewed for this

study, while men remain in charge and men retain the majority in the sports newsrooms at the ABC, BBC and CBC the status quo will continue in this segment of one of the “primary forces helping to preserve hegemonic masculine social structures throughout the Western world” (Kian & Hardin, 2009, p. 186).

Previous research points to a simultaneous battle to be fought outside the newsroom. For example, Theberge and Cronk (1986) and Lowes (1999) posited that journalists’ work practices alone did not result in a male sports bias. They blamed the social organisation of sport in western cultures and its domination by commercial spectator sports that were directed, primarily at male audiences. Kane (2013, p. 235) agreed: “[W]e should never underestimate the significance of sports in preserving male power and privilege as well as the media’s central role in that regard.” Thus, while this study has provided important evidence of the ways journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC said they worked, and how their practices could consolidate the culture of male hegemony that saturated their sports news environments, strategies for reversing the gender-power balance relations and hierarchies in sports newsrooms that shaped this dominant discourse about women athletes must take into account internal and external influences. Some of these are canvassed in the following section.

6.3 A way forward?

Several initiatives have been proposed to improve the media’s coverage of female athletes and their sports. The opinions of sports journalists from the ABC, BBC and CBC on this topic were reported in Chapter 5. Some of them are shared by researchers in the gender, sports and media field and other writers, including journalists. In sum, strategies that are decades old continue to be advocated or have been updated to take into account the opportunities and challenges of the digital age. These include, but are not limited to, observations that:

- little will change until women are appointed at all levels of the sports newsroom hierarchy, and in numbers that counter the (correct) perception among female journalism students that sports journalism is dominated by white males (Cokley et al., 2006); industry recognises and counters instances of overtly discriminatory processes employed to “stymie women’s opportunities in sports reporting” and increase the chances of male applicants (North, 2012, p. 15); and editors and writers alter their hegemonic attitudes to women’s sports (Kian, 2007).

The first of these recommendations was considered in detail in Chapter 2’s literature review. The notion that employing more women in sports newsrooms will help to turn around the deficit in women’s sports coverage is discussed in Chapter 5. Of the three broadcasters studied here, the BBC has acknowledged that women are under-

represented in BBC Sport. In 2013, it advertised for a “Trainee journalist – Sport”, saying this “positive action initiative (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) is one part of our commitment to address that”, although the advertisement also advised applicants that the 12-month traineeship was not a guarantee of a job (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). However, the BBC’s “Kick off trainee sports reporter scheme” for 2014 was open to both female and male applicants. The BBC appointed its first female Director of Sport, Barbara Slater, in 2009. In a submission to a 2014 government inquiry into media and sport, the BBC said it had “strengthened further” its commitment to coverage of women’s sport – including the appointment in 2013 of an editorial lead for women’s sport, Shelley Alexander (House of Commons, 2014, p. 31).¹⁶⁰

Sports production studies (Hardin, Chance, et al., 2002) have recommended that the media make use of audience surveys. Scott-Chapman (2012, p. 351) said research that established “what current *and potential* audiences’ interests might be” could ensure that the sports media “served a broader audience, including fans of women’s sports”.

- sports organisations provide the sports media with more and better information about women athletes (Cooky et al., 2013). Several journalists at the ABC, BBC and CBC also expressed this view, with one observing that “giving journalists a hand” by issuing well-crafted media releases or information subsidies substantially increased a sport’s chances of media coverage. Others suggested that sports organisations and female athletes should actively use social media to sidestep the media’s gatekeepers and set their own agendas. Such advice may indicate the journalists’ lack of interest in covering women’s sports or their belief that the status quo will persist in legacy and online media coverage. Either way, the ability to release information both empowers athletes and, correspondingly, creates conflict between athletes and sports reporters “as journalists see their sports media relevance shrink” (Sanderson & Kassing, 2011, p. 114).

Pfister (2010, p. 241) has been cautious about the ability of “new media” to make up for the marginal role of women’s sports in the print and broadcast media “since successful and popular websites require ample resources”. However, Sanderson and Kassing (2011) noted that the cheaper alternatives of blogs and Twitter were the social media “of choice” for athletes, affording them more control over the release of sports news

¹⁶⁰ Footnote 150 in the House of Commons report links to the BBC’s submission which lists its “contribution to the promotion of women’s sports and to encouraging greater participation in sport”.

while increasing their self-presentation management. Social media also invite participation from sports fans, whereas a shift in the focus of these potential critics of mediated sports coverage could also relieve the public pressure on journalists who ignore or under-report women's sports.

- in the self-reinforcing cycle of audience interest/response and media sports coverage, governments can supply a circuit breaker. They can fund more media training and resources for female athletes and their sports organisations to “proactively enhance female agency” (Caple et al., 2011a, p. 146). In mid-2011, the Australian government announced \$1.45 million in funding to 15 national sporting organisations to boost the media coverage of women's sport (Australian Government News, 2011). Minister for Sport, Mark Arbib, said women's sport deserved greater prominence in the Australian media: “We're supporting our organisations to make sure they have strategies, officers and programs in place to attract more support in the media,” he said (AAP, 2011).

Netball Australia, which received the largest share of \$260,000, announced it would use the money to develop a comprehensive digital media strategy and assist with broadcasting the ANZ trans-Tasman championship¹⁶¹ (AAP, 2011). Ironically, few media ran either the funding story or Senator Arbib's comments about the low profile of women's sports in Australia's media.¹⁶²

At the same time, corporate funding of women's sport in Australia remains “resolutely stuck in the status quo, disproportionately skewed to male professional sports” despite arguments that sponsorship of women's sport offers a strong return on investment (Wylie, 2014). The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation said women's sports in the UK could attract investment if rights holders learned the language of commerce and governments provided “seed-funding to incentivise commercial investment” in women's sports (2011, p. 3).

- sports organisations formally recognise excellence in the reporting of women's sports by student journalists and photographers to increase students' awareness of what

¹⁶¹ Netball now has 1.2 million participants annually and is one of the largest participation sports in Australia (Wylie 2014). Government funding may become even more of an imperative for the national women's competitions in basketball (WNBL) and football (W League) following the ABC's decision to axe coverage of them at the end of the 2014 season, as part of forced budget cuts of \$207 million over four years. Basketball Australia, which runs the WNBL, said it was looking at digital online and package options for free-to-air or subscription television “to provide the widest possible audience” (Jeffrey 2014, p. 2).

¹⁶² This has been confirmed by a search of the Dow Jones *Factiva* and RMIT *TVNews* databases.

women's sport has to offer (Phillips, 1997). Since 2002, the Federally-funded Australian Sports Commission has held the annual, national *ASC Media Awards*. For one year, in 2009, they included a category for the "Best sports journalism by a student". Coverage of women's sports is also a relatively new addition to the awards. Formerly called "Best coverage of women in sport", the name was changed in 2014 to "Best promotion of women in sport".¹⁶³ Since 1998, one-third of the winners of the student category at Canada's annual *Sports Media Canada Achievement Awards* have been women. The awards are not limited to women's sports coverage. Neither is the "Young sports writer" category at the annual *SJA British Sports Journalism Awards*. Young women have won two of the previous seven awards (in 2008 and 2013). The "Student sports writer" category, introduced three years ago, has an all-male winners list.

