Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: have we really 'come a long way, baby'?

Janet S. Fink

Fink, J.S. (2013) 'Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: have we really "come a long way, baby"?', *Sport Management Review*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 331–42.

Sport Management Review 18 (2015) 331–342

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Sport Management Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/smr

Review

Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: Have we really "come a long way, baby"?

Janet S. Fink *

University of Massachusetts Amherst, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 18 October 2013
Received in revised form 1 May 2014
Accepted 1 May 2014
Available online 31 July 2014

Keywords:
Female athletes
Women's sport
Media
Marketing

ABSTRACT

The 2012 London Olympic Games were heralded as the "Year of the Woman" as every delegation sent a female athlete to compete in the games, and nearly 45% of all athletes were women. Indeed, sport participation amongst girls and women is currently at an all-time high, and these sportswomen deliver remarkable athletic performances. However, female athletes and women's sport still receive starkly disparate treatment by the sport media commercial complex compared to male athletes and men's sport. This review documents these qualitative and quantitative differences and discusses the negative impact this differential coverage has on consumer perceptions of women's sport and female athletes. Additionally, the author examines explanations for these differences. The review concludes with suggestions for future research and strategies for change.

Published by Elsevier Ltd on behalf of Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand.

1. Introduction

> As never before, women are making their presence felt in the world of sport, and there are a wealth of opportunities for the media to influence society's acceptance of all female athletes... (Fink, 1998, p. 40)

The sentence above was written immediately after a very strong showing by the female athletes of the United States Olympic Team in the 1996 Summer Games. As the quote suggests, researchers harbored some guarded optimism that the media coverage, marketing, and promotion of female athletes and women's sport would be positively transformed. We anticipated that the tremendous progress female athletes experienced in terms of their ability 25 years after Title IX (at that time) would soon bring greater media attention in terms of quantity, but also, a qualitative reform in which female athletes would be truly celebrated as legitimate athletes. Sadly, 15 years after that article was published and 40 years since the passage of Title IX, very little has changed with respect to the media coverage, marketing, and promotion of female athletes and women's sport. As I will demonstrate in this review, female athletes and women's sport are still woefully under-represented in all types of media and sportswomen are rarely acclaimed solely for their athletic abilities. Instead, the focus is often on their physical appearance, femininity, and/or heterosexuality.

* Correspondence address: Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management, Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 121 Presidents Drive, Amherst, MA 01003, United States. Tel.: +1 413 545 7602.
E-mail address: jsfink@isenberg.umass.edu

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.05.001
1441-3523/Published by Elsevier Ltd on behalf of Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand.

This differential coverage bears enormous implications for the lives of women (and men) within sport and beyond. Sport's ubiquitous appeal renders it an immensely influential social institution and, as Kane (1988) has noted, "the mass media have become one of the most powerful institutional forces for shaping values in modern culture" (p. 88–89). Indeed, researchers indicate that the manner in which the media frames issues impacts how the public perceives reality (Gitlin, 1980; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Thus, these quantitative and qualitative differences in sport media coverage are harmful, as they generate and reinforce stereotypical gender roles and negatively impact perceptions of women's capabilities. This differential coverage creates strongly embedded, taken-for-granted notions that serve to limit women far beyond sport, producing a variety of economic, social, and political limitations that intensify the patriarchal power structure still so sharply entrenched in our culture (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008).

Space restrictions do not allow for an exhaustive review of the literature on this topic. Instead, I hope to provide a sample of evidence that demonstrates these quantitative and qualitative differences still exist, and, in many cases, are even worse than 15 years ago. Additionally, I will review the implications of this differential treatment and the (relatively) new research that examines consumer reactions to different depictions of female athletes and women's sport. From there, I will present various explanations for this differential treatment, and, given this information, will offer suggestions for future research and strategies to invoke change.

It is important for the reader to understand this review deals not only with the media, but what Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2000) coined the "sport-media-commercial complex." In this interpretation, sport is not an isolated and separate entity "but is part of a larger, increasingly global economic nexus that utilizes mediated sports to advertise a huge range of consumer products" (Messner, 2002, p. 77). Thus, the review will cover depictions of female athletes and women's sport in all different types of media as well as in advertisements, endorsement campaigns, and other aspects of the sport media commercial complex.

2. Quantitative differences

> The better sportswomen get, the more the media ignore them (Kane, 2013, p. 1)

2.1. Background

Consider these facts. In the 2012 Olympic Games in London, every participating national delegation sent a female athlete and 44.4% of all athletes participating were women (Brennan, 2012). In England, the number of women taking part in sport and physical activity increased by one million participants after London won the Olympic bid in 2005 (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, 2012). In Australia, the Australian Football League (AFL) noted there was a 43% increase in females participating in football (soccer) in 1 year alone (from 2011 to 2012) (Elite Sports Properties, 2012). In the United States, over 3 million girls now participate in high school sports and 46% of intercollegiate scholarship athletes are women, while the number of women's professional sport opportunities is currently at an all-time high (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; National Federation of State High School Associations, 2013).

Further, sportswomen have made great athletic progress fairly quickly. In a 1966 *Sports Illustrated* article, John Underwood wrote, "It takes getting used to, seeing young women run long distances, gasping and gagging and staggering around and going down on all fours at the finish line, pink foreheads in the mud" (cited in Baker, 2011, para 1). The "long distance" Underwood referred to was a mile and a half! Fast forward to less than 50 years later, and we find that women make up the majority (56%) of all road race finishers and 42% of finishers in US marathons (Running USA, 2013). Further, in the 2013 New York City Marathon, 12 of the top 100 times were posted by women (New York Road Runners, 2013). As Kane (1995) has noted, "...there exists today a sport continuum, in which many women routinely outperform many men, and in some cases, women outperform most – if not all – men in a variety of sport and physical skills/activities" (p. 193). Indeed, ESPN's Sport Science host, John Brenkus recently declared, "We are only scratching the surface of what women will accomplish in sports" (2012, para. 1).

Thus, female athletes are participating in record numbers, and delivering record performances; yet, the media coverage and marketing of female athletes and women's sport does not reflect this progress (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013; Lumpkin, 2009; Kian, Vincent, & Mondello, 2008). Researchers have consistently shown that female athletes (in a variety of countries) receive far less coverage than their male counterparts in written media (e.g., Bishop, 2003; Fullerton, 2006; Kian et al., 2008; Lumpkin, 2009; Pratt, Grappendorf, Grundvig, & LeBlanc, 2008), broadcast media (e.g., Billings & Angelini, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2002, 2003; Caple, Greenwood, & Lumby, 2011; Cooky et al., 2013), and even new media (e.g., Burch, Eagleman, & Pedersen, 2012; Clavio & Eagleman, 2011; Kian, Mondello, & Vincent, 2009).

2.2. Longitudinal studies of traditional media

Perhaps most troubling is the fact that several longitudinal studies, across a variety of media platforms, show the media coverage of women's sport and female athletes has actually *declined* over the years despite women's increased participation and athletic performance (Cooky et al., 2013; Kane, 2013). For example, Billings (2008) examined six Summer and Winter Olympic Games telecasts (1996–2006) and found no significant increase in the amount of coverage afforded to female athletes across the years. Billings, Angelini, and Duke (2010) examined NBC's prime time coverage of the Beijing Olympic

Games and found male athletes received 8.4% more air time than female athletes, and this differential was nearly two times than that found in the 2004 Athens Games (a 4.6% differential favoring men).

