The gendering of sports news:

An investigation into the production, content and reception of

sports photographs of athletes in New Zealand newspapers.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the selection, content, meaning and reception of photographs of sportswomen featured in New Zealand newspapers, in order to establish the relationship between media representations and cultural understandings of sportswomen and women's sport. The study adopts a feminist cultural studies perspective and questions how photographs of sportswomen are constructed and perceived through dominant discourses of gender, sport and nationalism by media decision-makers and audiences alike, within contexts that are shaped by gender power relations and hierarchies.

The first component of this tripartite study comprises two periods of participant observation and interviews conducted at a New Zealand media organization. The insights gained reveal how discourses of (sports) journalism impact on the choices media workers make about what constitutes sports news. Media practices, newsroom dynamics, organizational protocols, freedoms and constraints, and taken-for-granted work routines were all found to inform media workers' decision making. Thus, journalistic discourses play a decisive role in constructing perceptions of newsworthiness that privilege a few professional men's sports whilst marginalizing women's sports and sportswomen, who are frequently stereotyped in representations where physical appearance and aesthetic beauty are emphasized rather than athleticism.

The second component of this research comprises a systematic analysis of 2,787 sports photographs featured in four New Zealand newspapers during two distinct sample periods. The three main themes that emerged demonstrate that:

- ◉ Sports media reinforce an articulation of sport and masculinity;
- ◉ When sportswomen are featured, the media reinforce an articulation of sportswomen and femininity; and
- ◉ When major international sporting events occur, dominant discourses affirming an articulation of sports are momentarily disrupted, as the articulation of sport and nationalism creates space for greater coverage of sportswomen.

However, despite the increased focus on sportswomen during the context of a major international sporting event, the content of photographs continues to

reinforce discourses of femininity, emphasizing potential or actual medal winners and/or their physical attractiveness as sportswomen. A number of representative photographs of sportswomen are subjected to further in-depth evaluation using Peircean semiotic analysis, to establish how sports photographs convey gender differences. This analysis demonstrates how media draw attention to gender by using close-up photographs of sportswomen in tight fitting, body-hugging sportswear that is culturally defined as gender appropriate for women, which accentuates their physical attractiveness and femininity.

The third component of this study involves in-depth interviews with seven elite New Zealand sportswomen, who describe their engagement with sports photographs and the challenges faced in determining what it means to be an athlete *and* a woman. Participants' comments highlight how they often perceive photographs of themselves negatively, and in relation to the powerful discursive messages media convey about athleticism and gender, which associate sport with men and masculinity. Moreover, these media messages further result in sportswomen featuring in ambivalent and ambiguous ways, due to perceived contradictions in the articulation of sports with women and femininity.

Conclusions are drawn on the powerful role discourses of sport play in media workers' and audiences' perceptions of sports newsworthiness, which are predominantly gender-based and gender-biased. Although discourses of nationalism encourage greater attention to medal winning sportswomen during major international sporting events, this focus continues to be constrained within discourses of femininity, and thus highlights those sports deemed appropriate for women, with emphasis given to sportswomen who embody idealized modes of femininity. Moreover, the findings of this research highlight the necessity for sports media studies to incorporate the voices of media workers and audiences, as their actions, reactions and perceptions reveal the real issues that they experience and what is important to them in producing and consuming sports news. This study therefore takes a step forward in highlighting crucial questions about the role of gender in shaping sporting representations as they are constructed and consumed in New Zealand.

DEDICATION

To my partner, Erica Scott, as a small token of my love and gratitude for your enthusiasm, encouragement, understanding and great patience at all times in this shared journey. And to my two beautiful children, Samantha and Daniel, both of whom were born in the course of this academic journey of discovery, thank you for allowing me the space to finish this "big peoples story-book", and for your endless cuddles whilst I type.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation presents the results of a tripartite investigation examining the production, content, and reception of photographs of athletes published in New Zealand newspapers, with a particular focus on how dominant discourses of gender and sport influence the selection of sports photographs by media workers and their interpretation by audiences.

My initial attraction to sports photographs stemmed from my own interest in and passion for sports and photography, both of which were encouraged by my parents' participation in a range of sports and my father's photographic pursuits. When I was growing up, I always believed I could do anything I set my mind to, despite the ongoing political uncertainty and volatility I faced in East Africa and then Rhodesia. I played every sport offered at school, joined a number of sports clubs, and was an avid follower of a variety of televised sports, such as Wimbledon, international athletics and U.K. soccer. Yet I was disappointed that no women's soccer was featured and wondered why women didn't appear to be interested in playing professional soccer, and why soccer wasn't on offer for girls at school. Where were all the sportswomen and the female voices, and why were they not demanding their place in the sporting arena? It was only when I was in senior school that the Title IX 'victory' for American women's sport was secured; yet this triumph had little impact on the battles still raging around me in Southern Africa. It was only after immigrating to New Zealand that I started to explore and attempt to resolve my long unanswered questions about sports, gender and the media, and where I actively began to immerse myself in an academic journey of discovery.

So, what began as a personal voyage of discovery has led to a critical analysis of sports photographs. More specifically, this study examines how and why media workers select particular kinds of newspaper sports photographs as 'messages', and how this form of media content in turn shapes social understandings as audiences actively engage with and make sense of the predetermined range of sporting images. In seeking to understand what types of messages newspaper sports photographs produce and how meanings are created in relation to sports, gender, athletes and athleticism, this study takes the view that

photographs cannot be adequately examined without also taking into consideration the practices of the media workers who produce them, how production processes operate, what is represented, and the role played by actual audiences in shaping understandings of such images.

In her explanation of why studying the media is so important, Livingstone (2005) raises a number of pertinent points about the media/audience relationship that are addressed in the course of this research:

> Notwithstanding the critique of media effects research, most researchers do in fact believe that the media have effects - why study the media otherwise? Given that the media are thoroughly embedded in our lives, a major source of images and information, especially of social and political phenomena beyond our daily experience, how could we conclude that the media have no effect on how we think or act? (p. 26)

In her tripartite study of the *Sports Illustrated - Swimsuit Edition*, Davis (1992) similarly suggests that "mediated representations to some degree, and in a complex manner, influence how we perceive the world and how we act" (p. 3). This is particularly true in today's media saturated environment, where the media are seen to play an increasingly important and pervasive role in conveying social norms and values to audiences (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Curran, 2002; Hall, 1980a, 1980c). Photographs in particular are held to be a powerful media tool in communicating social meanings, due to the audiences' perception of their unmediated state and their visual potency in conveying a sense of transparency and realism (Barthes, 1982; Duncan, 1990; Hall, 1973; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

However, there remains some debate among researchers regarding the likely effect and influence of media content, and what role audiences play in media reception. While some scholars emphasize the capacity of media content to influence 'passive' audiences, others highlight the ways in which audiences actively create meaning (Ang, 1991; Buckingham, 1993; Fenton, 2000; Fiske, 1986; Jensen, 1995c, 1995d; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Press, 2000; Whannel, 1998). Within this study, I draw on Stuart Hall's cultural studies theorizing, which suggests that audiences make sense of media content by adopting one of a range of potential positions, described by Hall as 'preferred', 'negotiated', or 'oppositional' decodings (Hall, 1980b). Thus, sports audiences are able to create a

range of potential meanings when reading media content, and this is further complicated by the inherently polysemic nature of cultural texts (Fiske, 1986; Jensen, 1995d; Schrøder, Drotner, Kline & Murray, 2003). However, audiences' readings are also shaped by the same dominant discourses of gender, sport and journalism that inform the choices and activities of media workers as they construct media messages. This shared cultural framework helps contextualize the preferred meanings of media messages and operates to delimit audiences' readings, in turn shaping public perceptions of gender and sport, athletes and athleticism.

While some might question the relevance of studying traditional media forms in an increasingly digital era, it is clear that printed newspapers remain highly influential in shaping the processes and practices of sports news production and presentation, even as print media steadily incorporate online delivery. Research suggests for instance, that newspapers continue to be consulted by a range of media workers when establishing what stories to include and exclude in a process described as 'inter-media agenda setting' (Golan, 2006). Furthermore, printed newspapers continue to be drawn on by a wide range of audiences within New Zealand as a means of accessing local, national and international news and entertainment. Moreover, the standardised format of newspaper texts and images appears to have been integrated into the design and layout of online newspapers, suggesting that this production model is still regarded as effective and useful. For this reason, my research centres on newspaper production, how media workers go about selecting sports news stories and images for publication, what discourses media workers draw on in constructing preferred meanings of sports news and how these are encoded in the production process, and the contexts that influence which discourses dominate and which are marginalized. These issues are likely to have significant bearing on the processes of sports news production, irrespective of the medium of delivery.

It is also clear that sport plays an important part in the lives of many New Zealanders, both as participants in sport and as sports audiences. In describing the Kiwi sporting love-affair, Thomson and Sim (2007) state that "there is no doubt that sport has an honoured place in New Zealand society and that it has clearly been an integral part of New Zealand culture since the latter part of the 19th century" (p. 115). For many New Zealanders, sports culture is closely linked to a

sense of national identity, particularly being a small, remote country far from Europe and the United States, such that exceptional international sporting successes are seen to unite the country and are celebrated nationally (Bruce, 2008; Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Edwards, 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Jones, 2006; Silk, 1999; Smith, 2004). Although many New Zealand-born athletes live, train and compete overseas in sports, their successes are claimed as 'Kiwi victories' regardless of their current affiliations or citizenship status. Further, sport is considered a great source of global entertainment that fills much of the leisure time of a range of individuals (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Creedon, 1998; Lowes, 1997; Whannel, 1998). Whannel (1998) suggests that "sports viewing is associated with both information and entertainment. Centrally though, it has to do with pleasure" (p. 231). In the process of media production, decision-makers make choices about which sports, athletes and events to represent and how they should be featured, which in turn helps shape audiences' understandings of athletes and athleticism, gender and nationhood (Bruce, 1995; Claringbould, Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Creedon, 1998; Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney & Wise, 2006; Theberge & Cronk, 1986).

In this study therefore, I seek to identify not only what the media produce in terms of content, but also *how* New Zealand and international athletes are featured and *how* audiences engage with sports photographs as they make sense of sports news in general. Relatively few sports media scholars have studied all three aspects of the 'communication circuit'[1]- production, content and reception - in a single study. However, a tripartite approach provides an invaluable opportunity to identify the complexities and challenges involved in communication exchange between the producers and the receivers of sports photographs. Furthermore, this study questions how sports media workers negotiate their role in the communication process and how organizational hierarchies and power relations play a role in the choices media workers make about which sports photographs to publish and which to ignore. Drawing on the results of a production study conducted in a New Zealand newsroom, I illustrate how media workers – editors,

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[1] Hall (1980b) describes the complexities of the production circuit as a "structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumptions, reproduction" (p. 128).

sports-journalists, photographers and graphic designers - make sense of newspaper sports photographs within the context of competing discourses of hegemonic[2] masculinity, femininity and nationalism. I also show how media workers, in the course of newspaper production, struggle to find appropriate frames that represent sportswomen as athletes *and* as women. This conflict results in sportswomen frequently being depicted in an ambivalent manner, via imagery that portrays them as strong and successful national athletes whilst simultaneously highlighting their gender differences (from men), such that traditional idealized 'feminine' characteristics and interests are emphasized.

In seeking to understanding how sports production operates, this present study draws on research that suggests the production of sports news takes place within "one of the most male-dominated areas of news media – sports journalism" (Bruce, 2009, p. 151); a cultural site where preferred media messages are informed by dominant discourses of sport, which are in turn embedded in a discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Although the concept of hegemony has been critiqued as overused and outmoded in sport media research, I believe that this concept goes to the heart of how dominant discourses are routinely maintained and reproduced whilst marginalized discourses are less frequently able to intersect with and disrupt the status quo. Moreover, dominant discourses of sport are sustained through practices that encourage an articulation[3] between certain elements that, when effectively negotiated, attract only limited contestation. Thus,

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[2] The role and use of hegemony in this study, is drawn from Stuart Hall's cultural studies approach to reflect power relations and the temporary nature of opposing forces that, at times, work together to benefit particular groups (Hall, 1980a). Hall argues that "'hegemony' is always the (temporary) mastery of a particular theatre of struggle. It marks the shift in the dispositions of contending forces in a field of struggle and the articulation of that field into a tendency. Such tendencies do not immediately 'profit' a ruling class or a fraction of capital, but they create the conditions whereby society and the state may be conformed in a larger sense to certain formative national-historical tasks" (Hall, 1980a, p. 36).

[3] The use and role of 'articulation' in this study is based on the cultural studies approach that Stuart Hall developed. His use of articulation focuses on the connection of two separate elements, which are linked through 'an articulation' to one another. However, this connection is not fixed, but rather creates a temporary "unity" between the two different elements. In an interview, Stuart Hall explains that "a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or no not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (Morley & Chen, 1996, pp. 141-142)

this study also draws on Stuart Hall's definition of articulation (Grossberg, 1996b), which he defines as two different elements connecting to form temporary 'unity'. For instance, dominant discourses have traditionally coded sport as masculine and as requiring aggression, strength and power, thereby connecting sport with men and masculinity. In this way, these socially and discursively constructed links create a 'unity' that naturalizes the association between sport and men, creating what I term as the sports–masculinity articulation. Moreover, the strength and apparent transparency of this articulation helps promote perceptions of the innate 'truth' of this particular discourse, resulting in it becoming the dominant discourse. Consequently, men and masculinity are privileged in the sporting realm, while women and femininity are subordinated. Hence, as Davis (1997) also notes, "media coverage of sport often features masculinity as a central theme, and thus reinforces the use of sport as a masculine preserve" (p. 56). In this way, the status quo is maintained as dominant cultural discourses of gender become embedded within the processes of sports production, which consequently features 'masculine' traits as the norm, whilst simultaneously implying (by default) that sport is 'not feminine'. Thus, "sport serves an important role in securing consent for the present gender order because people use it to manufacture and reinforce beliefs in physical gender dichotomization" (Davis, 1997, p. 56), such that gender differences between men and women are emphasized in media coverage in ways that create or bolster dominant perceptions about sporting abilities and the appropriateness of sports participation based on gender.

However, despite the seeming naturalness of the sports–masculinity articulation, there are moments when this unity is broken, when other discourses are mobilized in different and overlapping ways, which either reinforce or challenge dominant articulations. For instance, during major international sporting events, such as the Commonwealth or Olympic Games, research suggests that media draw on discourses of nationalism in a way that helps reinforce the sports–nationalism articulation. Thus, athletes feature as members of the national team and coverage highlights whatever is considered to be nationally newsworthy, such as successful medal-winning performances, in a way that draws attention to national identity and encourages patriotism (Eastman & Billings, 1999; Kinnick, 1998; Mikosza, 1997; Stoddart, 1994a, 1994b; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Wensing,

2003). Discourses of gender thus *appear* to be inconsequential during these periods as media workers "bend the rules" (Wensing & Bruce, 2003, p. 388) that normally privilege sporting masculinity. This shift in focus has been of particular interest to feminist cultural studies scholars, due to the significant increase in coverage of sportswomen and women's sport during major event periods (Brookes, 2002; Hardin, Chance, Dodd & Hardin, 2002; Markula, Bruce & Hovden, 2010). These momentary incidents of increased media focus on sportswomen and women's sport are important to evaluate, not only because they differ so radically from 'everyday'[4] sports news coverage of women athletes, but also because relatively little is currently known about precisely how sportswomen are featured during such periods, what impetus drives these changes, what impact major event coverage has on audiences' perceptions of female athletes, and how the nature and content of that coverage compares with everyday coverage of women's sports and sportswomen.

To date, few studies have specifically examined the processes and practices of media production that reproduce, and at times challenge, the sports–masculinity articulation. And, although sports media researchers have examined a range of sports media production trends and themes, few sports sociologists have investigated the media production environment to observe how media workers construct sports news, or assessed the ways in which organizational processes and practices control what is or is not published (Davis, 1997; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Lowes, 1999; Rowe, 2007; Silk, 1999; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). Furthermore, few sports media studies have discussed the specific role that discourses of gender play in production processes, in organizational structures and in gendered practices within the newsroom environment (Davis, 1997; Gee, 2009; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). Seeking to address these gaps in the existing scholarship, this study aims to glean detailed insight into the implications of 'gender' within the sports media environment. Gallagher (2008) suggests that

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[4] 'Everyday' sports coverage is described by Wensing (2003b) as being "sports reporting at times other than large international multi-sport events such as the Olympics. It typically encompasses reporting on within-nation competitions, or professional individual sports such as tennis and golf" (p. 17).

"one of the key contributions of feminist scholarship has been to uncover the embedded nature of gender-based judgments and assumptions" (p. 18). Within the present study, focus is given not only to the composition of media workers' gender, but also to how discourses of gender and gender difference influence media workers' choices, practices and processes as they define the agenda and content of sports news. While a number of studies have identified that the majority of media decision-makers are men (Bruce, 1995; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Lowes, 1999; Theberge & Cronk, 1986), few studies have focused on the impact gender has on sports production processes more generally. The present study therefore draws on these different aspects to identify the gendered composition of the New Zealand sports media environment and determine what role gender plays in production processes and routines, power relations, newsroom hierarchies, and media workers relationships in general.

As previous studies in New Zealand and internationally have documented, the sports news focuses almost exclusively on a limited number of professional, 'nationally important' men's sports, and sports photographs predominantly depict elite male athletes participating in these professional sports. I maintain that within New Zealand, as has been identified within other international sports research, sport and nationalism are drawn together and are coded as masculine. The media highlights positive elements of national identity to capture a sense of national pride and unique '*Kiwi*' qualities in media content that local audiences can easily and readily identify (Bruce & Chapman, 2006a; Edwards, 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Wensing, Bruce & Pope, 2004). As many scholars have noted, much of New Zealand's local and national sport coverage revolves around rugby, particularly the national men's rugby team, the 'All Blacks' (Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Smith, 2004; Star, 1992). This privileging of men's rugby is an accepted norm within New Zealand's sporting culture and it clearly undermines the media's ability to adequately represent sportswomen in news coverage. However, researchers have noted that sportswomen are able to visually interrupt this masculine narrative of New Zealand's sporting nationhood, albeit within controlled parameters, during major international sporting events such as the Commonwealth Games. What is not known, however, is whether these disruptions necessarily also challenge the status quo in terms of the nature and focus of media coverage of women's sports and sportswomen.

This is an important question, since researchers have identified that when sportswomen are given greater media attention, sports photographs tend to emphasize those physical features of sportswomen that highlight gender difference and idealized femininity and focus more specifically on sports deemed to be *appropriate*[5] for women within a given cultural context. This media approach typically draws audience attention toward photographs featuring sportswomen as sexually attractive women rather than skillful, successful athletes. In addition, media coverage of sportswomen during major events frequently only occurs in relation to their potential to win medals or after they have won a medal (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Mikosza, 1997; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Wensing, 2003). Given the conflicting way in which sports photographs are used to convey gender and athleticism, it is clear that "sport remains one of the most problematically gender-defined and gender-divided aspects of social life" (Thompson, 2002, p. 106).

Much of the earlier sports media research was performed using content analysis, and focused almost entirely on data measurement to highlight *what* was featured, with limited attention given to how meanings are constructed or what impact media content has on audience perceptions of sport, athletes and athleticism in general. Although quantifying the exact number, size, style and theme of photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen featured within New Zealand newspapers is important and informative, measurement in isolation provides little insight into the possible impact of media content. Current trends in research methodology have seen a gradual move away from purely quantitative analysis to an expanded format that includes other modes of inquiry, such as semiotic analysis. Durham (2007) maintains that "because the focus of semiotics is the creation, circulation, and interpretation of … discourses in the form of social 'signs', it provides a useful tool for feminist media scholarship" (pp. 236-

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[5] My use of the term *appropriate* here is in keeping with existing research, suggesting that sports participation is culturally defined as being appropriate (or not) based on the participant's gender (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Duncan & Brummett, 1989; Hargreaves, 1982; Metheny, 1972b). Hence, shared understandings of which sports are appropriate for women and men may vary in different cultural context. This issue will be examined in greater detail in the course of this study.

237). Thus, in order to gain a clearer and deeper understanding of how gendered discourses are expressed within sports media representations, this study draws on feminist cultural studies theorizing informed by semiotic analysis to establish *how* media content is discursively constructed to convey messages about gender, and more specifically to identify how meanings and interpretations are produced in relation to sports photographs. Particular emphasis is given to the media's use of cultural signs and symbols within sports photographs as a means of constructing preferred messages about sports, athletes and athleticism that audiences can quickly understand and identify with. Using semiotic analysis to examine the contextual framing of sports photographs of sportswomen potentially provides considerable insight into the role of wider discursive processes in shaping audience perceptions of sports, gender and athleticism.

Feminist researchers argue that it is not only important to establish what is portrayed within sports media coverage, but also to determine what is ignored or excluded, and there is little doubt that sportswomen continue to be marginalized in media coverage in numerical terms (see for example, Bruce & Chapman, 2006b; Hardin et al., 2002; Jones, 2006; Mason & Rail, 2006). However, consideration also needs to be given to how meaning is encoded *within* media content, and why. Thus, this study examines relations of *power*, both the power of the media to construct meaning and prefer messages within the production process, and the power audiences have to accept or reject preferred messages or to create their own negotiated or oppositional readings of media content (Curran, 2002; Gitlin, 2003; Grossberg et al., 2006; Hall, 1980b, 1997a; McCullagh, 2002). Moving away from an isolated analysis of the number and type of sports photographs and drawing on semiotics, this investigation takes into consideration the social practice of 'reading' sports photographs (Birrell & Theberge, 1994b; Short, 2007). In addition, semiotic analysis is used to identify how photographs help to shape shared understandings and to establish how messages and meanings are discursively constructed within production processes.

The audience reception component of my study takes into consideration the perspectives of a core group of female participants, all of whom are elite New Zealand sportswomen. These sportswomen provide unique insight through their experiences of the media and invaluable personal perceptions of sports photographs of themselves and other athletes. Since this study utilizes feminist

cultural studies theorizing to focus specifically on the ways in which media messages about gender are received, the inclusion of the lived experiences of these sportswomen and their 'female voices' was regarded as a vital element of this sports media research. Very few sports media studies have actively integrated female audiences, and fewer still have drawn on the views of sportswomen. The inclusion of these female voices establishes how these elite sportswomen actively engage in a complex struggle where they attempt to balance conflicting discourses of femininity and athleticism both in relation to their depiction within sports news, and in their own lives. Their readings of sports media content offers valuable insight into how wider discursive practices create meaning and the complex negotiations that occur when sports photographs are decoded. Studying the cultural practices of elite sportswomen reading sports photographs also offers unique understanding of how discourses of gender and sport are experienced by an actual group of female audience members.

Traditionally, feminist media research involving female participants has focused on 'women's genres', such as romance novels, women's magazines and entertainment, or 'soft' news. In contrast, this study examines a commonly taken-for-granted 'male genre' of sports news, to establish how a marginalized element within this 'male genre', women's sport, is given meaning by a female audience. Historically, women's views were neither sought out nor considered important in respect of sports or the sports media (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Birrell & Theberge, 1994b, 1994a; Cashmore, 2000; Hargreaves, 2000). Thus, the experiences and challenges women face in respect of media coverage, both as members of the female sports audience and as athletes, have been overlooked in most sports research. By integrating elite women athlete's interpretations and personal experiences into its design, this research has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of how some women negotiate the multiple discourses that inform sports news about sportswomen and women's sport, and the sports media environment more generally.

This chapter has outlined the main areas of focus within this tripartite study, summarized the theoretical and methodological approaches drawn on, and detailed the primary aims and scope of the research. The main body of the thesis thus takes shape around investigating the complex circuit of communication involved in the production, content, and reception of sports photographs of New

Zealand athletes. In Chapter 2, the theoretical and methodological frameworks utilised in this study are presented, informed by cultural studies theorizing, and feminist cultural studies theorizing more specifically. The role of hegemony is examined particularly in relation to the way that certain discourses of gender, sport and journalism shape the production of sports news, whilst other discourses are subordinated. Charles Peirce's semiotic analysis is also highlighted as a meaningful approach that offers insight into how underlying principles of visual meaning making are constructed by media workers and assumed by audiences in the reading process. Chapter 2 also outlines the methods used in the production study, including formal and informal interviews with media workers and participant observation in the newsroom environment. It details the specific methods used to undertake a content and semiotic analysis of sports photographs and sports news in general, and overviews the approach taken to the audience reception component of this research, including interviews with seven elite athletes, some via telephone, some face-to-face and one via e-mail correspondence.

The review of existing literature in Chapter 3 establishes what other researchers in New Zealand and overseas have identified in relation to media production, content and semiotic analysis, and audience reception, to support and reinforce the current study. In a number of instances, it was found that few studies have been conducted in the areas of interest to this research, either in New Zealand or internationally, thus highlighting the value of the present study in contributing to feminist cultural studies theorizing and sports media research more specifically.

Chapter 4 investigates how sports media workers negotiate their role in the communication process and interrogates how the choices they make about which sports photographs to publish and which to ignore are reflective of the wider discursive hierarchies that exist in relation to sport and gender. This chapter draws on data gathered during two periods of observation in a New Zealand newspaper organization, where I ensconced myself in newsroom activities and attended formal and informal meetings where sport photographs and sports related issues were discussed. During my fieldwork I noted how media workers made choices about which sports and athletes to include or exclude from publication, and how media decision-makers acted, interacted and reacted to one another. The first

period of observation occurred during the 2006 Commonwealth Games, while the second period, exactly 12 months later, constituted an everyday production period, thus making it possible to establish any similarities and differences in media coverage during different contexts.

The content and semiotic analysis findings relating to two different periods of newspaper coverage are presented in Chapter 5. In each period, I analyzed four weeks of newspaper sports photographs from four New Zealand newspaper publications. The aim was to determine precisely what types of sports photographs of athletes were featured throughout the newspapers and then more specifically to examine the extent and context of coverage of sportswomen. In addition to documenting the number of sport photographs of male and female athletes and the range of sports featured, the images were further interrogated to reveal what was captured within the content and context of the image, whom or what was represented, and the positioning of all images. A representative sample of images of sportswomen were then subjected to semiotic analysis in order to ascertain the ways in which sports photographs are constructed as media 'messages', and how they create meaning and a sense of understanding about gender, sports, athletes and athleticism.

The ways in which audiences engage with and make sense of newspaper sports photographs are identified and illustrated in Chapter 6. The audience in this investigation comprised seven elite New Zealand sportswomen whose perceptions were sought both as athletes who have had firsthand experience with local, national and international media, and as women who are interested in sport. Their views illustrate how these elite sportswomen simultaneously attempt to negotiate what it means to be an athlete *and* a woman, whilst also acknowledging that in ascribing greater cultural value to men's sport and sportsmen, the media marginalize their own efforts, successes and achievements.

In discussing the main findings of this study, Chapter 7 reveals not only the interrelatedness of the three components – production, content and reception - but also their co-dependency for an *exchange* of meaning (Hall, 1980b). The discussion looks at various inconsistencies, ambiguities and anomalies that emerged in the course of this research. Here, the different elements of the research are brought together to offer an analysis of the role of dominant and marginalized discourses of gender, sports, nationalism and journalism, to explore the meanings

that are produced about sports news, and sports photographs more specifically. The findings collectively suggest that not only are sports photographs a powerful means of constructing preferred messages about sports, gender, athletes and athleticism, but they are themselves 'a message' through which dominant discourses of gender and sport are affirmed and rearticulated.

The conclusion, Chapter 8, highlights how discourses of sports, gender and journalism continue to impact on sports coverage of sportswomen and women's sports due to the powerful role of the sports–masculinity articulation. Yet I also note the way in which these discursive constructions that privilege sportsmen in sports photographs can potentially be challenged, as media workers and audiences negotiate both the sports–nationalism articulation *and* the sports–gender articulation and the role they play in shaping understandings of sports, athletes and athleticism. Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are offered for future research and practical intervention.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Overview of the theoretical framework and underpinning assumptions

In this study, I draw on feminist cultural studies theorizing to specifically focus on how the media appropriate dominant discourses of gender in sports media production and the role that dominant discourses of gender, sport and journalism play in the meaning making processes of sports media consumption. Feminist cultural studies embraces many of the theoretical perspectives developed by Stuart Hall within cultural studies, but also extends Hall's conceptual thinking about culture, by specifically focusing on gender as a central tenet. Moreover, feminist cultural theorizing provides valuable insight into the social and cultural issues and practices that women in particular (but also men) face on a daily basis. Historically within Western societies, dominant discourses have been constructed in such a way that a hierarchy is created that privileges masculine ideals and beliefs, resulting in the marginalization, subordination and frequent exclusion of women from the social and cultural landscape (Ang, 1985, 1996; Bordo, 1993; MacNeill, 1994). It is from this position that my study explores the ways in which gender is assumed and re-presented within sports media photographs. I examine how the sports media, in the processes of sports media production, feature sports and athletes in relation to discourses of gender, specifically through sports photographs in which media messages are encoded with preferred meanings relating to sporting masculinity, femininity and nationalism. This tripartite study also focuses on how a particular audience of elite sportswomen read and give meaning to newspaper sports photographs and media coverage of sports in general.

This investigation into the use and meaning of photographs was considered to be important because of its focus on visual rather than textual or audio message processing. Yet photographs are not just a means of supporting media communication; it has also been suggested that "the press photograph is a message" (Barthes, 1982, p. 194). Thus, *what* or *how* this message is constructed and received it particularly vital to both media production and audience reception

researchers alike. With rapid advances in digital imaging technology and their increasing use in global communication, media and audience researchers have become progressively more interested in the role of media photographs.

Photographs are a particularly valuable means of conveying messages in media because they are instantly recognizable and appear to reflect reality. As Barrett (1990) argues, "people's knowledge, beliefs, values, and attitudes – heavily influenced by their culture – are reflected in the photographs they take. Each photograph embodies a particular way of seeing and showing the world" (p. 33). This statement draws attention to the manner in which photographs are *constructed*, or more specifically, the way in which producers attempt to represent their view of 'reality' by selecting photographs that align with the particular preferred meaning being conveyed.

In this study, three areas of the communication circuit (production, content and reception) were investigated separately and then together to examine not only their interrelatedness and their co-dependencies, but also how sports photographs have become an effective and efficient means of communicating specific messages in society. Van Zoonen (1994) suggests that the value of conducting this type of tripartite study is that "separately, the elements of production, texts and reception of media make no sense; they are intricately linked in the process of meaning production" (p. 41). Therefore, to fully understand media content, we need to also understand how it is produced, received and made sense of, since the media/audience relationship is bound together in a meaning making process; one being loosely dependent upon the other. In this analysis therefore, the observations made by Barthes (1982), who highlights the value of studying the 'photographic message' through the three areas of 'emission, transmission and reception', are both acknowledged and integrated into the research process. In clarifying the processes involved in producing the photographic message, Barthes states:

> The source of emission is the staff of the newspaper, the group of technicians certain of whom take the photo, some of whom choose, compose, and treat it, while others, finally, give it a title, a caption, and a commentary. The point of reception is the public which reads the paper. As for the channel of transmission, this is the newspaper itself, or, more precisely, a complex of concurrent messages with the photograph as center

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and surrounds constituted by the text, the title, the caption, the layout …
(p. 194)

Although media researchers frequently investigate these three elements of the communication process in isolation, their results, although providing some valuable insights, are also deficient because they only shed light on one aspect of the circuit, without taking into consideration the interdependencies and consequential effects of the others. In addition, it is only through examining the complexity of the processes of *exchange* (Hall, 1980b) between what is produced and how it is consumed, where actual communication occurs, that some understanding can be reached. Hall describes this exchange as being a crucial link, which requires that there be "some degree of reciprocity" in the meaning making process (Hall, 1980b, p. 136).

This also, however, suggests that meanings are primarily culturally contingent and socially defined for audiences taking up the preferred media message. This is not to say that meaning is not assumed outside of these parameters, but rather that there is potential for an indirect, negotiated or oppositional reading to occur when there is partial or full disagreement with the preferred media message. For instance, in her investigation of Dutch audiences' interpretations of the American television soap opera *Dallas*, Ang (1990) identified that given the cultural differences between Dutch audiences and American audiences, for whom the programme was originally produced, Dutch audiences created their own cultural readings of *Dallas*. These audience interpretations differed not only from the preferred media meanings, but also from the interpretations generated by American audiences. Therefore, despite an *exchange* occurring between the media and audience, the mode of engagement of the Dutch audience was essentially established to be different due to their own cultural and social understandings of what was produced.

Media communication is thus reliant on a complex system of message construction by the media as they shape media content that audiences deconstruct and give meaning to. Due to this complexity, whereby the processes of meaning making entail negotiation, this study suggests that there is no single theoretical or methodological approach that can adequately be drawn on to elucidate an understanding of sports media production practices, media worker motivations, or the assumptions that audiences make about media content. Although the

overarching theoretical perspective in this study is that of feminist cultural studies, it also takes into consideration Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Peirce's theory and method of semiotic analysis, as important approaches that have greatly contributed to extending our knowledge about social and cultural practices. Both frameworks potentially provide valuable insight into the role sports media photographs play in society.

Culture and cultural studies

Cultural studies research is interested in the ways in which the processes of communication work, how information is exchanged, and how cultural norms and standards are developed, engaged with and maintained (Ang, 1996; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Curran, Morley & Walkerdine, 1996; O'Donnell, 2005b; Ruddock, 2007; Schrøder et al., 2003; van Zoonen, 1994). In my study, cultural studies theorizing is incorporated into my theoretical framework because I believe that no sociological research can be undertaken without first acknowledging the substantial bearing that the social and cultural environment have on society. Furthermore, with gender being positioned at the heart of this investigation, how meanings and messages about gender are culturally constructed and socially communicated is of fundamental significance. Thus, the manner in which the media construct and re-produce messages relating to gender and gender roles and how audiences create meanings are critical foci of this research.

O'Donnell (2005b) suggests that "culture is about the production and exchange of meanings between and among the members of society" (p. 535). This suggests that meanings are developed through a social exchange between individuals, creating certain routines that become standardized and 'normalized' as *cultural practices.* The media also contribute to this process by publicizing and circulating these 'norms', which frequently correspond with and reinforce dominant ideologies, such that they become accepted by members of the culture as 'just the way things are'. However, while cultural practices appear to be rational and commonsensical, they are in fact systems and customs that have been developed and adopted into a culture. Individuals are exposed to a variety of formal and informal practices, institutional knowledge, ways of thinking, habits and *traditions* within their culture that help socialize them into commonly accepted, shared understandings about their society. An individual's perceptions

about the world are shaped as a result of these processes of enculturation and socialization (Moriarty, 2005; O'Donnell, 2005b; van Zoonen, 1994).

Although 'cultural practice' appears to be a straightforward concept that refers to familiar values and beliefs that help members of that culture to "generate a common stock of shared meanings" (Lewis, 1994, p. 24), with increased globalization, migratory lifestyles and mass media communication, what constitutes 'local culture' has not only become more challenging to define but also more ambiguous (Ang, 1996; Grossberg et al., 2006; Moriarty, 2005; O'Donnell, 2005b; van Zoonen, 1994). Therefore, research that incorporates a cultural studies approach is particularly interested in ascertaining how practices impact on individuals and groups, and how identities that are developed within a culture are not only taken-for-granted but also given meaning and maintained (Kellner, 2003). Furthermore, within the field of media studies, it is important to establish how cultural meanings are adopted and disseminated within discourses of journalism, and how these discourses encourage audience engagement as they make sense of and give meaning to media messages.