- audience members complain directly to the producers of sports programs – to tell them that they do not appreciate the sexist treatment of female athletes, and demand more and better coverage of women's sports (Cooky et al., 2013). The lack of regular TV coverage can be a big turnoff for audiences, according to the Women's Sports Foundation's Angela Ruggiero. Ruggiero said the level of work required to be a fan of female sports was a hurdle most people were not willing to jump over (Springer, 2014). Fans trying to follow a sport want to be able to consume that sport at will: "With women's sports, you have to do a lot of digging," Ruggiero said. "You might be watching games that are live-streamed as opposed to broadcast." *New York Times* golf writer, Karen Crouse, said that women's sports might get the respect and coverage they deserved if adults demanded it – one parent at a time:

In the week after racecar driver Danica Patrick became the first woman to earn pole for the 2013 Daytona 500, Carl Edwards and Jimmie Johnson, two former winners of the event, brought their starry-eyed young daughters ... to meet Patrick. [A] ... *Times* reader wrote, 'I'm just looking at the sports pages more often through the eyes of my 10-year-old girl (a passionate gymnast). I'd like for her to see some parity of sports coverage in what I tell her is the greatest newspaper in the country.' Until viewers and readers demand parity in sports coverage, they will get what they deserve from the media: the status quo. (Crouse, 2013, p. 240)

- educators, because they have an ethical obligation to advocate for better opportunities for their students, advocate for better coverage of women's sports, "which, generally, are more often assigned to female reporters. [They] must counter the tired [and untrue]

¹⁶³ Another category renamed in 2014 is the "Best promotion of sport for people with disability".

argument ... from those in hiring at media organizations that women are not interested in covering sports” (Hardin, 2013, p. 243).

- researchers continue to document the “incredibly pervasive and vicious cycle” of under-reporting of women’s sport, even though it has proven difficult to change. Documenting such differences, using methods such as longitudinal analyses, is “especially powerful” and provides “context given the increasing number of female athletes, women’s sports leagues, and media outlets” (Fink, 2014, pp. 9-10). Bruce (2013, p. 128), too, said an ongoing record of the media’s poor treatment of female athletes offered “a damning indictment of the institutionalised sexism of sports reporting”. As noted in this study, there is only a small body of research on mediated sport in Australia, and few studies in the area of the gender-sport-media triad. Scholars have called on the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia (JERAA, formerly the JEA) to support and promote such research and its results (Cokley et al., 2006).
- students in journalism, sports management and related areas of study be educated about these findings, the importance of diversity in the sports workplace and the issues around women’s sports (Hardin, 2013). Schmidt (2013) noted that university student journalists were unaware of the inequality of coverage of women’s and men’s sports. Fink (2014) observed that male and female students alike failed to understand the harmful nature of these inequities. However, LaVoi et al. (2007, p. 39) saw great potential for students to be “future change agents”, if they were given learning opportunities that disrupted their “assumptions, discourse, and praxis associated with gendered hierarchies”. As a journalism educator, I have found my students were open to learning about gender issues via their own critiques of professional journalistic practice (Jones, 2005) – such as the different patterns of online media representations of female and male athletes at the Commonwealth Games.

It should also be noted that women’s sports organisations and others seeking to promote women’s sport (and, by association, themselves) can and do stumble. The Federation Internationale de Ski showed its preoccupation with appearance in this advice to female racers:

It is our desire to promote, encourage and support female ski racers, but to this end the ladies must work with us and help themselves. ... Lady skiers must learn to promote themselves, make themselves available for happy, uncritical and positive TV interviews. They must show themselves – helmet and goggles off in the finish area – play on their youth and pretty faces. Everyone loves a winner – and a glamorous winner is a big bonus (Stone & Horne, 2008, p. 95).

A women's health magazine drew widespread criticism in 2014 for a sexist gimmick to attract attention to the *I Support Women's Sports* awards in Australia. Event organisers engaged topless models in bodypaint to pose as athletes from various sports. News media outlets reported on the subsequent "uproar". On www.news.com the awards and the overall winner, World and Olympic champion hurdler Sally Pearson, were relegated to the tail end of a story that featured three photographs of the semi-nude models.

I have argued elsewhere (ABC Radio National, 2014; Jones, 2012a) that a strategy for boosting the profile of female athletes and audiences for women's sports could come, in part, from another quarter. It seems logical – based on my own studies and previous research cited in this thesis – to conclude that coverage of women's sports is about as good as it gets during the Olympic Games. Women's sports gained, on average, more than 40 per cent of the attention on the online news sites I have studied over three successive Olympic Games, starting with Sydney in 2000 (Jones, 2013). Then, just as quickly, it was all over. The sports media resumed normal transmission. Female athletes returned to their usual place on the sidelines.

Outside of the lead-in to the Olympics and during the Games fortnight, as studies in Australia and internationally show, women's share of mainstream sports coverage nosedives. Even racehorses get more attention. In the US, for example, thanks to a pair of series launched by NBC and Fox Sports 1, 21 horse racing programs are offered on television. The sport's 24-hour coverage on TVG and HRTV draws a core audience of millions of fans who regularly attend race meetings and bet on them (Mullen, 2014). And that is perhaps the root of the problem confronting women's sports. The attention deficit could continue unless punters come on side – in big numbers.¹⁶⁴ Veteran US sports writer, Frank Deford, observed. "Anything you can bet on gets more attention." (Deford, 2013, p. 2).

Punters already bet on women's sports. They just do not bet very much, comparatively speaking. Australian-based online bookmaker, Centrebet, turned over about \$6.3 million on women's sports in 2011, just .5 per cent of its annual hold and a trifle compared with its largest betting event of the year, the Spring racing carnival, when punters wagered more than \$7 million on Melbourne Cup day alone (Felgate, 2012). Global wagering giant William Hill's Australian brand, Sportingbet, reported a modest increase in betting on women's sports in 2012 to less than 2 per cent of its total turnover (A. Brown, 2014). That figure included the 2012 London Olympics.

Centrebet's former media and communications manager, Michael Felgate, agreed there is an umbilical connection between punters' interest in sports and live television coverage:

Live sport or at least TV friendly times assist bet volumes. The majority of punters want to be able to see the sports they are investing in rather than having a bet and all you can do is look up the result afterwards. (Felgate, 2012)

That is why, according to Felgate (2012), punters in Australia bet on women's sports during an Olympics: "Swimming, hockey, basketball – they will all be bet on quite regularly and quite heavily because punters can watch those teams and they know those teams perform well." What needs to happen to improve the odds of greater coverage of women's sports outside of the Olympics? Sportingbet's Bill Richmond said public and punter demand for live sport was growing:

Any sport that's on live we hold more money on. With three Foxtel channels and Fox Footy, there's a greater demand for content. So, if women's sports provide good content, then you'd certainly think there'd have to be a rise in women's sport as the overall coverage of sport increases. (Richmond, 2012)

Netball could be that good content model for other women's sports. Channel 10 has broadcast a mix of live and delayed matches from netball's ANZ trans-Tasman championship, the 10-team competition between Australia and New Zealand. Matches have also aired on SKY Sports in New Zealand. Centrebet's turnover confirms that punters have warmed to netball, making it the betting agency's biggest women's team sport. Sportingbet's annual hold on netball rose from \$1.4 million in 2013 to close to \$1.5 million in 2014 – which sounds like a fair slice, except that it is a small fraction of the more than \$100 million each in turnover for the men's professional team sports of AFL and NRL.