Recent work by Cooky et al. (2013) is especially alarming. They replicated a longitudinal study of television coverage which has been ongoing (every 5 years) since 1989. These authors examined the 11 p.m. sports news and highlights of the local Los Angeles affiliates of ABC, CBS, and NBC, as well as ESPN's SportsCenter for three, two-week blocks throughout the year (in March, July, and November). The percent of air time received by female athletes during these sports telecasts was quite small in each period examined: 1989 = 5.0%; 1993 = 5.1%; 1999 = 8.7%; 2004 = 6.3%. However, in the most recent study, female athletes received only *1.6%* of television coverage.

Weber and Carini (2013) analyzed the covers of *Sports Illustrated* from 2001 to 2011 and found that women were displayed on only 4.9% of covers, in contrast to the timeframe of 1954–1965, in which females were featured on 12.6% of covers. In an analysis of articles within *Sports Illustrated* from 1990 to 1999, Lumpkin (2009) reported that 89.9% of all articles were devoted to male athletes while female athletes were featured in only 9.7%. Further, the feature articles for female athletes were actually *shorter* during this time period than in the first 34 years of the magazine. Eagleman, Pedersen, and Wharton (2009) analyzed the relatively new sports magazine, *ESPN The Magazine*, from its inception (1998) through March 2007. Consistent with all other research, they discovered that male sports received the vast majority of coverage, 96.6% of feature articles and 94.7% of special photographs.

2.3. Quantitative differences in new media

In theory, the proliferation of online communication forms should allow for more coverage of female athletes as it alleviates the spatial limitations found in traditional media outlets (Kian & Hardin, 2009). However, most studies of sports coverage in new media reveal results consistent with other media platforms. While I could not identify any longitudinal studies of new media, there is vast evidence that many new media channels do not provide greater coverage of women's sport. For example, Jones (2013) analyzed the online coverage from ABC, BBC, CBC, and TVNZ of the 2008 Olympic Games and found that online stories of male athletes outnumbered those of female athletes by a 4 to 1 ratio. Additionally, male athletes received twice the number of lead stories and lead photographs. Similar disparities favoring male athletes were found in the 2006 and 2007 NCAA Division I Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments (Kian et al., 2009; Redmond, Ridinger, & Battenfield, 2009), the US Open Tennis Tournament (Kian & Clavio, 2011), and sports blogs (Clavio & Eagleman, 2011; Lisec and McDonald, 2013).

In a slightly different way of looking at things, Burch et al. (2012) analyzed three Olympic websites of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games relative to athlete participation figures (i.e., the percentage of male to female athletes). They found that male athletes received more overall coverage than female athletes, but when analyzed relative to the proportion of male and female athletes competing, there were no significant differences in coverage. This finding represents a positive step relative to the coverage of female athletes and suggests that online media could be utilized to provide more equitable exposure to female athletes.

Still, the vast majority of studies across media platforms show that female athletes and women's sports receive only a fraction of media attention afforded to male athlete's and men's sports. As Lebel and Danylchuk (2009) argued, "Although the sport-media nexus in men's sport is thriving, women's sport is scarcely a cut above invisibility" (p. 158). Sportswomen's virtual absence from media consideration frames them as irrelevant. Many suggest this is no coincidence and that the sport media remains a powerful tool in the maintenance of male power and privilege (e.g., Cooky et al., 2013; Eagleman et al., 2009; Kane, 2013).

3. Qualitative differences

> "...respectful media coverage of women's sports that focuses on their athleticism has been an enduring struggle since Title IX legislation was passed in 1972... (Daniels & Wartena, 2011, p. 577)

Perhaps even more disturbing than the overall lack of media coverage is the fact that when female athletes are provided coverage, it is disparagingly different than that afforded to male athletes. Researchers show that, across a variety of sport contexts, the media portrayal of female athletes tends to differ in its tone, production, and focus, all of which result in a more negative depiction of female athletes and women's sport (e.g., Angelini, 2008; Billings & Eastman, 2002, 2003; Daniels & LaVoi, 2012; Greer, Hardin, & Homan, 2009). Thus, not only do female athletes encounter "symbolic annihilation" from a lack of media coverage (Tuchman, 1978), but the insignificant amount of coverage they do receive tends to reinforce the gendered hierarchy of sport (Angelini, 2008; Angelini, MacAuthor, & Billings, 2012). Many of these practices are so pervasive, and they have become so deeply woven into the fabric of the marketing and production of women's sport, that most consumers do not notice, let alone question, their insidious nature.

3.1. Gender marking

One of the most common practices is termed "gender marking" (Messner, Duncan, & Jensen, 1993), which refers to the verbal and visual presentation of male athletes and men's sport as being the norm, while rendering female athletes and women's competitions secondary status. For example, the titles of numerous women's championships are gender marked:

the Women's World Cup (soccer), the Women's NCAA Final Four (basketball), the United States Women's Open Championship (golf) to name just a few – however, similar events for men are never qualified with a gender moniker (e.g., the Men's NCAA Final Four or the Men's World Cup) which serves to establish the male event as the "standard" and the women's event as "other" (Messner et al., 1993). A primary example of this occurred recently when British tennis player, Andy Murray, won the men's 2013 Wimbledon Championship and the worldwide headline hailed "Murray ends 77 year wait for British win." In fact, the drought for the British was not nearly as long as the headline led us to believe as Virginia Wade won the Wimbledon Championship only 36 years ago; but of course, she won the women's title – most stories assume the *men's* championship as the standard (Chase, 2013).

Similarly, sports commentators *during* telecasts often engage in gender marking for women's events (e.g., "she is a great *women's* basketball player" or "that sets her apart in *women's* golf") but not men's events – in fact, Messner et al. (1993) found that such labeling occurred 27.5 times in women's sporting events, but none in men's sports. Weiller and Higgs (1999) compared equitable men's and women's golf tournaments and discovered that commentators consistently prompted the viewing audience that they were watching a women's tournament, yet rarely commented on gender in the men's tournament. In fact, gender marking occurred 36 times in the women's golf events compared to only 8 times in the men's competitions.

3.2. Infantilizing

Highly accomplished female athletes are often "infantilized" by sport commentators by referring to them as "girls" or "young ladies" whereas skilled male athletes are rarely (if ever) referred to as "boys" (Messner et al., 1993; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). A recent headline in the UK's *Daily Mail* regarding the Sochi Olympics read, "Curl power: Girls sweep their way to bronze as Britain equals its best ever Winter Olympics tally" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2014). Not surprisingly, the male curlers were not referred to as "boys" when they won a silver medal the next day.

Commentators further infantilize female athletes by calling them by their first name only whereas this rarely occurs with male athletes. Messner et al. (1993) found that women's tennis players were referred to by their first names 304 times, but this occurred with the male players only 44 times. In basketball, the disparity was less (31 versus 19) but still prevalent. Higgs, Weiller, and Martin (2003) reported that female gymnasts were referred to by their first names 177 times compared to only 16 times for male athletes in the 1996 Olympic Games, and in the 2000 Games this occurred 104 times for female gymnasts, nearly twice the number of times they used first names for male gymnasts (Weiller, Higgs, & Greanleaf, 2004). Such language disparities serve to reflect the lower reputation of female athletes and reinforce existing negative, or ambivalent, attitudes about women's sport (Messner et al., 1993).