Cultural studies theorizing

Cultural studies theorizing focuses not only on culture *per se* but also on the role that social order, control, and power play in society. Cultural studies research focuses attention on the manner in which meanings are produced and how discourses are established in relation to individuals and groups identifying with and living their lives according to them (Ang, 1996; Grossberg, 1996a; Jensen, 1995d, 1995b; Schrøder et al., 2003). O'Donnell (2005b) suggests that cultural studies "attempts to discern what attitudes, beliefs, values, preferred forms of conduct, and ideologies are embedded and reinforced in images and supporting discourse" (p. 535). Of particular relevance to this study is the manner in which the media represent 'the way society is' through content that closely corresponds with dominant ideologies, such that particular cultural meanings and associated values are circulated by the mass media 'as the norm' (Dahlgren, 1998).

Studies of the mass media reveal that those cultural values and practices that more closely align with dominant ideologies are more frequently drawn on and integrated into standard production practices (Hall, 1988; Schrøder et al., 2003). Furthermore, Louw (2001) suggests that the appeal of using a cultural

studies approach to analyze the media is that it focuses "on deconstructing texts and coding systems as a way of denaturalizing the communicative process and stripping away the opaqueness and taken-for-grantedness of meaning" (p. 2). In analyzing media content, researchers are thus able to sift through the layers of information contained within text and image, highlighting what types of representations are publicized (and which are ignored), what is communicated (or not), how it is conveyed, who circulates the information, and about whom (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Louw, 2001; O'Donnell, 2005b; Schroder, Drotner, Kline & Murray, 2003; Stokes, 2003). In addition, cultural studies theorizing maintains that it is crucial to not only understand how the complex processes of communication operate between individuals and groups as they exchange information, but also how ideologies are distributed, assumed and 'consumed' through the media (Kellner, 2003; Turner, 1997b). Daily, people engage with a diverse range of mediated information that they either accept or disregard, and in the course of this communication exchange individuals create perceptions about their social and cultural environment. As a result of these interactions, shared understandings, meanings and beliefs are developed (Ruddock, 2007). Turner (1997b) suggests that people identify with and make sense of the world through "representations – images, words, sounds, gestures, which 're-present' a version of the world – and the value systems of the culture 'speaking' through representations by way of notions of ideology" (p. 327). Thus, the media play an important role in representing dominant discourses that become accepted as the 'norm', for instance through the use of stereotypes that audiences come to acknowledge and accept. In this way too, media representations help to maintain the status quo within society.

Although a number of theorists and scholars have been identified as influential in the area of cultural studies, such as Marx, de Saussure, Althusser, Barthes, Foucault and Gramsci (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Schroder et al., 2003), the work of Stuart Hall has been specifically drawn on in this study (Hall, 1980a, 1980c, 1980b, 1980d, 1988, 1997a, 1997b). In the 1970s, at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) under the leadership of Stuart Hall, focus was given to investigating how culture is constructed and maintained through social power relationships. This cultural studies theorizing specifically analyzed how patterns of social inequality relating

to class structures, gender, race, ethnicity and subcultures are developed and encouraged and what sort of challenges and oppositions are encountered in the process. Stuart Hall, described as "the leading voice of British cultural studies" (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000, p. 165), has been credited with helping "to frame the theoretically innovative approaches that combined the analysis of the relations of classes, subcultures, race, gender, and mass media" (Cruz & Lewis, 1994a, p. 5). Although each of these areas of investigation is important within the context of cultural studies, within this research particular attention was given to the way in which culture is responsible for generating meanings and understandings of *gender*; specifically, how gender is portrayed and communicated through the medium of newspaper sports photographs.

Hall (1997a) maintains, for instance, that a part of standard media practice is the use of gender stereotypes to normalize representations. These stereotypes take on certain distinctive features that make them immediately recognizable and obvious to audience members. The media draw on a variety of dominant ideological beliefs about gender that they then promote; for instance, portraying men as masculine and strong and women as subordinate and vulnerable. Using concepts central to Stuart Hall's theorizing, Gledhill (1997) highlights how cultural meanings are so intertwined with language that the "terms 'man' and 'woman' – whether word or image – … are in fact cultural signifiers which construct rather than reflect gender definitions, meanings and identities" (p. 346). Thus, the very nature of an audience's understanding of gender has become more prescriptive than descriptive, whereby men and women are viewed more in line with idealized characteristics of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, cultural studies research reveals that the media communicate 'gender' from a position of difference, whereby women are situated as being different from and inferior to men. Hall (1997a) argues that:

> … the norm of what counts as human is provided by the masculine and only women's culture needs to be marked as specifically gendered – much in the same way that 'man' is said to stand for men and women, or 'his' incorporates 'hers' etc. (p. 345)

Thus, discourses of gender have a powerful effect in terms of shaping cultural and social understandings, through the use of gender-based terminology and language.

Hall (1997a) further elaborates on the complexities associated with norms and behaviours that are expressed by the media in relation to gender differences. This differentiation results in the media using gender stereotyping and gender marking, whereby women are depicted as acting or responding differently to men. However, these representations suggest that men and male standards are the normative measure against which women's experiences and capacities are to be gauged. Birrell and Theberge (1994b) argue that "our actions are always understood by ourselves and others within the meanings that dominant discourses of sex, gender, sexuality, class, race, etc., make available for us. We are in that sense always culturally contained, but are not completely imprisoned" (p. 372). This suggests that although media more frequently reinforce dominant discourses within what is produced, and these discourses are commonly accepted as the norm, there is still capacity for audience resistance. From this perspective, the focus shifts from identifying *what* contributes to an understanding of gender within culture, to that of ascertaining *how* gender is communicated and the types of signs and codes that are employed in media production that convey messages about masculinity and femininity that audiences recognize, understand, assume and sometimes resist. In this respect, this study utilizes two very different models to investigate the ways in which media communication is developed and realized in relation to gender. The first model draws on Stuart Hall's cultural studies theory of encoding/decoding, while the second takes into consideration Charles Peirce's semiotics. Despite the differences in the methods used by both theorists, their models examine how the social exchange of information is developed using cultural 'codes' and 'signs' to denote meaning within media messages, and how audiences negotiate an interpretation of these messages in relation to their own understanding and experiences of the 'codes' that are on display.

The encoding / decoding model

Hall's encoding / decoding model of media communication proposes that for an exchange of communication to occur, the sender *encodes* particular meanings into the message that the receiver *decodes* on receipt. Although the encoding / decoding processes are seen as two separate moments, they work together to shape an understanding about the message being sent and the meanings that are communicated and assumed (Hall, 1980c, 1980b). Hall's model is built on

Barthes' idea that media representations are encoded with meanings that conform to dominant ideologies through a system of communication that Barthes described as 'myth' (Barthes, 1977, 1981). Although Barthes' approach focused on a system of semiotic analysis of visual communication labelled 'semiology' (Barthes, 1972, 1977, 1981), Hall incorporated aspects of this semiological thinking about social meanings, representations and 'codes' into the cultural studies encoding / decoding model (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Hall, 1980b, 1997b).

Yet Hall's model recognizes that the practice of communication exchange is neither transparent nor straightforward. Thus, despite the best efforts of cultural producers to encode a preferred media meaning that can be clearly understood and readily identifiable, there is no guarantee that audiences will read or decode that message in an identical fashion. Audience decoding has the potential for a variety of outcomes whereby the preferred meaning may be adopted outright, partially accepted or rejected as the message is engaged with and given meaning (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Hall, 1980b, 1997b). At the same time however, Hall argues that this model takes into consideration relations of power in respect of those who construct meanings and control the processes by which meanings are made. Despite encoding and decoding being reliant and co-dependent on each other, the media are in a more influential position to shape meaning, as they encode messages, than are audiences in the decoding process (Hall, 1980b). In response to questions about his communication model, Hall states:

> I don't think that the audiences are in the same position of power with those who signify the world to them. And preferred reading is simply a way of saying if you have control of the apparatus of signifying the world, if you're in control of the media, you own it, you write the texts – to some extent it has a determining shape. (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b, p. 261)

Hall therefore argues that in relation to power, it is the media in the first instance who construct the message that is then communicated, and it is only when this message is realized that audience interpretations can be established within set parameters.

Furthermore, in later discussions about his encoding / decoding model, Hall clarifies that his theorizing in relation to decoding proposed three 'ideal' types of audience response. The first audience response was that of decoding messages in line with the preferred meaning, also known as a *preferred reading*, to reflect how

audience members accept and adopt the dominant or intended media meaning (Fiske, 1986, 1990; Hall, 1980b; Morley, 1992; O'Donnell, 2005b; Schroder et al., 2003). Sturken and Cartwright (2001) argue that in taking up a preferred reading, audiences assume a "dominant-hegemonic reading. They can identify with the hegemonic position and receive the dominant message of an image or text (such as a television show) in an unquestioning manner" (p. 57). The second response is a *negotiated reading*, a process whereby audiences accept some aspects of the preferred meaning whilst also rejecting parts of it (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). The third 'ideal' response is that of an *oppositional reading*, which occurs when audiences disagree with, reject or ignore the 'preferred meaning' that has been encoded in the message (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Hall, 1980b).

Hall also acknowledges that media reception entails audiences being active rather than passive recipients of information (Hall, 1997b). Moreover, media researchers argue that audiences from different cultures and social environments have the potential to create meanings in different ways to one another due to the fluid nature of cultural interpretations, the influence of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, variations in personal experiences and understandings about situations, and different belief systems or sets of values (Ang, 1996; Fiske, 1986; Horne, Tomlinson & Whannel, 1999; Morley, 2006; O'Donnell, 2005b; Rose, 2007; Schrøder et al., 2003; Tomaselli, 1996). Bignell (2002), for instance, suggests that "preferred meanings are more likely to be encoded and decoded with the same result when both parties in the communication share common codes and ideological positions" (p. 102). It is therefore important to understand how media production processes impact on and are impacted by the social and cultural environment in which they are created and then consumed.

Cultural studies' theorizing also acknowledges that messages are open to diverse interpretations, due to the polysemic nature of language itself. Morley (1992) argues that "a message is always capable of producing more than one meaning, or interpretation. It can never be reduced simply to one 'ultimate' or 'real' meaning" (p. 83). Thus, the communication process and more specifically the decoding process involves a complex range of factors being taken into consideration, such as the way that media texts or photographs are framed and contextualized to reduce variant readings (Fiske, 1986; Grossberg et al., 2006; Jensen, 1995d; O'Donnell, 2005b; Rose, 2007; Schroder et al., 2003). Hall's

cultural studies model therefore focuses attention on both media production and audience reception, where meanings are constructed in a relational process, taking into consideration *how* and *what* messages are produced and the manner in which audiences then interpret them. Thus, Hall's model posits the audience with some power to control how they interpret media messages, albeit limited by what is presented in the first place. In describing how his encoding / decoding model was developed, Hall states:

> The encoding/decoding paper was written on the edge of the shift which Barthes makes from the interpretation of the code into the notion of textuality, and then later into the notion of desire and the pleasure of the text. And it's therefore the moment of a movement in cultural studies from communication studies to literary theory, to the cinematic text, to psychoanalysis, to feminism, and to the beginnings of poststructuralism (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b, p. 271).

He presents his model as an evolving, fluid structure that attempts to give light to an understanding of the active communication process, which is continually changing as theories are framed, defined and redefined (Morley, 2006).

Preferred reading and preferred meaning

Although some scholars' use *preferred reading* and *preferred meaning* interchangeably, within this study they are considered to be two distinctly separate entities. Following Hall's (1980b) lead, *preferred meaning* relates specifically to the media, who construct a message in the production process which is encoded with a particular preferred meaning. As they develop media content, the media draw on entrenched cultural norms that help reinforce dominant discourses. Hall (1980b) maintains that:

> The domains of 'preferred meanings' have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of 'how things work for all practical purposes in this culture', the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions. (p. 134)

This is an important and central tenet in understanding media power, as the encoding process draws on dominant ideological meanings that media embed into messages, helping to maintain the status quo in society (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Fiske, 1986, 1990; Hall, 1980b; Jensen, 1995c). Thus, the media develop

preferred meanings in the encoding process to align with a particular worldview that audiences then decode via a *preferred reading* of the message. To illustrating how preferred meanings and preferred readings work together, Rose (2007) argues that "preferred meanings (or ideologies) become **preferred readings** when they are interpreted by audiences" (p. 98, original emphasis). However, as noted above, cultural studies scholars argue that the media are only able to influence audiences 'to some extent', emphasizing the importance of the decoding process and the active role of audience members (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Fiske, 1986; Hall, 1980b; Morley, 1992). In addition, O'Donnell (2005b) also highlights how "the choice of the word *preferred* is deliberate because it indicates that the viewer has some power in interpreting meaning, yet it is important that the viewer's decoding takes place *within* the encoding process" (p. 527). Thus, the processes of encoding and decoding are bound together in a relational model; the media retain ultimate power in that audience interpretations are always contingent on the constructed preferred meaning in the first place (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; O'Donnell, 2005b; Rose, 2007; Tomaselli, 1996).

Furthermore, cultural studies theorizing suggests that the media draw on dominant discourses when constructing preferred messages that constantly repeat and reinforce social and cultural norms and values, thereby helping to shape expectations and beliefs about society. Moreover, media researchers argue that preferred meanings target certain audience members whilst simultaneously isolating others, as this process prejudices some individuals or groups while also stereotyping people, events or issues (Bignell, 2002; Brookes, 2002; Buckingham, 1993; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Fiske, 1986; Lester, 1996). The use of a preferred meaning by the media thus also functions to maintain the prevailing hegemonic power hierarchy. This is achieved through encoding preferring meanings in a manner that aligns with hegemony, such that media messages influence audiences through linking messages to dominant discourses that appear commonsensical, normalized and 'natural'.

Hegemony and cultural studies

Early cultural studies theorizing drew on Gramsci's concepts of hegemony to help develop an understanding of power relations and hierarchy. This approach suggests that people in positions of power maintain control as a direct result of

persuading the masses to consent to their domination, rather than control being physically imposed or enforced (Ang, 1996; Gitlin, 2003; Hall, 1997a; MacNeill, 1994; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). Much in the same way that Marxist theory is interested in practices and beliefs that support structures of economic power, the inclusion of this understanding of hegemony within a cultural studies framework draws attention to the challenges and struggles faced by individuals and groups as they either dominate or are subordinated within society (Franklin, Lury & Stacey, 1991). Using a hierarchy of cultural beliefs about gender, race, age and sexual orientation, individuals appraise themselves and evaluate others against socially constructed parameters (Ang, 1996; Franklin et al., 1991; Hargreaves, 2000). Historically, dominant groups have primarily been comprised of white, middle to upper class, middle-aged, heterosexual men (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Davis, 1993, 1997; Fiske, 1990; M. A. Hall, 1996; Hall, 1980a; Hargreaves, 1982; Theberge & Cronk, 1986), who have encouraged the adoption of dominant masculine ideals as the benchmark for social standards. Furthermore, these cultural standards, which promote masculine values and beliefs, are reflected in discourses of gender, ensuring that "gender difference is translated into gender hierarchy, because in existing social arrangements females are defined not only as 'other than' but as 'less than' their male counterparts" (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 29). This therefore results in androcentric masculine views and perspectives being expressed as 'the norm', while women are positioned as second-class and inferior citizens.

Using the principles of hegemony, cultural studies theorists have examined how dominant ideologies are maintained and the ways in which those in 'inferior positions' within society, such as women, facilitate masculine hegemony (Cudd & Andreasen, 2005; Dahlgren, 1998; Fenton, 2000; Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1994; Turner, 1997b). For instance, cultural studies research interrogates the way in which the media articulate gender and ability, to develop a hierarchy that incorporates and reproduces hegemonic masculine cultural values. Moreover, researchers are interested in establishing how dominant discourses of gender are so readily embraced within society, particularly hegemonic masculinity, where the norm is to position men as superior and women as inferior. Yet it appears that the majority of women, who are themselves subordinated within this process, accept and submit to this hierarchy without major challenge or contestation (Bruce,

Falcous & Thorpe, 2007; Curran, 2002; Hall, 1997a; Pringle, 2007). A number of media studies scholars argue that media representations help to "produce consensus and manufacture consent" (Ang, 1996, p. 138), among audiences who largely adopt the encoded hegemonic media messages without challenge or reservation. For many cultural studies scholars and sports media researchers, the contested terrain of sport is of particular interest because discourses of gender, and more specifically discourses of femininity, appear to be at odds with the espoused masculine characteristics of sport that the sports media promote and feature in sporting representations.

Masculine hegemony and sport

Sports media research reveals that media coverage articulates sport to masculinity. This articulation is developed through coverage that focuses almost exclusively on male athletes and sports traditionally associated with men, resulting in sportswomen and 'women's sport' either being marginalized or ignored (Brookes, 2002; Daddario, 1998; Sabo & Jansen, 1998). Furthermore, this type of emphasis on men by the sports media helps to transmit culturally embedded beliefs and values that "reaffirm mainstream values such as teamwork, competition, individualism, nationalism, achievement, and others" (Trujillo, 2000, p. 17), which are more frequently associated with discourses of masculinity. Therefore, the media promote texts and images that are constructed around dominant ideals of masculinity being the normative sporting standards. Moreover, researchers have also identified that:

> Culturally, sport is a reflection of the ideologies of dominant values and ideals, as portrayed in what sport means, how play is structured, who may participate, and notions of ideal athletes, etc. Hegemony is achieved and sustained as a successful balance between coercion and consensus. (Schell & Rodriguez, 2000, p. 3)

This suggests that, much in the same way that a constructed social hierarchy has evolved around patriarchal dominance, the sporting environment has also adopted a culture that espouses the dominant ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

As touched on earlier, from a feminist cultural studies perspective *gender* is a critical area of concern, specifically in relation to sports and the sports media, who are seen to concentrate attention on male athletes and professional men's

sports at the expense of sportswomen and women's sports. In their assessment of the ideological control experienced by women in sport, Birrell and Theberge (1994b) maintain that "the representation of female athletes available to us through the media restricts our imagination about what women athletes can accomplish and what their performances mean in a cultural sense" (p. 346). Thus, media coverage is argued to fuel an unequal power relationship between male and female athletes, which has far-reaching repercussions for society as a whole (Amis, 2005; Billings & Angelini, 2007; Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010a; Claringbould et al., 2004; Elling & Knoppers, 2005; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; MacNeill, Donnelly & Knight, 2001). In addition to studies that have identified how an athlete's gender impacts on their media representation, focus has also been given to establishing how gender influences the sports media production environment. For instance, studies have revealed how production practices and procedures are male oriented, giving rise to greater numbers of males as sports journalists and as media decision-makers (Creedon, 1998; Hardin & Shain, 2005, 2006; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1997, 1999; Miller & Miller, 1995; Theberge & Cronk, 1994). Moreover, as a result of media production practices and the subtle way that organizational processes have developed a commonsense approach to sports promotion, Hardin and Shain (2006) suggests that "female journalists may 'normalize' the masculine newsculture and refuse to acknowledge the disadvantages that women face as a group, even blaming other women for their own subordination" (p. 324). Thus, discourses of journalism, and particularly those of sports journalism, which professes to be objective and neutral by the very nature of their ethical and professional code of conduct, in fact choose to emphasize a few professional and commercialized men's sports.

Within the theoretical framework of this research, a cultural studies focus that takes into account masculine hegemony is helpful, particularly in relation to gender issues both within the media production and audience reception environments. Plymire (2005) highlights that "many sports studies scholars have concluded that the theories and methods of cultural studies make it ideal for sport-media analysis" (p. 140). The extent to which media workers and audiences interpret, give personal meaning to, and interact with sports and the sports media provides vital insight into many of the entrenched cultural practices and beliefs

created about gender as it relates to the sporting environment (Ruddock, 2007). Moreover, aspects of control and power are crucial components of this study in terms of establishing the extent to which the media construct and communicate preferred meanings and the abilities audiences have to shape meanings about sports media content (Hall, 1980a, 1980c, 1980b, 1980d, 1988, 1997a). The complex power relations that exist between media and audience will be examined more extensively within both the production and reception chapters of this thesis.

Both sport and the sports media, as socially constructed entities, work to support an environment that revolves around men's interests and male traditions that code sport as an inherently masculine activity. Rowe (2004) proposes that "forms of popular culture like sport … emerge within a Gramscian framework as important battlegrounds where social values and relations are shaped, represented and contested" (p. 104). Therefore, in constructing sports coverage using dominant discourses of sport that emphasize masculinity, the media mirrors wider discursive beliefs about gender, hierarchy and power. For instance, the physical attributes traditionally valued in sport focus on strength and aggression, which are perceived to be natural male characteristics (Daddario, 1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). These socially constructed beliefs about men's 'inherent' sporting abilities also convey an implicit message about sportswomen, who, regardless of their skills, abilities and achievements, are seen as being "a less authentic version of their male counterparts" (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998, p. 187). Thus, dominant cultural beliefs that position males as real athletes enable sportsmen and men's sport to take priority over women's sports and sportswomen. Furthermore, these messages are reinforced through the media stereotyping sportswomen as feminine and weak, minimizing not only women's sporting achievements but also diminishing any perceived threats to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity that are invoked by successful or strong sportswomen (Bryson, 1994; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Rowe, 2004). In her analysis of the broad area of feminism and the media, van Zoonen (1994) argues that "clearly, the media are the contemporary mediators of hegemony, the question being how, and to whose avail, particular ideological constructs of femininity are produced in media content" (p. 24). It is therefore essential, from a feminist cultural studies perspective, to identify how women's sports and women's sporting participation are communicated by the media, and

the type of media messages that are expressed. These insights are also valuable because they help researchers understand how sports audiences engage with and assign meaning to gender-based sports media coverage.

Feminist research and feminism

Feminist theory focuses attention on the subjugation of women on the basis of gender, highlighting where and how men are firmly entrenched in positions of power and control, and how this impacts on society (Franklin et al., 1991). Feminist research incorporates a broad area of study that is not only multi-dimensional but also multi-disciplinary (Ang, 1996; Franklin et al., 1991; Maddison, 2007; Thompson, 2002; van Zoonen, 1994). Evaluating how society is structured through a gendered lens, Thompson (2002) suggests that, as a theoretical technique, "feminism critiques traditional forms of knowledge to expose how these may be generated from an androcentric perspective, developed traditionally by men, based largely on male subjects and male experiences" (p. 106). Many of the issues that have concerned feminist researchers stem from the ways in which women (and other marginalized groups) are excluded or prevented from expressing themselves or holding positions of power within society (Bordo, 1993; Franklin et al., 1991; Gallagher, 1981, 2001; Press, 2000; van Zoonen, 1994). Feminist research often centres on who controls knowledge, who manages and transmits information within society, and how it becomes understood and for whose benefit (MacDonald, 1995; McDonald, 2000; Thompson, 2002; van Zoonen, 1994). Although women's experiences vary, much of feminist research focuses attention on what it means to be a woman and the ways in which women experience their lives individually and in groups, relative to men, who appear to be privileged within society (Reinharz & Kulick, 2007; Thompson, 2002; van Zoonen, 1994). A consistent finding from feminist research is that within most socially constructed hierarchies, women are regarded as 'second-class citizens' and are more likely to be marginalized or ignored in most spheres of society and in decision-making roles in general.

Furthermore, over the last two decades, research in the area of feminist and gender studies has often been met with resistance and apprehension from both men and women, because there is a belief that "for women to gain greater opportunities and access to public life, it has often required men to give up some

of the privileges they have historically enjoyed" (Thompson, 2002, p. 105). Even for academics and theorists involved in cultural studies theorizing, the introduction of feminist thought was seen as both unsettling and a challenge to the status quo. For instance, Hall (1996) commented that:

> For cultural studies, (in addition to many other theoretical projects), the intervention of feminism was specific and decisive. It was ruptural … as a thief in the night might, it broke in; interrupted, made an unseemly noise, seized the time, crapped on the table of cultural studies. (p. 269)

Thus, feminist and cultural studies scholars investigating issues of gender have had to develop ways to overcome a variety of hurdles and assumptions as they attempt to establish how culture impacts on and is experienced by women (and men). These hurdles include establishing techniques that support feminist thought being acknowledged and recognized as an accepted means of study within an environment dominated by male researchers and based around critical masculine inquiry.

At the heart of feminist research on gender and gender identities, the focus of attention lies in establishing how cultural knowledge is socially produced and maintained, particularly in relation to what it means to be 'a man' or 'a woman'. Traditionally, men's and women's capabilities and experiences have been regarded as being different, with the predominant focus given to biological gender differences which restrict women from performing at the same levels as men in society, or from being considered an equal (Bruce, 2008; Cock & Bernstein, 2001; Cudd & Andreasen, 2005; van Zoonen, 1994). Although scholars argue that all experiences are gendered, feminist research seeks to clarify how gendered discourses affect an individual's social experiences and how reference to biological gender difference benefits men and disadvantages women (Bordo, 1993; Cock & Bernstein, 2001; Ross & Byerly, 2004; van Zoonen, 1994). In analyzing the ways in which women are positioned as being 'inferior' within society, Reinharz and Kulick (2007) cite Ortner's (1974) three-pronged theoretical framework of female subordination that focuses on:

(1) ideologies and statements that *explicitly* devalue women, attributing them, their roles, their work, their products, and their social circle less prestige than those attributed to men;
(2) symbolic mechanisms that *implicitly* indicate female inferiority; and

(3) social and structural arrangements that *exclude* women from participation or powerful roles. (p. 260)

In line with Ortner's framework, the media play an integral part in transmitting gender representations that more frequently portray men as authoritative, serious and responsible, and women as subordinate, domestic and frivolous (Burnett, 2002; Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; MacDonald, 1995; Rose, 2007; Ross & Byerly, 2004; Tomaselli, 1996). Media texts and images, through their content, language and context of production, over-emphasize men whilst simultaneously marginalizing, trivializing or ignoring women (Bordo, 1993; McCracken, 1992). This process of disregarding women generates 'information gaps' in media content, resulting in a one-sided focus on men. Drawing on the neglect of women within media content, feminist and cultural studies researchers have also revealed the value of investigating what is not said, because this is often more telling and more important than what is said (Duncan & Brummett, 1991; Hargreaves, 1993; Heck, 1980; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Reinharz & Kulick, 2007; Rose, 2007). For instance, in her examination of the ideological dimension of media messages, Heck (1980) argues that "when a message is emitted it is not what is said that has significance but also the way it is said, and what is not said but could be said" (p. 124). This statement indicates the significance and value of studying all aspects of the construction of media messages, not only what is represented or how it is presented, but also what is not represented, or is marginalized or trivialized within media content.

Much of the feminist research conducted in the early 1970s and 80s focused attention on content analysis, in order to establish how women were underrepresented, using a liberal feminist approach (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Birrell & Theberge, 1994b, 1994a; M. A. Hall, 1996; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Messner & Sabo, 1990b). However, despite the perceived value of this method of investigation, which revealed glaring inequities for women in society, content analysis failed to delve into how or why these differences arose or the multifaceted nature of gender relations, hierarchical divisions, organizational practices or culturally constructed beliefs and values about men and women (Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010a; M. A. Hall, 1996; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Hargreaves, 2000; Thompson, 2002; Thorpe, 2007). Over the last two decades, feminist research has therefore paid greater attention to discourses of gender and

media to establish how gender is communicated. An area of increasing importance in this gender research is that of sports and the sports media, because this genre of 'entertainment' has traditionally been seen to privilege and promote sportsmen and men's sports whilst simultaneously disregarding and marginalizing women's sports and sportswomen. Feminist researchers have identified that the discourses of gender that confront sportswomen are not only problematic and contradictory, but also challenge the way in which sportswomen seen themselves and how audiences interpret women's roles in the sporting environment (Bruce, 2006, 2008; Byerly, 1999; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Plymire, 2005; Theberge & Cronk, 1994; Thompson, 2002). Sport, as a socially constructed cultural practice, is perceived to be "a key site for creating ideologies of male dominance, where images, beliefs and practices of masculine power and superiority are continually replayed and reproduced" (Thompson, 2002, p. 115). Thus, sport and the sports media assume dominant ideological beliefs and values about gender that align with hegemonic masculinity and with traditional and cultural assumptions about biological gender differences and gender roles (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994; Bruce, 2006, 2008; Cock & Bernstein, 2001; Cudd & Andreasen, 2005; Willis, 1994). Although there are a range of feminist theoretical perspectives that could be used to analyze the sports/media/gender relationship, including "liberal feminism, radical feminism, cultural feminism, socialist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existentialist feminism, postmodern feminism, post-structural feminism and third-wave feminism" (Thorpe, 2007, p. 146), this study utilizes a feminist cultural studies approach to establish:

▫ How discourses of gender are developed and conveyed within sports photographs;

▫ How relations of power and dominant discourses of sports, gender and journalism influence the way that photographs are produced by media workers and assumed by audiences; and

▫ How sportswomen and female audiences are challenged as they read sports photographs and must negotiate what it means to be an athlete and a woman.

Feminist cultural studies theorizing

My theoretical framework has been developed from within feminist cultural studies theorizing and emerges directly out of a broader understanding of the

effects of hegemonic masculinity. This framework considers how power and control are culturally constructed in relation to gender and, more specifically, how males dominate within a patriarchal society (Bennett, 1988; Fenton, 2000; Franklin et al., 1991; Mason & Rail, 2006; Press, 2000). Understanding how discourses of gender operate within society is important, but also reflects the complexity that surrounds power and hierarchies, where dominant and marginalized beliefs have been constructed about men and masculinity and women and femininity. These constructions are further complicated when notions of biological, physiological, cultural, sexual and emotional gender differences are taken into account. For instance, van Zoonen (1994) suggests that gender can be understood as "a set of overlapping and often contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions… gender is an intrinsic part of culture [that is] subject to continuous discursive struggle and negotiation" (pp. 33-34). This suggests that what it means to be 'a man' or 'a woman' has no definitive fixed meaning due to the ever-changing social and cultural environment in which these modes of being are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Furthermore, as a result of different cultural interpretations of gender, it is important to establish how discourses of gender develop and shape social understandings about what it means to be a woman and how women come to be defined in the course of social communication.

There has been a gradual evolution of what is now referred to as 'feminist cultural studies theorizing', such that perceptions and analysis of women's lived experiences are now taken as being centrally significant in this mode of research (Ang, 1996; Cruz & Lewis, 1994a; Hughes, 2002; Maddison, 2007; Reinharz & Kulick, 2007). Although some researchers have critically questioned the value of studying women's views, perceptions and lives because the process of including women (while excluding men) limits the results (Ang, 1996), other scholars are quick to highlight how the inclusion of feminist thought within cultural studies theorizing is critical because *gender* is a fundamental element of culture and cultural research. For instance, Birrell (2000) argues that, "for women, feminist theories provide 'new ways to understand ourselves as gendered beings' and 'new ways to see connections between our individual lives and the lives of other women and men'" (p. 62). Yet, rather than 'revering' women and ignoring men's experiences, a feminist cultural studies approach analyzes and evaluates the

various discourses of gender that women encounter, which tell them what they should do, feel, be, look like and how they should act and react.

At the same time that Hall's encoding/decoding model was developed, cultural studies theorizing also moved into the area of analysing media representations that focus on identities and stereotypes, particularly in relation to race and gender. While the use of media stereotyping is revealed to support "the maintenance of social and symbolic order" (Hall, 1997b, p. 258), this practice of developing stereotypes is connected to power relations and hierarchies to highlight difference in the way that the media "represent someone or something in a certain way" (p. 259). This focus on power and gender difference is central to feminist cultural studies theorizing, where discourses of gender are given priority, particularly in terms of how the hierarchies that dominant discourses create are normalized and how patriarchal power subordinates women (Ang, 1996; Bordo, 1993; Bruce, 1995; Byerly, 1999; Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Franklin et al., 1991; Gallagher, 1981; Radway, 1984; Tuchman, 1978a; Tuchman, 1978b; van Zoonen, 1994; Williamson, 1978). Furthermore, cultural studies researchers are particularly interested in establishing how workings of power are maintained not through "force or coercion: [but how] power also seduces, solicits, induces, wins consent" (Hall, 1997b, p. 261), particularly in relation to the role played by gender.

Yet a part of the problem for many gender and cultural studies scholars relates to much of early feminist research revolving around the interests of white, middle-class, heterosexual women at the expense of all other women, such that women of colour, lesbians, working class and disabled women have generally been ignored (Bordo, 1993; Franklin et al., 1991; Press, 2000). The oppression of women was framed in a general way that overlooked the varying degrees of subjugation that women individually and collectively experience (Franklin et al., 1991). Subsequently, feminist cultural studies scholars began to acknowledge that aspects of culture such as "sexual and gender identities, rather than being natural attributes of human beings, are constructed through the cultural performance of identities" (Press, 2000, p. 36).

These initial cultural studies perceptions about discourses of gender, power relationships, and the social construction of a gendered hierarchy encouraged the further development of feminist cultural studies theorizing. Moreover, for many

scholars, determining how experiences and meanings are shaped through learned processes that contribute to social understandings also entails understanding a range of other contributory cultural features, such as the role that language and specific words and signs play in supporting dominant discourses and creating perceptions (Hall, 1997a; O'Donnell, 2005b; Schwichtenberg, 1994). For feminist scholars, this means that even accepted terms such as 'mankind' do not just denote 'humankind'; in actuality, they reflect the views and assumptions of men, as a masculine yardstick that is used to measure life experiences and knowledge in society (Gledhill, 1997; Hall, 1997a; Hughes, 2002; Lenskyj, 1998). By taking such accepted terms, beliefs, traditions and concepts that have been constructed within dominant ideologies and analyzing what they embody and how they impact on society, feminist cultural studies research "has made major contributions to the project of theorizing gender without losing sight of women's lived experiences" (Schwichtenberg, 1994, p. 169).

In addition to conducting research acknowledging the existence of a 'woman's' gendered identity, a feminist cultural studies approach also gives recognition to women assuming a range of different identities, such as mother, wife, daughter, friend and sportswoman (Ang, 1996; Carter & Steiner, 2004a; Cock & Bernstein, 2001; Gledhill, 1997; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Press, 2000). These identities are frequently represented in the media, which stereotype distinctive characteristics and qualities that are socially 'expected' in relation to what it means to be a mother or daughter. Media are thereby an important part of and catalyst in constructing and maintaining the status quo within society. Ross and Byerly (2004) state that "the ways in which women … are represented on and in broadcast media send important messages to the public about women's place, women's role, and women's lives" (p. 62). The media therefore play a critical role in communicating messages about the roles and identities of women that may also emphasize other features such as their race, religion and sexuality.

Feminist cultural studies research has also identified how the media stereotypically define and confine women using discourses of femininity in certain media genres, where they construct 'women's interests and women's news' as separate entities from men's interests and news (Fenton, 2000; Gledhill, 1997; Hermes, 1995; Radway, 1984; Schwichtenberg, 1994). The construction of perceived gender-based interests or genres is for instance reflected in names, such

as the newspaper section termed 'women's pages', or the more recent development of a genre of women's films commonly labelled 'chick flicks'. In addition, women are primarily the targeted audience for romance novels, fashion magazines, and soap operas (Benet & Benet, 1978; Bordo, 1993; Gallagher, 2001; Gledhill, 1997; McCracken, 1992; Schwichtenberg, 1994; Tebbel, 2000; Whannel, 1998). In her analysis of women's everyday use of women's magazines, Hermes (1995) maintains that:

> Women's media use is important … and it needs to be made part of accepted and respected social research…. Contrary to stereotypical male genres, such as sports programmes on television, women's genres are consistently denigrated, while sport, for example, is associated with heroism, team spirit, loyalty and other grand values. (p. 149)

While this author makes a strong case for the value of studying magazines that have become socially accepted as a 'woman's genre', her comment also demonstrates how taken-for-granted sport is as a 'man's genre'. Hermes' statement also reveals a gendered hierarchy among media genres that encourages and positively endorses men's genres, whilst being apathetic towards women's genres.