Still, netball's numbers are "heading in the right direction", according to Sportingbet's Andrew Brown:

Once it [netball] was being telecast, that's where the interest from the punters definitely spiked. It's not just the free-to-air television exposure for them. The whole media exposure, essentially the more punters are exposed to certain sports and the more knowledgeable they become and the more information they have, the more broadcasts they are exposed to, the more confident they will become about having a bet. So, it's all about the information and that exposure, not just on live broadcasts on TV but also the media as a whole. (A. Brown, 2014)

¹⁶⁴ Please note: I am not an advocate for gambling. I make the observation, based on facts and figures, that punters are interested in betting on women's sports and I speculate about how this interest might develop.

While sports administrators, publicists and players wrestle with how best to raise the profile of women's sports in the media, one thing seems clear. Women's sports need punters. To get them on side, women's sports need to be in the public eye and played at a professional level that attracts public interest which, in turn, translates into punters. The promotions run by betting agencies will only serve to reinforce the appeal of those contests. Or, as Deford (2013, p. 2) observed: "The bookmakers, ladies, may be more important than the editors."

6.4 Future research

Research in the field of the sports news process can be divided into four areas, positioned along a continuum that starts with sports journalists, followed by the routines of sports news gathering that, in turn, generate the product or the content, and finishes with the potential effects of exposure to sports communication (that is, reporters → routines → content → effects) (Wayne Wanta, 2012). The findings described in this thesis add to our understanding of sports media and sports news production, through research centered on investigating two key areas in this process, by: interviewing sports reporters and editors whose attitudes and behaviours as gatekeepers make them a key component in the communication process; and content analysing the sports news communication product to discern the amount and quality of coverage given to sportswomen and sportsmen. By bringing together a mix of methodologies and theoretical concepts, this research makes significant contributions to theory as well as offering lessons for journalistic practice.

As this study has demonstrated, documenting the online media's gendered coverage of sports can help to raise awareness about discriminatory practices in sports reporting. Each of Wanta's (2012) four areas of the sports news process offers promising ground for future research to further inform our understanding of online sports journalism. The second area, the routines of sports news gathering, needs further attention in relation to digital media. The link between reporters and online content, such as the relationships between reporters and sources and their implications, warrants investigation.

So, too, does the impact of social media on the relationships between sports journalists and sports fans and sports journalists and athletes. For example, to what extent is the interactivity offered by social media such as Twitter and Facebook affecting the routine of sports news gathering? Social media now give athletes the capability to move from uninvolved to active and influential players in the production of sports media (Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). Further research could examine the extent to which female athletes' transition from actors in and consumers of the storyline has shifted how online sports stories unfold.

This study has been limited to an analysis of gendered sports news content and investigating journalists' perceptions of sports news and its production processes. This suggests the next step: an examination of communication effects, of the audience's reception of online sports news, including audience "interest" which has been identified so often in the discourse of the journalists interviewed for this study as a key influence on their sports news decision-making. Other research could examine the images of online Olympics coverage to test whether different demographic groups (Matures, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers) prefer images of female athleticism compared to images that sexually objectify female athletes (Creedon, 2014; LaVoi & Calhoun, 2014). Are their preferences similar to or at odds with those of the millennial generation of readers and viewers of sports news on the web?

The findings of this study cannot be generalised to all online sports media websites, but they do indicate "a certain degree of homogeneity in practices and discourses across geographically dispersed locales" (Boczkowski, 2011, p. 161). They also highlight the need for researchers and readers to look at male hegemony theory and media framing effects with a different perspective. For example, if athletes' frames in online media continue to follow traditional gender roles, will audiences gravitate to social media consumption to escape the pervasiveness of male hegemonic practices? Researchers could replicate this study's content analysis on national or international, commercial or niche sports media websites during the Olympic Games, in order to compare the findings from this study of public broadcasters with commercial sports media productions.

As has been the case with this study, combining quantitative content analysis with interviews with sports journalists and shifting the focus to the commercial sports news media could enhance the data by adding validity to the findings and providing information that could not be obtained by using other resources. As long as digital media coverage treads the path of legacy sports media by marginalising, sexualising and trivialising sportswomen, "innovative and dedicated research" (Schreiber, 2010, p. 434) will be needed to provide the public with a clear understanding of the issues contributing to the poor quality of media coverage of female athletes and the consequences of that action.

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Appendix A

Table A1 Female sports, events and participation at the Olympic Games, 1948-2008

Year	Female sports	Female events* (total events)	Female % of total events	Female % of participants
1948	5	19 (136)	14	9.5
1952	6	25 (149)	16.8	10.5
1956	6	26 (151)	17.2	13.3
1960	6	29 (150)	19.3	11.4
1964	7	33 (163)	20.2	13.2
1968	7	39 (172)	22.7	14.2
1972	8	43 (195)	22.1	14.6
1976	11	49 (198)	24.7	20.7
1980	12	50 (203)	24.6	21.5
1984	14	62 (221)	28.1	23
1988	17	72 (237)	30.4	26.1
1992	19	86 (257)	33.5	28.8
1996	21	97 (271)	35.8	34
2000	25	120 (300)	40	38.2
2004	26	125 (301)	41.5	40.7
2008	26	127 (302)	42.1	42.4

* Note: Mixed events are not included.

Sources: IOC (2000) *Olympic Review*, no. 35, October/November; IOC (2001), *Factsheet*, available at http://www.olympic.org/ioc/e/women/women_jo_e.html; IOC (2013), *Factsheet: Women in the Olympic movement*, available at http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reference_documents_factsheets/Women_in_Olympic_Movement.pdf

Appendix B

Address: <http://www.abc.net.au/olympics/>

ABC Home Radio Television News Your Local ABC

Beijing 2008
ABC's Coverage of the Beijing Olympic Games

Home Just In Features Athletes Sports Schedule Results Blog Fun Stats

2008 Medal Tally

	Gold	Silver	Bronze
China	22	8	6
United States	14	12	17
Germany	8	2	3
South Korea	6	7	3
Australia	5	6	8

Full Medal Tally ▶

Did You Know?
Alex Croak will become the 13th athlete to represent Australia in more than one sport at the Olympics (gymnastics in 2000, diving in 2008).

Boomers improve: Crunch match looms
▶ Coach Brian Goorjian says the Boomers improved against Iran, but must beat Russia to progress (Video).

Form Guides
▶ **Canoeing: Men's C2 Slalom**
Two pairs of Slovakian brothers will set the pace in the white water. [View](#)

Friday
2:00pm
▶ **Beach Volleyball: Women's** : Natalie Cook and Tamsin Barnett play Greece in the final 16. [More Highlights](#)

Trickett settles for 100m silver
Australia's Libby Trickett had to settle for silver as German Britta Steffen won the women's 100 metres freestyle in the Beijing Olympic pool today.
World record-holder Trickett led at the turn and was in front until the final seconds when the fast-finishing Steffen mowed her down. [More](#)

Medallist kicked out
North Korean bronze and silver medallist disqualified from the Olympic Games after testing positive for a banned substance.