3.3. Differential framing and ambivalence

In addition, commentators frame male and female athletic performances differently and typically in ways that minimize females' athletic abilities while proliferating male superiority (e.g., Billings et al., 2010; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Elueze & Jones, 1998; Weiller & Higgs, 1999). For example, Weiller and Higgs (1999) found that golf commentators noted the strength of male golfers 3 times more often than they did for female golfers. Higgs et al. (2003) found similar results for gymnastics in that the ratio of weakness to strength descriptors for female gymnasts was 3 to 1 in the 1996 Olympic Games. Elueze and Jones (1998) reported similar findings for track athletes and discovered that female athletes' were described in terms of weakness (e.g., choking, weary, fatigued) twice as much as male athletes.

In another example of differential framing, male athletes' success is more often attributed to talent and hard work, while female athletes' achievements are often attributed to luck, a strong male influence, or emotion (Eastman & Billings, 1999, 2001; Messner, Duncan, & Wachs, 1996). Failure by athletes is also treated differently – tough conditions and achievement by opponents highlight the commentary for men's sport while lack of skill, commitment, concentration, aggression, etc. more often describe female athletes' failures (Angelini et al., 2012; Billings & Eastman, 2002, 2003; Messner et al., 1996).

Such differential framing seems to occur most often in sports considered "female appropriate" (e.g., those sports that require more feminine attire, are esthetically pleasing, and which do not require physical contact amongst participants) (Metheny, 1965). For example, Billings (2007) examined the media commentary for men's and women's diving, gymnastics, swimming, and track and field competitions during the 2004 Summer Olympics and discovered that gender biased commentary occurred more often in the sports considered "artistic" (e.g., gymnastics, diving) with the greatest gender bias between men and women's gymnastics. Similarly, Angilini, Billings, and MacAuthor (2013) found the greatest amount of gender biased commentary in figure skating in their examination of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Typically, the negative framing described in the previous paragraphs occurs alongside positive narratives. Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) used the term ambivalence to describe media accounts about female athletes that present such mixed messages. As Eagleman (2013) described, "it is coverage that appears positive at first glance, but actually includes words, phrases, or themes that subtly belittle women" (p. 4). It is used to simultaneously acknowledge the changing norms regarding women's involvement in sport and yet resist major changes to the status quo by artfully undermining women's athletic accomplishments. Ambivalence is still quite prevalent today. For example, Poniatowski and Hardin (2012) found widespread ambivalence in the commentary of women's ice hockey competitions in the 2010 Winter Olympics while

Eagleman (2013) discovered ambivalent commentary for both male and female gymnasts in US newspaper accounts of the 2012 Olympic Games.

3.4. Focus on femininity/heterosexuality

Yet another way in which the sport media reinforces patriarchal sovereignty is to focus on female athletes' (hyper) femininity and heterosexuality which serves to degrade their athletic accomplishments and athleticism (Daniels, 2009). Across a variety of media outlets, sports, countries, and time periods, there is evidence that more coverage is provided to women who compete in sports that embody feminine ideals such as grace, beauty, and glamor (e.g., Daddario, 1997; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kane, 1988); coverage of female athletes often highlights their sex appeal and femininity instead of their athletic accomplishments (e.g., Bissell & Duke, 2007; Daniels, 2009; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Kim, Walkosz, & Iveson, 2006); and the coverage tends to draw attention to players' heterosexuality by focusing on aspects of their lives outside of sport and/or their roles as wives, girlfriends, and mothers (e.g., Billings et al., 2004; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Knight & Giuliano, 2001; Wensing & Bruce, 2003).

3.5. Different production techniques

In addition to the focus on femininity and heterosexuality, the actual production techniques utilized for men's and women's sport are markedly different and result in rendering women's sport as less important and exciting (e.g., Billings & Angelini, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Greer et al., 2009; Higgs et al., 2003; Messner et al., 1996). Studies of the men's and women's NCAA basketball tournament revealed that more shot variations are used in the men's game which results in more engaging production and greater excitement (Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999; Messner et al., 1996). Greater use of on-screen graphics occurred in the men's championship compared to the women's, and there were often video frames of longer duration, both of which can influence consumer perceptions of excitement (Hallmark & Armstrong, 1999). Bissell and Duke (2007) analyzed camera angles in women's beach volleyball and found that camera angles and close ups were used to emphasize women's chests and buttocks. Greer et al. (2009) studied the production of the 2004 Olympics' track and field events and found, "...that coverage of male athletes used more of everything: more time, more segments, more variation in field of view, more variation in point of view, more slow motion, and more use of rail-cam" (p. 184).

Kane (1995) pointed out a different type of "production" strategy that serves to trivialize and marginalize women's athletic performances, which she described as selective gender comparisons. She argued that media coverage of sport can artificially hide the fact that sport performance falls along a continuum in which many women outperform men. She used televised marathon coverage as an example. In marathons, men and women run the same course at the same time, and yet, it is constructed as two separate races for the viewing audience. Additionally, particular gender comparisons are emphasized while others are overlooked. She argued:

> ...once the first female crosses the finish line, gender comparisons for the rest of the race vanish from the television landscape; she is only compared to the men who have finished ahead of her. We are not told this same woman has outperformed all of the other men who are yet to cross the finish line. The arbitrary decision to focus exclusively on who finished ahead of the women's winner instead of (or in addition to) who finished behind her ensures that we will never think of women competing against, and beating, men (p. 209).

3.6. Qualitative differences and new media

It is possible that the proliferation of online spaces could challenge the dominant ideology of hegemonic masculinity embedded in sport by offering not only more coverage to female athletes, but different discourse as well (Antunovic & Hardin, 2012). Indeed, in 2010, *ESPN* launched a website devoted to female athletes, *espnW*, in order to "serve women as fans and athletes" and provide greater coverage to women's sport (*espnW*.com, 2014). While many lauded this as a positive and welcome development, the move was also met with some trepidation. As Messner noted, "Yes, it's going to give women's sports fans a place to go...but it might ultimately ghettoize women's sports and kind of take ESPN off the hook in terms of actually covering them on its main broadcast" (as cited in Thomas, 2010, para. 11).

Wolter (2013) analyzed the content of *espnW* for its first six months of existence and found that the photographic coverage within it portrayed female athletes as serious competitors (e.g., in action/in uniform). Further, feature articles highlighted their athletic performance and physiological/psychological strength to a much greater extent than traditional media. These findings are, indeed, positive and suggest that such online sites can provide progressive portrayals of female athletes. However, as Messner alluded to, if such coverage is found only in "niche" sites, it will do little challenge the gender order of sport.

Further, other research regarding the depiction of female athletes in new media is less encouraging. In an analysis of the 10 most popular sports blogs in the United States, Clavio and Eagleman (2011) found that only 7.1% of images in those blogs featured a female, but these images were significantly more likely to be sexual in nature than were the male images. Antunovic and Hardin (2012) analyzed the blog *Women Talk Sport*, a blog group created to produce discussion regarding

women in sport, to determine if such a site actually served to transform sport discourse. They found that while the bloggers strongly advocated for women's sport, they rarely critically addressed the dominant notions of gender, sexuality, and race in women's sport. The authors suggested that while blogs can be transformative, "...these blogs also carry the danger of uncritically replicating dominant ideologies and thereby leaving the marginalization of women's sports uncontested" (p. 318).

Thus, the evidence is clear. The media portray women's sport and female athletes differently. These differences repeatedly trivialize sportswomen's accomplishments and, as such, reinforce traditional gender ideologies, perpetuate male power and privilege, and strengthen mindsets that women "naturally" should be provided lower status within our culture (Greer et al., 2009; Tuchman, 1978).