Yet, feminist media researchers argue that the analysis of mediated texts, whether pertaining to women's sport or women's magazines, should include "the assumptions of the producers and readers" (Reinharz & Kulick, 2007, p. 259), in order to reflect how shared meanings of gender are constructed and assumed. For example, Bignell (2002) maintains that women's magazines:

> … provide readers with a sense of community, comfort, and pride in this mythic feminine identity (that) naturalises an ideological view of what being a woman means, and overlapping with this, it naturalises the consumer culture which magazines stimulate through advertising and editorial material … women become subject to the ideologies encoded in women's magazines. (p. 60)

Thus, categorizing 'women's entertainment' as a separate entity promotes the idea that everything outside of this is 'men's entertainment'. Using these assumptions about men's and women's entertainment and interests, media genres are developed using discourses of gender in such a way that, for instance, the sport–masculinity articulation will neither appeal to nor be disrupted by women, because of its detachment from idealized femininity (Ang, 1996).

Feminist cultural studies theorizing in this area not only exposes how discourses of gender are socially constructed and reinforced by the media but also how powerful media messages, drawn from dominant ideologies, prefer meanings with which audiences can identify (Cahn, 1994; Franklin et al., 1991; M. A. Hall, 1996; McKay, 2000; Messner & Sabo, 1990a; Press, 2000; van Zoonen, 1994). In a recent analysis of journalism, Parameswaran (2005) highlights that despite cultural studies' initial interest in the effect and practices of journalism in the 1970s; there has been little progress in cultural studies theorizing or active debate about media production from the 1980s onwards. She further draws attention to the way in which "cultural studies' superficial treatment of journalism as a coherent and stable pro-establishment institution of power conceals the contradictory and turbulent practices of authority and legitimacy that unfold within the corporate structure of news media" (Parameswaran, 2005, p. 196). Thus, engaging feminist cultural studies theorizing to examine the ways in which media production operates, and employing it to establish how media workers conduct themselves within the production environment, is both insightful and necessary in terms of addressing a significant gap in the existing scholarship. Moreover, by examining media production and reception, insight is provided into the cultural and ideological environment in which meanings are encoded by media producers and decoded by audiences. This study therefore aims to employ feminist cultural studies theorizing to establish how discourses of gender are conveyed by the New Zealand sports media, and how an audience of female elite athletes engages with and interprets sports media representations and the sports media as a whole.

Semiotic analysis as a theoretical approach

Semiotic theory and analysis is also used in this study to establish how media photographs, as preferred messages, help to shape understanding about sport and gender through processes of visual meaning making. Plymire (2005) argues that semiotics "offers a theoretical premise from which to study a wide range of cultural practices as signifying practices" (p. 142). Therefore, this approach is seen to be particularly useful in relation to studying the media, where the concepts and cultural assumptions that inform media workers are under scrutiny, as well as

the way that audiences create meaning through visual content. Tomaselli (1996) explains that:

> Semiotics is the study of how meaning occurs in language, pictures, performance, and other forms of expression. The method incorporates not only how things come to mean, but how prevailing meanings are the outcomes of encounters between individuals, groups and classes and their respective cosmologies and conditions of existence. (p. 29)

Therefore, the analytical process of reading photographs semiotically is dependent on media workers and audiences drawing on shared understandings that are informed by dominant discourses. These discursive practices frame the content of the representation within its social and cultural context, which when interpreted, materializes as a result of this constructed knowledge. Turner (1997b) for instance suggests that the practice of creating shared understanding is dependent on "the dynamic relation between the reader and the text, between the text and its context, and between the three – reader, text and context – and the culture itself" (pp. 313-314). This dynamism highlights the concomitant nature of meaning construction that occurs in the complex circuit of communication, where the interdependencies of media production, content, and reception processes become apparent. Although there are a number of different theories associated with semiotics and variants of this method of analysis, for the purposes of this study the fundamental approach employed in the reading of sport photographs featured in New Zealand newspapers draws on Peircean semiotics.

While there are clear distinctions and deep-seated differences between the frameworks of the European semiotic approach taken by Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology versus Charles Peirce's American semiotics, many researchers continue to merge and confuse the two approaches (Short, 2007). De Saussure, a Swiss linguist, was the principal founder of the European semiotic movement generally referred to as semiology, which focuses on the linguistic structure of language and speech as its primary tenet (Barnard, 2001; Fiske, 1990; Moriarty & Sayre, 2005; Short, 2007; Turner, 1997b; van Zoonen, 1994). De Saussure's semiology is expressed as a theory of signs where meaning is derived in a dyadic relationship between the 'signifier' and what is 'signified' (Barthes, 1977; Moriarty, 2005; Short, 2007). For many scholars, one of the concerns with semiology is the fact that "Saussure had rather a static notion of how signs work

and was uninterested in how meanings change and are changed in use" (Rose, 2007, p. 83). This suggests that the practical application of semiology within cultural studies theorizing is problematic because of the changing nature and fluidity of discursive elements within the cultural environment that results in power relations being constantly challenged and negotiated. As Jensen (1995b) argues, "the problem with Saussurean semiology in communication studies has been a tendency to give much attention to signs as such, less to society, and hardly any to the 'life' of signs in social practice" (p. 3). It is for these reasons that de Saussure's semiology is deficient in its methodological approach to cultural research, and regarded as impractical within feminist cultural studies theorizing.

Conversely, the principle concept of Peircean semiotics is based on a triadic relational approach, comprising a 'sign', 'object', and 'interpretant'. It is only through the sign and the relative properties of the object and interpretant that meaning is created (Short, 2007). Charles Sanders Peirce was an American logician, philosopher and scientist born in the early 1800s whose preoccupation with logic and semiotics related to his interests in identifying how thought processes worked to generate meaning (Bignell, 2002; Fiske, 1990; Moriarty, 2005; Short, 2007). For Peirce, within his theory of signs, the different modes of signification of the interpretant were not limited to text and language, but encompassed image, thought, action, experience, and a quality of feeling (see Short, 2007). Over the course of many years, Peirce deliberated on how to meaningfully express how signs (and their objects) are interpreted without restricting these interpretations to a fixed or static state of meaning within the 'interpretant'. In a letter to Lady Welby in 1904, Peirce gave the following explanation of the interpretant:

> I am now prepared to give my division of signs, as soon as I have pointed out that a sign has two objects, its object as it is represented and its object in itself. It has also three interpretants, its interpretant as represented or meant to be understood, its interpretant as it is produced, and its interpretant in itself. (as cited in Short, 2007, p. 180)

Thus, Peirce's definition of the interpretant, as shown in Figure 1 below, operates in much the same way as Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding and decoding model describes the relational properties of the encoding and decoding of the 'sign'.
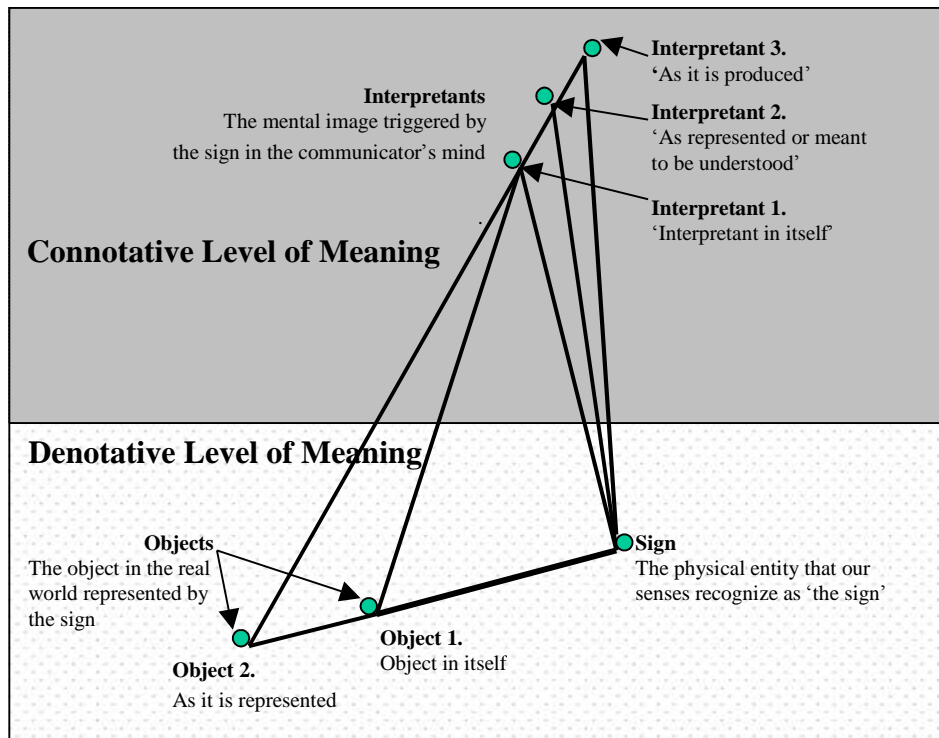
Figure 1. The relational properties of Peirce's three levels of interpretants.

However, both Peirce's and Hall's theoretical approaches acknowledge that with the complexity of the communication process, codes and signs are susceptible to a range of interpretations. The link between Peirce's semiotics and Hall's model will be examined in more depth below.

Other scholars have also advanced Peirce's semiotic theorizing, particularly in relation to revealing how meanings are made and expressed through text and photographs (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Dahlgren, 1998; Fiske, 1990; Hagen & Wasko, 2000; Hall, 1980b; Jensen, 1995d; Rose, 2007; Short, 2007). Peirce's use of signs, as the first step in meaning creation, is further clarified in relation to the way that both verbal and visual sign-systems work through three different categories of representation that comprise the 'icon', the 'index', and the 'symbol' (Fiske, 1990; Schroder et al., 2003). Expanding how these different categories of signs operate, Fiske (1990) states that the 'icon' is something that looks like the object it represents (a photograph of a fire); the 'index' links the sign to the object (smoke is an index to a fire); while the 'symbol' is a constructed human representation of the object (like the word 'fire'). By advancing the sign beyond the initial object to break down each facet of the photograph, semiotics dissects

layers of meaning that are consciously and subconsciously constructed within media messages that are then read by audiences.

The study of photographic representations requires the researcher to use semiotics to help identify and make sense of visual signs that produce meanings (Horne et al., 1999; Tomaselli, 1996). Peirce's semiotics focuses on "the important role signs play in the way we know things and think about things, rather than just talk about them" (Moriarty, 2005, p. 229). As a theoretical approach, semiotics thus permits a depth of understanding about how meaning is created beyond the apparent first glance perspective of a photograph, much like pulling apart the layers of an onion to establish what each layer means and what lies at the core. This process of unraveling media messages using semiotics takes into account signs of a social and cultural nature and the shaping of meanings and interpretations in relation to both internal and external influences of dominant discourses and belief systems (Bignell, 2002; Jensen, 1995d; Tomaselli, 1996). Media audiences therefore instinctively learn to read signs and interpret meaning without consciously thinking about what meanings are created and why or how this process occurs.

Theoretical approaches to audience reception

The media production / audience reception debate has historically focused on the 'effects model' versus the 'uses and gratifications model'. The 'effects model' acknowledges "the power of the text" (Morley, 2006, p. para 1), where the media are positioned to exert power and control meanings. An implicitly assumed 'hypodermic needle' model of transmission in the effects model suggested that media 'inject' messages into unsuspecting audiences who assume and accept those messages without much conscious thought or contestation, as passive recipients (Curran, 2002; Lacey, 2002; Morley, 1992, 2006). This theoretical approach locates the media as adopting the decisive role rather than the audience, whereas the 'uses and gratifications model' focuses on the role of audiences in meaning creation as they decode media messages. This model seeks to identify what audiences do with media messages, rather than what media messages do *to* audiences and thus locate audiences as controlling meanings while also acknowledging the role of polysemy in audience interpretations (Grossberg et al., 2006; Jensen, 1995d; Morley, 2006; Schrøder et al., 2003). Moreover, these

theories recognize that media texts and images are susceptible to many possible meanings and argue against audience interpretations being fixed or static (Fiske, 1986; Whannel, 1998).

Although this mode of inquiry credits the audience role in the meaning making process, the 'uses and gratifications' approach has been criticized for its narrow outlook that "remains individualistic, in so far as differences of response or interpretation are ultimately attributed solely to individual differences of personality or psychology" (Morley, 2006, para. 6). The implication of these assertions is that the uses and gratifications model is impractical for cultural or sociological research, which seeks to go beyond the personal to explore how collective knowledge and shared understandings are developed. In addition, uses and gratifications research is criticized for focusing almost exclusively on audiences and their role in meaning making, without taking into consideration the production of media messages (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Curran, 2002; Lacey, 2002; Morley, 2006).

Further to this, as already discussed above, the development of Hall's encoding/decoding model and its use in cultural studies audience reception research is particularly important. The way in which audiences read sports photographs and create meaning, through the subconscious workings of semiotics, reveals how sports media content is engaged with and given meaning. Moreover, the process of decoding signs within photographs reflects the degree of power that individual audience members have in 'actively' interpreting media messages. Addressing how these active interpretation processes work, cultural studies theorizing incorporates both semiology and semiotics, to advance the works of Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Charles Peirce. The inclusion of semiotics enhances an understanding of how social codes and signs operate as representations. For example, Peirce states:

> There is the Intentional Interpretant, which is a determination of the mind of the utterer; the Effectual Interpretant, which is a determination of the mind of the interpreter; and the Communicational Interpretant, or say the Cominterpretant, which is a determination of that mind into which the minds of the utterer and interpreter have to be fused in order that any communication should take place. (as cited in Short, 2007, p. 187)

Peirce's theorizing suggests that there are no guarantees that the *intentional* and the *effectual* interpretations will be identical. Yet for communication to take place he suggests that synthesis needs to occur. *Intentional* meaning and the *effectual* understanding form a relationship in a *communicational* interpretant – the '*Cominterpretant*' – as audiences engage with and assume meaning. As noted above, Peirce's semiotics proposes that meanings evolve in three ways, through: 1) the interpretant in itself; 2) as it is represented or meant to be understood; and, 3) as it is produced (as cited in Short, 2007). Much in the same way that Peirce's semiotics focuses on audiences actively interpreting signs and their objects to assign meanings in relation to them, Hall's encoding and decoding model mirrors Peirce's circuit of communication and maintains that media messages construct meaning through the appropriation of cultural codes. Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney and Wise (2006) suggest that "every society lives within the codes of meaning that it produces for itself" (p. 145), such that individuals create common understandings and construct shared cultural codes that are specific and identifiable to audience members within these specific cultural groupings. Although this does not limit audiences outside of these specific cultural groups reading the preferred message in a similar way, it does mean that there is always potential for different interpretations as cultural understandings and experiences are related to the signs or codes used (Hall, 1980b). Moreover, Rose (2007) suggests that decoding "is the central tenet of audience studies" (p. 200). Audiences are thus seen to actively engage with media messages and create meanings using taken-for-granted cultural codes in the decoding process. Although audience interpretations are not limited *per se*, the suggestion is that "the majority of viewers will recognize and understand [media texts] in broadly similar ways, even though they have different responses to, and evaluations of, those meanings" (Michelle, 2007, p. 186). Here, Michelle raises an important point, as it is not *how* audiences receive media messages but rather *how* meanings and responses are created by audiences in relation to media messages that are of central concern in cultural studies research.

Hall's research also focuses on the processes by which audiences read visual signs, which incorporates much of Roland Barthes' theorizing, particularly in relation to denotative and connotative levels of interpretation. Denotative meanings are conveyed as an initial reading where impressions are formed about

"the direct, specific, or literal meaning we get from a sign" (Moriarty, 2005, p. 231), while the connotative level engages audiences with what Moriarty (2005) describes as 'cultural baggage', to connect the sign to the object that "it symbolizes on a subjective level" (Moriarty, 2005, p. 231). In this regard, meanings are important as they reflect the discursive power relations through not only what is represented at the denotative level but also what meanings audiences individually construct at the connotative level. Michelle (2007) also draws attention to the role of denotative and connotative levels of meaning making in audience reception theory, highlighting not only *how* audiences create meaning in relation to what is depicted, but also summarizing *what* audiences do in developing implicit meanings during media consumption. In addition, Michelle stresses how the construction of audience meaning is a complex and challenging process that is:

> … influenced by a range of factors, including the text itself, the social contexts within which it is produced and subsequently encountered by audiences, the cultural affinities of differently positioned audience members, and the ways in which social, economic, political, and cultural factors influence their predispositions and access to particular discursive repertoires. (2007, p. 209)

In describing the complexities involved in understanding how audiences develop meanings and interpret media content, Hall argues that "reception isn't the open-ended, perfectly transparent thing at the other end of the communication chain" (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b, p. 254). Furthermore, Hall reveals how the encoding/decoding model and his hypothetical categories relating to audience interpretations, which were developed in relation to an 'ideal audience', have been assumed to describe 'actual audiences'. Although Hall's model is widely used, it has also been criticised on the grounds that "Hall's decoding categories have been overgeneralized in both concept and application" (Michelle, 2007, p. 187). Yet, despite this criticism, the encoding/decoding model continues to be a valuable tool that not only extends media / audience research but enables scholars to focus on the cultural and social ramifications of mediated representations (Cruz & Lewis, 1994b; Grossberg, 1996b; Morley & Chen, 1996).

It is also important to note that, in some research traditions, audience members are expressed as 'the audience' in a singular, generalized group, while at

other times they are conveyed as 'audiences', such that individual meaning is positioned in relation to shared cultural and social interpretations and meaning making. In respect of sport media research, Gantz and Wenner (1995) suggest that "to understand how the audience consumes media sport, it is important not to conceive of this audience as a 'monolithic mass'" (as cited in Brookes, 2002, p. 44). Moreover, feminist cultural studies theorizing highlights how audiences neither interpret nor communicate meanings of media texts and photographs in a singular or uniform manner (Ang, 1991; Fiske, 1986; Turner, 1997a). This therefore suggests that audience research that draws on generalized responses, making assumptions about 'the audience', limits the extent to which cultural and social scholarship is realized through individual meaning making and the shaping of shared or divergent readings. This study therefore moves away from 'the audience' and applied the use of the term 'audiences' to enable individual audience members to convey their individual and personal interpretations, which provide greater insight into understanding how shared cultural meanings, come into being.

Overview of the methodological approaches of this study

Since the early 1970s, researchers have become increasingly interested in examining either media production or audience reception of media, particularly in terms of the workings of power and the construction and consumption of meanings. In their investigation of media audiences, Schroder et al. (2003) caution that:

> There exists no empirical method that can provide rock-solid knowledge about human society and its social and cultural practices. But each method may claim its ability to deliver at least a partial picture of the complex mediatized reality we live in, and thereby to contribute to the platform of knowledge that institutions, communities and individuals need as points of departure from interventions in the social construction of reality. (p. 20)

To date, however, the majority of international sports media studies have focused on content analysis, with insufficient attention given to meaning making processes and the relationship between media production and consumption. As Sabo and Jansen (1998) maintain, "a current problem facing sports media researchers is that so little research actually examines how media producers and audiences actually

perceive and construct interpretations" (p. 205). Without taking into account the ways in which individuals assign different meanings and interpretations to media content, there cannot be an appreciation of how media representations influence the social and cultural environment (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003; Creedon, 1998; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Similarly, without understanding why media workers 'do the things they do'; an evaluation of media production processes would be incomplete. It is only through analysing the circuit of communication, whereby production, content and audience reception are investigated simultaneously, that greater understanding will be elicited about the sports media and audience receptions of it (Hall, 1980b; Lowes, 1999; Morley, 1992, 1996).

Designing an enhanced sports media research study

In seeking to understand the role that the sports media play in society, my study specifically examines the three core components of mass communication - production, content and reception. In assessing the benefits of a three tiered or tripartite analysis, Morley (1992) suggests that "any understanding of mass communication will be inadequate if we consider the elements of that process (production, programme, audience) in isolation from each other" (pp. 77-78). My study thus heeds Morley's warning and takes into account each of the three vital areas of the 'communication circuit' (Hall, 1980b; Lowes, 1999; Morley, 1992). Although there have been no previous tripartite studies specifically examining newspaper sports photography per se, my study takes into consideration techniques used in a previous tripartite sports media study undertaken by Laurel Davis (1992) in her PhD thesis, which focused on *Sports Illustrated - Swimsuit Editions*. Her analysis incorporated interviews with magazine editors and a wide range of consumers, along with critical examination of magazine texts and photographs. Davis (1992) suggests that:

> The relationships between consumers, producers and the media texts themselves produce meanings. Representations are assumed to influence the perspectives of consumers, yet this happens in a complex indirect manner where consumers also influence the meanings of the texts themselves. (p. 3)

As Davis suggests, it is important to understand what directly and indirectly influences and creates meaning within media production and consumption.

In addition to Davis' (1992) study on the special swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated*, two further sports media studies were closely examined as potential models to draw on in this study. The second was Lowes' (1999) examination of newspaper sport production and sports journalism, and the third was a similar production study by Len-Rios, Rodgers, Thorson & Yoon (2005), which investigated the way representations of women in news texts and photographs are conveyed and interpreted, closely aligning their methods with those used by Davis (1992). The role that gender plays within the sports media environment is therefore centrally significant in these two studies. Due to the extensive scope of the present tripartite study, a multi-method approach was used to appropriately address each different area of analysis. The benefits of a multi-method approach are highlighted by a number of researchers, who suggest it allows for greater depth in the data, fuller and clearer interpretations, and the different strengths of each method counteract the weaknesses of the others (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Atkinson et al., 2003; Fenton, 2000; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998; Jick, 1979; Oppermann, 2000; Schroder et al., 2003; Stokes, 2003; Yin, 1998). The benefits of this type of study are discussed further below.

A multi-method approach

Using various methods to investigate the same phenomenon is known as a 'multi-method' or 'mix-method' approach, and it is a practice encouraged by numerous scholars, particularly in media studies (Atkinson et al., 2003; Jick, 1979; Jones, 1997; Maxwell, 2005; Moores, 1993; Schroder et al., 2003). When analysing media texts, "multimethod research creates the opportunity to put texts or people in contexts, thus providing a richer and far more accurate interpretation" (as cited in Maddison, 2007, p. 400). Prior to engaging in research, it is also important to determine which methods are of most value to the area under investigation. This ensures that the correct emphasis is given to the research questions, so that they are logically formulated and provide the best opportunity for insightful and valuable findings. Jensen (1995b) maintains that "it is crucial that researchers assess the relevance of different methodologies with reference to the purpose and objects of analysis, asking *what* and *why* before asking *how*" (p. 6, emphasis added). Moreover, due to the challenges encountered when examining a range of

contested sites such as gender, sports, media, culture and audiences, no single
method or approach would be able to fully or accurately evaluate how individuals,
singularly or together, make sense of or interpret media content (Davis, 1992;
Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Silk, 1999). Thus, in
investigating these three different yet interrelated areas of study, my research
utilizes various qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data and compare
findings.

Quantitative analysis

Much of the early sports media research employed forms of quantitative analysis,
where focus is given to "the concrete, delimited *products* of the media's meaning
production" (Jensen, 1995b, p. 4, emphasis added), and this continues to be a
widely used approach in media studies. These '*products*' relate to the physical
content (media texts and representations) that can be examined through statistical
analysis, more specifically the quantifiable features and objects (data) that can be
measured. The specific advantage of measurement is suggested to be that in
dissecting and itemizing units that can be counted, quantitative analysis provides
an important starting point for data analysis (Turner, 1997b). Additionally, this
form of evaluation offers the researcher a way to perform statistical measurement
that is accurate, simple and reliable (Schroder et al., 2003). Jones (1997) further
suggests that "a quantitative research design allows flexibility in the treatment of
data, in terms of comparative analyses, statistical analyses, and repeatability of
data collection in order to verify reliability" (p. 2). The use of measurement
therefore acts as a stimulus that enables the researcher to draw inferences about
the data that can then be analysed further (Hansen et al., 1998; Jones, 1997;
Vincent, Imwold, Masemann & Johnson, 2002). Although this approach has been
heavily critiqued for failing to establish "deeper underlying meanings" (Jones,
1997, p. 2), the value of quantitative research, and content analysis specifically, is
that the data is attained through an impartial process of counting and quantifying
(Jick, 1979; Jones, 1997; Schroder et al., 2003). Nonetheless, as a single research
tool, content analysis provides limited benefit to the researcher. It is a far more
effective and practical technique of inquiry when used within a mixed-method
approach alongside qualitative methods, (Hansen et al., 1998; Jones, 1997; Len-
Rios et al., 2005; Schroder et al., 2003; Vincent et al., 2002).

Qualitative analysis

To effectively understand the ways in which media content is produced and how audiences respond to and interact with this content requires that both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis be applied. The value that qualitative analysis brings to this study is in providing a range of techniques that complement the content analysis measurement data, but can delve beyond the measurements to expand an understanding of what is being investigated. These included recording and interpreting not only the verbal and written words gathered in the various data collection processes, but also the gestures and other forms of non-verbal communication that occurred in the field observations and during interviews with the elite athletes (Bignell, 2002; Turner, 1997a, 1997b). The value that a range of collection techniques adds to research, such as the use of audio recording, was highlighted by Gee (2009) in her analysis of the French sports production environment. She found that "it was not until the recordings of interviews has been listened to, transcribed and read through that the extent of patterns in the persistent discourse became apparent" (p. 66). Thus, although individual interviews may not appear to reveal anything unusual or valuable, the assessment of a range of interviews using a thematic analysis allows the opportunity to establish how shared perceptions and understandings are created. Moreover, this highlights the benefit of qualitative analysis in providing a depth of contextually based knowledge (Jankowski & Wester, 1995; Maxwell, 2005; Schroder et al., 2003; van Dijk, 1995). The data derived from each of these modes of analysis was interpreted and the subsequent meanings applied to identify trends and themes, which were further categorized for ongoing analysis. Moreover, qualitative analysis is drawn on within the framework of feminist cultural studies theorizing to help identify how discourses of gender are constructed and represented within the sports and media environments.

Media production - methods of research

It is only more recently that researchers have begun to investigate the sports media production environment, particularly in relation to what media workers do and the processes of news selection (Davis, 1992; Gruneau, 1989; Lowes, 1999; MacNeill et al., 2001; Silk, 1999; Silk & Amis, 2000; Stoddart, 1994b; Theberge

& Cronk, 1986). In this study, I spent two months at a regional newspaper observing the processes of sports news production, where I attended meetings where sports photographs and sports news were discussed. My study of the media production environment focuses specifically on the assumptions and trends identified through the course of discussions with and observations of sports journalists, editors, photographers and other media workers in relation to the processes of sport photograph selection. The research methods supported the effective gathering of data during the observation periods and provided insight into the media production environment, the physical structures of the newsroom, the people, as well as the meanings that media workers develop in the course of their work. The main purpose of this production study was to determine how *people* and *newspaper processes and practices* impact on the production of sports photographs, both separately and together. Using two methods of data gathering, participant observation and formal and informal interviewing, the data not only reflected media workers' perceptions but also my own observations of the daily routines, processes, interactions and reactions of media workers in the course of sports media production. The value of using two or more methods is noted by Jorgensen (1989), who suggests that "the more information you have about something from multiple standpoints and sources, the less likely you are to misconstrue it" (p. 53). More specifically, Atkinson et al. (2003) argue that "part of the reported comparison between participant observation and interviewing has revolved around the ironic contrast between what people do and what people say they do" (p. 106). Thus, fieldwork observations were utilized as a means of gathering data about how media workers go about their work, how the newsroom environment operates, and how organizational practices function, which established how routines and schedules influence not only *what* media workers do and *how*, but also made it possible to compare and challenge what media workers say they do (Hansen et al., 1998). Moreover, the data obtained through observation, although acquired in a public setting, provides insight into relationship dynamics, personalities, work pressures and spontaneous reactions, whereas the more private interview setting allows participants to provide guarded and structured answers, with no outside interruptions or demands.

Researching media production

In this study, during the fieldwork periods, all discussions and activities involving the sports media workers, and those of other individuals involved in the production of the sports pages, were listened to and documented. Where convenient, and without overtly disrupting daily activities, participants were shadowed during the course of their work activities. This included participating daily in the early morning sports photograph selection and discussion meetings with the various decision-makers, where comments and reactions were noted. Two periods of fieldwork observation were undertaken, exactly twelve months apart, which helped validate and expand the initial set of data and establish any differences and similarities between the two contexts.

The first period of observation occurred during a major international sporting event, the Commonwealth Games held in Melbourne in 2006, which provided a unique set of challenges and logistical requirements for the sports section. This period of fieldwork commenced on Tuesday March 14, 2006 at 6.45a.m, when I met with the editor, who introduced me to three of the editorial team members while they attended the daily early morning photograph discussion session with the chief photographer. Attending this meeting daily, which generally lasted for about 15 minutes for any of the editorial staff, provided an opportunity to examine all available digital images on a large computer screen in the graphic design section. The section editors discussed a variety of photographs to establish how they could fit with potential storylines on which they were working. These informal yet regular daily meetings are referred to as '*photograph sessions*' in the course of this study. After the photograph sessions, the editor and his editorial team moved through to the editor's office for 'the first' of two daily editorial meetings. These commenced at 7.30am and were typically completed by 8.00am. The purpose of the early morning meeting was to ensure that the day's production run was finalized and that all aspects were organized before the first print run close-off at 10.00am. The second editorial meeting was held at 11.30am, and potential stories for the following day and beyond were discussed. The daily routines were identical except for Friday, when the second meeting of the day occurred at 4.00pm rather than at 11.30am due to the large publication of the Saturday edition, which was managed specifically by one of the section editors

rather than the editor. The Saturday edition included the production of the weekend supplements and a magazine. There were no official Saturday meetings, as the paper was run by a skeleton staff complement and any urgent discussions were raised in the newsroom, if necessary. The final day of observation for 2006 was held on Friday, March 24, 2006.

In a similar fashion to the first fieldwork period, observations one year later in 2007 provided an opportunity to explore the types of interactions and incidents that occurred during an everyday news period. The second period of fieldwork commenced on Tuesday, March 13, 2007 and the final day of observation was on Thursday, March 22, 2007. During the second period of observation, the media workers appeared more at ease and familiar with the observation process, and this allowed the opportunity to casually approach participants to ask them some general questions about processes that I had previously noted but not clarified, or to ask about specific issues that had been raised during the first observation period.

Interviews

One of the methods used during the production phase was a one-on-one interview with the participating media workers. Researchers suggest that one-on-one interviews provide the researcher with both depth and detail due to the ability to adapt the formal questions and probe for clarity when the answers are vague or unclear in the course of the interview (Atkinson et al., 2003; Buckingham, 1993; Jensen, 1995d; Jick, 1979; Schroder et al., 2003). In establishing what the interview process provides, research suggests that it "produce(s) a highly uniform set of data" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 89). The data that was produced for this study was 'uniform' or consistent in respect of ensuring that a range of specific questions were answered by the end of the interview. A list of standardized questions was developed for media worker interviews (Appendix 4), but the process was structured to have "flexibility to develop questions as new themes emerge[d] in the course of the interview" (Amis, 2005, p. 108). Thus, the format of the interview schedule was flexible to allow for the inclusion of additional questions when individual responses needed to be clarified. In addition, the one-on-one format of the interviews encouraged participants to articulate their own understandings and meanings when answering the questions, rather than being

prompted or influenced by someone else's response (Atkinson et al., 2003; Bruce, 2004; Buckingham, 1993; Jensen, 1995c; Lowes, 1999; Schroder et al., 2003). The interviews (much like the participant observations) also provided an opportunity to gather non-verbal data such as their expressions, pauses and gestures, which helped generate significant and meaningful information. By conducting a number of individual interviews, the accumulated data established overlapping trends and patterns in the responses, as well as indicating gaps or anomalies. A variety of techniques were utilized in the formatting of participant questions, such as asking a combination of open and closed questions (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Jorgensen, 1989; Stokes, 2003).

Formal interviews were conducted with the five main media workers involved in the day-to-day production of sports photographs. Although not all of the participants were responsible for or in control of the outcome in terms of which sports photographs were used, each individual influenced certain aspects of the photographic selection process in one way or another. The interviews were held at the newspaper offices, in an enclosed interview room, where colleagues or management could not overhear participants' responses. The participants all consented to have their interview recorded, and were advised beforehand that they had no obligation to answer any questions, if they did not feel comfortable doing so. After completion of the interviews, their documented responses were transcribed from the recording. Each participant received a copy of their transcript to ensure that it accurately reflected the proceedings and their responses, and the returned signed transcript indicated consent for the use of this material within publications. As noted, this method of collecting data from interviewing media workers was carried out in addition to, and in conjunction with, a period of participant observation within the newspaper production environment.

Participant observation

Participant observation provided an opportunity to gather data whilst being immersed in the personal experiences, discussions and events of the participating media workers. These insights helped reveal a deeper sense of understanding, not only about the processes and procedures of sports news production, but also about the roles individuals play and how positions of power operate in the newsroom (Atkinson et al., 2003; Bertrand & Hughes, 2005; Fetterman, 1998; Glesne &

Peshkin, 1992; Hansen et al., 1998; Jensen, 1995d; Jorgensen, 1989; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Schroder et al., 2003; Stokes, 2003; Yin, 1998). The immersion process also drew attention to the physical environment of the newsroom, a factor that is often overlooked yet has the potential to be a significant cultural and social agent of meaning (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Jensen, 1995d; Jorgensen, 1989; Krueger & Casey, 2000). This first-hand knowledge and experience allowed me to interpret the data from a more informed position, providing greater accuracy and lessening the chance of misunderstandings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Hansen et al., 1998; Jorgensen, 1989; Schroder et al., 2003). In addition, I gained familiarity with and an appreciation for the practices, processes, constraints and limitations affecting and influencing not only the participants but also their interactions with others, interruptions and social exchanges. Hansen et al. (1998) state that "participant observation can be highly *challenging*. It demands much from the researcher" (p. 36). Thus, to be able to effective execute this method of study, it was necessary to be perceptive, attentive, and an organized, adept investigator (Hansen et al., 1998).

The significant advantage of this method of data collection was that it provided more personal and idiosyncratic information about the people, places and processes of media production, through the collection of both verbal and non-verbal data (Atkinson et al., 2003; Fetterman, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Hansen et al., 1998; Jensen, 1995d; Jorgensen, 1989; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Schroder et al., 2003; Yin, 1998). The observation study revealed that media production does not happen in a vacuum, and is dependent on a range of people sharing ideas and constructing information. During both periods, newsroom interactions were observed; comments made by media workers to each other both in meetings and at workstations while preparing the day's edition were noted, as well as their non-verbal responses and expressions. I was assigned a workstation by the sports editor, which was positioned behind his own workstation and alongside that of the sports sub-editor. This provided a prime location to overhear their conversations, and to see all activities in the sports section. In addition, the open plan setting of the newsroom allowed me to observe what was happening throughout the newsroom, look at what was playing on the two televisions, and to hear the phone conversations of all the sports media workers. On numerous occasions, the editor and chief photographer discussed sports news and

photographs with the sports editor at his workstation. All of their conversations were audible and it appeared that my presence did not inhibit them speaking their mind, as there were a few volatile encounters as they fervently made their opinions clear. The sports editor and sub-editor seldom left their seats during the day, and they always appeared busy. The fieldwork observations were documented on an ongoing basis and used to either support or challenge the formal interview findings in the production chapter (Chapter 4).