Breaststroke boomer
American Rebecca Soni has upset Leisel Jones in the 200m breaststroke final. [cs](#)

Phelps cruises to sixth Beijing gold
Bolt, Powell, Gay negotiate 100m heats
AOC slaps down Hackett illness reports
Potent claims shooting bronze
Sullivan, Callus into splash-and-dash final
Lochte claims 200m backstroke gold
Lauterstein shadows Phelps into 100m fly final
Nay, Hoching into backstroke final
Martin, Anlezark fall short in shot put
China faked 'ethnic minority' children at Olympic ceremony: report
Kenny gets nod as France vs Britain grudge match looms
Australian Olympian on assault charge

Haile Gebrselassie
[View Profile](#)

TEAM AUSTRALIA
OUR ATHLETES IN BEIJING
POST R TRIBUTE

Analysis

Figure B1.1 ABC Olympics splash page (T1), at <http://www.abc.net.au/olympics> on Friday, August 15, 2008

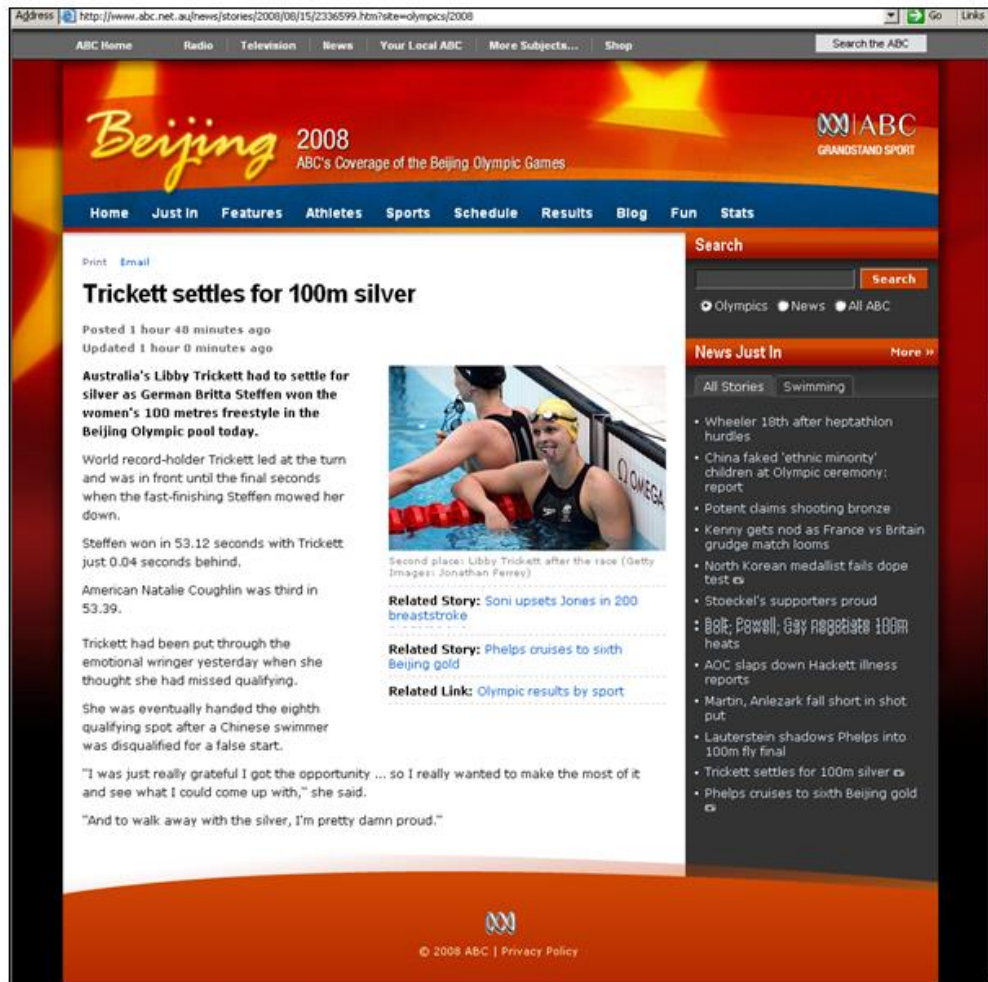


Figure B1.2 ABC Olympics top story's T2 or main page, at <http://www.abc.net.au/olympics> on Friday, August 15, 2008

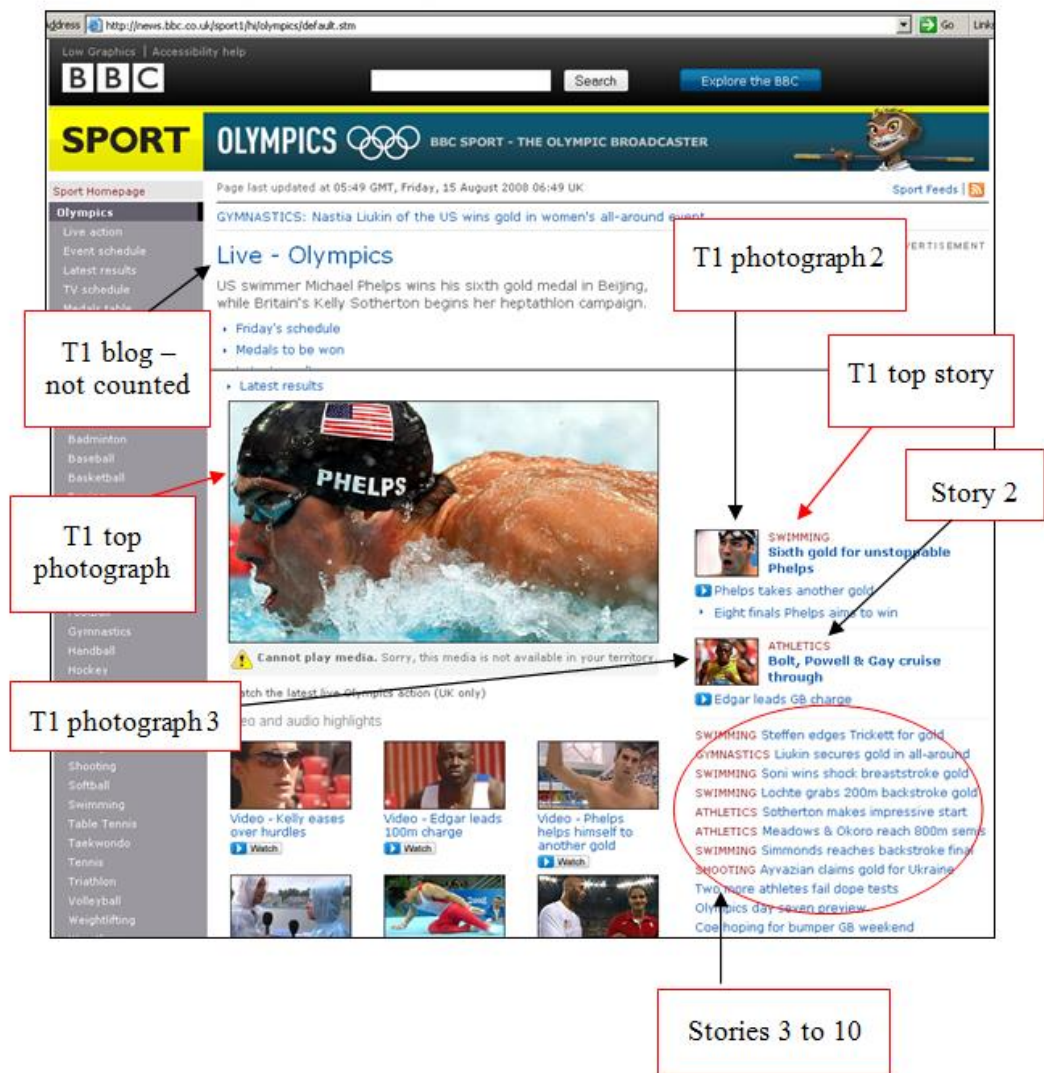


Figure B1.3 BBC Olympics splash page (T1), at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/Olympics/default.stm> on Friday, August 15, 2008

SPORT

OLYMPICS

BBC SPORT - THE OLYMPIC BROADCASTER

Sport Homepage

Olympics

Swimming

Event schedule

Latest results

Related BBC sites

News

Weather

Site Version

UK Version

International Version

About the versions

Page last updated at 03:18 GMT, Friday, 15 August 2008 04:18 UK

E-mail this to a friend

Printable version

Sixth gold for unstoppable Phelps

Cannot play media. Sorry, this media is not available in your territory.