3.7. Impact of differential coverage

> "There isn't a subtle way to say this, so I'll just say it: most women's sports are boring... I think subconsciously they must know that women are a little bit slower, have a little less endurance, jump a little bit lower, and generally perform at a level less than men..." (Reader's responses to NPR segment, NPR Staff, 2010)

When asked about the differential treatment of female athletes, "...producers, commentators, and editors will usually explain their lack of attention to women's sports claiming that they are constrained by a combination of market forces, and by their desire to give viewers 'what they want to see'" (Cooky et al., 2013, p. 19). However, this perspective does not account for the fact that there is a circular quality to the "production-reception relationship" – all of the differences previously outlined trivialize, demean, and ignore female athletes' accomplishments which, subsequently, renders women's sport less attractive to viewers (Greer et al., 2007, p. 185). It fails to acknowledge that sport consumption is a mediated process: what is covered, how often it is covered, and the manner in which it is covered all impact audience perceptions of value and quality (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). As such, decision makers are not merely reflexively reacting to what their audience wants to see, their decisions create (or reduce) audience demand (Cooky et al., 2013; Kane, 2013).

Indeed, current research indicates that the differential media coverage outlined in the previous sections does have a negative impact on audience perceptions of women's sport and female athletes. The quote to begin this section came from a reader of a story highlighting the University of Connecticut's women's basketball team's 89th consecutive win. This win broke the previous record which had been held for 36 years by the UCLA men's team (NPR Staff, 2010). The quote is representative of many comments that follow articles written about women's sport or female athletes. In support of the circular nature of the production-consumption media experience, scholars have discovered that attitudes such as those captured in the quote are, in part, shaped by the media's differential coverage of women's sport and female athletes (e.g., Daniels, 2012; Fink, 2010; Knight & Giuliano, 2001).

Daniels (2012) displayed different pictures of female athletes (i.e., depicting athletic performance versus more sexualized poses in bathing suits) to college age and adolescent females. Participants shown the athletic depictions viewed the female athletes as talented and capable but described the athletes in sexualized images as "sub-par physically" (Daniels, 2012, p. 87). Daniels and Wartena (2011) found similar results with adolescent boys – the athletic images elicited positive comments from the boys relative to the female athletes' physical skills while the sexualized images of the female athletes invoked objectified appraisals. As Daniels and Wartena (2011) stated, "These patterns demonstrated that sexualized images of female athletes are especially problematic and may contribute to the devaluation of female athleticism" (p. 576).

Angelini (2008) contended that the different type of coverage afforded to female athletes actually serves to implicitly reinforce stereotypical gender schemas, particularly the notion that female athletes are "naturally" inferior athletically. He showed male and female participants men's and women's televised sports events and measured their excitement through both self-reports and physiological tests. Participants self-reported greater levels of interest during the men's events; however, their physiological measures did not correspond with these self-reports. That is, the *physiological* tests showed no differences in arousal for participants when watching male versus female sports. He explained:

> ...individuals have been taught to believe that sports with male athletes are inherently more exciting and arousing, therefore leading to higher self-report scores on their emotional arousal, while their physiological readings belie that possibility by demon-strating that the human body is similarly aroused by sports featuring male or female athletes (p. 27).

The disparate results between the self-reported arousal levels and the actual physiological arousal levels are powerful proof of biased perceptions regarding female athletes and women's sport. He suggested that this finding was due to participants' response bias, a bias created, in part, from the manner in which male and female athletes have historically been presented via the media.

Indeed, some research suggests that perceptions of male athletes can also be negatively swayed by media coverage. In an experimental study that manipulated the main focus of a fictitious newspaper article about a male and female athlete (i.e., the athlete's athletic accomplishments versus his/her attractiveness), participants provided significantly lower ratings of athleticism for both the male and female athlete when the article's predominant focus was on the athlete's appearance (Knight & Giuliano, 2001). Similarly, Fink (2010) conducted an experimental study using tennis stars Maria Sharapova and Andy Roddick at a time when they possessed similar world rankings. The athletes were portrayed in on-court athletic photos, or off-court sexy photos as part of an advertisement for a tennis charity event. Participants exposed to the sexy photos rated

both athletes (male and female) lower on measures of athletic expertise and respect for the athletes' accomplishments, providing more evidence that different media portrayals do, indeed, influence viewer attitudes, even for male athletes.

It is important to realize that the effects noted in these studies occurred after very minimal exposure – participants viewed the article or advertisement for only a few seconds or minutes, and yet this brief encounter resulted in significantly lower perceptions of the athletes' athleticism and related constructs (Fink, 2012). Given the documented years of different and biased coverage of women's sport and female athletes, it is little wonder that the quote found at the beginning of this section is a common response to accounts of female athletes' accomplishments.

4. Explanations for disparate coverage

> Let the women play in more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball. They could, for example, have tighter shorts (Sepp Blatter, President of world governing body FIFA, 2004, cited in Christenson & Kelso, 2004)

4.1. Hegemonic masculinity

Many critical media scholars suggest that, in contrast to reacting to audience demand, this differential treatment by the sport media is a conscious effort to maintain male power and privilege in our society (e.g., Birrell and Cole, 1994; Kane, 2013; Messner, 2002). Sport, and particularly the sport media commercial complex, is a powerful institution in the reinforcement of masculine hegemony (e.g., Duncan, 2006; Greer et al., 2009; Hardin, 2005; Hardin, Lynn, & Walsdof, 2005; Kane, 1995; Pedersen, 2002). Gramsci (1971) described hegemony as the mechanisms by which dominant, powerful groups establish consent for their authority over other groups via the use of ideological norms. These social structures are presented as "natural" occurrences and yet serve to facilitate the powerful (i.e., able bodied White males) while simultaneously hindering other groups (i.e., women, minorities) (Hardin et al., 2005). Hegemonic *masculinity* refers to ideological practices that reinforce the supremacy of men and the subordination of women in society (Connell, 2005). The most desired masculinity embodies heterosexuality, aggression, and assertiveness (Kian et al., 2009), all characteristics (supposedly) embodied by male athletes whose supremacy is perpetuated by sport media. The incredibly enduring and pervasive demonstration of quantitative and qualitative differences in the coverage of women's sport and female athletes suggests the sport media purposely propagate a hierarchy aimed to privilege men and marginalize or ignore women (Cooky et al., 2013; Kane, 2013).

4.2. Sexism

While some may question the notion of intentional schemes aimed to maintain male privilege, there is no doubt sport is an institution steeped in sexism. As Walker and Sartore-Baldwin (2013) note, sexism in sport seems to be an impermeable, cognitive institution – sexism as a norm is so entrenched within the institution of sport that it is rarely even perceived at a conscious level, and if detected, most consider change impossible because, "that's just the way things are" (p. 21). As a result, sexist acts in sport go largely unnoticed, let alone contested, by the mainstream sports media (Brennan, 2007; Fink, Borland, & Fields, 2010). Indeed, sexism, perhaps more than *any other form of prejudice* in sport lacks a critical protest by most of those involved in the sports media commercial complex (Cunningham, Ferreira, & Fink, 2009). For example, the 2013 Men's British Open was held at Muirfield, a course that does not allow female members. While *some* members of the press and a few government officials spoke out against the site of the tournament, there was not even a hint of player, advertiser, or corporate sponsor boycott (Dahlberg, 2013; Newberry, 2013). Compare that (non) reaction to the player, corporate, media, and public outcry that occurred 23 years ago when Shoal Creek, site of the 1990 men's PGA Championship, was forced to change their White only membership policy due to the persistent, impassioned protests of these influential constituents (Daddario & Wigley, 2006). And yet, in 2013, Royal & Ancient Chairman Peter Dawson defended Muirfield's policy by stating:

> For some people it's a way of life that they rather like. If, on a Saturday morning, a guy gets out of the marital bed and plays golf with his chums, that is not on any kind of par with racial discrimination, anti-Semitism or any of these things. *It is just what people do* [emphasis added] (as cited in Newberry, 2013, para. 27).