Social and cultural research considerations

Research carried out in people's work environment, as undertaken in the formal and informal interviews and fieldwork observations, unavoidably raises social and political concerns for the participants and their colleagues due to the somewhat unfamiliar nature of the research and the intrusion of the researcher into their workspace environment. These concerns also develop because the research and the researcher are dealing with people, relationships and opinions, which are not always necessarily in agreement. Atkinson et al. (2003) suggests that researchers "need to remain theoretically and methodologically vigilant in order to avoid slipping into the ready assumption that we are studying private experience rather than socially shared actions and resources" (p. 106). In this research, these 'shared actions and resources' are the product of the newsroom environment, where journalistic practices and routines are encouraged through institutional training and mentoring of a range of individuals. However, the research focuses not on an individual *per se*, but rather on what that person does in relation to the role or position of responsibility that they hold within the broader context of what is done and how it is achieved.

In addition, when researching people, especially within their professional environment, researchers are required to ensure that participants are safeguarded from any harm transpiring from the processes of observation and evaluation. In order to ensure that this study was innocuous and maintained impartiality, the cultural and social newsroom environment was also taken into consideration. The data gathered was then thematically organized to identify specific trends, which were evaluated to establish what similarities and differences had emerged as the sense making process commenced (Jensen, 1995c; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Morley, 1992; Rowe, 1999; Turner, 1997a). The meaning making process entailed

not only recording facts about the physical environment in which media workers performed their duties, but also attempted to expose the less obvious aspects, such as examining the often taken-for-granted practices and procedures that media workers automatically and routinely carry out. These perfunctory yet necessary activities often highlighted issues that at first appeared unimportant or vague, yet within the context of further elaboration and clarification, provided the study with a range of critical and useful insights into media production (Davis, 1997; Howe, 2008; Lowes, 1997).

Research methods that require the researcher to interact with others are heavily dependent upon a relationship of trust (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Hansen et al., 1998; Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher, in observing and recording data about human interaction, can provoke concern and antagonism if participants feel vulnerable or are confronted by questions that appear potentially political or intrusive. Additionally, Jorgensen (1989) warns that in certain circumstances, "being a female participant observer may present serious obstacles, such as in studies of predominantly male occupations, subculture, or culture" (p. 44). This caution is particularly appropriate for a female researcher working in an environment dominated by males, such as sports journalism, where male media workers may feel consciously or subconsciously uncomfortable being observed by a woman.

A core consideration at the start of the production study was to established contact with the key media decision-makers at the chosen newspaper, in order to have buy-in from the top. In Lowes' (1999) study he referred to this as a "'top-down' rather than from the 'bottom-up'" (p. 26) approach into the newsroom environment. I was fortunate that my chief supervisor personally knew three of the key decision-makers in the newsroom selected for this study from working with them in the early 1980s, and made the initial contact with the newspaper editor, the chief photographer and the sports editor, on my behalf. The newspaper editor received a copy of the Information Sheet For Media Worker Participants (see Appendix 1) and the Consent Form For Media Participants (see Appendix 2) before our first meeting on March, 13 2006, in order for him to ascertain the purpose of the study and to prepare questions or raise any concerns about the aim of the research up front. This background information also highlighted how the research would proceed and how it was envisaged that media workers would be

involved. Once his consent was secured and prior to the commencement of the first fieldwork observation period, a number of ethical issues associated with interviewing people were taken into consideration.

The first was that of ensuring that all potential participants were made aware of the research process in advance of any discussions through the informed consent process. Each potential interviewee received an Information Sheet For Participants (Appendix 1), outlining the research study and clearly defining the extent of their involvement, as well as advising them that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. In line with the approved ethics for this study (see Appendix 3), I provided background information about the study and gave a Consent Form For Media Participants (Appendix 2) to each of the potential participants that required each participant to select her / his own level of confidentiality within the study. This consent varied from the participant being able to choose 'full confidentiality' through to 'full disclosure'. However, each of the media workers selected 'full disclosure', and explained their choice in relation to their involvement in journalism, in terms of feeling comfortable standing by what they said or did in the course of their work. Yet despite my participants selecting 'full disclosure', after discussions with my thesis supervisors it was decided that, due to the negligible size of sports media production in New Zealand where there are relatively few sports journalists, photographers and graphic designers involved in newspaper production, a greater degree of anonymity was needed. Thus, direct participant quotes are associated with the media worker's role rather than being attributed to the person by name. Although this could still identity the individual to their colleagues, the value of this data that distinguishes the role is that it enables certain assumptions to be made about how status or position impacts on the choices made and opinions that are expressed.

At the onset of this study I was keenly aware that my presence could be of concern for media workers and that conversation could be moderated with an outsider listening in, particularly as the newsroom was small and with there being few sports media workers. With little previous research to go on in relation to similar newsroom experiences, it was important at the commencement of the study for media workers to feel comfortable and informed, through detailing the study format, how they would be impacted and to answer any questions or concerns up front. Furthermore, by inviting a variety of media workers to

participate in this study, rather than just focusing on the decision-makers, I was able to synthesize a range of responses from across the production environment, similar to the way that Lowes (1997) blended media workers "views and opinions in with their colleagues, both in the analysis and in the writing" (p. 145). This approach provides the opportunity to establish not only what media workers say they do, but also what they do via actual observation of media worker activities, their reactions, comments, interactions, demeanor and body language throughout the production periods.

The analysis of newspaper content

The content analysis was designed to measure; firstly, the physical size of sports photographs throughout the selected newspapers in square centimetres. This process of quantification was developed initially to ensure that what was being counted appropriately correlated with the requirements set out at the commencement of this study, and to ensure that the measurement was carried out systematically, meticulously and in an unambiguous fashion (Hansen et al., 1998; Rose, 2007). Thus, the preparation focused on determining *what* needed to be measured and *how* that data would be measured in the most effective manner. Although the primary focus was to identify the types, sizes, positioning and numbers of sports photographs, the data gathering process required that a broad range of data relating to sports representations be recorded, not just the actual cm^2 size of each photograph. The additional range of ancillary data collected, documented informative and descriptive features of each image that would be evaluated further. The full set of the content analysis data fields is attached in Appendix 5, while the data fields used more extensively that relate to the tables and specific sports photographs used in the semiotic analysis study are described in detail below. The data fields developed in this content analysis take into account a number of previous quantitative studies of sports media representations, most notably research undertaken by Toni Bruce (Bruce and Chapman, 2005, 2006a, 2006b & 2006c) and work conducted during my undergraduate and graduate studies (Chapman, 2002a, 2002b), the data framework developed for the 'Global Women in Sports Media Project' (Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010a), as well as research conducted by another graduate student at Waikato University, Emma Wensing (Wensing, 2003). More specifically, my studies have been

informed by the data gathering techniques revealed in the New Zealand research of Ferkins (1992), and McGregor and Fountaine (1997), and the international research of Duncan (1990), Davis (1992, 1997), Len-Rios et al (2005), Vincent, Imwold, Johnson and Massey (2003); Vincent et al (2002), Billing and Eastman (2002) and Serra (2005).

Once gathered, the acquired data was evaluated in relation to a series of emergent themes, where the visual elements of the photographs were assessed in relation to the codes and signs featured within them. This process of analysis follows the suggestions made by Lutz and Collins (1993), who maintain that:

> Although at first blush it might appear counterproductive to reduce the rich material in any photograph to a small number of codes, quantification does not preclude or substitute for qualitative analysis of the pictures. It does allow, however, discovery of patterns that are too subtle to be visible on casual inspection and protection against an unconscious search through the magazine [or newspaper] for only those which confirm one's initial sense of what the photos say or do. (as cited in Rose, 2007, p. 60)

In other words, the physical measurement process helps to highlight and summarize what is revealed not only in one photograph, but also across a range of newspaper photographs over an extended timeframe.

Drawing on feminist cultural studies theorizing, this study investigated how the media used sports photographs to emphasize differences between sportsmen and sportswomen during the two periods examined. The most significant issue in respect of this study was that of how discourses of gender were represented. In addition, the articulation of 'preferred' or valued sports was examined. This approach reflected the view that, not only is meaning derived from the number of sports photographs that feature sportsmen or sportswomen, but also from the context of these images, and the way in which constructed representations are framed in relation to dominant discourses of sport and gender and the workings of power and hierarchy (Reinharz & Kulick, 2007). Consequently, how sportswomen are represented is of major consequence within this content analysis. Examining how sportswomen are represented within media content, Turner (1997b) suggests that content analysis provides a starting point for analysis of "the ways in which the women who *do* appear are represented … are themselves a damning indictment of the institutional sexism of sports reporting" (p. 298). Consequently, this study focuses on identifying processes governing how

sports media feature photographs of sportswomen, and how media draw on wider discursive elements to construct sports news in relation to gender.

The media sources and framework for data collection

This study sought to identify and measure each sport photograph published within four separate New Zealand newspaper editions during two specific periods. The newspapers selected for inclusion were two daily publications, *The New Zealand Herald* and the *Waikato Times*, and two Sunday publications, *The Sunday Star Times* and the *Herald on Sunday.* [6]

The New Zealand Herald is the largest circulated broadsheet format daily newspaper in New Zealand and includes a Saturday edition. *The New Zealand Herald* is owned by APN News and Media, an Australian and New Zealand media company. Its circulation in 2006 was around 200,000, with readership in the vicinity of 558,000. Its political alignment is described as being 'centre-right', focusing on socially conservative values. The readership community mainly comprises the Auckland region, but distribution extends to much of the north of North Island; Northland, Waikato and the King Country.

The second daily newspaper is the *Waikato Times*; a Waikato based metropolitan or regional broadsheet newspaper that includes a Saturday edition. In 2006 it had the fourth largest circulation numbers in New Zealand, with approximately 35,000 copies distributed and readership of 95,000. This publication is owned by Fairfax Media Limited, an Australian based diversified media company. The readership community comprises Hamilton city and the greater Waikato Region.

The first of the weekend newspapers studied is the *Sunday Star Times*, which is the largest circulated broadsheet weekend newspaper in New Zealand, with a national circulation of 182,314 in 2007[2] and readership of roughly 554,000. It is

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[6] The details provided about these newspapers were referenced online from: http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz/2007/08/newspaper_readership.html, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_print_media_in_New_Zealand, retrieved June 22, 2012), and http://www.nzdelivers.co.nz/view/3106-sunday-star-times, retrieved June 22,2012.

owned by Fairfax and provides a centre-left political perspective. It is published in Auckland with Christchurch and Wellington based news bureaus.

The second weekend publication is *The Herald on Sunday*, also owned by APN News and Media, an Australian and New Zealand media company. In 2006 this broadsheet newspaper had a circulation of roughly 85,000 and readership of 317,000.

These particular publications were chosen because of their potential to provide a wide range of daily and weekend sports photographs, which addressed both a national and regional readership, and were published by two different media organizations. All newspaper pages were examined, in conjunction with a range of newspaper supplements and special editions, to establish where and how sports photographs were featured.

Data collection periods

As noted, the newspaper data collection periods revolved around two identical time periods, twelve months apart. The first data collection period (March 8 to April 5, 2006) constituted a month of sports media coverage that overlapped with the 2006 Commonwealth Games - March 12 to March 26, 2006 - held in Melbourne, Australia. There were a total of 25 newspapers for each of the two daily newspaper publications and four Sunday newspapers for each of the two Sunday publications. The first newspaper collection period was specifically scheduled to coincide with this major international sports event, so that content could be analysed and evaluated to establish trends, patterns and themes in the media's sports coverage while the production fieldwork was also underway. This timing was based on previous sports media research that suggests that media coverage during major events is given a different focus, such as reflecting a heightened sense of nationalism, the inclusion of a range of sports, and a greater emphasis on winning and national achievements (Bruce, 2006; Bruce & Chapman, 2006c, 2006b; Capranica, Minganti, Billat, Hanghoj, Piacentini, Cumps & Meeusen, 2005; Markula et al., 2010; Mason & Rail, 2006). Edwards (2007) argues that the importance of coverage of major international multi-sport events is that such events "are seen by many as measuring a nation's sporting capabilities,

which are often perceived as an index of the country's worth" (p. 179). Thus, what the media selectively cover (or ignore) during major events reflects the perceptions that media workers have about what is important, and highlights the way that newsworthiness is conveyed in coverage. Moreover, by using two different periods of analysis, the findings could be evaluated and compared to establish any similarities and differences in media coverage, and whether there were any obvious or subtle shifts in media emphasis between the two periods.

The second period of data collection (March 7, 2007 to April 4, 2007) was considered a normative period of sports activities, which featured no major international multi-sport events. This normative period is also referred to as 'everyday' sports coverage, where the media focuses on athletes and sports at local, national and international levels to reflect typical, mainstream sports reporting. Again, sports photographs from the two daily newspaper publications were collected (25 editions each), along with the two Sunday publications (four editions each). During this everyday period, the most notable sporting events included the New Zealand women's cycle tour, the Maadi Cup rowing at Lake Karapiro, the Hamilton Futures Tennis Tournament, the World Water Polo Championships held in Auckland, and the netball pre-season tournament. Further, New Zealand athletes participated in the World Swimming Championships in Melbourne, Australia, the Pacific Life Tennis Tournament in the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, California, and the Queen Sirikit golf tournament in the Philippines. Many of these events included sportsmen and women as well as a range of 'mixed gender' competitions (such as men and women in tennis mixed-doubles). In addition, the men's Super14 rugby union competition was in progress, and it was the middle of the men's rugby league season. The Men's World Cup Cricket was also underway, as was the men's Six Nations rugby, and Americas Cup Yachting in Valencia.

The classification of data fields and analysis criteria

In order to capture and record the newspaper content accurately, the data was organized into a range of common characteristics, with gender being the main differentiator. The data fields for both periods of study were arranged as follows:

- ◦ Newspaper - the newspaper in which the sports news appeared;

- Number reference - the specific number assigned to each individual input, as a means of double checking the data afterwards rather than returning each time to the newspaper;
- Page - the physical newspaper page number;
- Date - the day and date, including year;
- Sport - the featured sport or sports;
- Event - each type of event was recorded. The Commonwealth Games was recorded as (X), other events were identified in relation to an international event (In), national (Na), regional (Re), local (Lo), and overseas sports (O). In a number of instances, more than one type of event was identified within one article and each event was noted;
- Gender - four different gender categories were identified; *female* (F), *male* (M), *mixed* gender (male and female athletes reflected together either participating or not) (MIX), and *neutral* (photographs of the stadium or other sports venues; scenes that focused on objects rather than people) (NEU). The reason for having these four distinct categories was to ascertain who or what the media visually represent, such as individual male or female athletes, or groups of athletes before or after an event, or the combination of male and female athletes together, or other non-participant general sports images;
- Identify individual or team – who was featured, such as the Silver Ferns netball team or Irene van Dyk (one of the Silver Ferns players);
- Article or photograph position – where in the newspaper the image or article appeared, such as front page or main sports page, inside sports page etc;
- Article Focus – what or who the article or photograph related to, such as sporting event (E), participating athlete or team (P), stadium or facility (S), organization (IOC)(O), issue (drugs) (I), news (N), or other (OTH);
- Article type – noted the types of issues raised, such as event report (E), preview (P), feature (F), results (R), column (C), editorial (ED), page header (HE);
- Article size - the size of each article or result was measured in cm and displayed as cm^2;

- Image – each photograph, graphic or cartoon was also measured in cm^2 and a note made of whether it was attached to an article or whether it was a freestanding image;
- Identify individual or team – reflects the name(s) of those featuring in the image;
- Gender – the gender of those featured in the photographs using the same gender criteria as described above;
- Image focus - the sports photographs were grouped into different categories of the featured activities:
  - sports action (SA): athlete(s) doing sports, the physical activity of active participation;
  - sports-related (SR): passive depictions of sport either reflecting an athlete - before or after an event, preparing for the event or after a training session, watching an event from the side-line, being interviewed at the Commonwealth village or featuring an athlete in their team uniform but not participating in an event;
  - sport-related flag (SRF): athletes before or after the event with their national flag or another symbolic token of nationalism;
  - medal or ceremony images (M): athletes either on the podium receiving their medals or afterwards displaying their medals;
  - non-sports (NON): non-sports events such as signing autographs or face mug shots of the athlete being referred to in the article;
  - the coach or management team (CO): the coach or one of the management team, either on or off the field of play;
  - other (OTH): all photographs falling outside the other categories.
- Type of image – whether it was a photograph (P), head or mug shot (H), logo (L), graphic (G), or cartoon (CAR);
- Representation of the body – what aspects of the individual or group was shown; the head or above chest and shoulder (HEAD), whole body (W), part of the body (P);
- Colour / B&W – whether the image was colour or black and white (C or BW);

- ◦ Photographer – who produced the image, either the organization or data store such as Reuters, Fairfax or Times file, or individual photographer such as Iain McGregor or Kelly Schicker;
- ◦ Caption – the text caption was recorded in full to help establish what is used and how media workers construct preferred messages via text. This text also supported a semiotic analysis of images.

The purpose for these different data fields was to aid in understanding what and how sports photographs are featured and of whom; to establish emergent trends and themes that are constructed within media production. It was also used to identify the types of preferred messages that are created through the visible signs and codes reflected in the images. Each newspaper publication was recorded separately, in order to establish any similarities and differences between newspaper organizations. The data was then combined to provide a consolidated view of New Zealand media sports coverage.

Although the main focus of the research was to examine the role and meanings of sports photographs, my analysis frequently refers to 'sports news', a term used in relation to either sports text and/or photographs. Specific aspects attributable only to photographs are clearly stated in relation to their photographic characteristics. In addition, the phrase 'sportsmen and sportswomen' describes all individuals who are perceived to be involved in sporting activities, either demonstrating sports, participating in or in a posed non-sporting context. Although the recording of the data collection process was laborious, the depth of information provided valuable insight into media workers' perceptions of worth, which were content and context specific. The value of establishing the size of each piece of physical sports content in cm^2 is that this reflects the amount of space assigned to different athletes, as individuals and groups, thereby revealing the perceived newsworthiness of that sport or individual through ascertaining the actual amount (or lack) of space attributed to them. In many instances, the article or results focused on a number of athletes, whereas the photograph reflected an individual athlete. In these instances, the gendered nature of text and photograph were recorded separately. In addition, there were numerous times when more than one photograph appeared with an article and in these cases the details of each

photograph was recorded separately. Whilst the majority of these incidents occurred in coverage of *mixed* gender sports, where a range of individual photographs of athletes were attached, there were times where an article about a particular male athlete included a photograph of the crowd at the event, the female cheerleaders, or a female athlete competing in a similar event. The data therefore highlights a range of ways that sports photographs are represented in newspapers and the way that they are either featured alone, without text, or as part of a montage of sports photographs, whilst also being used to support or establish a preferred message.

Collectively, this data was analysed in a variety of ways to establish the different types of emphasis given to different sports, and to sportsmen and sportswomen. With the extensive range of data fields, a variety of spreadsheets were created from the original data, where each newspaper publication was examined in relation to how athletes were featured - based on gender, which sports were preferred in the coverage, and the number and types of photographs that were featured. In addition, the analysis also examined the types of events focused on in coverage to establish what was given priority, such as local, regional, national or international events. The size and positioning of the articles and photographs were reviewed and then the nationality of each sportswoman was recorded. Through an in-depth analysis of a broad range of criteria, a variety of themes emerged, which highlighted patterns in the data and the repetitive ways of featuring sports photographs on the front page or the sports pages, in turn suggesting that media workers use these features to convey specific meanings. The findings reveal how sports photographs were published during the everyday period (2007) and major event period (2006). Attention is given to the way in which gender is reflected in photographs and text, and the manner in which images are featured throughout the newspaper. These findings and the emergent themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

A semiotic analysis of photographs of sportswomen

Given that my study concerns what is visibly featured in newspaper sports photographs, my analysis also examines how the featured sports photographs within both periods of coverage were represented. The quantitative data revealed a range of visual trends and themes in the content and context of photographs of

sportswomen. This analysis was performed through a process by which each photograph featuring a sportswoman was first digitally reproduced. Dominant themes and trends that emerged in relation to gender and gender difference were further investigated using semiotic analysis. All visible features of the context and content of each sports photograph was assessed and interpreted, initially for all the images of sportswomen, including the athlete's expression, body language, actions, clothing and anything else that potentially conveyed meaning. This enhanced data information was combined to establish the specific trends and themes evident in photographs of sportswomen. In addition, the background and foreground of each photograph was evaluated, as the entire composition of photographs supports the framing of the preferred meaning. Bignell (2002) suggests that the media select photographs of people where the "physical pose very often provides connotations which affect our reading of the picture …gestures and facial expressions mean something to us because they belong to a code or language of gesture and expression which is recognised in our culture" (pp. 96-97). Semiotics provides a means of assessing "how culture and language work together to produce meaning systematically" (Turner, 1997b, p. 311), which is further supported through "discursive practices [that] 'frame' meanings in pre-agreed ways recognisable to both producers and readers of the discourse" (Tomaselli, 1996, p. 42). Thus, semiotics establishes not only how meanings are formed through what is represented, but also takes into account the context of production and reception, the social environment in which encoding and decoding takes place, and the power relations that co-exist as a communication exchange occurs (Hall, 1980b).

Although photographs may be perceived by audiences and media workers as transparent and unmediated visual signs, the actual selection process and the use of captions and headings all work to construct a preferred meaning (Lester, 1996; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Focusing on the work of Roland Barthes, who argued that the polysemic nature of photographs produces a range of possible meanings, Hall (1997b) asserted that "the 'meaning' of the photograph … does not lie exclusively in the image, but in the conjunction of image and text … the discourse of written language and the discourse of photography – are required to produce and 'fix' the meaning" (p. 228). Therefore, the media draw on text to not only anchor a photograph's meaning in the preferred message, but also more

importantly use it to limit other possible audience readings of the photograph. Moreover, the anchoring of text with a photograph may result in the photograph and text appearing to be disconnected, incongruent, or being at odds with the content or context of the visual representation. As already noted, the captions and headlines for each photograph were also recorded, to establish what and how text is used by media workers to support or construct the preferred meaning. Although content analysis revealed that this mismatch between text and photograph occurred relatively infrequently, it occurred almost exclusively in relation to photographs of sportswomen, and therefore the role and nature of this ambiguity or ambivalence needs to be elucidated.

As noted above, there are limitations to the information that content analysis can provide, particularly in the case of visual imagery. For this reason, other scholars have turned to semiotic analysis to acquire deeper insight into how preferred meanings are constructed in relation to the process of selecting photographs, and how audience readings are influenced by their understandings of what is conveyed within those images. For example, feminist scholars have turned to semiotic analysis to highlight how cultural practices engage a hegemonic perspective that privileges men and marginalizes women (Dahlgren, 1998; Lines, 2002; MacDonald, 1995; Plymire, 2005; Rose, 2007; Schroder et al., 2003; van Zoonen, 1994; Whannel, 1998). Van Zoonen (1994) describes how "semiotics has become quite popular in feminist media criticism because of its ability to unravel structures of meaning beyond the mere presence or absence of women in cultural forms" (p. 74). Semiotics therefore provides feminist cultural studies scholars with a useful tool that helps highlight how shared meanings of gender are socially constructed, and provides the dynamism and intensity to enhance what was identified within content analysis (Ang, 1996; Cole, 1994; Davis, 1997; Durham, 2007; Franklin et al., 1991; Gledhill, 1997; Hall, 1997a; MacDonald, 1995; van Zoonen, 1994). In a study of the gendered nature of sports photographs, Sabo and Jansen (1998) argue that analyzing photographs "without reference to the larger sexual economy of images that gives these representations meaning leaves the system of domination in which the images are embedded unexamined and unchallenged" (p. 204). It is therefore important that, when studying how meanings develop from sports photographs, the broader context of media and sport are also examined in relation to sporting representations and issues of

gender. From a feminist cultural studies perspective, determining how discourses of journalism and gender are conveyed and how entrenched social and cultural understandings are created in relation to sports photographs is critically important.

As noted above, the method of semiotic analysis that is most useful for the purposes of analyzing photographs in this study is that of Peircean semiotics, because it reflects how signs, objects and interpretants are automatically developed as media workers and audiences engage with and create meanings. In addition, a sign is not read as a solitary and disconnected entity. Peirce maintained that a sign is "anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*" (as cited in Short, 2007, p. 54). This sign reading results in a progressive and continuous method of interpreting and re-interpreting until clarity is attained; described by Jensen (1995) as a process of 'semiosis'. Jensen further maintains that semiosis is "defined not as a system, but as a continuous process of signification that orients human cognition and action" (Jensen, 1995d, p. 11). This process caused Peirce (1958) to suggest that "every thought must be interpreted in another, or that all thought is in signs" (Jensen, 1995d, p. 11). Accordingly, reading a photograph becomes an action, an interaction and a re-action to a series of messages engendered in a sign, its object and its interpretant. This method of visual meaning making is equivalent to reading a sentence that is dependent on each individual word; it is only once the whole sentence has been read that meaning is created. Yet because of a photograph's visual immediacy, the process of interpreting, appraising and understanding, although ostensibly a single act of recognition, is in reality the result of evaluating a sequence of messages relayed within the signs, the objects and the interpretants. Figure 2 reflects the process of semiosis that Jensen (1995d) describes to illustrate Peirce's semiotic process and the sequence of layers that are produced through a progressive reading and reinterpreting of meaning until an understanding is developed. In the process of semiosis, Jensen maintains that there are three main principles that operate; those of deduction, induction and abduction (Jensen, 1995d). Deduction is the relationship between a sign and the interpretant, where the process of interpretation effectively redefines the initial sign into a subsequent sign, which in turn is further re-interpreted to form a new sign. The process of induction "confers the sign and the object, or rather many

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objects, thus establishing certain common features in these objects, with reference to a context of other objects" (Jensen, 1995d, p. 148). The linking of similar characteristics within a sign and the object enables meaning to develop. The third step of abduction is the affiliation between the object and the interpretant that in effect is a "redescription or a recontextualization of the object" (ibid).
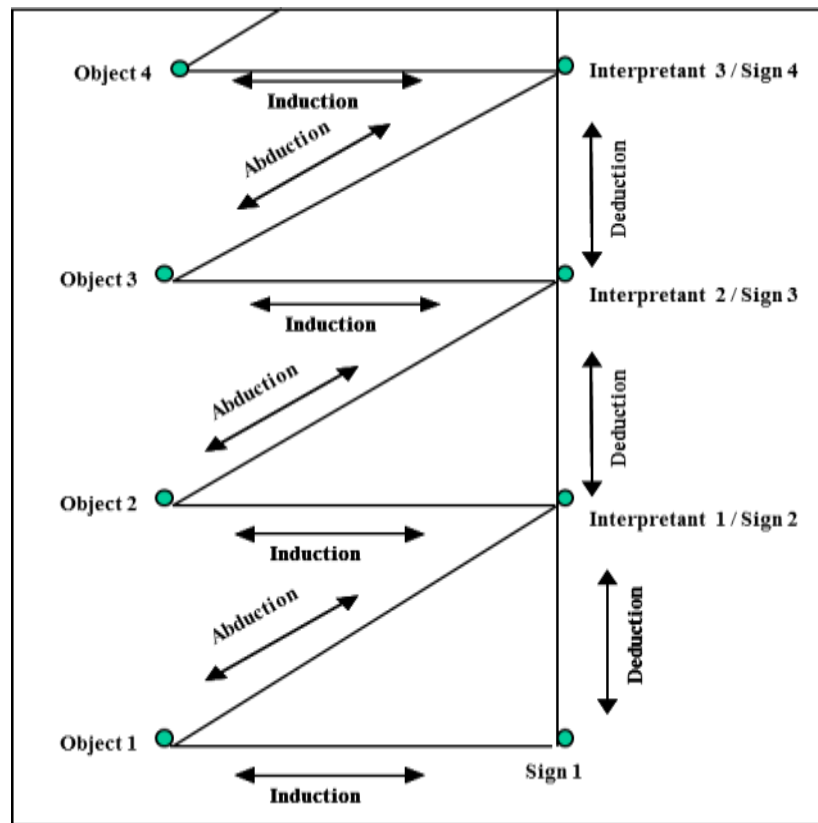
Figure 2. The semiotic triad and process of semiosis

Adapted from (Jensen, 1995d, pp. 22, 23, 148).

The main idea conveyed in this process of semiosis suggests that individuals subconsciously deconstruct photographs into a multitude of basic elements that are reconstituted and given meaning in relation to the individual's social and cultural knowledge, past experiences and beliefs. Stokes (2003) argues that a semiotic analysis provides the "intellectual context to the content: it addresses the ways in which the various elements of the text work together and interact with our cultural knowledge to generate meaning" (p. 72). Therefore, when researchers use semiotics to interpret photographs, they hone down into a range of meaningful readings as each sign is analysed separately to explicitly establish how this typically subconscious process functions and how understanding is reached.

As noted, Hall's encoding/decoding model employs a semiotic approach to the analysis of media content to the extent where meanings are ascertained through the shared signs and symbols represented within, say, a photograph. These signs, much like codes, convey a message encoded within media content that audiences immediately recognize and decode, usually (but not always) in relation to the media's preferred meaning. However, due to the inherently polysemic nature of media texts, not all audience members interpret media messages in line with the 'preferred meaning'. Nonetheless, Durham (2007) reveals that:

> In semiotic analysis, it is important to see these elements of sign systems as operating via intricate interrelationships with one another as they are organized by means of design rules or codes. The codes through which signs are organized serve to stabilize their meanings and *limit the possibility of polysemic readings* ... of the texts. Codes are, in effect, the mechanisms of ideology. (p. 240, emphasis added)

This suggests that the use of dominant discourses and the contextual framing of the text or photograph by the media support a restricted reading, despite an individual's capacity to create multiple interpretations. Moreover, the use of captions and headlines in conjunction with the majority of sports photographs helps to 'limit' the 'possibility of polysemic readings' by textually steering audience decoding to the preferred meaning.

The process of reading sports photographs using semiotic analysis

The media production process uses a variety of verbal and non-verbal text and photographic signs through which preferred messages are conveyed. These signs are described as the base unit of recognition and include actions, expressions, images or any physical form that can stimulate meaning (Fiske, 1990; Floch, 2001; Horne et al., 1999; Jensen, 1995d; Lacey, 1998; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Thwaites, Davis & Mules, 2002; Turner, 1997b). Due to the repetitious nature of media communication and a predominantly standardized presentation layout, audiences readily ascertain the general nature of the featured content through the style of language used and the signs and symbols encoded within the content. For instance, in studying how romantic fiction is produced, Radway (1984) reveals that:

The simple syntax, elementary realism, repetitive vocabulary, and authorial interpretation characteristic of romance fiction together create a verbal structure that can be 'decoded' easily and quickly on the basis of previously mastered cultural codes and conventions. Because the prose is so familiar, individual words or signs appear to make their meanings immediately available to any reader operating according to certain procedures and assumptions. (p. 197)

Thus, this suggests that it is important that both the sender and receiver of the message understand the social and cultural significance of the signs being used, otherwise it becomes difficult for the preferred meaning to be effectively communicated as *the* 'preferred reading' (Davis, 1997; Evans & Hall, 1999; Fiske, 1990; Lacey, 1998; Tomaselli, 1996; Turner, 1997b; Whannel, 1998). It is therefore important that each facet in the circuit of communication performs a function, such that the encoded message constructs meaning that is then decoded as the exchange process occurs (Hall, 1980b).

Signifying femininity in sports photographs

Taking past research findings into account, my study used semiotic analysis to establish how print media represent sportswomen and how meanings and interpretations are constructed. Examining the advantages of using semiotics within media research, Turner (1997) highlights how it can "deal comfortably with the combination of signifying practices which customarily occur in most mass media – the relation between headlines, photos, layout and stories in the newspapers" (p. 312). Through semiotic analysis, meaning is conveyed in all signs and symbols, such that reading sports photographs becomes a process of interpreting and reinterpreting what is visually depicted before an understanding is reached.

After a thorough analysis of each individual photograph of sportswomen, wherein the size, placement and context of the photographs and text were examined using a semiotic analysis, the data was found to reflect a number of textual ambiguities, or to construct ambiguity between the text and image. The specific method of reading and interpreting sports photographs used in this study is illustrated in the following example. In one particular inside sports page article about New Zealand swimmer, Helen Norfolk, the athlete was featured in a page header and photograph ($36cm^2$) at the start of the sporting section, entitled

'*Norfolk Broad'* (*Herald on Sunday*, March 12, 2006, p.52), highlighting a play on the colloquial term for a woman, a "broad", thus focusing audience attention, through both text and image, on her femaleness.

Figure 3. New Zealand swimmer Helen Norfolk on page header
(*Herald on Sunday*, March 12, 2006, p. 52). Caption – '*Norfolk Broad – Helen Norfolk looking good for a medal'*.

The use of ambiguous text attached to an apparent non-sports action photograph of a blonde haired, bikini-clad female, reveals the media drawing on discourses of femininity in both text and image, conveying Norfolk as an attractive woman rather than any direct attention to her as an athlete. The use of the athlete's surname and the added word *'broad'* highlights media ambiguity, as it is unclear whether this refers to the slang American term for a woman – a broad – to the swimmer's broad shoulders, or to the British waterways region, the Norfolk Broads. However, despite the uncertainly of the intended media meaning, what is revealed is that in this case, text helps create ambiguity in respect of the preferred message. Furthermore, the balance of the page-header text *'Helen Norfolk looking good for a medal'* also helps emphasize what the photograph already alludes to in the sense of the athlete 'looking good', which can also be read as 'good looking' in relation to discourses of gender. Thus, the sizable text of the page header draws audience attention to the featured woman using the content and context of the photograph featuring Norfolk wearing a modest pink bikini and with her long blonde wet hair hanging over her shoulders.

A semiotic analysis of the full article and photograph (Figure 4) reveals how meanings are encoded in a variety of signs and objects that are framed either within the photograph itself, in the text, or in a combination of both the text and the photograph. For example, the headline *'Norfolk in best shape yet'* and large photograph (542cm^2) were anchored to the caption: '*Relaxed: Helen Norfolk leaves the pool after training in Geelong'*. Utilizing Jensen's (1995) process of semiosis, the photograph and text of Norfolk was examined to establish how

meaning making might occur through reading the visual signs, objects and interpretants.