Video - Phelps helps himself to another gold

Swimming superstar Michael Phelps won his sixth gold medal of Beijing Games, breaking his own world record in the 200m dual medley.

American won in a time of 1min 54.23secs, shaving 0.57secs off previous best set in July and setting his sixth world record of the Games.

Hungary's Laszlo Cseh took silver and Ryan Lochte of the US won bronze.

Phelps, who is chasing an unprecedented eight gold medals in Beijing, now has 12 career Olympic golds to his name.

He led from the start of the race and finished strongly on his favoured freestyle leg, 2.29secs ahead of Cseh in second.

Lochte held on for third despite having raced just half an hour earlier, when he broke the world record to take the men's 200m backstroke title.

Phelps, 23, the dominant story of the Beijing Olympics, has now won the 400m medley, 200m freestyle, 200m butterfly, 4x100m free relay, 4x200m free relay and now the 200m medley, all in world record time.

But he showed little reaction apart from a quick shake of his fist after his latest victory.

He is now closing in on Mark Spitz's 1972 record of seven golds at a single Games.

Moments after receiving his medal for winning the 200m medley Phelps returned to the pool for the semi-final of the 100m fly, winning in a time of 50.97secs.

"I switched from my dress sweats to my parka, shoes, threw my cap and goggles on and then they pushed us on out. No time," he said.

"The medal was in my warm-up jacket."

SEE ALSO

- Phelps breaks Olympic gold record 13 Aug 08 | Swimming
- Is Phelps really the greatest? 13 Aug 08 | Olympics
- Why Phelps is so special 13 Aug 08 | Olympics
- Phelps cements place in history 13 Aug 08 | Swimming
- Eight finals Phelps aims to win 10 Aug 08 | Swimming
- My Games: Michael Phelps' mum 13 Aug 08 | Olympics
- Ten to watch: Michael Phelps 13 Aug 08 | Swimming
- Hackett tips Phelps to set record 29 Jul 08 | Swimming

RELATED BBC LINKS:

- Mihir Bose blog on Olympic greats

RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

- Beijing 2008 - swimming
- Amateur Swimming Association
- World Swimming
- World Championships 2008
- Olympic schedule from the BOA
- Sport info from the BOA

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

Only the first photograph in T2 main stories was counted

Figure B1.4 BBC Olympics top story's T2 or main page, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/Olympics/default.stm> on Friday, August 15, 2008

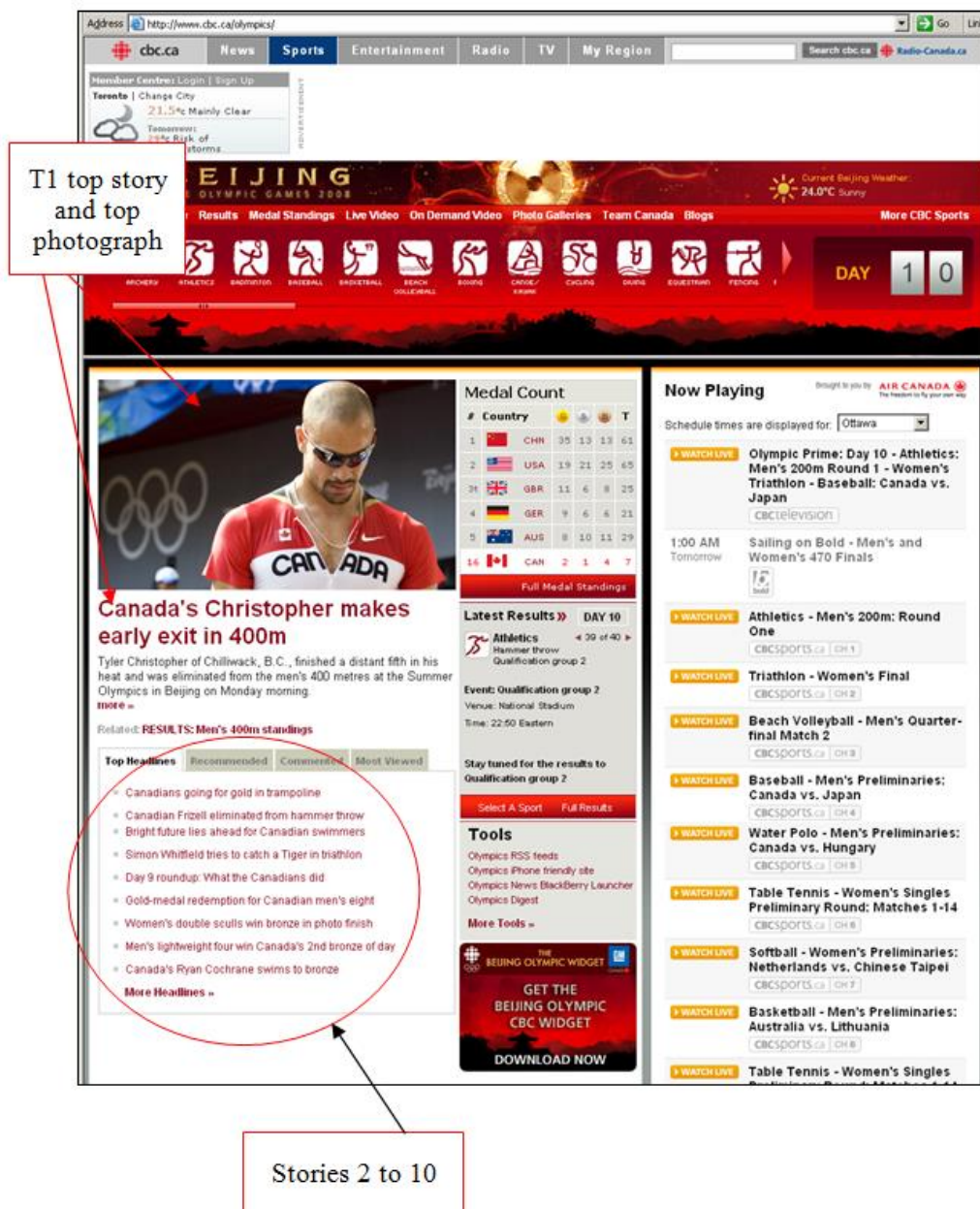


Figure B1.5 CBC Olympics splash page (T1), at <http://www.cbc.ca/olympics/> on Monday, August 18, 2008

Address: <http://www.cbc.ca/olympics/athletics/story/2008/08/17/olympics-athletics-track.html>

cbc.ca News Sports Entertainment Radio TV My Region Search cbc.ca Radio-Canada.ca