Clearly Dawson does not equate a male only policy with other types of discrimination – indeed, as he notes. . .it's just what people do. This, perhaps, is the most daunting obstacle preventing change for female athletes and women's sport. That is, most people in the sport media commercial complex do not even recognize the level of discrimination that occurs against women in sport. The above is just one recent example, but instances of sexism in sport are so numerous that the landscape of sport is like a stereogram – if one takes a long, critical look at the face of the landscape, the shape of sexism embedded in sport, once veiled, surges into view to such an extent it is difficult to observe one without the other. But, like a stereogram, without careful observation or the revelation of the concealed object, most observers fail to recognize the powerful presence of sexism in sport. Without recognition there is no subsequent public outrage, and, consequently, these instances of sexism are actually reinforced as part of the "natural" sport landscape.

4.3. Heterosexism/homophobia

Adding to the armory of patriarchal hegemony in sport is the strong heterosexism and homophobia that exists. Women who are superior athletes, especially those who do not conform to a feminine and/or heterosexual prototype, threaten male

hegemony and, subsequently, are ridiculed and deemed unnatural, deviant, and/or lesbian (Griffin, 1992; Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). As Fink (2012) explained:

> Women "naturally" are not "supposed" to be as strong, athletically gifted, or powerful as men. Females are "supposed" to be "naturally" feminine, perhaps graceful in movement, but weaker and less "genuinely" athletic. As such, female athletes' exhibitions of physical excellence fracture long held, "common sense" notions of gender roles, patriarchy, and male hegemony (p. 51).

The threat of being considered deviant, and especially being labeled as lesbian, affects all female athletes, gay or straight, as they have to carefully navigate this heterosexist and homophobic terrain; they must vigilantly monitor how they look, what they wear, how they speak, who they spend time with, etc. in order to avoid the dreaded lesbian label (Fink, 2012; Nyland, 2007). As Griffin (1992) noted female "...athletes are encouraged...to engage in the protective camouflage of feminine drag" (p. 254).

4.4. Influence on marketing/promotion

As the quote from Seth Blatter at the beginning of this section indicates, all of these forces combine to induce those involved in the marketing and promotion of female athletes and women's sport to believe the most successful (and perhaps only) way to effectively market them is to highlight something other than their athleticism (Kane et al., 2013). This involves focusing on their (hyper) sexuality and/or attractive, feminine qualities, or their roles outside of sport such as wives, mothers, girlfriends, and so on due to the belief that female athletes' athletic accomplishments, in and of themselves, are not sufficiently marketable. Sadly, Blatter is not alone in his opinion, as there are numerous recent examples from league officials, agents, media representatives, and even sportswomen themselves that underscore the pervasiveness of this belief (Fink, 2012; Fink et al., 2013; Kane et al., 2013). While male athletes are celebrated by the sport media commercial complex solely for their athletic accomplishments, *gender* remains the primary classification for female athletes by the sport media commercial complex (Meân & Kassing, 2008).

For example, the Women's Tennis Association's (WTA) latest campaign, Strong is Beautiful, features tennis players "glammed up," wearing swanky dresses and skirts, and situated in scenes with provocative images – in fact, their website (http://www.wtatennis.com/) consists of these images in the background, overlaid by the actual tennis content. Thus, when attempting to look up news, player information, or any other material related to the actual sport and/or athletes, viewers are besieged by the sexualized images. Again, this is just one example of many similar marketing strategies present throughout the women's sport landscape but speaks to the pervasive, taken-for-granted notion that the *only* way to sell female athletes and women's sport is to focus on their physical appearance. However, as noted previously, such positioning of female athletes reduces their athletic stature in the eyes of the viewing public. Thus, a negative circular nature to the production-consumption media experience is continually and consistently perpetuated. As Fagan (2013) noted:

> ...just think of the negative effects these marketing images have had on how we, as a society, view women's sports. It goes a long way toward explaining why a highly successful female athlete can often feel like Sisyphus, pushing the rock up the hill only to watch it roll back down – because the sports world is still mostly operating as if bikinis on soccer players and slinky dresses on tennis stars are where the money is (para 10).

5. Conflicting evidence

> No wonder children once giggled at the very idea of a woman firefighter or police officer. In other words, biases that once seemed untouchable – biases based on beliefs of female limitations – now appear absurd (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 3)

Those in decision making capacities within the sport media commercial complex suggest they engage in such tactics because they are responding to audience demand. Sex sells, they argue, again and again, as they defend their production choices. However, a growing body of recent research suggests this commonly held notion may be inaccurate. Fink, Cunningham, and Kensicki (2004) conducted an experiment in which they manipulated the attractiveness and the skill level of a female athlete in promotional materials for an intercollegiate softball event. Results indicated the promotional materials featuring the highly skilled female athlete (as opposed to the highly attractive athlete) was perceived to be the better fit for the event, and in turn, produced greater intentions to attend the event. Cunningham, Fink, and Kenix (2008) replicated this study with a tennis event and also found the athlete's skill level was important to intentions to attend the event.

Kane and Maxwell (2011) conducted focus groups with actual sport fans – the groups included men and women and ranged in age from 18 to 54. The participants were shown media images of female athletes; the six different types of images ranged from "athletic competence" (pictures of the athletes in action) to "the girl next door" (wholesome image of athlete with no representation of athleticism) to "soft pornography" (images which sexually objectified the female athletes). Women and older men noted that images of athletic competence were most likely to increase their interest in women's sport. Further, the sexualized images offended these two groups, which Kane (2011) called "the core fan base of women's sports" (para. 9). While some younger male participants noted the more sexualized images were "hot," they admitted that such images would not increase their likelihood to attend the women's sport event.

Antil, Burton, and Robinson (2012) conducted a similar study to gauge participants' perceptions of athlete endorsers. Their focus groups included men and women, aged 14–61, located in the Northeastern and Western United States. Interestingly, all participants responded negatively to sexualized images of the female athletes. Female consumers, in particular, responded negatively to such depictions when they compared themselves to the female athletes. The findings led the authors to ask, "Is it possible that female athletes have been found to be less effective endorsers because of the way they have been used in ads? In essence, is it possible that some of the problems facing female endorsers are more related to the design and implementation of the communication strategy?" (p. 303). The vast amount of evidence collected for this review suggests the answer to their question is a resounding yes!

6. Embracing contested terrain

> We can't get into specifics, but it's safe to say we jumped at the opportunity to work with her because she breaks the mold (Nike spokesperson, Brian Strong, referring to the endorsement deal with Brittany Griner, as quoted in Fagan, 2013)

While many in the sport media commercial complex still view talented female athletes who exhibit more traditionally masculine qualities as contested terrain, there are recent examples of sport entities embracing such challenges. Brittany Griner, the WNBA's first round draft pick, is 6′8″, openly gay, and sports an "athletic bow tie" look. She was also recently signed to a significant endorsement deal with sport behemoth Nike in which she will wear both men's and women's clothing lines (Fagan, 2013). Similarly, soccer star Abby Wambach has been featured in commercials for Gatorade and Panasonic in which she is shown dripping in sweat and described as "tough" and "fearless." Similar to most entities that utilize male athletes as endorsers, these companies showcase Wambach's incredible *athleticism* to market their products, nothing more. These examples represent a significant departure from most endorsement opportunities provided to female athletes.