Figure 4. New Zealand swimmer Helen Norfolk and news article
(*Herald on Sunday*, March 12, 2006, p. 54). Caption - '*Relaxed: Helen Norfolk leaves the pool after training in Geelong*'

Figure 5 below, features the way in which Peirce's signs and objects are automatically read in a photograph to be interpreted and re-interpreted as the continuous process of meaning making develops (Short, 2007). This example shows just a few of the possible steps in a reading of this photograph, which is by no means definitive, as the polysemic nature of the decoding process is potentially limitless. However, the way in which the media prefer one particular message via dominant discourses helps narrow the potential readings of it. Evaluating the entire photographic content to establish what signs and objects are included in the background and foreground reveals a broader contextual framing of the preferred media message.
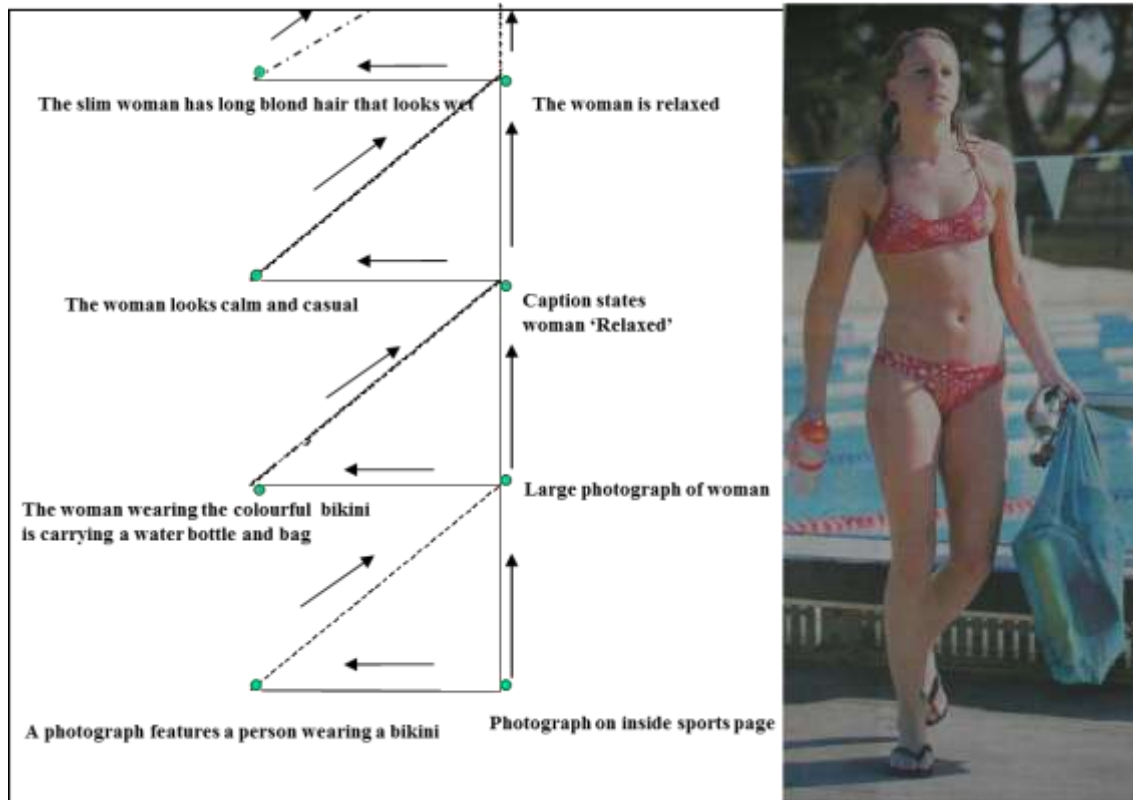
Figure 5. The semiosis process of reading a sports photograph

The visible signs displayed include; a person wearing a colourful pink patterned bikini and flip-flops; therefore this suggests it is a woman. She appears to have recently come out of the water, as noted from signs that her long, blonde hair that hangs over her shoulders is wet. Further, the woman is carrying a bag in one hand and a water bottle in the other, and in the background, a swimming pool is featured that has demarcated lanes in it and rows of flags above it. The woman is looking past the photographer and her demeanour appears to be unconcerned, and could be described as *relaxed*, which is also textually used in the photograph caption. The large portrait-shaped photograph stretches down the entire newspaper page and besides its height and positioning on the page; it is immediately eye-catching due to the bright colours and central focus on the semi-clad woman. Although Norfolk's physical features are already clearly visible in the photograph due to the lack of clothing that reveals her slim and youthful appearance and European descent, the headline *'Norfolk in best shape yet'* draws further attention to her appearance. This again reflects media using double meanings, emphasizing her body and physical appearance in the photograph, similar to the page-header, which is further accentuated in the headlines

suggesting that Norfolk is '*In best shape yet*' and '*looking good*', clearly drawing attention to dominant ideals of femininity. Thus, the photograph and text position Norfolk as an object to be evaluated and judged as a woman, derived from discourses of gender, rather than featuring her as an athlete via discourses of sport.

Although Norfolk is a well-known, elite New Zealand swimmer, there is little evidence of this within the photograph, as the context of the image itself provides minimal indication of any serious signs of swimming training or competition. In addition, her swimsuit does not correspond to the standard swimwear worn by elite swimmers in competition nor that more commonly associated with competitive training. Moreover, Norfolk does not appear to be exhausted or otherwise visibly tired, another visual sign generally connected with elite sport training sessions. In fact, the swimmer looks calm and casual and her gaze is expressionless. Each of the signs in the photograph are interpreted and then re-interpreted, as the automatic and subconscious processes of semiotic induction, abduction and deduction are engaged with to decode meaning. Yet, what is also evident is the way in which the photograph and text convey ambivalence, due to the ambiguity of the words used and the atypical representation of an elite athlete in training. At first glance, audiences are confronted with a photograph of 'a woman', Norfolk, and only later in the course of the text with Norfolk, the athlete.

This method of semiotic analysis, particularly analysing the process of semiosis, was used in relation to a representative sample of sports photographs of women. This sample was identified after an initial analysis of the emergent main themes and trends in the content analysis and after an in-depth study of each photograph of sportswomen. The main patterns that emerged in coverage of sportswomen are examined in Chapter 5, where content and semiotic analysis are brought together to establish how sports photographs work to construct meaning and shape social understandings of gender, sport, athleticism, femininity, nationalism and newsworthiness. All 85 photographs of sportswomen featured in the everyday period and the 331 images of sportswomen published in the major event period were individually analysed. This analysis took the form of photographically reproducing each image and examining each one to establish the types of signs illustrated within them. This analysis went hand-in-hand with the

content analysis findings, where a broad range of themes emerged. These focused on: the types of photographs that featured sportswomen in multiple images; the focus given to potential medal-winning sportswomen; the favouring of well-known international sportswomen; the emphasis on physically attractive and feminine sportswomen; and the size and positioning of photographs depicting New Zealand sportswomen competing against an international opponent. Although there were a vast range of photographs that related to each of these themes, after producing a number of montages of photographs to visually reflect the extent of these themes, a sub-sample of 17 images was selected that best reflected these emergent themes through the visual signs, objects, texts and contexts that were represented. The selected images clearly featured a range of qualities and characteristics that were both visibly evident and easily readable, thereby making them archetypal of each theme and more appropriate for an in-depth semiotic analysis. When subjected to a comprehensive reading, a number of the photographs highlighted their usefulness in conveying meaning in relation to each theme, such that seven images were selected in relation to the sportswomen–femininity articulation, while 10 were chosen reflecting the sports–nationalism articulation. However, during the examination of images featuring signs of nationalism, three areas of meaning were identified through the types of photographs that media workers selected. These areas included, 1) the prominence of winning sportswomen (reflected in five of the selected images), 2) the power of visually displaying national identity via means of national flags and other cultural symbols (featured in two representative photographs), and 3) action photographs of sportswomen in combative interaction with an international opponent (displayed in three action photographs). Although these photographs predominantly featured New Zealand sportswomen, there were four photographs featuring international athletes on their own, as well as four images depicting New Zealand athletes competing against an international competitor. Most of the photographs of sportswomen in the content analysis featured them in close-up, where the majority featured either an athlete on her own or two players together in action. Thus, these common aspects featured in the majority of the images of sportswomen were also taken into consideration in the semiotic analysis. Moreover, images of sportswomen identified as either featuring some form of

ambiguity or who were represented in an ambivalent manner by the media were also included in this representative sample for a more in-depth analysis.

Audience reception

 The third area of my tripartite study examined audience receptions of the sports media. Audience reception is a critical component of the complex circuit of communication, and it is only by examining how audiences make sense of media content, and in this study specifically, newspaper sports photographs that it becomes possible to bring to light the vital role that media play in society. In audience research that uses feminist cultural studies theorizing, establishing *how* audiences create meanings about gender and determining what impact their reading of gender plays in constructing shared understandings and cultural knowledge about gender roles and gender power relations is therefore fundamentally important.

As noted previously, meanings are essential as they reflect the discursive power relations through not only what is represented at the denotative level, but also what meanings audiences individually construct at the connotative level. In her composite multi-dimensional model of audience reception (Figure 6), Michelle (2007) highlights the relationship between denotative and connotative levels of meaning making and their function in audience reception analysis. This model integrates a range of audience reception theorizing to reflect not only *how* audiences create meaning in relation to what is depicted, but also *what* audiences do in developing implicit meanings during media consumption (Michelle, 2007). Moreover, Bignell (2002) argues that this distinction between the denotative and connotative levels of meaning is especially important in interpreting photographs. He suggests that, "the cultural significance of photography as a medium … [is that photographs] appear to denote their subject without coding it, but when subjected to a semiotic analysis, they reveal the cultural codes of connotation at work to produce mythic meanings" (Bignell, 2002, p. 99). Thus, understanding a photograph's meaning requires the researcher to not only establish what is denoted within the content or determine how it is denoted, but also to reveal the connotative levels of meaning.

DENOTATIVE LEVEL OF MEANING		
Transparent Mode: Text *as* life	**Referential Mode**: Text as *like* life	**Mediated Mode:** Text as a *production*
▪ *Non-fictional texts:* perceived as a "mirror" of reality ▪ *Fictional texts:* "suspension of disbelief" – narrative transportation, emotional engagement, identification ▪ Ideological/ discursive content is *implicitly* read "straight" → dominant/preferre d decoding	*Comparative sources potentially drawn on:* i) Personal experience/ individual biography ii) Immediate life world experience iii) Experience and knowledge of the wider social/ political/ economic/ cultural/ national/ international context of production or reception	*Heightened attunement to:* i) Textual aesthetics ii) Generic form iii) Intentionality • Textual • Generic • Professional/ Industry-based

CONNOTATIVE LEVEL OF MEANING

Discursive Mode: Text as a *message*

i) *Analytical* (Comprehension of message)
• Identification
• Motivation
• Implication

ii) *Positional* (Response to that message)

Dominant/Preferred	*Negotiated*	*Oppositional*

EVALUATION

Hegemonic Reading	*Contesting Reading Reading*	*Counter-Hegemonic*

Close/ Subjective ←--→ **Distant / Objective**
(Relationship between text and viewer

Figure 6. Composite multi-dimensional model of audience reception
(Michelle, 2007, p. 194).

A photograph's power lies in the way that audiences create meaning at face value from what is observed as they go through an automatic process of decoding. Audiences draw on a constructed *mental map* of understanding through a shared cultural frameworks of recognition when reading photographs (Hall, 1997a). For example, when a photograph features a woman the reading first entails establishing what dominant cultural discourses have constructed about *woman* and the gender norms that have been created via discourses of femininity. Therefore, what is developed in relation to the ideals of "femininity is not a natural property of women, but is a cultural construct" (Bignell, 2002, p. 60). It is only once these entrenched and underlying levels of significance are recognized and given meaning that greater understanding is reached. Moreover, in the media / audience relationship, it is not only important to understand how shared social meanings are created but also to identify *what* interpretations audiences develop and why. For instance, Schroder et al. (2003) suggest that for feminist researchers, "the ways in which various groups of women acquiesce to or oppose patriarchal portrayals of gender relations" (p. 137) is especially important. Therefore, audience research that interrogates the way in which audiences come to understand how gender is communicated, as well as the contextual, social and cultural characteristics media ascribed to it, is an essential part of feminist cultural studies research (Ang, 1991; Buckingham, 1993; Fiske, 1986; Jensen, 1995c; Turner, 1997a, 1997b). Davis (1992) maintains that "the context within which the readers interact with the text influence the meanings produced" (p. 16). Thus, how audiences come to read what the media produce is a complex process of negotiation and one that is reflected in Michelle's (2007) composite multi-dimensional model of audience reception, which suggests that audiences may engage in a variety of different modes of meaning making in the course of decoding a media message. Similarly, Jensen (1995b) argues that "several interpretations coexist as potentials in any one text, and may be actualized differently by different audiences, depending on their interpretive conventions and cultural backgrounds" (p. 75). Thus, audience members develop understandings through a social relational process, creating meanings based on a variety of factors that include the production and reception contexts, cultural recognition that triggers certain perceptions about the subject matter, past experiences, and ongoing reassessment of media content as the interpretation evolves and meaning is created. Much like the suggestion made by

Hall (1997) that there is not a singular fixed meaning produced by audiences, Michelle (2007) asserts that a range of meanings can be produced within each mode, and, "depending on their access to different discursive repertoires, some viewer may commute between these different modes" (p. 214), which further expands the potential for polysemic readings. Therefore, it is important to understand *how* actual audiences create meaning about gender in relation to their perceptions of media production practices.

Conducting an audience reception study using elite sportswomen as participants

The 'audience' in this study was made up of small group of seven elite New Zealand sportswomen. Although the original intention was to interview more than these seven elite athletes, busy international sporting schedules and work demands necessitated working with those willing and available to participate in this study. Initial communication with the athletes occurred via e-mail with a letter of invitation sent out on my behalf by my Chief Supervisor, which provided a brief overview of the study and outlined the extent of their potential role in it (see Appendix 6). This was distributed to 25 elite sportswomen; however, only 11 athletes confirmed their interest and then only nine elite sportswomen provided their contact details. I immediately made telephone contact with all the consenting participants, to discuss in more detail what the interview would entail and to answer any of their questions or concerns. This was followed up with an e-mail providing them with the written research Information Sheet for Athlete Participants (see Appendix 7) and the Consent Form for Athlete Participants (Appendix 8). The athletes were asked to respond in writing if they were willing and able to take part in the research and to select the form of confidentiality that best suited them. Two of the athletes, however, withdrew from the study in the middle of completing the questions via e-mail, due to sporting commitments overseas. However, I do not believe that the reduced number of participants necessarily undermined or diluted the findings, as these participants provided a wide range of perspectives on and interpretations of local and international media coverage.

The athletes all requested that they remain anonymous due to the potentially negative consequences of critically discussing issues relating to media coverage.

For each of the athletes, the media was described as being centrally important for both their sports body and their own professional livelihood, hence they expressed concerns about their media relationship being jeopardized. In terms of this research, retaining this anonymity has meant generalizing responses without specific reference to the athlete's sport, and at times, depersonalising direct quotes to conceal names and other finer points that could potentially identify an athlete. Individual athletes were referred to as either 'the elite athlete' or 'the participant', and of the seven athletes, only two were involved in the same sport. Of the six sports that the athletes participated in, only one was regarded as a professional woman's sport in New Zealand.

The motivation for incorporating the views of elite New Zealand sportswomen into this study centred on two issues. Firstly, this study provided a unique opportunity to include individuals who have exclusive, first hand experience of sports media practices and procedures. And secondly, due to the feminist framework of this study and the limited research focus on women, particularly in relation to sports, establishing women's perspectives was regarded as vitally important to add to our understanding of how representations of gender are created and consumed. Significantly, these elite sportswomen are both media consumers and potential sources of sports news. Maguire (1999) suggests that:

> The complexity of global sport lies not only in terms of how sports are used in different societies but also how these sports are read and interpreted. This observation applies both to those who participate in and / or who consume sport via the media-sport complex. (p. 212)

Thus, to understand how audiences comprehend the sporting experience, aspects of the consumption process itself needed to be interrogated and given meaning. Most often audiences have little or no direct control over media coverage, other than choosing whether to switch the television on or to read the newspaper sports pages (Davis, 1992). Thus, for the majority of the sports audience their reading of the event is confined to the choices made by the media. For the elite athletes participating in this study, their interpretations of sports photographs, especially of themselves, offered a more profound sense of meanings and insight into the moments that are captured in sports photographs. In addition, the perspectives and meaning given to all other sports photographs (of other athletes) by these participants were considered important in providing impressions of a 'female

voice' that has traditionally been excluded from sports media research and the sports and media environment in general.

The methods of audience research in a sports media study

Interviews with the elite athletes were conducted, on a one-on-one basis. This method was seen to be appropriate to ensure that the athlete's confidentiality was guaranteed and for them to feel as comfortable as possible. In addition, the interview questions were drawn up in a standardized format that could be adapted as the interview progressed and where responses could be elaborated on or clarified. The standardized questions are attached in Appendix 9. However, due to the residential location and overseas sports commitments of the majority of the athletes, it was only possible to interview two of the athletes face-to-face. Four of the athletes were interviewed by telephone and one athlete completed the interview questions and some further follow-up questions via several e-mail exchanges. In the two face-to-face interviews, both elite athletes consented to the recording of the proceedings and a similar line of questioning was instituted for the telephone-based interviews, where the conversations were also recorded. These interviews took approximately an hour and in the face-to-face and telephone interviews, any additional features such as long pauses, exclamations, the venting of anger or embarrassment were all noted in addition to the audio recording. In the e-mail interviews, the participants' use of text capitals and exclamation marks and happy and sad faces, was also drawn on as additional data. For the face-to-face interviews, facial expressions and body movements were also discreetly noted, as this provided additional insight into the way that the elite athletes felt about the media and sports photographs. The transcripts of the recordings were sent to the athletes via post or e-mail (as per their individual request) for their signed approval and for them to raise any concerns about what had been discussed.

In my analysis of the elite athlete's responses, I try to identify the types of features in sports photographs that appeared to be important to these participants, as athletes and as women. This was achieved through establishing a line of questioning that examined their general impressions and experiences with the media, their perspectives about local and international sports news in general, and how past experiences have influenced their current media relationships. Once all

the interview transcripts had been distributed and audience consent received, I proceeded to collate the data into a spreadsheet. The initial examination focused on the similarities and differences in comments made by the elite athletes in relation to the different sports represented, drawing out the types of overlaps that emerged or the extent of detail each athlete had provided. The analysis process evolved as the questions were further interrogated, to create a picture of the most common trends and themes, as well as the unique experiences that were conveyed. These trends and themes are described in detail in Chapter 6.

The chapters that follow therefore take into consideration a range of issues and themes to establish how the complex circuit of communication operates and how sports photographs convey messages and create shared understandings about the gender nature of athletes and athleticism. In Chapter 4, I outline the findings of the media production interviews and observation periods, and argue that media workers draw on a range of discourses that are used to inform the field of sports journalism. Although there are multiple discourses circulating at any given time, in each concrete instance, the power relations that exist within the newsroom determine which discourse predominates. In Chapter 5, I present the results of the content and semiotic analyses. These findings suggest that the sports photograph is an important aspect of newspaper sports news, featuring as a preferred message in its own right. The quantitative assessment of the full sample of 416 sports photographs of sportswomen was followed by a semiotic analysis of a smaller sample, where the signs and objects reflected in a range of photographs of sportswomen are evaluated using the process of semiosis. In Chapter 6, I consider the findings of the audience reception study and argue that the inclusion of actual sports audiences is imperative for research that focuses on determining how media production and content shape social understandings of gender and sport. Finally, in Chapter 7 where the tripartite study is brought together in a thematic discussion, I offer insight into the interrelatedness and concomitancy of the circuit of communication. In addition, I show the ways in which each component of this study has a ripple effect on the others, and helps shape the way that media workers and audiences perceive the gendered nature of sports, athletes, and athleticism in general.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this review of literature, I firstly examine the theories and concepts developed over the last 30 years relating to sports about media production, content and semiotic analysis, and audience reception of sports news. These concepts help create an understanding of how the complex circuit of communication operates and the interdependencies between dominant discursive and professional practices, power relations, and hierarchies of gender that influence how sports photographs feature in newspapers. This literature review therefore critically appraises the main themes and trends that have emerged in existing theoretical and empirical research relating to sports news production, content and reception.

Sports media production

In conceptualizing aspects of sports media production that inform sports media content, I whole-heartedly heed the observation made by Hesmondhalgh (2006), who suggests that:

> We take it that it is just as important to study media production as it is any other dimension of the media, and indeed, in certain instances, it is even more so. For if much of communication that goes on around us is created and distributed by relatively small numbers of people, we surely need to know about these people, about their working practices and conditions, and about how they make the media products which dominate so much of our communication landscape. (p. 1)

This analysis thus proceeds from the view that it is not only important to understand how media production occurs, but also to take into consideration the roles of media workers, the newsroom environment, and organizational practices. To understand how production processes work and their social effects requires an in-depth analysis of the cultural environment within which media workers operate. As Lowes (1999) maintains, "an awareness of how news is produced is indispensable for developing a better understanding of what becomes news and what doesn't, and why this is so" (p. 5). Therefore, ascertaining precisely how sport media production functions, how newsroom practices and procedures are developed, by whom and for what purpose, and how decisions are made is a critical aspect of understanding the role of media in the communication circuit

(Gruneau, 1989; Lowes, 1999; Silk & Amis, 2000; Stoddart, 1994b). What few studies of media production exist provide insight into the role played by sports media workers (Gee, 2009; Lowes, 1997, 1999), newspaper practices that subordinate women (Theberge & Cronk, 1986), how gender and other distinctive aspects of identity are constructed (MacNeill, 1998; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003), and the global effects of televised sports production practices (Silk & Amis, 2000; Stoddart, 1994a).

Traditional media plays a multifaceted role in society, where its function lies not in "representing the real world so much as <u>it</u> reveals, reinforces, and shapes the cultural beliefs, values, and myths held about the 'real world'" (Paulson, 2005, p. 135). Thus, how media organizations construct news is both influential and culturally important to understand, particularly in relation to how political, social and cultural power relations are conveyed to audiences. For instance, research reveals the powerful and central position the media hold in maintaining the status quo, which is variously described as actively manipulating production for political and social gain, or alternatively merely mirroring social reality (Carter & Steiner, 2004b; Hartley, 1982; Morley, 1996; Schultz, 1997; Turner, 1997b, 1997a; Woollacott, 1988). For example, Creedon (1998) argues that the media "set the public agenda by providing us with information about all other societal institutions including military, education, medicine, law and sport" (p. 88). From a cultural studies perspective, this agenda setting role within media production is particularly powerful because the structuring of texts plays an instrumental role "in sustaining systems of domination" (Maguire, 1999, p. 153). Additionally, the media are perceived as a social intermediary between apparently *transparent* information and audiences, conveying messages that have pre-existing meanings within dominant culture (Curran, Gurevitch & Woollacott, 1988). From a cultural studies perspective, Stuart Hall (1980c) argues that the media are "a major cultural and ideological force, standing in a dominant position with respect to the way in which social relations and political problems [are] defined" (p. 117). Thus, what the media produce directs public attention toward specific issues or information.

In this thesis I endorse Stuart Hall's position that the media "unwittingly, unconsciously" serve "as a support for the reproduction of a dominant ideological discursive field" (Hall, 1988, p. 88). Therefore, the very action of reproducing

information of a political, economic, or social nature results in the media progressing the interests of those who have the most to gain from what is produced; usually (but not necessarily) those with political and economic power. Moreover, those with political influence, social power and wealth utilize the media to convey their own espoused values and beliefs, which more often than not mirrors dominant discourses, thereby supporting these as the norm (Carter et al., 1998; Lacey, 2002; Louw, 2001; McCullagh, 2002; Schultz, 1997; Tiffen, 1997). However, despite the limited influence that individuals have over what the media produce, research suggests that audiences play an important role in how meanings and shared understandings are created (Davis, 1992; Morley, 1992). With the power of discourses being constantly challenged and negotiated in society as individuals and groups struggle to maintain or secure dominance, Gitlin (1994) suggests that these "major social conflicts become transported into the social system [through media], where hegemonic process frames them" (as cited in Paulson, 2005, p. 135). It is thus the way in which the media deals with these interactions that then becomes evaluated by researchers in order to establish how the privileging or marginalization of discourses occur and what effect this has on audiences or society in general (Bennett, 1988; Davis, 1997; Hall, 1988; McGregor, 2000; Woollacott, 1988). From a feminist cultural studies perspective, gender issues are of paramount importance in the complex processes of media selection and negotiation, particularly the way in which gender is inculcated within the wider discursive struggles that media workers are engaged in. However, unlike most other feminist cultural studies research, my thesis does not examine a 'typical' example of women's popular culture or interests, nor a genre of entertainment normally associated with women, but rather investigates a genre more commonly embedded within discourses of masculinity and men's interests: the sports media and sports photographs.

The decision to focus on sports photographs was based on an interest in both photographs and sports, specifically with the increasing global dependency on visual communication. To date, there has been a lack of research on what influence production practices, media workers and photographers have on shaping perceptions of sports through the selection and use of particular images. Photographs are a powerful tool that the media use to convey visual messages, which audiences read by decoding visual signs embedded within the photograph

(Barthes, 1972, 1977; Hall, 1997a, 1997b). Moreover, Meyers (1999) argues that "considerable research indicates that the images *do* affect us, that they work, cumulatively and unconsciously, to create and reinforce a particular world view or ideology that shapes our perspectives and beliefs about the world, our neighborhood, and ourselves" (p. 3). Studies suggest that photographs provide an immediately recognizable visual message that text is incapable of achieving (Barthes, 1972; Bignell, 2002; Hall, 1973, 1980b, 1997a, 1997b). In addition, the power of media photographs lies in the fact that they appear to "record rather than transform (information)" (Woollacott, 1988, p. 99), and invoke a sense of reality where "the photograph functions as the 'proof' that the text's message is true" (Bignell, 2002, p. 96). In other words, photographs appear to come across as unmediated (Barrett, 1990; Barthes, 1977, 1981; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Evans & Hall, 1999; Frosh, 2003; Goldberg, 1991; Scott, 1999; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Wells, 2003). Lester (1996), for instance, suggests that:

> A reporter's words may be disputed, but pictures are considered to be unmediated representations, a true rendering that is not subject to debate or interpretation. In short, news consumers have been conditioned to believe that pictures equal reality, that they are documentation that is irrefutable, and that news simply holds up a mirror to the real world. (p. 145)

However, despite the apparent neutrality and authenticity of photographs, media workers actively select photographs using subjective assessments, choosing one image over another, which may have been cropped or in some way manipulated to more effectively convey the preferred message (Barthes, 1977, 1981; Bignell, 2002; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Tagg, 1988). Hall (1973) argues that the selection of media photographs is a "highly ideological procedure" (p. 188), which suggests that photographs are, therefore, mediated to satisfy a particular discursive position, or social or cultural need, and are a powerful media production tool that are used to create preferred meanings (Tagg, 1988).

Media photographs are also valuable because they frame the context of the representation, revealing expressions, fashions, background, and time of year or day. Furthermore, photographs capture the social and cultural environment that is framed within the complete picture, which provides a much deeper and more personal meaning than can be conveyed through text (Burnett, 1995; Evans & Hall, 1999; Rowe, 1999; Tagg, 1988). For instance, a newspaper photograph of

New Zealand gold medal cyclist Sarah Ulmer, would have greater impact and mean more to New Zealand audiences than to non-New Zealand audiences. Rowe (1999) maintains that "looking at a photograph can be regarded as one social construction coming into contact with another in a perpetual cycle of producing, reading and circulating meaning" (p. 122). Photographs therefore convey meaning beyond what is immediately re-presented, due to the decoding of a visual message, which is done routinely and automatically as audiences interpret the image (as has already been addressed more comprehensively in Chapter 2).

Newspaper production

So why are the photographs published in newspapers so important and employed as the object of this study, rather than other images contained in forms of sports media communication, such as television and magazines? Historically, newspapers have been an important means of communication and reach a diverse and varied local, national and international audience (Corner, 2000; Curran & Gurevitch, 2000; Gitlin, 2003; Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2003). In addition, due to the central role played by traditional newspaper organizations in developing professional journalistic standards, most media organizations follow similar routines and practices embedded within discourses of journalism in a process that has been defined as 'inter-media agenda setting' (Golan, 2006). These standards and journalistic practices are important to understand, primarily because "media narratives that are available to the greatest number of people are more likely to become and remain the dominant narratives within a society" (Wensing et al., 2004, p. 208). It is therefore important to establish what the consequences of these dominant narratives are and how they support the media constructing messages that consistently prefer a particular narrow range of meanings in sports photographs. For instance, an analysis of newspaper sports photographs can highlight patterns of representation to reveal valuable insight into *how* sport is represented, *what* media workers consider important in respect of sport, and *who* they regard as newsworthy. Furthermore, it offers an indication of how the sports media perpetuate social and cultural norms using sports photographs.

Media workers and discourses of journalism

Although discourses of journalism encourage particular ways of doing and thinking, it is important not to discount the role that media workers play, particularly because "what is presented as 'news' – and how it is presented – is the result of concrete choices made by human beings" (Duncan, Messner, Williams & Jensen, 1994, p. 255). Thus, it is imperative to understand how media workers' decisions impact on production processes. However, media workers are themselves products of the society about which they communicate, being similarly influenced by dominant discourses, and exposed to the same social, political and cultural influences and pressures as their audiences. At the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall examined how the workings of power function in media organizations through discourses of journalism that are supposedly based on objectivity, neutrality and impartiality (Hall, 1980b). He revealed that journalistic discourses are constructed within dominant discourses and typically function to maintain the status quo, develop stereotypes, and adhere to standardized organizational practices (Bruce, 2005; Carter et al., 1998; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Miller & Miller, 1995; van Dijk, 1995; Whannel, 1998). Milkie (2002) similarly revealed that the media, as "cultural producers … rely heavily on frames, scripts, and schemas that the organizational culture makes available regarding what their products should look like and what keeps them commercially viable" (p. 844). Thus, practices of media production control how media workers operate, rather than them being free to draw on their own personal beliefs and opinions.

Although most journalists participate in institutional training to acquire the necessary skills of their profession, including "critical thinking and debates on professional ethics, the *primary* goal of training is to prepare students to enter the profession" (Parameswaran, 2005, p. 201, emphasis added). Media workers therefore adopt traditional discourses of journalism, through training that encourages adherence to standardized media practices, which in turn controls not only what is produced, but also *how* it is produced. Furthermore, Smith and Price (2005) suggest that "as reporters and photojournalists learn news routines and other technical aspects, they develop their professionalism because they are trained to become detached from the story and the conflicts of interest involved"

(p. 128). Yet, despite this apparent *detachment*, decision-makers construct media messages that are consistent with organizational objectives, which more frequently also support the maintenance of dominant discursive practices and affirm social norms. In respect of the role played by the sports media, Lowes (1999) suggests that media control is developed through "not telling us *what* to think, but rather what to think *about"* (p. 5). It is therefore important to establish what or who the sports media focus on and the types of messages that media encode within sports representations.

In assessing the communication process, Turner (1997b) maintains that "critiques of the media have been dominated by two concerns – the effects of media technologies in and of themselves, and the nature of the messages they carry" (p. 293). Although technology is often perceived as machinery or equipment, which the media depends upon for production, technology also refers to the knowledge and skills required by the media to develop news, events and issues using recognizable language, terms and images with which the audience becomes familiar (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Tiffen, 1997). Therefore, these media technologies are a crucial part of media production that facilitates preferred messages being effectively, efficiently, and consistently constructed by media workers. It is for this reason that it is important to understand the responsibilities that decision-makers and media workers have in media production, and what impact their roles and perspectives have on 'getting the job done'.

The male centredness of news and the role of female journalists

Historically, the news media have primarily catered for male needs and male interests (Fiske, 1986; Hall, 1980a; Hargreaves, 1982, 1993; McCullagh, 2002; Sabo & Jansen, 1992; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). In examining the structure of media production, Dyer (1987) argues that "men own and control the media and it is their ideas, viewpoints and values which dominate the systems of production and representation. A gendered production process inevitably produces a gendered representation of the world" (as cited in McCullagh, 2002, p. 44). Therefore, not only do men benefit from a media environment that is owned, managed and run by men, but they also gain from discourses of journalism that are constructed around masculine practices and language and male perspectives (Brookes, 2002; Carter & Steiner, 2004b; Coakley, 2004; Creedon, 1998; Giulianotti, 2005;

Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Lacey, 1998; Miller & Miller, 1995; Rowe, McKay & Miller, 1998). In the mid-1970s, Gaye Tuchman (1978b) argued that "the professional ideology to which 'newsmen' subscribed identified male concerns as *the* important news stories, and accordingly relegated topics traditionally characterized as 'female' to a peripheral status as news" (p. 138). This male centred, androcentric perspective within the media helps perpetuate a hierarchy of gender, where dominant discourses of gender are constructed based on masculine norms. This masculine hierarchy is also referred to as hegemonic masculinity (Hargreaves, 1982; McKay, 1991; McKay, 1997; Hall, 1980a). The embeddedness of all things male is particularly obvious in relation to the sports media, where gender-based exclusions include low levels of female employment in the sports media, media practices that are masculinized, and the marginalization of sportswomen from media coverage (Brookes, 2002; Tiffen, 1997; Tuchman, 1978b). Ross and Byerly (2004) suggest that "part of the endurance of gender stereotypes in news discourse can be related directly to the culture of newsrooms themselves, microcosmic environments that constitute sites of considerable contestation about gender and power" (pp. 62-63). Although women have entered the media profession in greater numbers during the last decade, the existing norms and practices appear to have changed little (Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Bruce, 2001; Byerly, 1999; Byerly & Ross, 2006; Creedon, 1994, 1998; Gallagher, 2001; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Meyers, 1999; Miller & Miller, 1995; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). The impact of dominant gender practices on media production is that a "newsroom culture that masquerades as a neutral 'professional journalism ethos' is, for all practical (and ideological) purposes, actually organized around a man-as-norm and woman-as-interloper structure" (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 79).

The question that this raises for feminists and sociologists alike is how media objectivity is maintained when the majority of journalists are men. In examining British journalism and the gendered hierarchy of power, Carter, Branston and Allan (1998) clearly highlight the nature of these social concerns and argue that:

> Today, as we approach the start of a new century, the day-to-day culture of most newsrooms is still defined in predominantly male terms. Whilst there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women securing jobs in

journalism, white middle-class men continue to occupy the vast majority of positions of power throughout the sector. (p. 2)

This is not to say that women do not hold any powerful positions in the media, or that women are unable to influence media production; it is rather that media culture and practices continue to be influenced by dominant discourses of gender that empower male perspectives and subordinate female ones (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Meyers, 1999; Ross & Byerly, 2004). For instance, a British-based investigation of women in the media identified that "18 out of the 19 national daily and Sunday newspapers were edited by men. Most newsrooms are still heavily male-dominated" (Fenton, 2000, p. 735). This gender-based hierarchy enables male views, opinions and beliefs to dominate (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gallagher, 1981; Len-Rios et al., 2005). Moreover, despite more women being employed as journalists, women continue to be underrepresented in positions of newsroom power.

Despite media research over the last three decades highlighting how power relations and hierarchical structures in media organizations work to favour men, little has changed in the manner in which news is collected or provided (Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Byerly, 1999; Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gitlin, 2003; Lines, 2002; Ross & Byerly, 2004; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Whannel, 1998). Therefore, other than a superficial absorption of greater numbers of women into media organizations, there has been little integration of female values or beliefs or ways of doing and thinking (Carter et al., 1998; Carter & Steiner, 2004d, 2004c, 2004b; Meyers, 1999; Ross & Byerly, 2004). Moreover, the concern for many researchers is the fact that media organizations hamper the possibility of change, not only by what is produced but also though employing women in media who are themselves "the product of a world system of patriarchal capitalism" (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 75). Thus, the overriding institutionalization of discourses of journalism that are masculine in nature effectively silences female journalists from articulating a feminine voice in hard news, such as business news, world news or sports news.

In New Zealand, with the dearth of media production research, little is known about the gendered structure of local and national newspaper and television newsrooms. In a New Zealand media survey of 297 journalists, Lealand (2004) found that female journalists accounted for 53% (156) of those who completed the questionnaires. One of the survey questions asked whether

becoming a journalist in New Zealand was as easy for women as it is for men, to which most participants (85%) agreed, with 10% disagreeing, while 5% were unsure (Lealand, 2004). These results indicate that in New Zealand, female journalists did not feel they were negatively affected by gender in becoming journalists (Lealand, 2004). Moreover, although this study included a range of the respondents' personal particulars such as age, position, status and salary, there was no gender comparison of media workers' roles or remuneration, which would have shed more light on how female journalists are treated in New Zealand media organizations.