Herbster Content Login | Sign Up
Toronto | Change City
21.5°C Mainly Clear
Tomorrow: 25°C Risk of thunderstorms

BEIJING THE OLYMPIC GAMES 2008
Home Schedule Results Medal Standings Live Video On Demand Video Photo Galleries Team Canada Blogs More CBC Sports

Archery Athletics Badminton Baseball Basketball Boxing Canoe/Kayak Cycling Equestrian Fencing Judo Karate Taekwondo Triathlon Volleyball Water Polo Wrestling

DAY 10

Athletics
Athletics Home | Results | Broadcast Schedule | Event Schedule | Contenders | History | Glossary | Venues | Essentials

Story Tools: E-MAIL | PRINT | Text Size: S M L XL | REPORT TYPO | SEND YOUR FEEDBACK

Canada's Christopher makes early exit in 400m

Last Updated: Sunday, August 17, 2008 | 10:43 PM ET
CBC Sports

Suffering from what he called "a really bad flu," Canada's Tyler Christopher suffered an early exit in the men's 400 metres at the Summer Olympics in Beijing on Monday morning.

Christopher, from Chilliwack, B.C., clocked a time of 45.67 seconds in a competitive qualifying heat won by Britain's Andrew Steele in a personal best 44.94.

Christopher finished fifth in the heat and a disappointing 28th overall — failing to advance to the semifinals.

"To be honest, everything was going really good up until I travelled over here and I ended up getting a really bad flu," Christopher told CBC Sports. "I just was able to train two days ago."

"I thought I was over it. But obviously, it took a lot more energy out of me than I thought."

Christopher had the quickest reaction time to the starter's pistol (0.172) as he rounded the first turn off the stagger, but he faded badly down the stretch.

"I had the race where I wanted," he said. "I just didn't have the energy for the last 100, I didn't close the way I wanted." Christopher, the world indoor champion, opened the season with an impressive 44.71 at Carlsbad, Calif., but he hasn't broken 45 seconds since.

He set a Canadian record of 45.03 at the nationals.

Defending Olympic champion and two-time world titlist Jeremy Wariner of the United States breezed to victory in the final heat, crossing the line in 45.23.

American teammate LaShawn Merritt, who beat Wariner at the Olympic trials, won the fifth heat in 44.96.

Chris Brown of the Bahamas posted the fastest qualifying time, winning a close heat in 44.79 over Australia's Joel Milburn (44.80) and Sweden's Johan Wissman (44.81).

Brown beat Christopher to win the event at last year's Pan American Games, but Christopher returned the favour at the indoor worlds.

In the third heat at Beijing, Andretti Bain, Brown's Bahamian teammate, qualified third in 45.96 behind Costa Rica's Nery Brenes (45.36) and Nigeria's Godday James (45.49).

Martyn Rooney of Britain took the fourth heat in 45 seconds flat, winning handily over Australia's Sean Wroe (45.17) and Jamaica's Ricardo Chambers (45.22).

Michael Johnson of the U.S. still owns the world record of 43.18 set at Seville, Spain, in 1999, and the Olympic mark of 43.49 set at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Related

- RESULTS: Men's 400m standings
- RESULTS: Men's 400m summary
- BIO: Tyler Christopher
- Send a message to Tyler Christopher

Athletics Triple jump Round 1 heat 2 DAY 10

ZIM	Brian Dzangai	20.25
GBR	Christian Maloom	20.42
JAM	Christopher Williams	20.53

Athletics Headlines

- Canada's Christopher makes early exit in 400m
- Canadian Frizell eliminated from hammer throw
- Fraser leads Jamaican 100-metre sweep
- Ethiopia's Bekele repeats as Olympic 10,000-metre champ
- Romania's Tomescu-Dita wins women's marathon

Olympic Headlines

- Canada's Christopher makes early exit in 400m
- Canadians going for gold in trampoline
- Canadian Frizell eliminated from hammer throw
- Bright future lies ahead for Canadian swimmers
- Simon Whitfield tries to catch a Tiger in biathlon

Figure B1.6 CBC Olympics top story's T2 or main page, at <http://www.cbc.ca/olympics/> on Monday, August 18, 2008

Appendix C

Olympic sports coverage code sheet

Day and date of bulletin _____, 2008

Source: ABC BBC CBC (circle one) Downloaded at _____ (am/pm)

For instructions on the requirements for each category, turn to the “Coder instruction sheet”.

Stories

A. Lead/top story (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
B. Story 2 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
C. Story 3 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
D. Story 4 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
E. Story 5 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
F. Story 6 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
G. Story 7 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
H. Story 8 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
I. Story 9 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
J. Story 10 (Tier One) summary	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	
K. Lead/top main story (T2)	1. Male	3. Gender-neutral
	2. Female	

L. Story 2 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
M. Story 3 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
N. Story 4 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
O. Story 5 main story(T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
P. Story 6 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
Q. Story 7 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
R. Story 8 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
S. Story 9 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
T. Story 10 main story (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Gender-neutral
Photographs		
U. Lead/top photograph (T1)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
V. Photograph 2 (T1)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
W. Photograph 3 (T1)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
X. Lead story photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
Y. Story 2 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
Z. Story 3 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive

AA. Story 4 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
BB. Story 5 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
CC. Story 6 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
DD. Story 7 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
EE. Story 8 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
FF. Story 9 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
GG. Story 10 photograph (T2)	1. Male 2. Female	3. Mixed gender 4. Active 5. Passive
HH. Thematic descriptors: male	1. Appearance 3. Emotions	2. Relationships 4. Success 5. Failure
II. Thematic descriptors: female	1. Appearance 3. Emotions	2. Relationships 4. Success 5. Failure
JJ. Language use: male	1. Last name 3. First & last 5. Trivial. language	2. First name 4. Martial metaphors 6. Gender marking
KK. Language use: female	1. Last name 3. First & last 5. Trivial. language	2. First name 4. Martial metaphors 6. Gender marking

Coder instruction sheet

The following instructions apply to coding for Olympic sports reports.

Code the top 10 Olympic sports story summaries on each site's splash page or Tier One (T1), and the Tier Two (T2) full stories linked to them; and sports photograph/s (as described below) on each site's splash page and in the main stories on T2.

Definitions: "Sports stories" are those stories whose topics or themes are contests, achievements or issues affecting individual Olympic athletes or teams. Exclude stories about the opening and closing ceremonies. That is, unless a particular athlete or team is mentioned, do not include stories about economic, political or social conditions affecting sport; reports about coaches, venues, athlete payments, sponsorships and sports administration; or stories about drug-testing procedures and outcomes, or performance enhancing drugs.

"Lead/top story (Tier One) summary" refers to the lead story summary posted on the online site's home or splash page.

"Lead story (Tier Two)" refers to the main story accessed by hyperlink from the splash page (T1) summary.

Code all Olympic sports stories, according to the above criteria and those below.

Complete one set of sheets for each bulletin to be coded.

Tier One story summary:

Code the summary as being about one gender only (i.e. male or female) or as gender-neutral. For a combined gender summary (a summary that mentions both male and female athletes), code the summary according to the first-mentioned gender (i.e. male or female). Where a summary contains gender-neutral language, such as "Australia has won gold", code it as "gender-neutral". However, if a summary begins with gender-neutral language but goes on to mention either male or female athletes, code it according to the first-mentioned gender (i.e. male or female). Do not code the headline accompanying the summary.