Similarly, the WNBA engaged in rebranding efforts and WNBA President Laurel Richie noted the main "catalyst for the rebranding was to make sure that our visual identity was a true reflection of the athleticism and diversity of today's players" (as quoted in Glass, 2013, para.13). Indeed, rather than attempt to fit its athletes into a stereotypically feminine mold, the WNBA's new brand showcases the tremendous athleticism and varied, yet authentic, personalities of their players. They began the "3 to see" campaign, highlighting Griner as well as two other intercollegiate star players, Skylar Diggins and Elena Delle Donne, during their senior seasons and well before the WNBA draft took place. The campaign focused on their athletic abilities, different personalities, and transition from intercollegiate to professional sport. Additionally, there was no attempt to hide Griner's sexuality or make her appear more feminine. To understand the incredible progress this represents, consider that only 5 years ago the WNBA *required* rookies to participate in make-up and fashion courses during their orientation (Ryan, 2008).

7. Creating change

Unfortunately, as the preceding review exposed, these types of league marketing and company endorsement deals are exceptions rather than the norm for women's leagues and female athletes. Though these athletes continue to produce outstanding performances and remarkable accomplishments, media coverage remains miniscule. Even worse, the qualitative differences in coverage continues and negatively impacts audience perceptions of sportswomen's athleticism. It is an incredibly pervasive and vicious cycle – a cycle that has proven difficult to change, but we must persist with our work in this realm.

We must continue to document these quantitative and qualitative differences. Longitudinal analyses are especially powerful as they provide context given the increasing number of female athletes, women's sports leagues, and media outlets. For example, Messner, Cooky, and colleagues' work documenting televised news and highlight programs provide irrefutable evidence that coverage of women's sport and female athletes is actually decreasing though women's sport participation is at an all-time high. Such evidence of actual regression provides watchdog groups a formidable case when questioning those in decision making positions about their content choices and production techniques.

Similarly, more audience reception research must be undertaken. Such research seems to resonate with the more "mainstream" (non-academic) media outlets – Kane and Maxwell's (2011) work has been cited in the *Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Nation* (amongst many others) and Antil et al.'s (2012) work, released immediately after the 2012 Olympics, was mentioned by numerous media outlets. This type of coverage often demands that those in positions of power defend their strategies. While the results of these studies have been relatively consistent (i.e., sex does not sell women's sport and often undermines perceptions of athleticism), decision makers will require abundant proof from empirically sound, evidence based research, collected across a variety of populations to eschew their traditional marketing and media practices.

Those in decision making capacities in the sport media commercial complex should be recruited as participants in research. Analyses of the policies, practices, tensions, and incentives from the perspective of sport agents, league and media executives, and sponsorship managers might uncover new/different explanations for the phenomena that have been consistently documented. Additionally, it would allow for candid discussions regarding our research findings and, perhaps, facilitate an understanding of the damage current practices pose to female athletes and women's sport. Likewise, such discussions may create collaborative academic/industry efforts aimed at transformation and progress.

Indeed, if the past 15 years provide evidence, research alone will not to create change. The disparities have been consistently documented through research over the years, and yet, still seem to be widening. We must take lessons from others who have fought for equal treatment in sport. For example, in the LGBT community, faculty member (and researcher) Pat Griffin developed partnerships with advocacy groups such as the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) and the Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Education Network (GLSEN). With her assistance, they developed initiatives such as "It Takes a Team" and "Changing the Game" that provided educational and legal initiatives for athletes, coaches, parents, and others to make sports more inclusive for LGBT athletes. The progress they have made is incredible. Only a few years ago, calling someone a pejorative term for a gay man or a lesbian in sport would hardly have garnered notice. Today, many athletes are comfortable being "out" in their sport settings and there are numerous athlete allies speaking on behalf of inclusive LGBT policies.

As researchers interested in the marketing and promotion of female athletes and women's sport, we need to make similar connections in order to provide analogous initiatives aimed at educating and persuading all involved in the sport media commercial complex to change the way female athletes and women's sport are treated. We need to become involved with, and contribute to, influential women's organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), and the Women's Media Center, amongst others. We should attend and/or present at practitioners' conferences such as those hosted by the Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM), the Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE), College Sports Information Directors Association (CoSIDA), the *SportsBusiness Journal*, and so on. We need to do all we can to build relationships with those involved in the sport media commercial complex in order to better facilitate change.

Additionally, the LGBT community has several strong and committed activists who vigilantly monitor the sport landscape, and consistently bring national media attention to discrimination based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of athletes. These include members of advocacy groups like the National Center for Lesbian Rights Sports Project, the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, and writers for websites like Outsports.com. We need similar efforts to highlight, at national and international levels, the various instances of sexism in sport. As long as sexist acts in sport go unnoticed or are taken for granted, progress for women's sport and female athletes relative to the sport media commercial complex will be impossible.

As educators, we must ensure these documented qualitative and quantitative differences, and their effects, become requisite curricular content for journalism, sport management, and related majors. Many students, male and female alike, are completely unaware of these inequities – or worse, fail to understand their harmful nature. Without exposure to these practices, graduates of our programs may remain complicit in the negative production-consumption media experience when they become professionals in the sport industry.

In conclusion, some would proclaim female athletes and women's sport have "come a long way, baby," and in many ways, they have. Girls and women are participating in record numbers and producing remarkable athletic accomplishments. However, as the preceding review suggests, female athletes and women's sport have a long way to go in terms of obtaining equal treatment from the sport media commercial complex.

References

Acosta, R. V., & Carpenter, L. J. (2012). *Women in intercollegiate sport. A longitudinal, national study. Thirty-five year update*. Retrieved from http://www.acostacarpenter.org

Angelini, J. R. (2008). Television sports and athlete sex: Looking at the differences in watching male and female athletes. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 52*, 16–32.

Angelini, J. R., Billings, A. C., & MacAuthor, P. J. (2013). The Vancouver 'Big Six' Gender – Framed: NBC's Prime-Time Coverage of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. *Sport in Society, 16*, 1176–1197.

Angelini, J. R., MacAuthor, P. J., & Billings, A. C. (2012). What's the gendered story? Vancouver's prime time Olympic glory on NBC. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 56*, 261–279. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.678515

Antil, J. H., Burton, R., & Robinson, M. J. (2012). Exploring the challenges facing female athletes as endorsers. *Journal of Brand Strategy, 1*, 292–307.

Antunovic, D., & Hardin, M. (2012). Activism in women's sports blogs: Activism and feminist potential. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 5*, 305–322.

Baker, K. (2011, November 3). The rise of the female distance runner. *Grantland* Retrieved from: http://www.grantland.com/story/_/id/7188499/the-rise-female-distance-runner

Billings, A. C. (2007). From diving boards to pole vaults: Gendered athlete portrayals in the 'Big Four' Sports at the 2004 Athens Summer Olympics. *Southern Communication Journal, 72*, 329–344.

Billings, A. C. (2008). *Olympic media: Inside the biggest show on television*. London: Routledge.

Billings, A. C., & Angelini, J. R. (2007). Packaging the games for viewer consumption: Gender, ethnicity, and nationality in NBC's coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympics. *Communication Quarterly, 55*, 95–111.

