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Still not getting a fair deal: The under-representation of
female athletes in television news coverage of the 2006
Commonwealth Games

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Management
in
Communication Management

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

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2008

ABSTRACT

This research investigates gender equity in New Zealand television news coverage of the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Using content and frame analyses, the study evaluates the prime-time news coverage of the two largest free-to-air broadcasters, TVNZ and TV3. The results demonstrate that the hegemonic masculinity of sport is still reflected and supported by New Zealand's television news media. Women athletes received just 25% of the time spent reporting on the Games with male athletes receiving 43%. This was despite women making up 46% of the New Zealand Commonwealth Games team and winning 53% of the medals, indicating that participation and success had little correlation with the media's decisions about which athletes to report on.

This study also highlights differences in the framing techniques used by the media in reporting on sportsmen and sportswomen. The research found the presence of gender-marking, preferential positioning, reliance on male sources and other framing devices. The ways these were used provided further evidence of the dominant presence sportsmen have over sportswomen in the New Zealand Commonwealth Games television coverage. On a positive note, the research found no sexualisation and very little stereotyping of female athletes, techniques which have been prevalent in international studies.

This thesis outlines the need for New Zealand's television news media, particularly the public service broadcaster TVNZ, to reflect on the inequality they continue to demonstrate in their coverage of sportsmen and sportswomen and to put in place active measures to increase the levels of coverage given to sportswomen by New Zealand's mainstream media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the guidance of my supervisors, Dr Margie Comrie and Dr Elspeth Tilley from the Department of Communication and Journalism at Massey University. Their critique, advice and encouragement have been central to the completion of this thesis. I also extend my gratitude to the wider Department of Communication and Journalism for their continued support throughout my postgraduate study at Massey University. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my family without whose support and encouragement completing this research project would not have been possible.

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