Note:

On the BBC site, some changes occur in the placement of the lead/top story and coding must reflect this. On August 7, 2008, the main/lead summary (and its headline) appears top left on the splash page. Stories 2, 3 and 4 and so on appear top right with their headlines listed in a column on the right-hand side of the screen. On August 9, the position of the lead/top story is taken by a blog which is not coded or counted. While the lead/top photograph remains in the same top left position, the lead/top story is now the story that appears at the top of the right-hand column of story headlines. That is, code the story headline at the head of the right-hand column as the main/top story on the splash page, but code the photograph that appears at the head of the left-hand column (with the blog) as the main photograph on the splash page.

1. Circle 1. for a splash page summary that has been coded as "male"; circle 2. for a summary that has been coded as "female"; circle 3. for a summary that has been coded as "gender-neutral".

Main story (Tier Two):

Code the story as being about one gender only (i.e. male or female) or as gender-neutral. For a combined gender story (one that mentions both male and female athletes), code the story according to the first-mentioned gender (i.e. male or female). Where a story contains gender-neutral language only, such as "Australia has won gold", code it as "gender-neutral". However, if a story that begins with gender-neutral language goes on to mention either male or female athletes, code it according to the first-mentioned gender (i.e. male or female). Do not code the headline accompanying the main story.

1. Circle 1. for a story that has been coded as “male”; circle 2. for a story that has been coded as “female”; circle 3. for a story that has been coded as “gender-neutral”.

Photographs (T1 and T2): Only photographs featuring individual athletes or more than one athlete will be counted. If a team is the dominant visual element, count the photograph as one entry according to the gender of the team (i.e. female, or male or mixed gender). Where a photograph depicts individual athletes of more than one gender, count this as one photograph for each gender. Do not count the number of athletes appearing in a photograph.

Notes:

On the ABC site’s splash page, up to three photographs are eligible for coding and counting. The main/lead photograph appears directly above the lead/top story on the splash page. Story 2 and Story 3 on the splash page may each be accompanied by a small photograph that appears to the left of the story summary.

On the BBC site’s splash page, up to three photographs are eligible for coding and counting. On August 7, the main/lead photograph appears top left on the splash page and to the left of the lead/top story headline and one sentence summary. Story 2 and Story 3 on the splash page are accompanied by a small photograph to the left of the story headline. On August 8, a much larger main/lead photograph is used. This remains consistent for the duration of the Games. However, from August 9 the main/lead photograph is associated with a blog rather than a conventional main/lead sports story. Code and count this photograph as the main/lead photograph.

On the CBC site, only one photograph on the splash page (Tier One) is eligible for coding and counting. It appears directly above the lead story headline and summary.

In main (T2) stories containing more than one photograph, code and count the first photograph only.

1. Circle 1. for a photograph that has been coded as “male”; circle 2. for a photograph that has been coded as “female”; circle 3. for a photograph that has been coded as “mixed gender”.

Photographs: Active and passive depictions: Examine all photographs coded and counted above for depictions of female and male athletes in certain poses.

An “active” depiction shows the athlete doing something competitive (for example, rowing in a race), training or warming up.

A “passive” depiction shows the athlete doing nothing competitive. It includes, for example, posed shots of the athlete in a social or domestic setting, etc.; images featuring the glamorous appearance of the athlete, such as a female in day or evening wear, or with lavishly applied make-up and hairstyling more appropriate for a formal event; and images where the athlete appears motionless (such as recovering after exertion), is shown from the shoulders up (in a mug shot) or is depicted celebrating (for example, hugging a team mate or giving a victory salute).

1. Circle 4. for a photograph that has been coded as “active”; circle 5. for a photograph that has been coded as “passive”.

Tier Two main stories and featured sports: Select the featured sport from those listed in *Attachment 1* according to the code number corresponding to the sport (1– 35). For each T2 story, enter the number corresponding to the sport featured (first-mentioned) in the story. Do not code or count stories about mixed gender teams. However, a story about individual members of a mixed gender team will be classified according to the gender of the athlete first mentioned in the story, and the sport concerned will be listed according to the number representing it.

Sources of bias: Examine all stories for occurrences of the following themes along gender lines (HH and II). Count any word or adjoining words, phrase, sentence or paragraph concerning the same theme as one appearance of that theme. See *Attachment 2* for examples of thematic verbal descriptors relating to:

(1) appearance, (2) relationships, (3) emotions, (4) success and (5) failure. Do not count factual descriptors such as “dropped the baton”.

1. Enter one slash mark (/) for each instance of mention of a male athlete’s (1) appearance, (2) relationships, (3) emotions, (4) success and (5) failure.
2. Enter one slash mark (/) for each instance of mention of a female athlete’s (1) appearance, (2) relationships, (3) emotions, (4) success and (5) failure.

Language use: Examine all stories, along gender lines, for the manner in which athletes are named, the use of martial language, trivialising language and gender-marking of sports (JJ and KK).

Martial language uses the metaphors of war. Examples include “charged”, “smashed”, etc.

Trivialising language refers to descriptions of adult female athletes as “girl”, “young lady”, etc. and adult male athletes as “boy”, “lad”, “young man”, etc. The terms “guy” and “guys” are not considered to be trivialising references.

Gender marking occurs when sports are referred to by the genders participating, such as “women’s hockey”, “women’s tennis”, “men’s basketball”, “men’s 400m”, etc.

1. For male athletes, enter one slash mark (/) for each instance where the athlete was described by (JJ1) last name, (JJ2) first name, and/or (JJ3) first and last name.

Enter one slash mark (/) for each usage of (JJ4) martial metaphors, (JJ5) trivialising language, and (JJ6) gender-marking of sports.

2. For female athletes, enter one slash mark (/) for each instance where the athlete was described by (KK1) last name, (KK2) first name, and (KK3) first and last name.

Enter one slash mark (/) for each usage of (KK4) martial metaphors, (KK5) trivialising language, and (KK6) gender-marking of sports.

Attachment 1 Olympic sports by gender-type

Sport	Gender-appropriateness	Sport's code
Archery	Male	1
Athletics	Male	2
Badminton	Neutral	3
Baseball	Male	5
Basketball	Male	4
Beach volleyball	Neutral	6
Boxing	Male	7
Canoeing/kayaking	Male	8
Cycling	Male	9
Diving	Female	10
Equestrian	Neutral	11
Fencing	Male	12
Gymnastics	Female	13
Handball	Male	14
Hockey	Male	15
Judo	Male	16
Modern pentathlon	Neutral	17
Mountain biking	Male	35
Rhythmic gymnastics	Female	18
Rowing	Male	19
Sailing	Neutral	20
Shooting	Neutral	21
Soccer (football)	Male	22
Softball	Male	23
Swimming	Female	24
Synchronised swimming	Female	25
Table tennis	Female	26
Taekwondo	Male	27
Tennis	Female	28
Trampolining	Female	29
Triathlon	Male	30
Volleyball	Neutral	31
Water Polo	Male	32
Weightlifting	Male	33
Wrestling	Male	34

Note: Sports classified in the above table, such as Athletics, are as listed by the Olympic movement at <http://www.olympic.org/sports> and are those that featured in the sampled bulletins only.