Sports journalists and gender

An area that has received increased focus by sports media researchers over the last decade is the role played by media workers' gender and the impact of gender on encoded messages within sports media production (Bruce, 2002; Creedon, 1994, 1998; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Knoppers & Elling, 2004). Much in the same way that general news production has struggled to find a place for a feminine voice, other areas of news production have faced similar challenges, none more so than the realm of sports production. Theberge and Cronk (1986), in a seminal examination of sports production in an American newspaper, argue that "because the media form a powerful institution that does not simply reflect but indeed shapes perceptions and behaviors, their treatment of women is important to the larger struggle for women's advancement" (p. 196). However, researchers reveal that discourses of sports journalism that articulate sport to masculinity not only support the marginalization of sportswomen, but also encourage the perspective that female sports journalists are unsuitable and incompatible within the sports media environment (Bruce, 2001, 2002; Coakley, 1998; Creedon, 1998; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1999). For instance, Lowes (1999) describes the gender makeup of sports journalists in the newsroom where his fieldwork occurred in these terms: "the typical *Examiner* sports newsworker is a thirty-three-year-old white male with about ten years' experience doing sports journalism" (p.29). Furthermore, in this organization there were no female sports media workers involved in sports production. In another USA based study of sports journalists, Bruce (2002) highlights that "rather than accepting women as reporters, [male journalists] interacted with them in ways that

emphasized sexuality and gender hierarchies which privileged males" (p. 64). Moreover, other studies suggest that female sports journalists are not only treated differently from male journalists, but are also considered to be less conversant and given fewer professional opportunities to express their sporting knowledge (Milkie, 2002; Miller & Miller, 1995; Miloch, Pedersen, Smucker & Whisenant, 2005; Staurowsky & DiManno, 2002). Hardin and Shain (2006) highlight how "scholars have argued that the cornerstone of U.S. journalism - objectivity - is not gender neutral, but essentially masculinizes journalism.… Professional values in news (such as toughness and detachment) support the 'macho' culture of newsrooms" (p. 324). The macho newsroom culture, effectively resembling an old boys' club, enables male journalists whilst simultaneously disadvantages female journalists (Carter et al., 1998; Claringbould et al., 2004; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Louw, 2001; Ross & Byerly, 2004). A number of media studies have also suggested that male journalists, editors and decision-makers benefit from the 'old boys club', mentoring male media workers into senior positions and ignoring female media workers (Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Hardin, Zhong & Whiteside, 2009; Miloch et al., 2005). In an analysis of female sports journalism, Miloch et al. (2005) cite a female journalist suggesting that "the old boys club will hamper your career" (p. 229). Thus, despite their knowledge and skills, female sports journalists face traditional male-oriented mechanisms of favouritism based purely on gender. Moreover, despite an increase in the number of female sports journalists, many of them opt to cover the more lucrative and highly regarded area of male sports (Carter et al., 1998; Creedon, 1998; Miller & Miller, 1995; Theberge & Cronk, 1986).

For female sports journalists, many of them also face the additional demands of juggling the traditional domestic responsibilities expected of wives and mothers (Claringbould et al., 2004; Miloch et al., 2005). Women entering sports journalism have to strive to balance their domestic roles and responsibilities with careers that have historically paid little or no attention to such matters. Claringbould et al. (2004) highlight how dominant discourses of gender work against female journalists, particularly where "the structure of the work of journalists is seen as incompatible with women's (but not men's) parental work and responsibilities" (p. 714). Moreover, in another study a female sports journalist commented that women considering sports journalism should "be

prepared for a long, tough road. Don't expect to have much of a social life or children if you want to rise in the field" (Miloch et al., 2005, p. 230). These comments highlight the challenges female journalists face in sports journalism, due to cultural expectations of gender roles, which continue to dominate in society.

Although it is unsurprising then that there are fewer female decision-makers in the sports media, researchers argue that this has a ripple effect on the way that sporting representations are featured and the preferred messages that are constructed. Traditionally, the majority of sports reporters have been men who have primarily covered men's sport (Bruce, 2002; Fenton, 2000; Hart, 1972; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Lowes, 1999). A 2006 study of the composition of newspaper workers in the USA revealed that approximately 39% of all newsroom workers are female. Given that women are employed in increasing numbers within media organizations, the assumption is that "women are steadily gaining acceptance in the sports journalism arenas" (Miller & Miller, 1995, p. 883). Yet what little research there is on this issue reveals that, despite recent efforts to encourage more females into sports journalism to potentially improve coverage of women's sports and sportswomen, such efforts appear to have been unsuccessful. For instance, studies reveal that in newspaper sports departments female workers only constitute 11% (Hardin & Shain, 2006; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006). A more recent study of French media production reveals that female enrolments in journalism courses outnumber those of men, yet women comprise only 15% of sports media workers (Gee, 2009).

Discourses of (sports) journalism

In assessing the media production environment, Curran et al. (1988) maintain that "control of the production process by media professionals is confined … to the production of messages whose meanings are primarily determined elsewhere within the dominant culture" (p. 19). However, despite merely drawing on dominant discursive practices in production, the media support the maintenance of the status quo (Hall, 1980a, 1988; Louw, 2001). Moreover, and perhaps of greatest significance, is the fact that media workers are driven by dominant discourses of journalism, where newsroom practices and procedures become taken-for-granted by media workers (Louw, 2001). It is therefore important to

establish how media workers balance their own social, cultural and political beliefs whilst simultaneously reporting from what they believe is an objective and neutral position. Although research suggests media production is shaped through either entrenched organizational practices or media workers in positions of power who set guidelines for the news agenda (Bernt, Fee, Gifford & Stempel, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Louw, 2001; Lowes, 1997, 1999), this study examines the role of both individual media workers and organizational practices to establish how they work together to shape what is produced.

Media workers provide audiences with news, facts and photographs that either entertain or inform them about particular incidents or aspects of society. Yet the content of information is constructed by media workers to appeal to particular target audiences, who access a mediated form of the real experience (Buckingham, 1993; McCullagh, 2002; Tomaselli, 1996). Moreover, discourses of journalism regulate what is produced, through standardized patterns in production techniques and routines in media practices that become normalized for media workers and audiences alike (e.g. Davis, 1992; Fiske, 1990; Tagg, 1988; Weedon, Tolson & Mort, 1980). For instance, Edles (2002) argues that:

> One of the most distinctive features of modern society is the extent to which our knowledge and experience of the world is *mediated*. We conceive of, and act in, this world via television, movies, radio, newspapers, and computer. Today we take for granted both the centrality of media in our everyday lives, and the near-instantaneous transmission of information. (p. 56)

Hence, it is important to establish how discourses of journalism construct preferred media messages about *mediated* sports news. In addition, the shared media environment where media workers go about 'practicing' media production is also suggested to support processes of production, and therefore worth studying as a part of discourses of journalism.

The newsroom and processes of sports production

Although few studies have examined the physical newsroom layout, Lowes' (1999) study of the *Examiner*, the pseudonym given to a large Canadian newspaper he spent time at, reveals how the newsroom environment operates and how important the routines and standardized practices are that media workers

follow. Lowes (1999) highlights how mapping the physical layout of the newsroom is important to understanding the environmental freedoms and constraints within which media workers operate. For instance, Lowes (1999) suggests that "the clutter of most workstations is an apt symbol for the chaotic newswork environment at the *Examiner*" (pp. 29-30). He also draws attention to the open plan newsroom that he described as lacking privacy, yet the sports editor positively described it as a creative environment that helped contribute to teamwork and the sharing of ideas. In Lowes' (1999) examination of newspaper processes, he reveals that "all copy has to be vetted, accompanying photos selected and cropped, headlines composed, pages laid out, and final approval from the editor received before the sports section is ready for incorporation into the day's edition of the paper" (p. 44). His study is important to sports media researchers because it highlights not only what media workers do and the environment in which sports news is constructed, but also reveals the hierarchical structure and roles media workers play, the contexts of production, and then finally the content of sports news. Describing his personal experiences in the newsroom, Lowes (1999) states, "the rhythm of sports newswork is governed by deadlines and a general lack of time, a factor that cropped up repeatedly in my fieldwork" (p. 26). Thus, production timetables and schedules dictate what sports media workers have to do, rather than self-imposed cut-off times or the completion of sporting events. His observations also reveal how the timing of sports events frequently influences what is available, as deadlines are implemented despite events still being underway. These findings highlight the complexity sports journalists face in preparing current sports news, the challenges of meeting deadlines, and the often chaotic newsroom environment in which it is produced.

Production practices and the construction of encoded media messages

Stuart Hall's (1980b) encoding / decoding model provides insight into the role media workers play in preferring meaning in production. The messages encoded in production endeavor to limit the extent to which audiences are able to interpret what has been produced, through media workers drawing on readily understood concepts, terms, language and images (Hall, 1980b). For instance, in her analysis of the production of the *Sports Illustrated – Swimsuit Edition*, Davis (1992)

suggests "the senior editor, along with the photographers, and to some degree the managing editor, has primary input into the meanings encoded into the swimsuit issue texts" (p.155). Her findings reveal that the senior editor predetermines not only what the annual swimsuit edition should look like, but also the meanings that are to be preferred through the specificity of photographs and text. Such determinations are made with reference to implicit and explicit understandings of newsworthiness which are internalised as those issues or incidents that a targeted audience would consider important and current, which meet a range of news values criteria about prominent personalities, events and situations.

The determination of media newsworthiness

Through experience and training, media workers learn what makes information newsworthy and how it should be conveyed to make the greatest impact (Curran et al., 1988; Turner, 1997b; Woollacott, 1988). Louw (2001) argues that:

> Once a journalist has internalized the appropriate vision of 'newsworthiness' and the work routines to accompany this vision, the model becomes 'naturalized' (and 'self-policing'). Thereafter, journalists need not confront the fact that they are constructing a partial, skewed 'window on the world'. (p. 161)

Theoretically, then, media workers internalize and 'naturalize' what is considered important in production through formal institutionalized teaching, on-the-job training, and the assimilation of work routines and repetitious consistencies in organizational procedures. Through this, a hierarchy of media preferences is created by favouring certain news stories or people, whilst simultaneously ignoring or marginalizing others, which results in a perception that "appearing in the newspaper is deemed special and noteworthy" (Len-Rios et al., 2005, p. 154). Although the media profess objectivity, the selection process effectively re-presents a particular slant on the story, or one side of the story that necessitates a direct or indirect rejection of any other version of the story. In analyzing the effect of the media selection process, Tiffen (1997) raises the concern that "news-gathering routines and the peculiar nature of newsworthiness mean that news will always fail any test of representativeness applied to it" (p. 200). Therefore, the process of selection within media production makes it inevitable that there will always be exclusions, or a disregard for the concerns, interests and opinions of

certain audience members. For instance, in her study of the *Sports Illustrated –*
Swimsuit Edition, Davis (1992) reveals how media workers involved in the
magazine's special annual edition held a variety of opinions about how audiences
received the magazine. Some media workers argued that the special edition was
unpopular with women and sports enthusiasts because it was unrelated to sport
and therefore unacceptable, while others regarded it as a valuable and successful
part of the magazine's offering to audiences (Davis, 1992). These media worker
assumptions highlight the complexities involved in the decision-making process,
which Hall (1980b) suggests entails a variety of processes that individually and
collectively shape the way that information is constructed and given meaning. For
instance, the way media content is framed, the language used, and the ideas that
are developed to support the message's credibility, reliability and rationality all
have bearing on how meaning is created by audiences. Furthermore, and of real
concern for feminist cultural studies theorists, is the way in which in Western
society the media assume the views of white, middle-class, middle-aged,
heterosexual men as the norm; such that male opinions not only dominate but also
subjugate all other viewpoints (Byerly, 1999; Gallagher, 2001; MacDonald,
1995).

Semiotics as a tool in media production and in the analysis of sports
photographs

Grossberg et al. (2006) maintain that "semiotics is particularly useful in visual
analysis because people often assume that visual images are somehow closer to
reality, as if they were less subject to manipulation and less structured by codes"
(p. 189). Thus, the assumptions that individuals make about the authentic nature
of photographs, particularly those published in newspapers, disregard the
numerous stages of intervention, selection and editing that occur before
publication. Further, although the reading of photographs occurs subconsciously,
semiosis gives rise to a complex process of appraisal and meaning making as
dominant cultural discourses are engaged with and power relations are negotiated.
The signs and symbols featured within photographs are observed, absorbed and
acknowledged as this process of semiosis initially engages media workers in their
assessment of photographs, which are encoded with a preferred meaning. Using
the same processes of induction, abduction and deduction that Peirce identified,

audiences then decode the published photograph (Barthes, 1977; Bignell, 2002; Fiske, 1990; O'Donnell, 2005b, 2005a; Rose, 2007; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

Photographs provide audiences with a one-dimensional representation that the media have selected, cropped, and generally fine-tuned to fit the space, layout and context of the article, issue or event being communicated (Frosh, 2003; O'Donnell, 2005b; Rowe, 1999). Each facet of the photograph, including its size, layout, background, gesture, motion, camera angle and all other definable characteristics of the image, provides meaning at both denotative and connotative levels of understanding (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Nelson, 1994; O'Donnell, 2005b; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Wenner, 1998; Whannel, 1998). Thus, sports photographs that capture a particular instance draw the audiences' attention towards a series of features that include the type of sport, the athlete(s), the specific moment captured by the photographer, how it has been framed by the text, and the context in which the image is represented. Each photograph is read by media workers and audiences in light of *what* it reveals, *how* and *when* it is presented, *where* it appears, and *why* that particular photograph was chosen over others. In addition, as already described, the text (caption and headline) help embed the preferred media message that the selected photograph is being used to produce. Analysing newspaper photographs, Fuery and Fuery (2003) suggest that:

> Our cultural and individual eye gravitates towards the picture on the front page of the newspaper before the stories outlining and explaining what the picture *is* … this is because within the image, we have already surmised and read enough to be basically informed…. We can recognize instantly what code the image is to be read by, and use the writing that surrounds it for further interpretation and reinforcement of these codes. (p. 97)

Thus, audiences assume much about image representations from their past experiences, including prior knowledge that front page photographs convey specific messages about newsworthiness. Sports photographs represented on the front page and the main sport page frequently feature sporting successes or failure at major sports events, and instances of sports controversy such as injury or drug abuse. These visual signs of triumph or tragedy convey specific messages about sporting personalities and issues that are often regarded as outside of sports news *per se*, which audiences decode in relation to their prior experiences of this type of coverage (Andrews, 2005; Bruce, 2005; Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; McKee,

2001; Rowe, 2000; Vincent et al., 2003). Research has also identified that much of the front page sports coverage relates to discourses of sport, masculinity and nationalism.

Moreover, discourses of sports journalism create patterns in the way in which sporting issues, events and athletes feature in various newspaper sections. Newspaper sections, such as the 'business news', the 'entertainment news', or 'world news' immediately denote for audiences the context of sports stories and their relationship to the accompanying photographs. With the repetitive styles of coverage and standardized layout of photographs, audiences become familiar with and immediately recognize these visual signs that code sports news stories with sports photographs (Bignell, 2002). Newspapers generally have pre-set page formats where sports results, event coverage and previews, features and editorials are grouped together in the main and inside sports pages.

Discourses of photojournalism and the use of photographs

> Through cartoons, pictures and images, among other visual forms, many messages are communicated, which often are stronger than words. This media form can be far more overt than text in highlighting gender prejudices, biases and stereotypes. Images can reflect a society as it is, capturing the dynamic changes and diversity of all, or they can reproduce the believed norm, which provides access to some, but caricatures, objectified and marginalizes others. (MISA & Gender Links, 2003, p. 24)

South African-based media research conducted by MISA & Gender Links (2003) suggests that visual images, such as photographs, are an especially effective and powerful tool in media production. In addition, photographs are a particularly powerful means of constructing preferred media messages with which audiences can socially and culturally identify, due to their strong visual connection to dominant discourses. In relation to sporting representations, photographs are valuable because they are "an important indicator of the emphasis placed on a news story" (Fountaine & McGregor, 1999, p. 120). Researchers suggest that for sports audiences, who are frequently unable to experience the live sporting event, photographs offer fans immediacy and the sensation of 'having been there' via action-filled images that engage and captivate audience attention (Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Duncan, 1990; Rowe, 1999).

A number of media content studies conducted a decade or more ago found that photographs of sportsmen more often captured them in action, whilst sportswomen featured in more submissive, non-sporting or posed, feminine shots (Duncan, 1990, 1992; Knight & Giuliano, 2001). Additionally, passive sports photographs, "in which the athletes were obviously positioned for the camera or were motionless" (Duncan & Messner, 1998, p. 176), were held to help foster traditional, stereotypical ideas that women are desirable, sexual and submissive rather than framing them as serious athletes (Duncan, 1990, 1992; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Vincent et al., 2003; Vincent et al., 2002). More recent research has examined how sportswomen are featured in fewer images, where they are depicted in passive, feminine and sexualized poses, as well as other types of representations that visually convey gender difference as a means of marginalizing women's sporting participation (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin et al., 2002; Hardin, Dodd & Chance, 2005; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Jones, 2006; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Mason & Rail, 2006; Nelson, 1994; Rowe, 1999; Rowe, McKay & Miller, 2000). In addition, newspaper studies reveal that photographs of sportswomen are often accompanied by little or no text, and that they are used as a means of attracting male audiences to the sports pages (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin et al., 2005; Inness, 2004; Jones, 2006; Nelson, 1994; Rowe, 1999).

The power of photographs to convey meaning and worth

News photographers are primarily concerned with ensuring that their photographs are selected for publication, a process which requires that images conform to media norms and standards (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). In addition, the physical newspaper page layout and the specific page or section placement of photographs are all strategically predetermined to capture audience attention (Bignell, 2002). Newspaper photographs that are featured on the front page are deemed more newsworthy or important as they are strategically located in the prime position to capture the reader's initial attention and interest (Fuery & Fuery, 2003; Jensen, 1995a; Len-Rios et al., 2005). Gee's (2009) study of French sports production practices reveals how journalists relate front page coverage to "newsworthiness, nationalism and notoriety" (p. 40). Research also suggests that the value of sports photographs is that they visually entertain audiences, which further encourages

those audiences to read the text (Brookes, 2002; Hardin et al., 2002; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003; Rowe, 1999). Here, Rowe (1999) describes the essential charm of sports photographs:

> It is the 'primary' still photographic sports text of the captured sporting moment, though, that first commands our attention – the image that transfixes the reader as they go to turn the page through its sheer visual and emotional power, its capacity to make us wish that we were there – and, even if we were, that we too, had seen it that way. (p. 121)

As Rowe suggests, sports photographs stimulate a range of audience responses. This ability relates to photographs visually conveying a depth of meaning, through the signs and codes captured within an image that prompt audiences to experience feelings and emotions, as a direct result of visually reading and internalizing what is represented as real and tangible (Duncan, 1990). Researchers are therefore interested in establishing the complicity of media workers in the selection of photographs that privilege sportsmen. The taken-for-grantedness of media choices is especially important to understand from a cultural studies perspective, because, as Brookes (2002) points out, "it is the images of sportsmen that we consume daily but don't look at twice which are the most significant in terms of the reproduction of definitions of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 133). The real concern therefore for researchers is the way that audiences assume standard production practices as the norm, such that sport photographs that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation create perceptions about athleticism being synonymous with men and masculinity (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; von der Lippe, 2002). Therefore, "sport photographs that emphasize the otherness of women enable patriarchal ends" (Duncan, 1990, p. 40) through featuring them as passive, feminine and graceful and contrasting this with muscular sportsmen in aggressive sports action, thereby highlighting the incompatibility of discourses of sport with sportswomen and femininity. Moreover, this type of visual narrative reifies gender differences as a natural consequence of biology, rather than being the result of choices made by media workers about including particular types of sports photographs (Hardin et al., 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Lines, 2002; Rowe, 1999, 2000; Rowe et al., 1998, 2000). Therefore, in drawing on discourses of traditional femininity, the media divert attention away from a sportswoman's athletic abilities and achievements and towards her feminine attributes and

physical appearance (Duncan, 1990; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Horne et al., 1999; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Rowe, 1999).

The anchoring of the preferred meaning through captions

Once a published photograph has captured the audience's attention, the surrounding text attempts to frame the context of the photograph in line with the preferred meaning. This anchoring of a photograph's meaning via text is designed to limit polysemy, by creating a means of reading the photograph (Barthes, 1977; Bignell, 2002; Evans & Hall, 1999; Hall, 1997b; Rose, 2001). Duncan (1990) highlights how the content and contexts of sports photographs are developed in media production, which can then be used to support preferred meanings:

> The content includes the physical appearance of athletes, their poses and body positions, facial expressions, emotional displays, and camera angles. The context includes the visual space in which the photo appears, its caption, the surrounding written text, and the title and substantive nature of the article in which the photograph appears. (p. 26)

Newspaper producers do not leave audiences to appraise photographs in line with their implicit, face-value meanings, but rather use text to explicitly suggest the desired reading. Barthes (1977) argues that the caption, "by its very disposition, by its average measure of reading, *appears* to duplicate the image" (p. 26, emphasis added). Yet, Barthes' suggestion that the caption 'appears' to duplicate the image, is a critical indication that this text is specifically employed to effectively limit the audience's reading of the photograph. This textual restriction on the polysemy of the photograph also increases the potential for audiences to assume the preferred media message. While there are never any guarantees that audiences will read the text and photograph together in the intended fashion, researchers nevertheless argue that text helps shape how photographs are given meaning (Bignell, 2002; Rowe, 1999).

Bignell (2002) also highlights how media decision-makers draw on the 'double-messages' inherent in photographs, where the social and cultural signs featured within a photograph are used in relation to both a denotative and connotative level of meaning (Bignell, 2002; Hall, 1980b; Moriarty, 2005; Moriarty & Sayre, 2005). For instance, a sports photograph showing an individual wearing the Silver Fern emblem on sports clothing constructs a number of

messages. Firstly, for any New Zealander reading this photograph it denotes national identity, as the Silver Fern is a symbol worn by a New Zealand national athlete, which also in this case is one aspect of connotation as well, as it implies elite membership of a New Zealand sports team. These types of semiotic readings will be examined in-depth later in this chapter. However, media production processes go beyond the pure denotative and connotative aspects of the photographs in applying captions to signal the preferred meaning and also include various techniques of editing the image to clarify or alter its meaning.

Photographs and the role of technical changes

The process of selecting a photograph entails a defined and deliberate construction in the media process whereby a sport photograph is selected to fit a preferred or intended meaning. Often, however, the media can only fit a photograph to an article after it has been modified or altered to suit the desired meaning. These changes to newspaper sports photographs are generally limited to minor retouching, technical corrections or cropping that support audiences reading the image in a particular way (Fetveit, 1999; Lester, 1996; Rowe, 1999; Scott, 1999) (Bignell, 2002; Duncan, 1990; Lacey, 1998; Nelson, 1994; Rowe, 1999). Rowe (1999) maintains that:

> Like all media texts, sports photographs work through a particular ordering of signs and codes which are part aesthetic, part ideological. They are not innocent records of events – through selection, composition and manipulation (cropping, 'burning', 'brushing' and so on in traditional photography and computer commands in digital photography), sports photographs offer up an account of how the world is (or how the photographer thinks it should be). (p. 120)

The media therefore use photographs to reinforce the often taken-for-granted worldview constructed for audiences. Moreover, the newspaper layout, the colour of the image, the size, and the page on which the photograph is presented all impact on *how* audiences interpret the image and *what* meaning they give to it (Brookes, 2002; Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Len-Rios et al., 2005). Different camera angles, the position of the athlete, whether it is a close-up or a panoramic image, or whether the image captures action or is posed all contribute to the preferred meanings and messages the media develop (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin et al., 2002; Mason & Rail, 2006; Sturken &

Cartwright, 2001). However, these adjustments or alterations to photographs are not necessarily undertaken to change the meaning or create messages that deceive or mislead audiences. For instance, Tagg (1988) highlights that "advanced techniques, and the use of very specialized and delicate equipment, are often necessary in order to produce photographs that are fair and accurate representations of the matters they depict" (p. 98). In order to provide audiences with the best possible photograph of an athlete, event or activity, media production processes may result in an original, substandard image being improved prior to publication, which may include adjustments that darken, lighten or remove sunspots, scratches or any other unacceptable blemishes prior to printing (Burnett, 1995; Tagg, 1988).

The construction of sports news and photographs

Researchers suggest that the media and sports relationship is "inextricably linked together in a symbiotic relationship. These two institutions rely on each other – the mass media sell sport and sport sells the mass media" (Pedersen, 2002, p. 304). Thus, the concomitancy between the media and sport organizations (and athletes) is extremely important, as the media help to popularize sports events as entertainment, while simultaneously supporting the dominant discourses being espoused (Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Pedersen, 2002). The complexity of the power relations between sport and media is highlighted by Kian and Hardin (2009), who argue that sports journalists play a role in the way that sports coverage is framed in relation to discourses of gender. Further, in an analysis of French sport production, Gee (2009) argues that "not only is sports coverage gendered, but so too, it seems, is the process by which it is produced" (p. 21). Moreover, a number of studies also suggest that sports journalists help reinforce gender norms through media messages that articulate sport to masculinity, and that media production operates as a commercialized spectacle and entertainment (Andrews, 2005; Bourgeois, 1995; Creedon, 1998; Kian & Hardin, 2009; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1999; MacNeill, 1998; Whannel, 1998). Sports and sporting events have become increasingly valuable and lucrative for the media to the extent that it is suggested that "sport has become a bankable item" (Gee, 2009, p. 11), not only in relation to its sheer entertainment value (Coakley, 1998; Creedon, 1998; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes,

1997; Whannel, 1998), but also (and of greater significance) due to sport's cultural importance to a broad spectrum of society (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Hargreaves, 1982; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Len-Rios et al., 2005). Rowe (2007) argues that "sport is both a product of, and a key institution within, human societies at all levels" (p. 391), with sport therefore fulfilling various roles in society.

Research reveals that the selection process constructs a hierarchy of sporting preferences, such that media coverage emphasizes certain sports and particular athletes whilst simultaneously ignoring others (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Rowe et al., 1998). Kinkema and Harris (1998) argue that "although media institutions claim to present athletic events objectively, they engage in considerable selective construction and interpretation in the production phase before their programs reach an audience" (p. 32). However, it is not only how media decision-makers select sports, athletes and an event that is of concern to researchers, but rather the way "they also provide us with definitions of what has been selected. They interpret events for us, provide us with frameworks of meaning in which to make sense of the event" (Clarke & Clarke, 1982, p. 69). Therefore, the context and framing of sports news is also a critical part of the media selection process and one in which media decision-makers play a powerful role (Billings & Eastman, 2002; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Coakley, 1998; Giulianotti, 2005; Louw, 2001; McCullagh, 2002). Rowe (2007) argues that "the sports press is implicated in the active promotion of a hierarchy that results in saturation coverage of a small number of sports and the advanced neglect of most others, despite their substantial popular support bases" (p. 400). Therefore, media selection controls not only what audiences are exposed to but their choices also help construct perceptions about the athlete or sports selected (Billings & Eastman, 2002; McCullagh, 2002). Through promoting sports events and framing them in a particular way, the media attempt to capture audience attention. Studies suggest that this is achieved through the media actively hyping the event and building the competitive challenge, in order to create audience appeal and to entertain mass audiences (Andrews, 2005; Coakley, 1998; Hardin & Shain, 2005, 2006; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1999; Rowe, 2007). Whilst the media focuses on one event or athlete, attention is diverted away from others.

Production practices that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation

Production practices in sport media that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation convey the perception that idealized sporting attributes and athleticism are linked to physical strength, muscularity and power. Moreover, these characteristics are traditionally associated with sportsmen rather than sportswomen (Brookes, 2002; Bruce, 1995; Bryson, 1990; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin et al., 2005; Hargreaves, 1982, 1993; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; McGregor, 2000; Pedersen, 2002; Rowe, 1999). For instance, Harris and Clayton (2002) argue that the "media constructs and maintains masculine ideals in sport by highlighting those characteristics which are traditionally associated with men, while maintaining that women do not display the same attributes" (p. 400). Discourses of sports journalism therefore develop sports coverage in relation to perceptions that sport and athleticism are inherently masculine (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Trujillo, 1995). Moreover, the media positively reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation by contrasting it with the sportswomen–femininity articulation, which focuses attention on the perception that feminine attributes are less meaningful in sports, suggesting that sportswomen are therefore less capable athletes (Brookes, 2002; Davis, 1997; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Horne et al., 1999; Kinnick, 1998). Trujillo (2000), for instance, argues that "media representations of sport reproduce and reaffirm the features of hegemonic masculinity … [to] link them positively with cultural values and … condemn alternative features of opposing gender ideologies on preferences such as feminism" (p. 17). Thus, the media employ gender as an important differentiator in sports production.

Although this positive reinforcement of men's sport in discourses of sport journalism appears to be a form of active discrimination against women's sport, some researchers embrace the position that:

> Sexism in the sports media is not primarily a function of the prejudices of individual journalists, male or female. Rather, this bias is woven into journalists' beliefs about the makeup of the news and the practices they follow to uncover the news. (Theberge & Cronk, 1986, p. 202)

Here, the suggestion is that, like news journalists (Hall, 1988), sports journalists are not consciously or deliberately sexist per se; but rather, discourses of sports journalism adhere to dominant discourses of gender and wider discursive practices that favour men. This privileging results in the media reinforcing the sports–masculinity articulation, prioritizing men's sport whilst simultaneously marginalizing and undermining women's sport (Hardin & Shain, 2005; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1999; Miller & Miller, 1995; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). These findings also highlight the belief that the ideal sports 'beat' is that of a few elite men's sports, which encourages a premium being placed on male sports coverage by journalists (Gee, 2009; Lowes, 1999; McGregor, 2000; Rowe, 2007; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). In this way, dominant discourses of sport and sports journalism encourage a self-fulfilling prophecy that men's sport and sportsmen *are* the most valued and interesting (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1997, 1999; McGregor, 2000). Although sports media production is based on perceptions of what makes good sports news, perceived public interest, and ideas of sports newsworthiness, media decision-making is subject to the workings of power and dominant discourses of sport and gender (Curran et al., 1988; Lowes, 1997, 1999; McGregor, 2000; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). For instance, Rowe (2007) argues that, "the sports beat occupies a difficult position in the news media. It is economically important in drawing readers (especially male) to general news publications, and so has the authority of its own popularity" (p.400). This suggests that for media organizations, the economic imperatives linked to sports extend beyond the sports pages, as sports attracts audiences to the rest of the media offering.

The symbolic annihilation of sportswomen in media production

The overwhelming media focus on men's sport and sportsmen seems likely to result in audiences accepting the sports–masculinity articulation as the norm. The lack of visibility of sportswomen within media also influences the assumptions audiences make about women's sport and sportswomen (Hardin et al., 2002; Jensen, 1995d; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Len-Rios et al., 2005), which in turn "creates a *false* impression of women's athleticism by denying the reality of the modern female athlete" (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 36). From the early 1980s,

sports sociologists utilizing content analysis to study the sports media have focused "primarily on women athletes, specifically on the ways female athleticism has been marginalized and devalued by sports discursive and production practices that take manly prowess as the norm" (Sabo & Jansen, 1998, p. 205). Although in Western society over the last four decades there have been some major political and social changes for women that have initiated greater sports participation, such as Title IX in the United States, there are still limited opportunities and fewer incentives for sportswomen than for sportsmen (Hargreaves, 1982, 2000; Messner, 2002; Messner & Sabo, 1990a; Sandoz & Winans, 1999). Sportswomen therefore continue to struggle to have their everyday sporting achievements acknowledged and their athleticism taken seriously by the sports media (Daddario, 1998; Hargreaves, 1982, 1993, 1997, 2000; Knoppers & Elling, 2004).

Numerous sports studies refer to Gerbner's 1976 concept of '*symbolic annihilation*', which conveys media disregard for women in general. The term *symbolic annihilation* is particularly well suited to conveying how sports production fails to recognize women's sport or advance sportswomen's accomplishments, and has been extensively used over the last three decades in sports research (Billings & Eastman, 2002; Brookes, 2002; Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010b; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Creedon, 1998; Daddario, 1998; Duncan et al., 1994; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Hargreaves, 1982; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; McGregor, 2000; Theberge & Cronk, 1994; Vincent et al., 2003). Gaye Tuchman (1978a) argued that women experience different scenarios in respect of news media coverage, including that "relatively few women are portrayed … women who are portrayed are condemned. Others are trivialized …or they are dismissed … they are subjected to *symbolic annihilation*" (p. 8). In sport, these conditions of condemnation, trivialization and omission not only give rise to media undermining women's sporting achievements, but also facilitate the development of negative perceptions through stereotyping, gender marking and emphasizing biological gender differences within sports reporting that detracts from women's athletic accomplishments or ability. These three aspects will be examined more closely below.

Sports media decision-makers perpetuate this '*annihilation*' by not only trivializing, distorting, ignoring or marginalizing the achievements of sportswomen, but also by overlooking the appeal of women's sport (Daddario,

1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Mikosza, 1997). As Creedon (1998) notes, "content studies have argued that female athletes are invisible, ignored and denigrated in the media and the dearth of women's sports coverage functions to symbolically annihilate their existence" (p. 92). Therefore, media practices that focus on gender differences and stereotyping of athletes play a pivotal role in creating perceptions of the newsworthiness and value of sportsmen and sportswomen (Brookes, 2002; Cahn, 1994; Creedon, 1994; Daddario, 1998; Davis, 1997; Hargreaves, 1993; Horne et al., 1999; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). The media then draw on these differentiations to justify the predominant coverage given to a few professional men's sports and sportsmen. When sportswomen are given media attention, coverage tends to focus on sportswomen as physically attractive women, on medal winning sportswomen, or on unique, unexpected or controversial aspects of women's participation (Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Gee, 2009; Kinkema & Harris, 1998). In more recent sports media research that examines issue of gender, there has been a move away from the term 'symbolic annihilation', as focus is given to establishing how sportswomen are actually represented when they are given media attention. This has frequently resulted in highlighting the ways in which media create ambiguity or are ambivalent in their coverage of sportswomen.

Sports production draws on discourses of nationalism to encourage national pride and patriotism

There have been few studies that have examined how media production processes are managed and coordinated during major international sporting events, such as the Olympics. These investigations have examined the Canadian Broadcasting of the World Cup skiing coverage (Gruneau, 1989), coverage of the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Games and the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics (MacNeill, 1996, 2001), and New Zealand television coverage of the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games (Silk, 1999). During these studies, production processes were seen to draw on aspects of national identity to reveal that these special sporting events are mediated differently to normal, everyday sports media production. For instance, Silk and Amis (2000) suggest that "major sporting events such as the Olympic Games are symbolically transformed in the production process" (p. 270). These changes highlight that when discourses of sport are

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intersected by the sports–nationalism articulation, media production practices are modified to feature a diverse range of athletes and sports and develop sports news in such a way that "the audience is primarily interested in 'our side' winning" (Bassett, 1984, p. 19). In addition, researchers also suggest that during major events the media's nationalistic fervor is encouraged through singling out a few potential medal winners, therefore encouraging what has been referred to as '*performance biased*' coverage (Urquhart & Crossman, 1999). Yet despite the apparent change in media coverage during major events, researchers also highlight that regardless of the performance and medal winning achievements of sportswomen, sports production continues to privilege men's sports and sportsmen (Billings & Angelini, 2007; Bruce, 2005; Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Hardin et al., 2002; Hardin & Shain, 2006; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Lines, 2002; Milkie, 2002; Wensing et al., 2004).