Billings, A. C., Angelini, J. R., & Duke (2010). Gendered profiles of Olympic history: Sportscaster dialogue in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 54*, 9–23. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838150903550352

Billings, A. C., & Eastman, S. T. (2002). Gender, ethnicity, and nationality: Formation of identity in NBC's 2000 Olympic coverage. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 37*, 349–368.

Billings, A. C., & Eastman, S. T. (2003). Framing identities: Gender, ethnic, and national parity in network announcing of the 2002 Winter Olympics. *Journal of Communication, 53*, 369–386.

Birrell, S., & Cole, C. L. (1994). Double fault: Renee Richards and the construction and naturalization of difference. In S. Birrell & C. L. Cole (Eds.), *Women, sport and culture* (pp. 373–397). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Bishop, R. (2003). Missing in action: Feature coverage of women's sports in Sports Illustrated. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 27*, 184–194.

Bissell, K. L., & Duke, A. M. (2007). Bump, set, spike: An analysis of commentary and camera angles of women's beach volleyball during the 2004 summer Olympics. *Journal of Promotion Management, 13*, 35–53.

Brennan, C. (2007, April 11). Rutgers women block Imus' shot with classy stand. *USA TODAY* Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/columnist/brennan/2007-04-10-brennan-rutgers_N.htm

Brennan, C. (2012, July 15). Finally. It's all about the women at London Olympics. *USA TODAY* Retrieved from: http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/story/2012-07-25/London-Olympics-Brennan-women/56488526/1

Burch, L., Eagleman, A. N., & Pedersen, P. M. (2012). Gender and nationalism in the 2010 Winter Olympics: An examination of online media coverage. *International Journal of Sport Management, 13*, 1–17.
Caple, H., Greenwood, K., & Lumby, C. (2011). What League?. The Representation of Female Athletes in Australian Television Sports Coverage. *Media International Australia, 140*, 137–146.
Chase, C. (2013, July 8). If a British woman won '77 Wimbledon, why is Murray first winner since '36? *USA TODAY* Retrieved from: http://ftw.usatoday.com/2013/07/andy-murray-virginia-wade-first-brit-wimbledon/
Christenson, M., & Kelso, P. (2004, January 15). Soccer chief's plan to boost women's soccer? Hotpants. *The Guardian* Retrieved from: http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/jan/16/football.gender
Clavio, G., & Eagleman, A. N. (2011). Gender and sexually suggestive images in sports blogs. *Journal of Sport Management, 25*, 295–304.
Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Hextrum, R. H. (2013). Women play sport, but not on TV: A longitudinal study of televised news media. *Communication & Sport*, 1–28. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2167479513476947
Cunningham, G. B., Ferreira, M., & Fink, J. S. (2009). Reactions to prejudicial statements: The influence of statement content and characteristics of the commentator. *Group Dynamics, 15*, 59–73.
Cunningham, G. B., Fink, J. S., & Kenix, L. J. (2008). Choosing an endorser for a women's sporting event. The interaction of attractiveness and expertise. *Sex Roles, 58*, 371–378.
Daddario, G. (1997). Gendered sports programming: 1992 summer Olympic coverage and the feminine narrative form. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 14*, 103–120.
Daddario, G., & Wigley, B. J. (2006). Prejudice, patriarchy, and the PGA: Defensive discourse surrounding the Shoal Creek and Augusta National controversies. *Journal of Sport Management, 20*, 466–482.
Dahlberg, T. (2013, July 17). Women members at Muirfield? Don't ask us. *Associated Press* Retrieved from: http://bigstory.ap.org/article/column-women-members-muirfield-dont-ask-us
Daily Mail Reporter. (2014, February 14). Curl power! Girls sweep their way to bronze as Britain equals its best ever Winter Olympics medal tally. Retrieved from: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/..
Daniels, E. A. (2012). Sexy versus strong: What girls and women think of female athletes. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 33*, 79–90.
Daniels, E. A., & LaVoi, N. M. (2012). Athletics as solution and problem: Sports participation for girls and the sexualization of female athletes. In T. A. Roberts & E. L. Zubriggen (Eds.), *The sexualization of girls and girlhood* (pp. 63–83). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Daniels, E. A., & Wartena, H. (2011). Athlete or sex symbol: What boys think of media representations of female athletes. *Sex Roles, 65*, 566–579.
Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (2012). *London 2012 helps encourage a boom in women's sports participation*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-2012-helps-encourage-a-boom-in-womens-sports-participation
Duncan, M. C., & Hasbrook, C. A. (1988). Denial of power in televised women's sports. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 5*, 1–21.
Eagleman, A. N. (2013). Constructing gender differences: Newspaper portrayals of male and female gymnasts at the 2012 Olympic Games. *Sport in Society*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.854509
Eagleman, A. N., Pedersen, P. M., & Wharton, R. (2009). Coverage of gender in ESPN The Magazine: An examination of articles and photographs. *International Journal of Sport Management, 10*, 226–242.
Eastman, S. T., & Billings, A. C. (1999). Gender parity in the Olympics: Hyping women athletes, favoring men athletes. *Journal of Sports and Social Issues, 23*, 140–170.
Eastman, S. T., & Billings, A. C. (2001). Biased voices of sports. Racial and gender stereotyping in collegiate basketball announcing. *The Howard Journal of Communication, 12*, 183–201.
Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 43*, 51–58.
Elueze, R., & Jones, R. L. (1998). A quest for equality—A gender comparison of the BBC's TV coverage of the 1995 world athletics championships. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 7*, 45–67.
Elite Sports Properties (2012). *Peta Searle thrilled with record number of women participating in AFL*. Retrieved from: http://www.elitesports.com.au/latest-news/peta-searle-thrilled-with-record-number-of-women-playing-afl/
espnW. (2014). About espnW. Retrieved from: http://espn.go.com/espnw/v1/about
Fagan, K. (2013, May 29). Owing the middle. *ESPN The Magazine* Retrieved from: http://espn.go.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/9316697/
Fink, J. S. (1998). Female athletes and the media: Strides and stalemates. *JOPERD, 69*, 37–45.
Fink, J. S., (2010, June). Using athletes to advertise their sport: A comparison of male and female athletes and the notion that "sex sells". Paper presented at the meeting of the North American Society for Sport Management, Tampa, Miami, FL..
Fink, J. S., Borland, J. F., & Fields, S. K. (2010). Sexist acts in sport: Media reactions and forms of apologia. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 3*, 198–215.
Fink, J. S., Cunningham, G. B., & Kensicki, L. J. (2004). Using athletes as endorsers to sell women's sport: Attractiveness versus expertise. *Journal of Sport Management, 18*, 350–367.
Fink, J. S., Kane, M. J., & LaVoi, N. M. (2013). The freedom to choose. Elite female athletes' preferred representations within endorsement opportunities (in press). *Journal of Sport Management*.
Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Glass, A. (2013). WNBA, ESPN extend television agreement, announce rebranding strategy. *Forbes* Retrieved from: http://www.forbes.com/sites/alanaglass/2013/03/29/wnba-espn-extend-television-agreement-announce-rebranding-initiative/
Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
Greer, J. D., Hardin, M., & Homan, C. (2009). "Naturally" less exciting? Visual production of men's and women's track and field coverage during the 2004 Olympics. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 53*, 173–189.
Griffin, P. (1992). Changing the game: Homophobia, sexism and lesbians in sport. *Quest, 44*, 251–265.
Hallmark, J. R., & Armstrong, R. N. (1999). Gender equity in televised sports: A comparative analysis of men's and women's NCAA Division I basketball championship broadcasts, 1991–1995. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 43*, 222–236.
Hardin, M. (2005). Stopped at the gate: Women's sports, "reader interest," and decision making by editors. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 82*, 62–77.
Hardin, M., Lynn, S., & Walsdorf, K. (2005). Challenge and conformity on "contested terrain": Images of women in four women's sport/fitness magazines. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 53*, 105–117.
Higgs, C. T., Weiller, K. H., & Martin, S. B. (2003). Gender bias in the 1996 Olympic Games: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 27*, 52–64.
Jones, D. (2013). Online coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games on the ABC, BBC, CBC and TVNZ. *Pacific Journalism Review, 19*, 244–263.
Kane, M. J. (1988). Media coverage of the female athlete before, during, and after Title IX: Sports Illustrated revisited. *Journal of Sport Management, 2*, 87–99.
Kane, M. J. (1995). Resistance/Transformation of the oppositional binary: Exposing sport as a continuum. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 19*, 191–218. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/019372395019002006
Kane, M. J. (2013). The better sportswomen get, the more the media ignore them. *Communication and Sport, 3*, 231–236. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2167479513484579
Kane, M. J., & Maxwell, H. D. (2011). Expanding the boundaries of sport media research: Using critical theory to explore consumer responses to representations of women's sports. *Journal of Sport Management, 25*, 202–216.
Kane, M. J., LaVoi, N. M., & Fink, J. S. (2013). Exploring elite female athletes' interpretations of sport media images: A window into the construction of social identity and "selling sex" in women's sports. *Communication & Sport*, 1–30. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2167479512473585
Kian, E. M., & Hardin, M. (2009). Framing of sports coverage based on the sex of sports writers: Female journalists counter the traditional gendering of media coverage. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 2*, 185–204.
Kian, E. M., Mondello, M., & Vincent, J. (2009). ESPN – The women's sport network? A content analysis of Internet coverage of March Madness. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 53*, 477–495.