Attachment 2 Examples of thematic verbal descriptors

Appearance	References to physiological attributes	– includes irrelevant references to size, age, masculine attributes, feminine attributes etc.
	Use of condescending descriptors	– for example, “elegant presence”, “golden girl”, etc.
Relationships	References to personal relationships	– for example, marital status, boyfriends, girlfriends, family, responsibilities, etc.
Emotions	References to athletes’ emotions	– for example, happiness, elation, disappointment, jubilation, tearfulness, etc.
	References to emotional dependence	– for example, “couldn’t have done it without ...”, etc.
Success and failure	Explanations for winning	– references to: athletic skill/strength (“powerful”, “confident”, “skilful”, “smart”, “big and strong”, “dominant”, etc.); experience (“veteran”, “been there before”, “experienced”, etc.); athletic consonance (“the day belonged to”, “his/her time”); leadership (“led the way”, “was in charge” etc); and commitment (“focused”, “persistent”, etc.).
	Explanations for losing	– references to: athletic skill/strength (“mental lapse”, “weary”, “shaky”, “choked”, etc.); experience (“overwhelmed”, “green”, “inexperienced”, etc.); athletic consonance (“not her day”, etc.); leadership (“lost control”, “panicked”, “struggled to stay in touch”, etc.); and commitment (“indecisive”, “distracted”, “lost concentration”, etc.).

Appendix D

Table D1 Top sports by country by Olympic medal wins in 2008

Australia	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Canada	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Swimming	6	6	8	Rowing	1	1	2
Rowing	2	1	0	Equestrian	1	(1)*	0
Sailing	2	1	0	Wrestling	1	0	1
Athletics	1	2	1	Diving	0	2	0
Canoe/kayak	1	1	3	Trampoline	0	2	0
Diving	1	1	0	Canoe/kayak	0	1	1
Triathlon	1	0	1	Taekwondo	0	1	0
Basketball	0	1	0	Triathlon	0	1	0
Cycling	0	1	0	Athletics	0	0	1
Equestrian	0	(1)*	0	Swimming	0	0	1
Hockey	0	0	1				
Shooting	0	0	1				
Softball	0	0	1				
Water polo	0	0	1				

Great Britain	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Cycling	8	4	2
Sailing	4	1	1
Rowing	2	2	2
Swimming	2	0	1
Athletics	1	4	2
Canoe/kayak	1	1	1
Boxing	1	0	2
Modern pen	0	1	0
Equestrian	0	0	1 (1)*
Gymnastics	0	0	1
Taekwondo	0	0	1

* Note: Mixed team medal wins are not counted in comparisons of coverage by gender

Appendix E

Table E1 Lead stories about Australian and international athletes on the ABC

Story content	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Own country medal win	14	30	8	17	22	47
Own country non-medal	7	15	5	11	12	26
International athlete	2	4	11*	23	13	27
Total	23	49	24	51	47	100

* Includes five leads about US swimmer Michael Phelps

Table E2 Lead stories about British and international athletes on the BBC

Story content	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Own country medal win	11	24	11	24	22	48
Own country non-medal	3	7	4	9	7	15
International athlete	2	4	15*	33	17	37
Total	16	35	30	65	46	100

* Includes 10 leads about US swimmer Michael Phelps. Note: Percentages may not add up to total due to rounding.

Table E3 Lead stories about Canadian and international athletes on the CBC

Story content	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Own country medal win	5	10	6	13	11	23
Own country non-medal	9	19	16	33	25	52
International athlete	3	6	9*	19	12	25
Total	17	35	31	65	48	100

* Includes four leads about US swimmer Michael Phelps

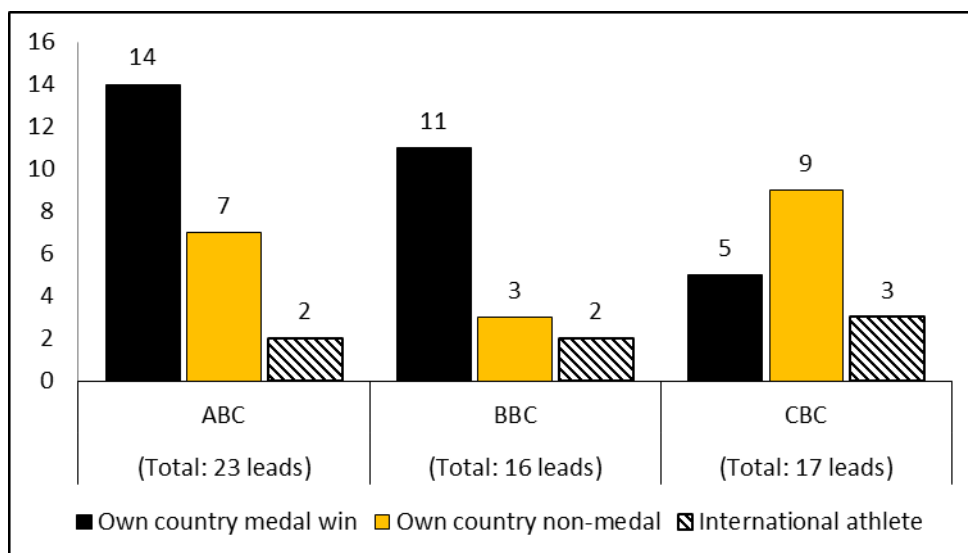


Figure E1 Female lead stories (n) by own country and international focus on the ABC, BBC and CBC*

* National athletes featured in 91 per cent of female lead stories on the ABC, in 88 per cent on the BBC and in 82 per cent on the CBC.

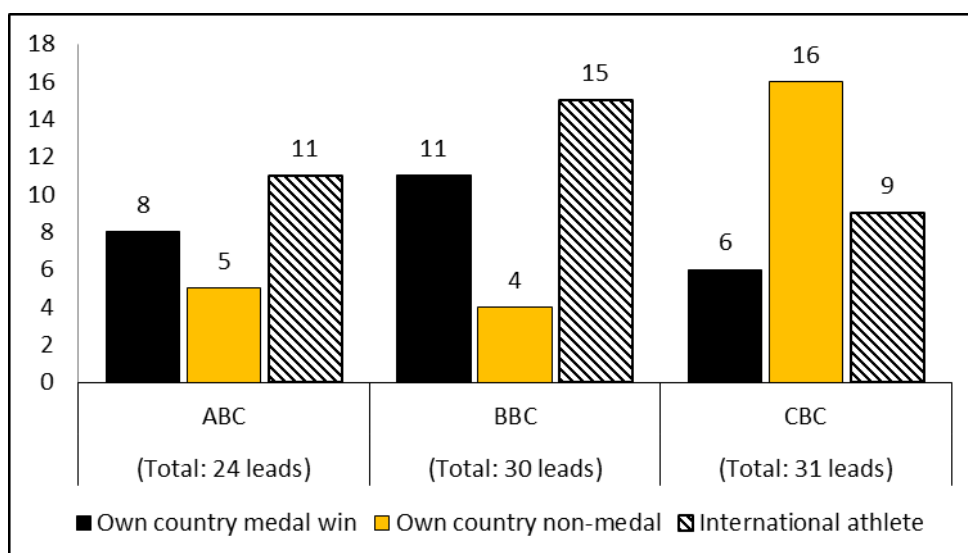


Figure E2 Male lead stories (n) by own country and international focus on the ABC, BBC and CBC*

* National athletes featured in 54 per cent of male lead stories on the ABC, in 50 per cent on the BBC and in 71 per cent on the CBC.