Research on media coverage of major events reveals that the media position national athletes as carrying the hopes of the nation with them by reinforcing the sports–nationalism articulation (Jones, 2006; Keech, 2004; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Smith, 2004; Smith & Porter, 2004; von der Lippe, 2002; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004). Major events provide sports audiences with uncharacteristic media coverage that helps encourage national enthusiasm and competitive interest through rallying national pride (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Kinnick, 1998; Wensing, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004). Harris and Clayton (1998) maintain that the media place "a high level of expectancy upon on the backs of the nation's sports teams, radiating a patriotic, masculine vibe" (p. 42). Embodied within national sporting culture, sporting masculinity is symbolically expressed by the media as the nation doing battle with the opposition; communicating athletes' performances using warlike metaphors such as 'conquering/ massacre the opposition', 'battle-weary heroes', and 'fighting/ bombing the foes of the field of play' (Keech, 2004; Pedersen, 2002; Smith, 2004; Smith & Porter, 2004; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004; von der Lippe, 2002). Moreover, the media use of '*us*' and '*our*' athletes, as opposed to '*them*' and '*their*' athletes, draws attention to national identity, unique characteristics and dominant national values (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Hargreaves, 2000; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Maguire, 1999; Rowe et al., 1998; Tudor, 1998; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al.,

2004). In one New Zealand study it was suggested that "the silver fern … and the *haka*[7] have consequently provided specific symbols of New Zealand identity and a rallying point for young and old New Zealanders" (Edwards, 2007, p. 178). The media draw attention to tangible and intangible signs and symbols known to evoke nationalistic pride. Moreover, for New Zealand audiences and athletes at major events and those experiencing the mediated event, the haka is specifically representative of a unique 'Kiwi' traditional challenge and celebration of sporting success. For instance, Edwards (2007) maintains that "during the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, the use of the *haka*, as a powerful identifier and cultural symbol, attracted a great deal of media attention" (p. 183). Furthermore, the media utilize the uniqueness of traditional customs and easily identifiable symbols featured in sports photographs that draw attention to national athletes (Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010a; Burnett, 2001b; Edwards, 2007; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; MacNeill et al., 2001; Smith, 2004; Williams, Lawrence & Rowe, 1985; von der Lippe, 2002). Yet to understand precisely *how* media production practices and choices are featured, it is important to evaluate *what* is produced and which representations are featured in newspapers. The most effective method to do this is via a content analysis, which quantitatively appraises how sports photographs are a manifestation of the 'preferred message'.

Content analysis

Although scholars have long debated the usefulness and value of content analysis, one of its values is that "it provides important 'hard data' to convince policy and programme decision-makers about the need for change and to promote public awareness and debate" (Bruce et al., 2010, p. 29). Most existing sports media content analyses have drawn on liberal feminist theorizing, with the belief that if gender inequalities are exposed, change will naturally occur. Yet after almost 30 years of 'proving' that media coverage predominantly focuses on sportsmen, very

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[7] The *haka* is more popularly believed to be a Maori cultural war-dance that has been assimilated into the New Zealand sporting environment. The performance of the haka in sport has its roots in early 1900s rugby union, but has more recently come to be used during a range of sporting events where national identity is exhibited. In a sporting context, the haka is drawn on to motivate both athletes and audiences, as a challenge to the opposition, and as a means of celebrating victory (Edwards, 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Smith, 2004).

little change has actually transpired (Bruce et al., 2010; McKay, Messner & Sabo, 2000; Miloch et al., 2005; Sabo, Gray & Moore, 2000). Content analysis supports greater understanding of discourses of journalism in "rigidly categorizing or quantifying aspects of a text (or image) we can more readily observe patterns that we otherwise would have missed" (Grossberg et al., 2006, p. 186). The value, therefore, of undertaking content analysis of sports photographs in this research, is that it has the potential to reveal commonalities, anomalies and ambiguities across a broad spectrum of photographs, which an analysis of only a few or small sample of photographs could not expose.

Despite the traditional link between content analysis and liberal feminist theorizing, this is by no means the only theoretical framework under which content analysis can be used to obtain greater insight into the discursive power relations of sports, media and gender. Moreover, utilizing content analysis in conjunction with feminist cultural studies theorizing to examine how gender and power are conveyed in sports photographs not only quantifies *what* is produced, but more importantly reveals *how* researchers can "build a strong or persuasive argument" about media production techniques and media worker's perceptions, an argument that Parameswaran (2005) suggests is lacking in traditional quantitative analysis of journalism research (p. 200). A critical part of this review therefore, is to establish the trends and themes in the gendered nature of sports photographs and sports coverage in general.

In New Zealand, the majority of studies examining issues of gender discrimination in the media have used content analysis (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c, 2006a, 2006b; Chapman, 2002b; Cooper, 1981; Cox, n.p.; Ferkins, 1992; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; Jones, 2006; McGregor, 1993, 2000; McGregor & Fountaine, 1997; Wensing, 2003). A number of research articles have focused on qualitative analysis of issues of gender (Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Cameron & Kerr, 2007; Cosgriff, 1983; Crooks & Palmer, 1983; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; McGregor, 1993; McGregor & Melville, 1995; Thorpe, 2007), or examined issues of national identity (Bruce & Chapman, 2006a, 2006b; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Edwards, 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Richards, 1999; Smith, 2004; Thompson, 2003; Thomson & Sim, 2007; Wensing, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004). A few other studies have investigated sporting masculinity (Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Keane, 1999; Pringle, 2007; Richards,

1999) and the role played by journalists in the production of sports news (Bruce et al., 2007; Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Keane, 1999; Lealand, 2004; McGregor, 2000; Pringle, 2007; Silk, 1999; Smith, 2004; Walters & Wiebe, 2001). Problematically however, few sports studies in New Zealand or elsewhere have investigated how gender differences are expressed within photographs or what meanings and messages are infused within sports photographs (Hardin et al., 2002; Lee, 1992; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Pedersen, 2002). The current study thus makes an important contribution to the field by examining the content, placement and proportional representation of photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen, the size and type of images featured in newspapers, and the preferred messages that the selected photographs convey in relation to their target audience. In addition, using two different periods of analysis provided an opportunity to establish the similarities and differences in the way that media feature athletes during a major international sporting event, as opposed to during everyday coverage, and any pattern in those representations.

In the study of photographs, researchers use semiotic analysis to help identify and make sense of the visual 'signs' that produce and privilege particular meanings (Horne et al., 1999; Tomaselli, 1996). As already discussed in Chapter 2, Peirce's semiotics focuses on the way in which signs are used as a visual trigger, rather than as a verbal or textual prompt that give something meaning (Moriarty, 2005). As a research method, semiotic analysis thus permits a depth of understanding that identifies meaning beyond what is apparent at first glance within a photograph. This method of unraveling media messages integrates the social and cultural nature of signs and how meanings and interpretations are shaped in relation to both internal and external influences, such as dominant discourses and experiences (Bignell, 2002; Jensen, 1995d; Tomaselli, 1996). Deconstructing the process of semiosis allows the researcher to establish how sports photographs are read in relation to their signs, objects and interpretants to create meaning and to form an understanding about what is featured in the image and surrounding text. Therefore, although few content studies specifically mention semiotics or go into a detailed semiotic analysis of particular text or photographs, collection processes inherently entail the researcher reading the content, as they assess and evaluate the data for inclusion, in an internalized and

automated fashion that mirrors the process of semiosis (Jensen, 1995d; Short, 2007).

The production of sports photographs and the patterns of representation

Researchers suggest there are a variety of ways that athletes are represented in sports photographs, each of which conveys meaning. In a number of sports media content analyses the types of sports photographs published were analyzed, revealing that sports action photographs feature more frequently than any other type of image. Moreover, in a number of studies, the gender-based ratios of the various types of images reflected minimal percentage variance. For example, the gender-based results of a global sports media study of the 2004 Olympic Games are reflected in Table 1. These percentages are based on the proportion of photographs by gender and suggest, on face value, that sportswomen in Olympic coverage are featured as being as active as sportsmen. Yet these percentage-based results do not focus on the actual number of action photographs, which reveals an altogether different picture.

Table 1. Global study of the types of Olympic sports photographs by gender.

Countries (n=10)	Sport action (%)		Sport related (%)		Non-sport (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Canada	49.8	46.1	32.2	31.9	6.8	8.3
England[2]	60.0	62.0	21.0	18.0	14.0	10.0
Germany	53.1	50.5	28.3	36.9	18.6	12.6
Hungary[3]	46.2	31.9	46.2	36.2	0.0	6.4
New Zealand	52.6	51.7	26.3	32.2	11.4	11.1
South Africa[3]	31.7	31.1	66.7	55.5	0.8	11.7
South Korea	36.5	55.3	35.6	60.0	28.0	44.4
Spain	42.9	48.3	35.2	32.9	14.3	7.6
Sweden	61.0	50.0	21.0	27.0	15.0	22.0
USA	66.4	65.4	32.9	25.6	0.4	5.9
Average [1]	**47.3**	**46.3**	**32.6**	**34.3**	**13.1**	**15.4**

[1] Percentages may not total 100% because other categories of images, such as 'medals' or 'other', are not included in this table.
[2] These are estimates drawn from the figures presented by the authors.
[3] These percentages are from the total newspaper coverage.
(Hovden, Bruce & Markula, 2010, p. 298)

For instance, the South African newspaper results reveal that 31.7% of photographs of sportswomen featured them in sports action shots, remarkably similar to sportsmen, where 31.1% were of sports action. However, for

sportswomen this percentage figure relates to 41 photographs, whereas there were 125 sports photographs of sportsmen. Therefore, although the percentage differential was less than 1%, in reality sportsmen featured in over three times as many sports action photographs than sportswomen (Scott-Chapman, 2010). Similarly, although not as pronounced as within the South African coverage, the New Zealand results revealed that there were 93 sports action photographs of sportsmen (51.7%) as opposed to 60 of sportswomen (52.6%) (Bruce & Scott-Chapman, 2010). This suggests that although media workers draw on discourses of sports journalism, and sport action photographs feature most prominently for both sportsmen and sportswomen, they do so within traditional gender-based and gender-biased parameters, where photographs of sportsmen continue to predominate.

Placement of sports photographs

Media research also acknowledges that media practices and routines, such as the placement and size of newspaper photographs, convey meaning and value (Bruce, 2005; Duncan, 1990; George, Hartley & Paris, 2001; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Mason & Rail, 2006; Rowe, 2000; Vincent et al., 2003). The media position sports photographs in newspaper pages to attract audience attention, particularly front page sports photographs. Content analysis of photographs of sportsmen during major events reveals that they appeared more frequently in "high profile areas" (Mason & Rail, 2006, p. 34), such as on the front page and on the main sports page. Photographs of sportswomen "received more space in the middle sections of the sports pages" (Mason & Rail, 2006, p. 34), suggesting that these images are less valued and are of supplementary importance to the main sport pages, which feature the 'real' sporting attraction, men's sports and sportsmen. Hence, more frequently representing male athletes in these prominent pages of the newspaper suggests their achievements are more newsworthy than those of female athletes (Andrews, 2005; Bruce, 2005; Fuery & Fuery, 2003; Len-Rios et al., 2005; McKee, 2001; Serra, 2005; Urquhart & Crossman, 1999; Vincent et al., 2003).

Content analysis of sports news and gender

When examining the content of *everyday* newspaper sports coverage based on gender, little appears to have changed nationally and internationally over the last 30 years (e.g., Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Capranica et al., 2005; Hardin et al., 2005; Jones, 2006; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Lowes, 1997; Mason & Rail, 2006; McGregor, 2000; Pemberton & Shields, 2004). In many respects, the content and context of New Zealand sport media mirrors much of broader Western media. In part, this is due to ownership of the majority of New Zealand media organizations by offshore media organizations, adherence to international standards of media production and 'inter-media agenda setting' (Golan, 2006). Although New Zealanders occupy most of the media worker and editorial roles, international professional practices and qualifications help to shape standardized newspaper formats, reporting styles and techniques. Much of New Zealand's sports media research on gender has been performed using content analysis and reflects much of what has been internationally revealed about sports media favouring sportsmen at the expense of sportswomen (Ferkins, 1992; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; McGregor, 2000; McGregor & Melville, 1995; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). These studies have included a number of newspaper analyses (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; McGregor, 2000; McGregor & Melville, 1995).

Coverage focusing on gender-based appropriateness of sports for athletes

Much of early sports media research in the 1970s and 1980s that focused on gender examined which sports the media focused on and the types of messages that were preferred through this coverage in relation to these privileged sports. A range of studies suggest that sports are generally assumed to fall into three categories as being gender appropriate, inappropriate, or neutral (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Cooper, 1981; Duncan & Brummett, 1989; Gallagher, 1981; Hargreaves, 1982; Metheny, 1972b; Nelson, 1988; Tuchman, 1978a). This categorization is based on traditional beliefs about the inherent nature of gender difference and discourses of sport and gender, which suggest that sports which require physical strength, contact, aggression and power align more closely with masculinity and

are therefore male-appropriate (and female-inappropriate) (Bryson, 1990; Duncan & Brummett, 1989; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hargreaves, 1993; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Messner, 1994; Sabo, 1994). Labelling sports that involve "bodily contact, conflict, or face-to-face opposition, or those requiring heavy equipment, padded uniforms, or protective armor" (Daddario, 1998, p. 11) as inappropriate for sportswomen helps retain the dominant belief that sports are inherently masculine and therefore more appropriate for men or normalized as male activities.

Over the years, sports researchers have used Metheny's (1965) original classification of gender appropriate sports to detail what constitutes female-appropriate or female-inappropriate sports. Although reflecting many similarities in gender attributes and ideals of femininity internationally, these lists are by no means definitive or fixed (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010b; Daddario, 1998; Hargreaves, 1993; MacNeill, 1994; Metheny, 1965; Vincent et al., 2003; Vincent et al., 2002). The problems researchers encounter as they compile these lists are country-based cultural discrepancies that reflect different dominant beliefs about sports and gender appropriateness (see von der Lippe, 2002). Thus, sports are subjectively categorized as being appropriate or inappropriate in relation to a particular country's dominant discursive practices. For instance, researchers highlight that media coverage of sportswomen tends to reinforce the sportswomen–femininity articulation, most noticeably in individual sports that emphasize feminine attributes of grace and aestheticism. Many of these female-appropriate sports are frequently referred to as 'women's sports' due to this gender-based discursive construction. For instance, sports such as gymnastics, diving and figure-skating help draw attention to sportswomen as *women* rather than as *athletes,* through the clothing worn by the athletes and the techniques aspects of sports themselves, which require and reward grace and artistic expression (Beisser, 1972; Bignell, 2002; Davis, 1997; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Feder-Kane, 2000; Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1994; Hart, 1972; Koivula, 1999; Markula et al., 2010; Messner & Sabo, 1990a, 1990b; Metheny, 1972b, 1972a; Vincent et al., 2003). Further, researchers suggest that the media focus more on women's individual sports rather than team sports because team sports generally involve physical contact and opposition, which are also deemed to be masculine characteristics (Brookes, 2002; Daddario, 1998; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin

et al., 2002; Hargreaves, 1993; Pirinen, 1997; Vincent et al., 2003; Vincent et al., 2002).

In an examination of British newspaper coverage, Harris and Clayton (2002) maintain that "women gain media coverage in sport, so long as they remain within the confines of appropriate participation, as authorized by contemporary male opinion upon what is suitable" (p. 405). Therefore, although not all researchers agree on all aspects of Metheny's (1965) early work on the gender classification of sport, many of the principles of gender appropriateness or inappropriateness continue to be a part of existing cultural sports discourses. In addition, studies suggest that media stereotyping of sportswomen encourages particular audience perceptions of athletes and sports (Duncan et al., 1994; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003). For example, Feder-Kane (2000) argues that "coverage of women skaters always seems to emphasize women's vulnerability, both emotional and physical, rather than their strength and accomplishments" (p. 220). In stereotyping women's sport, media messages create perceptions about sportswomen that then become entrenched within institutional and cultural norms (Duncan, 1990, 1992; Duncan & Brummett, 1989; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kinkema & Harris, 1998).

Comparing British, Canadian and United States newspaper coverage of female and male athletes competing in the Centennial Olympic Games, Vincent et al. (2002) identify how "female athletes competing in the so-called 'female-appropriate' individual sports such as gymnastics, swimming, and tennis were highly represented in newspaper articles and especially photographs" (p. 326). Their findings further reveal that the media focus greater attention on feminine sports. Other studies have also identified that despite superior performances by sportswomen in sports regarded as gender inappropriate, the lack of media exposure is based on perceptions that their participation challenges dominant discourses of gender and potentially undermines the masculine status of these male-appropriate sports (Markula et al., 2010; Pirinen, 1997; Vincent et al., 2003). Similarly, an investigation of USA media coverage of interscholastic athletes revealed that 67.2% of all photographs reflected sportsmen, while 32.8% were of sportswomen, and that athletes were depicted in stereotypical photographs that emphasized gender differences (Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003).

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Sports media privilege sportsmen

A body of work has focused on quantitatively analysing sports media content to measure the amount of space and number of articles in relation to the athlete's gender. The principal findings from these studies reveal that the majority of coverage focuses attention on men's sports and sportsmen, while women's sporting achievements in Western media typically receive between six and 12 % of the total sports coverage (Bruce, 2006, 2008; Bruce & Chapman, 2006b, 2006a, 2006c; Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010a; Capranica et al., 2005; Cooper, 1981; Cox, n.p; Duncan, 1990; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Ferkins, 1992; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; Hardin et al., 2002; Hardin et al., 2005; Jones, 2006; Kinnick, 1998; Lee, 1992; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Mason & Rail, 2006; McGregor, 1993; McGregor & Fountaine, 1997; Pedersen, 2002; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003; Pemberton & Shields, 2004; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Vincent et al., 2003; Vincent et al., 2002; Wensing, 2003).

In a recently completed international research project during the 2004 Olympic Games that drew on 18 individual country studies, the combined results revealed that over half of all sport photographs (56.4%) featured sportsmen (see Table 2). However, 84% of sports photographs representing non-Olympic sports during the same period featured men's sport and sportsmen, while only 7.3% of the photographs focused on sportswomen. This result is consistent with the findings of most other studies of everyday and non-major event coverage.

Table 2. Average percentages of sports photographs for the overall project.

Type of Coverage	Female Photos Average %	Male Photos Average %
Non-Olympic	7.3	84.0
Olympic	32.3	49.7
Total	**23.7**	**56.4**

Table adapted to show only the photograph results
(Hovden et al., 2010, p. 290)

Sportsmen are prominent in New Zealand everyday media coverage

The majority of findings from quantitative studies of everyday sports media coverage in New Zealand highlight that the media focus the majority of attention

on men's sports. A comprehensive overview of New Zealand content analyses of sports media coverage between 1980 and 2007 is presented in Table 3 (Bruce et al., 2007), revealing persistent marginalisation of women's sporting achievements. These studies highlight that the typical range of newspaper coverage for sportswomen is between four and 14% of the total, which Bruce and Scott-Chapman (2010) describe as evidence of "the ongoing failure of the New Zealand sports media to recognise and highlight female athletic achievement" (p. 276).

Table 3. New Zealand everyday media coverage between 1980 and 2007.

Year of Research	Media analysed	Male %	Female %	Mixed/ Neutral[1] %	Source
1980	2 newspapers	83[2]	11	6	Cooper (1981)
1980	1 newspaper	88	13	-	Patterson (cited in Cooper, 1981)
1984	1 TV news	69	13	18	O'Leary & Roberts (1984)
1987	4 newspapers	83	9	8	Aston (1987)
1987	1 Sunday newspaper	88	5	7	Media Women (cited in McGregor & Melville, 1993)
1989	2 newspapers	92	8	-	Snell (1989, cited in Ferkins, 1992b)
1989	1 TV	89	11	-	Snell (1989, cited in Ferkins, 1992b)
1991	2 newspapers	91	8	-	The Hillary Commission (cited in Ferkins, 1992b)
1992	6 newspapers	76	12	12	McGregor (1994), McGregor & Melville (1993)
1992	2 TV news	79	9	12	McGregor (1994)
1993	1 TV show	82	8	10	McGregor & Melville (1995)
1996	6 newspapers	80	4	16	McGregor & Fountaine (1997)
1998	6 newspapers	74	11	15	Fountaine & McGregor (1999)
2002	1 newspaper	75	14	11	Chapman (2002)
2004	1 newspaper	82	13	4	Alexander (2004)
2005	1 TV news	95	3	2	Shanks (2005)
2007	4 newspapers	86	5	9	Chapman (2007)
Average %		**83**	**9**	**10**	

1 This column contains mixed coverage of both men and women and neutral coverage of stories such as reports on security preparations, doping controls and the status of various stadia. The average is calculated only across those studies that included this category. As a result the overall averages columns total more than 100%.

2 All percentages have been rounded to whole numbers. As a result the total may range between 99% and 101%.

(Bruce et al, 2007, p. 160)

Although the majority of the content analyses in Table 3 examined newspapers, the results illustrate how men's sports are emphasized in New Zealand media, averaging 83% of all coverage. Women's sports coverage varied for all forms of media ranging between 3% and 14% within individual studies, but averaged 9% across the sample. This highlights "the structural inequity of press coverage" (Fountaine & McGregor, 1999, p. 124) which New Zealand sportswomen face. Moreover (as reflected in Table 4), there have only been a limited number of New Zealand content analyses that integrate sports photographs (Chapman, 2002a; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; McGregor, 1993; McGregor & Fountaine, 1997).

Table 4. New Zealand newspaper coverage of everyday sports photographs based on year and gender of athlete

Research period	Newspapers #	Male %	Female %	Mixed/ Neutral%	References
1992	6	75	17.2	7.8	(McGregor & Melville, 1993)
1996	6	87	8.4	4.6	(McGregor & Fountaine, 1997)
1998	6	81.2	14.3	4.5	(Fountaine & McGregor, 1999)
2002	1	89.6	9.4	1	(Chapman, 2002a)
Average %		**83.2**	**12.3**	**4.5**	

The results from four New Zealand content analyses of newspaper sports photographs reveal that sportsmen featured in more than 8 out of every 10 everyday sports photographs (83.2%). These findings are similar to those presented in Table 3 above, however on average sportswomen were given greater focus in photographs (12.3%) than in sports news articles (9%).

The media reinforce gender difference through the sportswomen– femininity articulation

Studies identify how the media use gender to differentiate between athletes, such that coverage of sportswomen frequently focuses on the female body and physical traits that are different to a man's. This results in media coverage of sportswomen objectifying and sexualizing them, and may lead audiences to perceive women's sport as less serious and sportswomen as inferior athletes (Beisser, 1972; Cahn, 1994; Creedon, 1994; Hargreaves, 2000; Hart, 1972; Horne et al., 1999; Kinkema

& Harris, 1998; Rowe, 1999; Sabo & Jansen, 1998). The media practice of stereotyping and sexualizing "female athletes as attractive and feminine shifts attention from their physical prowess to their looks and minimizes the symbolic threat sportswomen pose to male hegemony" (Duncan & Messner, 1998, p. 182). In this way, the media reinforce the sportswoman–femininity articulation, which emphasizes their physical appearance in relation to dominant ideals of femininity. Studies highlight that media workers select photographs of sportswomen that "favor sports that accentuate the beauty of the athlete and the gracefulness of the sport" (Daddario, 1998, p. 17), resulting in images that display "women as physically inferior to men" (Birrell & Theberge, 1994b, p. 346). The media therefore emphasize sportswomen as women first and foremost (Davis, 1997; Hardin et al., 2002; Kinkema & Harris, 1998).

Studies also highlight that sports photographs work to support dominant discourses by visually capturing the ideals that are expressed as social and cultural norms (Duncan, 1990; Fuery & Fuery, 2003; Tagg, 1988). O'Donnell (2005a) argues that "according to Stuart Hall, images are associated with power relations because they determine who is and is not represented and what issues are or are not important" (p. 554). As noted above, sports photographs more frequently reflect sporting masculinity as the norm, which Duncan (1990) suggests supports "patriarchal ideology" (p. 24). Further, these processes do "not simply create images of women or girls, men or boys; they construct differences between females and males and address viewers as though the differences are natural and real" (Duncan, 1990, pp. 24-25). Through selecting sports photographs that visually provide *evidence* of gender differences and athleticism, media workers help reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation. It is therefore not merely the lack of media coverage of sportswomen that is of concern to feminist cultural studies researchers, but also the fact that when sportswomen are featured, the media provide a narrow range of images of them that are linked to discourses of femininity. Media attention focuses on sportswomen's bodies and physical appearance rather than sporting achievements or skills. Birrell and Theberge (1994b) argue that "women are controlled in patriarchal cultures not just through direct control of their bodies, but also through the control of images of their bodies" (p. 345). This statement highlights the powerful role media play as they select representations of sportswomen that more frequently draw attention to

idealized femininity and disregards images of sportswomen who deviate from this ideal. Moreover, the choices media workers make about which photographs to include (and exclude), and how preferred messages are constructed, are fundamentally important components of the circuit of communication.

Furthermore, studies identify the ways in which media convey gender difference in relation to sportswomen, such as sports commentators using a female athlete's first name rather than her surname, or revealing little background or depth in knowledge about the sportswoman being represented (Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Bruce, 1998; Bruce et al., 2007; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Rowe, 2000). Additionally, media frequently present non-sports related coverage of sportswomen. Such coverage often stresses their heterosexuality by referencing a husband, partner or children; includes reference to their domestic responsibilities; features them in photographs that emphasize their bodies and physical appearance; or includes photographs of them in non-sporting feminine clothing (Billings & Angelini, 2007; Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Bruce, 1998; Burnett, 2002; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Harris & Clayton, 2002; MacDonald, 1995; Rowe, 2000; Sabo et al., 2000; Willis, 1994). Sports media studies therefore reveal how the media reinforce gender differences, by telling different stories about sportsmen and sportswomen. These narratives help reinforce the existing cultural articulation of sport and masculinity, and draw attention away from a sportswoman's athletic abilities (Baker & Boyd, 1997; Brookes, 2002; Cashmore, 2000; Daddario, 1998; Davis, 1997; Hardin et al., 2002; Horne et al., 1999; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Sabo & Jansen, 1998).

Gender marking and 'women's sports'

Sports media coverage highlights not only how women's sport is different from men's sport, but also reveals what is different; *gender*. In describing how the media emphasizes gender difference, von der Lippe (2002) argues that "sporting females are often mediated not as doing sport per se, but participating in a special branch of sports: women's sports" (p. 372). Drawing on gender as a distinctive marker in sports, the media focus attention towards an athlete's biological gender difference and only then on their abilities or achievements (Duncan et al., 1994; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; Hardin, 2005; Hardin et al., 2002; Jones, 2006; Kinnick, 1998; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Mason & Rail, 2006; Messner, Duncan

& Willms, 2006; Pedersen, 2002; Theberge & Cronk, 1994; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; von der Lippe, 2002). The sports media *mark* sports in relation to gender, creating a differentiation that emphasizes women's sports as being different from and secondary to men's sports, and describe the sport being participated in using gender attributions, such as *women's* tennis or *women's* soccer. This marking of a sport in relation to the gender of players is associated predominantly with women and subsequently results in shaping an opinion about the newsworthiness and value of the featured sport (Brookes, 2002; Bruce et al., 2007; Capranica et al., 2005; Daddario, 1998; Duncan et al., 1994; George et al., 2001; Hall, 1997a; Macey, 2005; Sabo & Jansen, 1992; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Macey (2005) maintains that "gender marking involves using terms to identify or 'mark' women's sporting events; whereas men's sporting events are just "sporting events" (p. 7). This demarcation draws on dominant gender discourses that suggest that sports are by nature male, thereby facilitating the promotion of sporting masculinity as the normative standard. Moreover, this type of differentiation constructs a hierarchy of sports, which Hall (1997a) suggests "only becomes an issue if women as a specific category are in question, when they become discussible as a deviation from the norm" (p. 345). For instance, media coverage of an international men's football event, is conveyed as the 'Football World Cup', automatically linking the event with sportsmen without needing a gender precursor, whereas the same event for women is referred to as the 'Women's Football World Cup', thus highlighting the dependency on gender to distinguish this event being different from and secondary to the original.

The sports media use of gender stereotypes and biological differences
Content analysis of the sports media examines the volume of coverage given to sportswomen and also presents a range of findings about the nature and characteristics of that coverage. As noted, sports photographs of sportswomen are often framed in ways that highlight their femininity and physical appearance rather than their sporting capabilities. Media workers select photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen that convey messages about biological gender differences, such as emphasizing sportswomen's physical feminine appearance and traits and highlighting their traditional cultural and domestic roles as women, mothers, wives and girlfriends (Brookes, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Kinkema

& Harris, 1998; Kinnick, 1998). Highlighting these culturally normative roles refocuses attention on sportswomen's domestic responsibilities and heterosexual identity, as women, rather than on their performance as athletes. For example, Harris and Clayton (2002) highlight how the British press focused on Venus Williams' home life to "divert the audience's attention, from 'Williams the athlete' to 'Williams the woman'" (p. 406). Reframing the focus towards Williams' domestic roles detracts from her athleticism and highlights her biological gender difference – as a woman (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Horne et al., 1999; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; MacNeill, 1994; Theberge, 1994; Willis, 1994).

The media sexually exploit sportswomen for their feminine attributes as a point of biological gender difference. Lenskyj (1998) maintains that "the sexualization of female athletes in sport media serves to consolidate the male / female relationship as superior / inferior, dominator / dominated, and active / passive" (p. 20). This 'sexploitation' subordinates sportswomen and helps maintain a male dominated sporting hierarchy. Moreover, a Unites States study of sportswomen revealed that in depicting idealized femininity, the sports media focus on "icons of white, heterosexual, feminine attractiveness. In 1999 it was Anna Kournikova; in 2004, Maria Sharapova" (Messner et al., 2006, p. 35). Although recent analysis of the media has identified a shift away from obvious sexploitation of sportswomen, particularly in sports photographs, the media continue to contrast gender differences within sports news and photographs.

The media also perpetuate dominant sports discourses that construct sportsmen as more skilled and superior athletes in comparison to women who are seen to have inferior physical capabilities (Dworkin & Messner, 2002; Hardin et al., 2002; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). In addition to structuring sports coverage based on gender difference, Hardin et al. (2002) note that the performances of sportswomen tend to be reported in unflattering ways and as imperfect when compared to sportsmen. In a South African study, for instance, two sports journalists working for different media organizations both made reference to football, the national men's sport, suggesting that women's soccer is less exciting and therefore rarely featured in the newspaper (Serra, 2005). One journalist stated, "the pace is boring and slow", while the other added, "even though women have made gigantic strides in the game, they're still not a pretty sight running after the

round leather ball as compared to men" (Serra, 2005, p. 88). These journalists'
remarks, although commenting on women's soccer, described men's soccer in a
positive light as being interesting and fast paced, whereas women's soccer was
positioned as inferior and different in a negative way. Brookes (2002) further
suggests that "the sports media have tended to marginalise the extent of
participation of women in sport" (p. 126). The process of marginalization also
promotes the idea that women are not as involved or interested in sports as men,
which in turn enables the media to justify reduced exposure for sportswomen as
attention remains firmly focused on male sports (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994;
Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Sabo & Jansen, 1998).

Moreover, although Duncan's (1990) examination of sports photographs
during the 1984 and 1988 Olympics highlights that the majority of photographs
(86%) of sportsmen and sportswomen featured similar characteristics, it is the
way that gender differences are featured in the balance of images (14%) that is
particularly noteworthy. For example, "female athletes are sometimes
photographed in poses that bear a striking resemblance to those of women in soft-
core pornography" (Duncan, 1990, p. 29). Moreover, despite what may be
regarded as a minor disparity between the way that sportsmen and sportswomen
are represented, Duncan's study demonstrated specifically how sports
photographs are a powerful means of conveying discourses of gender, which the
media use to reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation.

Sportswomen who embody unique characteristics

Media studies have identified that when sportswomen feature in increased media
coverage, frequently a few specific sportswomen secure unprecedented attention.
For instance, Jones (2006) argues that greater media coverage of sportswomen is
sometimes the result of "disproportionate treatment of one or more athletes whose
stories were illustrated by one or more pictures" (p. 120). A number of media
content studies have revealed that during major sports events, "women's coverage
is mostly concentrated around a few top female Olympians" (Hovden et al., 2010,
p. 297). A few select athletes, particularly sportswomen, are singled out and
garner more extensive media coverage (Bruce, 2005; Bruce & Saunders, 2005;
Bruce & Scott-Chapman, 2010; Caple, Greenwood & Lumby, 2011;

Claringbould et al., 2004; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Jones, 2006; Scott-Chapman, 2010; Tebbel, 2000; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). For instance, Caple et al (2011) suggest that "news values are framed around well-known individuals who are able to 'brand' themselves for an interested public" (p. 144), whereby this singling out process is not only linked to medal winning performances but is rather attributed to the individual characteristics of a few select sportswomen.

In New Zealand, for example, during the 2004 Athens Olympics, overwhelming media focus was given to cyclist Sarah Ulmer, while in South Africa the media emphasized high jumper Hestrie Cloete (Bruce & Scott-Chapman, 2010; Scott-Chapman, 2010). Scott-Chapman (2010) argues that "despite 41 other South African females competing at the Games, Cloete clearly dominated the coverage; receiving 46.3% of the space given to South African females" (p. 266). For both Cloete and Ulmer, prior to the event the media spotlighted these sportswomen's world championship rankings, emphasized their national identities, and highlighted their popularity as respected athletes.

A number of studies suggest that the upsurge in coverage for a few individual female athletes is attributable to: 1) the physical attractiveness of those female athletes who embody idealized femininity, such as tennis player Anna Kournikova (Bruce, 2005; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Harris & Clayton, 2002); 2) the national significance of a specific athlete, e.g. Australia's Cathy Freeman during the 2000 Olympics (Wensing & Bruce, 2003); and 3) spotlighting potential medal winners and record breakers, e.g. New Zealand's Sarah Ulmer at the 2004 Olympic Games (Bruce & Chapman, 2005, 2006c, 2006b, 2006a; Rowe et al., 1998). Although point 1) reveals how discourses of journalism and gender influence the choices media workers make, points 2) and 3) reveal how the media reinforces the sports–nationalism articulation, framing sportswomen in terms of a variety of discourses, although the emphasis more frequently draws attention to national identity and patriotism. For example, although Cathy Freeman was not the only Australian woman to win a medal at the 2000 Olympics, the media emphasized her success as representing not only an Australian national victory, but also as evidence of positive race relations in Australia given Freeman's cultural identity as an Aboriginal athlete (Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Furthermore, Freeman's achievements occurred during an important era for Australians, where many prominent politicians publicly apologized for the exploitation, abuse and

maltreatment of the Aboriginal population. The media thus featured Freeman's triumph as positively engendering Australian unity and pride. In some situations, increased coverage of sportswomen can be attributed to more than one of these three points. For instance, New Zealand cyclist Sarah Ulmer is described in research as invoking both a sense of national identity *and* idealized femininity, which has resulted in greater media coverage of her, particularly since she also won an Olympic gold medal (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Wensing & Bruce, 2003).

