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Sports media decision-making in France: How they choose what we get to see and read

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Management
in
Sport Management**

**at
Massey University, Manawatu
New Zealand**

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2009**

ABSTRACT

Research to date on women in the sports-media has predominantly concentrated on comparisons of the type and amount of media coverage afforded to sportsmen and women. This substantial body of literature has consistently revealed that sports-media continues to be viewed as an exclusively masculine domain, where women remain under- and misrepresented. While content analyses are important in revealing the sexist portrayal of sportswomen in the media, they do little to provide guidance to sociologists on why this continues to occur. Looking behind the scenes into *how* sports-media content is produced has rarely been explored internationally, and not at all in France, yet is integral to understanding the process through which gendered coverage is sustained.

The aim of this exploratory case study was to redress the deficit of sports-media research in France by undertaking a study of those responsible for the production of sports media content. It was guided by the central question: what role do sports-media producers play in perpetuating dominant ideologies in sport? The nine participants were drawn from experienced male and female sports content decision makers (editors and higher) from the major, national television and print media in France. Data was collected through individual semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews and open coded using NVivo 8. The analysis, based around five themes (ideal profile, feedback, sport selection, women's sport, blame), revealed that the patterns of sport media decision-making in France show many similarities and some differences to those observed in other countries, but that the end result is the same: sports media content remains dominated by men's sport. Findings indicate that women's sport is subject to much harsher editorial selection criteria. Conclusions were drawn on what role the makers of sports media content in France have in reproducing this hegemonic masculinity so inherent in sports coverage. The findings will enable stakeholders such as sociologists, journalism academics, sport media management and sports organisations to consider ways through which hierarchical values and accepted patriarchal practices in the sports-media industry can be transformed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the encouragement, guidance and support of my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Sarah Leberman, on this thesis. I also benefited from the constructive comments of Dr Farah Palmer, who took the time while on maternity leave to provide useful feedback.

My sincere thanks are also extended to the staff of the Distance Library Service at Massey University. Their prompt turnaround enabled rapid sourcing of material, which otherwise would have been complicated to acquire in France.

While I completed this thesis, my daughter, Nathalie, and my partner, Paul, got used to me not being available on weekends. I thank them for their understanding and support and hope they will accept to reintegrate me into their social calendars.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Figures and Tables	iv
1. Introduction	1
2. Literature Review	4
The organisation of sport in France	4
Sports media in France	9
The production of sports media	14
Theoretical perspective	22
3. Methodology	26
Limitations	27
Participants	27
Data collection	30
Data analysis	32
4. Findings and Discussion	35
Ideal profile	35
Feedback	38
Sports selection	40
Women's sport	48
Blame	56
5. Conclusions	63
6. References	68
7. Appendices	
I Ethics Committee approval	77
II Participant information sheet	78
III Participant consent form	80
IV Interview schedule	81

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Top sports by total membership (2008)	8
Figure 2: Sports with highest female membership (2008)	8
Table 1: Participant profiles	29
Table 2 : Front page choice	45