Kian, E. M., Vincent, J., & Mondello, M. (2008). Masculine hegemonic hoops: An analysis of media coverage of March Madness. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 25*, 223–242.
Kim, E., Walkosz, B. J., & Iverson, J. (2006). USA Today's coverage of the top women golfers, 1998–2001. *The Howard Journal of Communications, 17*, 307–321.
Knight, J. L., & Giuliano, T. A. (2001). He's a Laker, she's a looker: The consequences of gender-stereotypical portrayals of male and female athletes by the print media. *Sex Roles, 45*, 217–229.
Fink, J. S., & Kensicki, L. J. (2002). An imperceptible difference: Visual and textual constructions of femininity in Sports Illustrated and Sports Illustrated for Women. *Mass Communication & Society, 5*, 317–339.
Fink, J. S. (2012). Homophobia and the marketing of female athletes and women's sport. Homophobia and the marketing of female athletes and women's sport. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport*. College Station, TX: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.
Lebel, K., & Danylchuk, K. (2009). Generation Y's perceptions of women's sport in the media. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 2*, 146–163.
Lisec, J., & McDonald, M. G. (2013). Gender inequality in the new millenium: An analysis of WNBA representations in sport blogs. *Journal of Sports Media, 7*, 153–178.
Lumpkin, A. (2009). Female representation in feature articles published by Sports Illustrated in the 1990s. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 18*, 38–51.
McDonagh, E., & Pappano, L. (2008). *Playing with the boys: Why separate is not equal in sports*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Meân, L. J., & Kassing, J. W. (2008). "I would just like to be known as an athlete": Managing hegemony, femininity, and heterosexuality in female sport. *Western Journal of Communication, 72*, 126–144.
Messner, M. A., Dunbar, M., & Hunt, D. (2000). The televised sports manhood formula. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 24*, 380–394. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0193723500244006
Messner, M. A. (2002). *Taking the field. Men, women, and sports*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Messner, M., Duncan, M. C., & Jensen, K. (1993). Separating the men from the girls: The gendered language of televised sports. *Gender and Society, 7*, 121–137.
Metheny, E. (1965). Symbolic forms of movement: The feminine image in sports. In E. Metheny (Ed.), *Connotations of movement in sport and dance* (pp. 43–56). Dubuque, IA: Brown.
National Federation of State High School Associations (2013). *2012–13 High School athletics participation results*. Retrieved from: http://www.nfhs.org/content.aspx?id=3282
Newberry, P. (2013, July 18). British Open: Staid R&A shrugs off gender division. *The Telegram* Retrieved from: http://www.telegram.com/article/20130718/NEWS/107189992/1009&Template=printart
New York Road Runners (2013). *Races and events*. Retrieved from: http://www.nyrr.org/
NPR Staff (2010). UCONN women's winning streak gets little notice. *NPR* Retrieved from: http://www.npr.org/2010/12/19/132180700/UConn-Womens-Winning-Streak-Gets-Little-notice
Nyland, D. (2007). *Beer, babes, and balls: Masculinity and sports talk radio*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communication, 10*, 55–75.
Pedersen, P. M. (2002). Investigating interscholastic equity on the sports page: A content analysis of high school athletics newspaper articles. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 19*, 419–432.
Poniatowski, K., & Hardin, M. (2012). "The more things change, the more they . . .": Commentary during women's ice hockey at the 2010 Olympic Games. *Mass Communication and Society, 15*, 622–641.
Pratt, J., Grappendorf, K., Grundvig, A., & LeBlanc, G. (2008). Gender differences in print media coverage of the 2004 summer Olympics in Athens, Greece. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 17*, 34–41.
Redmond, M. L., Ridinger, L. L., & Battenfield, F. L. (2009). Website coverage of NCAA basketball: Are women getting equal playing time? *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 18*, 78–89.
Running USA (2013). *State of the sport – Part III: U.S. Race Trends*. Retrieved from: http://runningusa.com
Ryan, S. (2008). WNBA offers advice to rookies. *Chicago Tribune* Retrieved from: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2008-05-04/sports/0805030427_1_wnba-female-athletes-orientation
Sartore, M. L., & Cunningham, G. B. (2009). Gender, sexual prejudice, and sport participation: Implications for sexual minorities. *Sex Roles, 60*, 100–113.
Thomas, K. (2010, October 15). *ESPN slowly introducing online brand for women*. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/16/sports/16espnw.html?_r=0
Tuchman, G. (1978). Introduction: The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media. In G. Tuchman, A. Kaplan Daniels, & J. Benet (Eds.), *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* (pp. 3–38). New York: Oxford University Press.
Walker, N. A., & Sartore-Baldwin, M. (2013). Hegemonic masculinity and the institutionalized bias of women in men's collegiate basketball: What do men think? *Journal of Sport Management, 27*, 303–315.
Weber, J. D., & Carini, R. M. (2013). Where are the female athletes in Sports Illustrated?. A content analysis of covers (2000–2011). *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1012690211434230
Weiller, K. H., & Higgs, C. T. (1999). Television coverage of professional golf: A focus on gender. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 8*, 83–100.
Weiller, K. H., Higgs, C. T., & Greenleaf, C. (2004). Analysis of media commentary of the 2000 Olympic Games. *Media Report to Women, 3*, 14–21.
Wensing, M. H., & Bruce, T. (2003). Bending the rules: Media representations of gender during an international sporting event. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 38*, 387–396. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1012690203384001
Wolter, S. (2013). A quantitative analysis of photographs and articles on espnW: Positive progress for female athletes. *Communication and Sport*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2167479513509368