Coverage that reinforces the sports–nationalism articulation

A number of researchers have identified how the media 'bend the rules' of coverage during major event in relation to everyday sports coverage (Eastman & Billings, 1999; Mikosza, 1997; Mikosza & Phillips, 1999; Stoddart, 1994a; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Wensing and Bruce (2003) state that "the implication is that bending the rules is most likely to occur in events such as the Olympic Games when national identity overrides all other identity markers such as gender" (p. 388). These changes to the traditional media focus include greater attention being focused on sportswomen (Bruce & Chapman, 2006a; Hardin et al., 2002; Jones, 2006; Lenskyj, 1998; Mikosza, 1997; Urquhart & Crossman, 1999), an inclusion of sports rarely seen outside of major events (Jones, 2006; Mason & Rail, 2006; Vincent et al., 2002), less stereotyped coverage of athletes (Pedersen, 2002; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003), and heightened use of sports battle-talk (Keech, 2004; Smith, 2004). Athletes are no longer featured as individuals competing for themselves, but rather emphasized as national team members, performing for the good of the nation (Lee, 1992; Rowe et al., 1998; Stoddart, 1994a; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; von der Lippe, 2002). The sports photographs media workers select encode signs and symbols of national identity that support preferred messages of national pride, unity, competitiveness and victory (Bruce, 2009; Bruce & Chapman, 2005; Chapman, 2002b; Jones, 2004; Lee, 1992; Rowe et al., 1998; Stoddart, 1994a; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; von der Lippe, 2002; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004).

For many researchers, the way in which the media construct a sense of sporting identity that contributes to patriotism and national identity is of particular interest (Bassett, 1984; Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Bruce, 2005; Clarke & Clarke,

1982; Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Giulianotti, 2005; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Maguire, 1999; Rowe et al., 1998; Smith & Porter, 2004; von der Lippe, 2002; Wensing, 2003). Maguire (1999) suggests that "sport is well placed to contribute to this process of identity-formation… sometimes the nationhood of countries is viewed as indivisible from the fortunes of the national teams of specific sports" (p. 178). Sports editors promote those sports deemed to be nationally important through coverage that emphasizes traditional sporting culture, values and beliefs with which audiences can identify (Bassett, 1984; Giulianotti, 2005; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Rowe, 2000; Wensing et al., 2004). From a New Zealand perspective, Bassett (1984) maintains that "sport is clearly an important outlet for nationalism and patriotic pride" (p. 19). The media capitalize on audiences' sporting passion, sense of pride and patriotic enthusiasm in coverage of international competitions. An international study that examined how national pride is created revealed that one of the greatest contributors to a sense of cultural belonging and national identity for New Zealanders was sport (Evans & Kelley, 2002). The link between New Zealand national pride and international sporting success is said to relate to "feeling good about ourselves in a world context" (Wensing et al., 2004, p. 214). Local media feature medal-winning performances as national successes, highlighting the athlete or team as a product of the nation. In conveying positive nationalistic sentiments, the media help foster a shared sense of pride with which the home audience can identify.

Studies reveal that the media construct national identity by drawing on a range of techniques that focus on the combative nature of international rivalry, on local culture, familiar language, and photographs that engage home audiences (Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Rowe, 2000; von der Lippe, 2002; Wensing et al., 2004). Tudor (1998) suggests that:

> Sports reporting tends to assume that its audience has a 'natural' allegiance to those who 'fly the flag' of the nation state, be they representative national teams, clubs in international competitions, or drivers of Formula One racing cars. By juggling the discourses of difference and identity at these various levels, sports reporters meet the narrative and emotional demands of story-telling, routinely applying frameworks which encourage the relocation of sporting spectacle into extra-sporting discourses of difference. (p. 155)

Sports photographs and news stories bring the nation together by prioritizing sporting challenges and potential victories. Rowe (2000) also argues that "by encouraging a sense of collective purpose between sport and nation in this way, the media can promote public viewing of its programmes as a patriotic practice" (p. 357). The media draw on easily identifiable signs and symbols of identity that encourage audiences to support the national sports team (Bassett, 1984; Clarke & Clarke, 1982; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; von der Lippe, 2002). In Serra's (2005) South African newspaper production study, she was advised by a sports editor that "international news and events such as the World Cup, Wimbledon, Olympics and Golf majors take priority, especially when a South African athlete is performing in such an event" (p. 85). Therefore, the media draw on discourses of nationalism to promote the national team and strengthen a sense of national unity and pride (Giulianotti, 2005; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Turner, 1997b).

A bending of media rules at major events results in increased coverage of sportswomen

Since the 1990s, researchers examining media coverage of major sporting events have identified both an increase in public interest in and a greater focus on sportswomen and women's sport (Bruce, Hovden & Markula, 2010a; Hardin et al., 2002; Jones, 2006; Kinnick, 1998; Stoddart, 1994a; Vincent et al., 2002). This change of media focus is argued to be a more recent trend for sportswomen, who have virtually been ignored during the last century, despite achieving exceptional sporting results (Sabo & Jansen, 1998). Table 5 reflects a number of international content studies of major event coverage from 1991 to 2004. The focus in this table is on newspaper article results only; those studies incorporating sport photographs are examined separately in Table 6. The majority of these studies reflect that although coverage of sportsmen ranges from 32.5% to 86.5%, sportswomen attract from 13.5% to 45.3% of coverage. The broad range of results highlights the inconsistent way that sportswomen feature in media coverage during major events, particularly in the case of the low level of coverage given to sportswomen in the South African research (Serra, 2005).

Table 5. Content analysis of newspaper sports coverage – Article results.

Year of research & focus	Country of study	# News-papers	Male	Female	Other	Reference
1991 World Athletic Champs	UK	7	76%	24%		(Alexander, 1994)
1992 Olympics (All cover)	UK	7	78%	22%		
1996 Summer Olympics	USA	5	54.7%	45.3%		(Kinnick, 1998)
1996 Olympics (All cover)	Canada; UK & USA	6	51.3%	33.9%	14.8%	(Vincent et al., 2002)
1996 Olympics (All cover)	Canada; UK & USA	6	51.3%	33.9%	14.8%	(Vincent et al., 2003)
1996 Olympics & 1997 2 week regular period	Netherlands	3		33%		(Knoppers & Elling, 2004)
2000 (Olympics only)	Belgium, Denmark, France Italy (nat) Italy (sport)	20	45% 51% 63% 62.3% 57.1%	32% 37.4% 34.2% 28% 20.3%	23% 11.6% 2.8% 9.7% 22.6%	(Capranica et al., 2005)
2004 Olympic Games	South Africa	1	49.3%	27.6%	23.1%	(Bruce & Chapman, 2006c)
2004 Olympics & Para-Olympics only	South Africa	3	86.5%	13.5%		(Serra, 2005)
1996 Summer Olympics; 1998 Winter Olympics 2000 Summer Olympics; 2002 Winter Olympics (Olympics only)	USA	1	39.9% 43.3% 32.5% 39.1%	24.9% 26.6% 24.4% 25.3%	19.4% 19.9% 36.1% 21.0%	(Pemberton & Shields, 2004)

The emphasis given to photographs of sportswomen varied in these different studies from 17.3% to 48% of all sports photographs (see Table 6). The findings of the sports photographs studies also reflect that sportswomen attracted substantially less coverage than sportsmen. However, Table 5 and 6 reveal how greater focus was given to photographs of sportswomen than article coverage for all but one of the studies, the South African 2004 Olympic Games coverage. This suggests that sports production practices internationally consistently attribute greater value to photographs of sportswomen during major international sporting events, than they do to articles.

Table 6. Content analysis of newspaper sports coverage – Photograph results.

Year of research & focus	Country of study	# News-papers	Male	Female	Other	Reference
1991 World Athletic Champs 1992 Olympics (All cover)	UK UK	7 7	72% 73%	28% 27%		(Alexander, 1994)
1996 Summer Olympics	USA	5	52%	48%		(Kinnick, 1998)
1996 Olympics (All cover)	Canada; UK & USA	6	52.7%	45.2%	2%	(Vincent et al., 2002)
1996 Olympics (All cover)	Canada; UK & USA	6	52.7%	45.2%	2%	(Vincent et al., 2003)
1999 Pan-Am Games only	Canada	5	51.4%	45.9%	2.7%	(Mason & Rail, 2006)
2000 Olympics only	USA	5	52%	48%	-	(Hardin et al., 2002)
2000 Olympics only	Belgium, Denmark, France Italy (nat)	20	50% 48.3% 63.3% 63.2%	37.7% 48.6% 34.8% 24.0%	12.3% 3.1% 1.9% 12.8%	(Capranica et al., 2005)
2004 Olympic Games	South Africa	1	50.1%	25.9%	24%	(Bruce & Chapman, 2006c)
2004 Olympics & Para-Olympics only	South Africa	3	82.7%	17.3%		(Serra, 2005)

Results of the *Global women in sports media project* that examined newspaper coverage of the 2004 Olympics (see Table 7) in 18 countries revealed that although women's sport accounted for an average of a quarter of the media focus, men's sport still attracted just over 40% of all Olympic sports articles. This international study highlighted that, with the exception of Sweden and China, sportsmen received greater media attention than sportswomen. Similar to the findings presented in Tables 5 and 6, the global study results highlighted more photographs than articles of sportswomen in all countries, except the United Kingdom. The combined average for sportswomen's articles was 25.2% as opposed to 32.3% for photographs, with a similar emphasis in the case of sportsmen, who featured in 40.2% of articles and 49.7% of photographs.

Table 7. Male and female Olympic coverage as a percentage of all Olympic coverage.

Countries (n=18)	Female articles (%)	Male articles (%)	Female photos (%)	Male photos (%)
Belgium (space)	35.4	39.8		
Canada (space)	25.2	28.6	40.6	50.3
China (space)	34.5	31.9	41.5	44.6
Czech Republic (space)	17.8	30.1	38.9	50.6
Denmark (n)	26	55	33	56.0
France (n)	24	45.4	30.0	54.2
Germany (n)[1]	31.5	49.1	44.1	54.2
Hungary (space)	9.6	32.8	13.3	33.1
Japan (space)	32	39.9	32.0	58.3
New Zealand (space)	26.5	45	32.4	46.8
Norway (space)	29	43	39.0	46.0
South Africa (space)	21.2	46.8	29.7	51.6
South Korea (n)	15.6	43.5	25.3	45.7
Spain (n)	14.6	48.9	23.3	65.8
Sweden (space)	32.6	31.8	39.8	33.8
Turkey (n)[1]	28.7	37.2	33.0	39.8
United Kingdom (space)	23.9	34.2	20.9	70.5
USA (space)	25.5	41.1	32.8	43.3
Average	**25.2**	**40.2**	**32.3**	**49.7**

[1] Germany and Turkey excluded the neutral category.
(Hovden et al., 2010, p. 293).

The countries with the most significant differentiation between the number of articles and photographs of sportswomen were the Czech Republic (17.8% of articles compared to 38.9% of photographs) and Canada (25.2% of articles and 40.6% of photographs). A number of the particular features that the media focused on in these studies will be examined in greater depth below.

There have been a number of New Zealand studies where the review periods overlapped with international sporting events such as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c, 2006b, 2006a; Bruce & Scott-Chapman, 2010; Chapman, 2002b, 2002a; Ferkins, 1992; Fountaine & McGregor, 1999; Scratchley, 1988; Wensing, 2003; Whitaker, 1993). Results from across a range of New Zealand based major event studies, illustrated in Table 8, reveal how gender is represented by the New Zealand media (Bruce, 2008).

Table 8. New Zealand Coverage of Commonwealth Games and Olympics by gender.

Year of Research & Focus	Media Analysed	Male %	Female %	Mixed/ Neutral[1] %	Source
1988 Summer Olympics	TV & newspaper	78	22		Scratchley (1988)[2]
1992 Winter Olympics	TV & newspaper	71	16[3]	14	Ferkins (1992a, 1992b)[3]
1992 Summer Olympics	TV & newspaper	55	24	22	Whitaker (1993)
2002 Commonwealth Games	Newspaper	21	24	55	Wensing (2003)[4]
2004 Summer Olympics	Newspaper	45	27	26	Bruce & Chapman (in press)
2006 Commonwealth Games	TV & newspaper	36	38	27	Student research, cited in Bruce et al. (2007)
2006 Commonwealth Games	Newspaper	33	29	38	Chapman (2007)
Average		**48**	**26**	**30**	

1 The average is calculated only across those studies that included this category. As a result the overall average totals more than 100%.
2 Scratchley's results cover only one week of the Games.
3 Ferkins' results focused on all sports news during the Winter Olympics, thus reducing the overall % for females. She found that the percentage of female coverage related to the Games was higher than unrelated coverage.
4 Wensing's results focused only on the 73% of Olympics stories that were about New Zealand athletes. She found high levels of mixed coverage, as did Chapman (2007).
(Bruce, 2008, p. 54)

The New Zealand research results in Table 8, along with those from the *Global women in sports media project*, highlight that media coverage during major international sporting events has been steadily increasing for sportswomen and that New Zealand media coverage mirrors that reflected internationally. Highlighting some of the major differences for sportswomen, Dworkin and Messner (2002) argue that "whatever sport has accomplished in terms of equity, women's and men's sports are still segregated, and men's sports are still dominant in commercial value and in the media" (p. 24). The implicit sports media message is that sportsmen are more newsworthy and of greater public interest than sportswomen (Hargreaves, 2000; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Kinnick, 1998). In addition, the global proliferation of men's professional and commercialised sports has also diverted attention away from women in sport (Bruce & Saunders, 2005; McGregor, 2000).

Table 9. Combined average percentages for the overall project by type of coverage.

Type of Coverage	Female Articles Average %	Male Articles Average %	Female Photos Average %	Male Photos Average %
Non-Olympic	5.0	87.6	7.3	84.0
Olympic	25.2	40.2	32.3	49.7
Total	**15.0**	**64.3**	**23.7**	**56.4**

(Hovden et al., 2010, p. 290)

A critical concern for sportswomen and women's sport was exposed in relation to Hovden et al's. (2010) findings (Table 9), where the combined average percentages for the overall project are also featured separately as Olympic and non-Olympic totals. These figures reflect that sportswomen are considered more newsworthy during major international sporting events than in non-Olympic coverage, particularly in sports photographs. This lack of coverage outside of major events also creates an impression that there are few women's sports occurring outside of these events and therefore they warrant less media attention. In addition, the findings from this global cross-cultural study suggest that internationally, the media continue to frame sportswomen differently to sportsmen, as revealed in Table.10, which presents the gender-based article and photograph results for the separate national studies.

Table 10. Global media study during the 2004 Olympics, total country-based coverage by gender.

Countries (n=12)	Female articles (%)	Male articles (%)	Female photos (%)	Male photos (%)
Belgium (n)	13.1	72.1	16.8	66.3
England (n)	6.3	58.9	35.6	53.2
Hungary (n)	11.2	54.3	13.3	45.2
Japan (n)	20.3	52.2	30.7	60.6
New Zealand (n)	19.0	59.4	24.6	38.9
Norway (n)	17.0	61.5	20.2	59.5
South Africa (n)	20.8	57.7	21.8	67.9
South Korea (n)	15.6	43.5	25.3	48.7
Spain (n)	11.1	61.0	18.7	72.2
Sweden (n)	21.4	54.3	30.1	51.8
Turkey (n)	10.1	78.0	-	-
USA (space)	14.0	60.0	-	-
Average	**15.0**	**64.3**	**23.7**	**56.4**

(Hovden et al., 2010, p. 290).

Unsurprisingly, the results reveal that regardless of the country of study, the media focused greater attention on sportsmen. However, the different level of coverage of sportswomen from country to country is remarkable, both in respect of the article percentages, which ranged between 6.3% and 21.4%, and those for photographs, which ranged between 13.3% and 35.6%. In the English study, only 6.3% of all articles featured sportswomen, yet they were reflected in 35.6% of the photographs. Similarly, although not as prominent, the Japanese study revealed figures of 20.3% for articles and 30.7% for photographs of sportswomen. Significant variations can also be seen in the cases of South Korea (15.6% and 25.3%) and Sweden (21.4% and 30.1%). The consistency of this finding highlights a media preference for photographs of sportswomen, rather than articles about them, during this major international sporting event.

Sportswomen who win medals at major events are more frequently featured

Major international sporting successes are often included in prime-time news rather than within the sports news (Andrews, 2005; Bruce, 2005; McKee, 2001; Rowe, 2000; Vincent et al., 2003), "especially when it pertains to the winning of medals in the Olympics and other big events" (Knoppers & Elling, 2004, p. 58). Newspapers highlight medal wins as national victories on the front page which are frequently described as "'we/us' who beat the others, because 'we' 'outclass' them and deserve the victory" (von der Lippe, 2002, p. 385). Potential medal winning athletes are profiled prior to and during the event using discourses of nationalism in both media articles and photographs (Bruce & Chapman, 2005; Chapman, 2002b; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Hardin et al., 2002; Hargreaves, 1982; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004).

The *Global women in sports media project* also examined the 'variations in Olympic coverage in relation to Olympic success' to establish how gender impacted on the way in which medal-winning athletes were represented (see Table 11). Although findings from this global project suggest that the media bend the rules for sportswomen at major events, this change of emphasis is "performance biased" (Urquhart & Crossman, 1999, p. 198). This 'performance biased' coverage was particularly evident for the Turkish and Norwegian**,** and to a lesser

extent United States coverage of sportsmen. In just over half of the cases, as reflected in Table 11, sportsmen feature more prominently, as is the norm, despite securing fewer medals in each case, as opposed to sportswomen who secured more medals than relative coverage allowed for. However, this '*bias*' is not necessarily a gender issue per se, but rather relates to coverage focusing on a few specific athletes who are expected to do well, which inflates the overall coverage ratios for that group of athletes.

Table 11. Male and female coverage compared to Olympic medals won.

Countries (n=12)	Male coverage (%)	Male medals (%)	Female coverage (%)	Female medals (%)
Belgium	57 ↑[2]	33	43	67
Canada	55 ↑	50	45	50
China	48 ↑	37	52	63
France	65 ↑	52	35	49
Germany	61 ↑	43	39	57
Hungary	74 ↑	59	26	41
Japan	55 ↑	54	45	46
New Zealand	62 ↑	60	38	40
Norway	59	67	41 ↑	33
Spain	77 ↑	68	23	26
Turkey	56	90	44 ↑	10
USA	57	57	43 ↑	40
Average	60.5	55.8[1]	39.5	43.5

[1] Medal % does not always equal 100%; mixed medals are not included
[2] ↑ Highlights whether media coverage exceeded the medal ratios secured by gender, no arrow reflects less coverage
(Hovden et al., 2010, p. 296)

Two separate studies of the media coverage of the 2002 Commonwealth Games in four New Zealand newspapers identified that sportswomen received more coverage than sportsmen (Wensing, 2003; Chapman, 2002a). Sportswomen featured in 53.9% and 57% respectively of all sports photographs, while 39.2% and 43% related to sportsmen. Although Wensing's (2003a) study only included coverage of New Zealand athletes, which represented 73% of all athletes' coverage, she argues that these *extraordinary* results "indicate that media images of women in sport at this international event may be just as, if not more, valued and interesting than those of men" (p. 67). However, the increased coverage focused attention specifically on potential and actual medal-winning sportswomen, where "the most frequently photographed New Zealand athletes all

won gold or silver medals" (Wensing, 2003, p. 95). New Zealand sportswomen won twenty-six medals and featured in 125 photographs, whilst sportsmen won fifteen medals and featured in 91 photographs. The perception that this therefore creates for sportswomen is that their newsworthiness derives from their international sporting successes. In addition, the majority of photographs of sportswomen depicted those who were expected to win medals, 53.9% (Wensing, 2003), and 82.5 % (Chapman, 2002a), and also reflected signs and symbols of national identity. For example, photographs featured the silver fern, the national flag, athletes wearing the New Zealand national uniform, or depicted the *haka* being performed. These sports photographs thus helped visually reinforce the sports–nationalism articulation, where "the use of these specific symbols and imagery in the Commonwealth Games coverage links the New Zealand sportsmen and women as representatives of the readers' own nation" (Wensing, 2003, p. 80). Moreover, these kinds of changes to discourses of sports journalism at major international sporting events momentarily disrupt the sports–masculinity articulation in favour of nationalism, and differences are highlighted between *nations* rather than between *athletes* based on gender.

The substantial body of literature produced about sports media content of sportsmen and sportswomen thus reveals that coverage is gender-based and gender-biased (Bruce, 2006; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Horne et al., 1999; Hovden et al., 2010; Jones, 2006; Kinnick, 1998; McGregor, 1993; Pedersen, 2002; Wensing, 2003). Although many sports media content analyses have identified that during major international sporting events a 'bending of the rules' occurs in media coverage, prompting increased coverage of sportswomen, these are only sporadic and momentary interruptions to normative media practice (Eastman & Billings, 1999; Kinnick, 1998; Mikosza, 1997; Stoddart, 1994a; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). A few more recent analyses have identified instances of greater focus on sportswomen than sportsmen during major events, reflecting a new trend of media focusing attention on a few individual sportswomen who are exploited for their medal-winning potential and their embodiment of dominant ideals of femininity.

Research also reveals that during major events, such as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, national identity is emphasized in photographs that reflect nation-specific characteristics and symbols, such as New Zealand's silver

fern and the haka, the Canadian maple leaf and other cultural emblems, which are distinctive and immediately recognizable to 'home' audiences (Edwards, 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; MacNeill et al., 2001; Smith, 2004; Tudor, 1998; von der Lippe, 2002). Moreover, by drawing on discourses of nationalism, the media feature photographs of a unified national team creating a sense of solidarity and national identity for audiences, which heightens the appeal and spectacle of these mediated events (Bruce & Chapman, 2006b; Daddario, 1998; Hargreaves, 1982; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Kellner, 2003; Tudor, 1998). Moreover, greater focus is given to athletes who have the potential to win medals (Bruce & Chapman, 2006a, 2006b; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Mason & Rail, 2006; Wensing et al., 2004), particularly where the emphasis given to discourses of nationalism results in 'performance biased' sports journalism (Urquhart & Crossman, 1999). This performance biased coverage creates opportunities for athletes in amateur and minority sports and sportswomen to be given greater media attention, primarily due to increased possibilities for 'national victories'. During major events many sportswomen, who the media more frequently feature as feminine, weak and inferior, are suddenly depicted using masculine characteristics, such as media articles emphasizing their power, and photographs revealing muscle definition or featuring photographs of sportswomen in more combative team sports battling against their opponents (Horne et al., 1999; Markula et al., 2010; Messner et al., 2006). Yet, despite sportswomen being featured in greater coverage, particularly potential and actual medal winners, the results of international newspaper content studies highlight that in reality it is "more common to find a story about a male who lost than a female who won" (Kinnick, 1998, p. 215). Moreover, research on the Australian sports media also reveals that:

> While women clearly are involved in international sporting competition –
> and, indeed, are often more competitively successful than their male
> counterparts (in Australia, for example, female competitors have
> proportionately gained many more Olympic medals than male athletes) –
> the discourses of media, sport, and nation remain unfavorable to them.
> (Rowe et al., 1998, p. 126)

Thus, the increased coverage of sportswomen during major events creates a perception that they are in fact featured favourably, and that gender is immaterial.

However, as content analysis reveals, the focus of sports photographs of female athletes typically emphasizes specific aspects of sportswomen and women's sport that hone in on potential and actual medal winning athletes, and on accentuating the feminine appeal of a few select sportswomen or highlighting appropriately feminine women's sports. Yet, what the media produce and how photographs are featured in newspapers only form two parts of the circuit of communication, and it is therefore important to ascertain how production practises, media worker choices and the physical content of newspapers are assumed and given meaning by audiences. Thus, the third component of this literature review examines existing audience reception research to establish what role audiences play in shaping social understanding of gender, sports and the media, as they engage with and read sports photographs.

Audience reception

Audiences access the media through an ever-increasing array of global, national and local channels of communication. As noted in Chapter 2, the extensive use of media in our daily lives has spurred researchers to debate the likely role and function that media play in relation to audience reception. Media are such an integral part of modern day society that an individual's way of life is unavoidably influenced in some way by media norms and stereotypes (Ang, 1996; Hall, 1997b). But, while media play a central role in constructing preferred meanings of mediated sport in society, it is also important to establish how sports audiences interpret media representations. In addition, *how* cultural codes are given meaning by audiences is a fundamental aspect of feminist cultural studies research, particularly the ways in which *gender* is recognized and understood. From this perspective, it is important to ascertain how audiences interpret sports media photographs and texts and how they define sport in relation to continuous representations of masculine aggression, muscularity and vigorous competitive action (Baker & Boyd, 1997; Birrell & Theberge, 1994b; Bryson, 1990; Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1994).

Concepts of sports audiences

Sports media studies highlight how sports audiences are as varied and unique in makeup and preference as any other media audience groups (Brookes, 2002). The

process of reading about or watching sports means different things to different people. Sports coverage fulfils the role of both serious news and entertainment, and to satisfy the expectations of sports audiences, the production of sports media tends to focus on addressing the needs of a target audience of predominantly male consumers (Kinkema & Harris, 1998). Whannel (1998) maintains that an important aspect of sports media consumption relates to audience pleasure, which has traditionally been experienced more by a male sports audience, whose limited domestic responsibilities have meant more free time to be entertained by *mediated* sports (Burnett, 2002; Hargreaves, 1997; Messner & Sabo, 1990a; Phillips, 1987). Moreover, sports media is constructed using discourses of gender that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation, which in turn encourages a predominantly male target audience (Hargreaves, 2000; Lowes, 1997; Messner, 1994; Messner & Sabo, 1990b, 1990a). Through developing sports news along gender lines, researchers suggest that the sports media tends to characterize women as 'outsiders' both as athletes and as sports fans; a process that further strengthens the sports–masculinity articulation (Brookes, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Lines, 2002; Whannel, 1998). Brookes (2002) argues too that television sports audiences are often stereotyped as "the male sports fan, fuelled by beer and snacks, totally emotionally absorbed in the action as he shouts at the screen, to the almost total exclusion of women" (p. 44). While this humorous caricature of the male sports supporter does, as Brookes argues, "have some basis in reality" (p.44), it is also problematic because it perpetuates a belief that the sports audience is almost exclusively male, thereby discounting female audiences (Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Lowes, 1999). After spending time in a Canadian newspaper sports production environment, Lowes (1999) revealed that "the prevailing philosophy in the news business is that a quality sports readership is an eighteen to forty-nine year-old, male-dominated demographic" (pp. 97-98), which results in sports news being developed to appeal to this audience segment. The sports media therefore plays a pivotal role in constructing what sports audiences' experience in the form of mediated sports.

The key issue raised by sports media production practices that focus on male sports and male audiences is that women tend to be ignored, both as athletes and as female sports audiences. Little research has acknowledged the existence of female sports audiences as spectators of male or female sports, and relatively little

is known about how the predominant focus on sportsmen influences female sports audiences. One study of female basketball fans revealed that despite the often dismissive media attitude towards sportswomen in television commentary, female audiences are able to construct their own negotiated or oppositional modes of interpreting women's basketball coverage (Bruce, 1998). Research suggests that female audience reception is a complex and multifaceted process that results in divergent interpretations often being processed during the decoding of media productions. For instance, audience members not only create different meanings from one another, despite viewing the same mediated content, but can also develop a range of interpretations during the course of consumption or at any stage thereafter (Barbatsis, 2005; Jensen, 1995d, 1995c; McCullagh, 2002; Michelle, 1998, 2007; Morley, 1992; Schroder et al., 2003).

The target audience for everyday and major events sports news

Researchers have identified how the sports media develop sports coverage using language and photographic techniques to appeal to a targeted audience (Bignell, 2002; Tomaselli, 1996). More frequently than not, this targeted sports audience is primarily constituted of white, middle-class, middle-aged, heterosexual men, with disposable income (Bassett, 1984; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Brookes, 2002; Davis, 1993, 1997; Fiske, 1990; Hall, 2002; Hall, 1980a; McGregor, 2000). International production studies reveal that there are few audience surveys and that when this information is received it "plays a 'marginal role' in news production" (Gans, 1979, p. 230). Moreover, journalists appear to know very little about actual audience interests or expectations and generally take audience interests for granted when producing sports coverage (Bernt et al., 2000; Bruce et al., 2007; Davis, 1997; Evans & Kelley, 2002; Gee, 2009; Hardin, 2005; McCullagh, 2002). For instance, Gitlin (2003) suggests that:

> Reporters hear little from their actual audience, tend to have a low opinion of the audience's knowledge and attention span, and form images of this abstract audience compounded of wish, fact, and indifference. (p. 267)

Journalists therefore appear to speculate about what interests audiences and utilize existing production processes to develop routine and standardized sports news. After completing a comprehensive analysis of production, content and audience

reception in relation to the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition*, Davis (1997) reveals that "producers of sports coverage seek a male audience, and then the predominantly male audience that most sport coverage draws perpetuates the use of sport as a masculine preserve" (p. 57). Yet it is unclear how much influence the sports media have in engaging the target audience or whether, as researchers suggest, the already partisan sports audiences of live events are merely drawn towards mediated sports (Creedon, 1998; Kellner, 2003; MacNeill, 1998; Real, 1998; Whannel, 1998). Moreover, when media workers are asked about the disproportionate emphasis on sportsmen, they typically respond that coverage reflects what the public expect, demand or want (Ferkins, 1992; Gee, 2009; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; McGregor, 2000). Further, media workers also defend extensive male sports coverage, arguing "women's sport (is) lacking audience appeal" (Rowe, 1991, p. 15). Similarly, in New Zealand, researchers examining what constitutes this 'audience appeal' found no evidence that the media actually poll public opinion (Ferkins, 1992; McGregor, 2000), resulting in little justification for "those who control the mass media [who] defend disproportionate coverage of female sport purely on the basis that the sports consumer wants male sport" (McGregor, 2000, p. 188).

Yet researchers also suggest that during major international multi-sports events, such as the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, media coverage changes and a more diverse sports audience is targeted (Burnett, 2001a; Duncan, 1990; Rowe et al., 1998). These changes in production emphasis not only boost media sales but also encourage greater audience interest during these unique and sporadic events (Brookes, 2002; Daddario, 1998; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Hardin et al., 2002; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Kinnick, 1998; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Research also highlights how audiences at major events are a more affluent and well-educated, 'non-traditional' sports audience, with significantly greater numbers of female spectators (Daddario, 1998; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Hardin et al., 2002; Kinkema & Harris, 1998). Moreover, research suggests that with the change in media focus there is also more coverage of a range of athletes and sports, providing an opportunity for audiences, particularly female sports enthusiasts, to experience the achievements of elite sportswomen (Alexander, 1994; Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Jones, 2006; Markula et al., 2010, 2010a). Although studies of major sports events emphasize the change in coverage that

encourages a more inclusive audience that both accommodates and attracts women, researchers caution against assuming that this media shift will result in either a change to everyday sports production content, or transform the composition of everyday sports audiences (Billings & Eastman, 2002; Daddario, 1998; Hardin et al., 2002; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Kinnick, 1998; Rowe et al., 1998).

Female sports audiences and their reception of sports media coverage

Few studies have examined the specifics of sports audiences or their reception of sports coverage of women. The few existing studies focus on female audiences' receptions of sports magazines (Davis, 1997), media soccer (Lines, 2002), televised basketball (Bruce, 1998), snowboarding (Thorpe, 2007) and televised rugby (Duncan & Brummett, 1993; Star, 1992). The commonality among these studies is the focus on women as either athletes and / or audience members in ways that highlight how the sports media undermines, trivializes, or exploits women in the sporting environment. Davis (1997) examines how audiences consume and give meaning to *Sports Illustrated's Swimsuit Edition*, and their interpretations of the nature and context of this special magazine edition. She reveals that there were diverse readings made by audiences, and that the majority of female audiences drew on either a negotiated or an oppositional reading of the *Swimsuit Edition*.

In a study of the influence that media sports stars and their gender have on a youth audience, Lines (2002) identified that her adolescent participants voiced strong opinions that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation. Moreover, she found that by focusing on professional and elite male athletes, the media's "omission of women from the sporting texts carries over, it seems, into everyday 'sports talk'" (Lines, 2002, p. 208), filtering down into how young people think about and describe sporting norms. She further argued that "young people's sports discourse revolves around men … they virtually exclude sportswomen from their sports talk, legitimizing the sports field as essentially male" (p. 210). Her findings suggest that these youths' perceptions are the result of assuming preferred media messages about the hierarchy of sports that privileges sportsmen. Moreover, their responses highlight a lack of knowledge about women's sports due to minimal

media coverage rather than them dismissing or vilifying sportswomen's sporting accomplishments.

Researchers argue that sports talk constructed in relation to discourses of gender has a profound effect on individuals and society that reaches far beyond the sports arena (Bruce et al., 2007; Elling & Knoppers, 2005; Lines, 2002; Pringle, 2007). In an examination of female basketball fans' interaction with women's televised basketball, Bruce (1989) suggested that it is "vital to access audience members who would be well placed to challenge preferred messages" (p. 379). Her six participant female basketball fans' comments highlighted their opinion that women's sport is conveyed by male sports commentators in ways that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation. Additionally, Bruce (1989) argued that, for the women interviewed in this study, five of whom were former or current basketball players, their concern with media coverage was that:

> … many commentators had little understanding of the flow and dynamics of the women's game…. The viewers' critique suggest that broadcasters based their commentary on the cultural expectations of female behavior rather than the athlete behavior. (Bruce, 1998, p. 384)

Not only do the perceptions of these female fans reveal how media production draws on gender-based assumptions that idealize male sports as the standard, which this audience group assumed as the preferred meaning, but also that coverage reinforces the sportswomen–femininity articulation when sportswomen are featured. However, despite the criticisms raised about the media preferring meanings that assume men's sport as the 'norm' against which women's sport is judged, these female basketball fans were engaged in "a complex process of active negotiation" of their own enjoyment of women's basketball through an oppositional reading, and further found pleasure in appraising the "flawed" commentary by displaying their own insights and knowledge of women's basketball (Bruce, 1998, p. 386).

Lynne Star's (1992) New Zealand based study theorizes about women's pleasure and their meaning making experiences watching men's televised rugby. She suggests that in New Zealand, men's "rugby is a ritualized rehearsal for war as the settlement of national differences – and therefore, according to patriarchal myth, the exclusive province of men" (p. 132). The viewing of rugby battles has long been considered an exclusive realm of pleasure for men, yet Star (1992)

reveals how women do participate and actively create personal meaning for themselves from these experiences. She argues that women either take up the preferred meaning that the media communicate or establish resistant readings, which she describes as "the pleasure of viewing against the grain, that is, in contradiction to the messages you are expected to receive from the text" (Star, 1992, p. 134). These oppositional responses include evaluating and criticizing standard media coverage, which she describes as "unpacking the patriarchal themes in telerugby" (p. 134). In this way, through Star's appraisal of the preferred meanings that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation, she reveals how women are able to enjoy watching men's rugby by either negotiating their own reading of it or through making oppositional readings of men's mediated sport.

Sports audience's perceptions of the sports–masculinity articulation

Researchers suggest that sports journalism has traditionally associated sport with men and discourses of masculinity, such that discourses of sport espouse distinctive male characteristics (Bruce, 1995; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Duncan, 1990; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). Furthermore, so-called 'passive' audiences who adopt the preferred media message in their reading of sport, often reflect this acceptance through mimicking media language and sporting cultural norms, which helps reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation and encourages its perpetuation (Bruce, 1998; Davis, 1997; Lines, 2002; Star, 1992; Whannel, 1998; Zwaga, 1994). However, in the case of other audiences, or the same audiences at other moments, their reading of sports coverage may actively challenge or resist the preferred media message. Therefore, although media practices may construct preferred meanings that reflect stereotypical gender norms, audiences are open to actively interpret and create personal readings of media content.

Media sports photographs are assumed to reinforce discourses of sport and masculinity amongst audiences

As noted in Chapter 2, theoretically, the value of media photographs is that this form of communication provides immediacy and recognition in a way that text is unable to do. Fuery and Fuery (2003) suggest that "when we, as spectators, rest

our gaze on the image we are not simply viewing a flat, singular, secular piece of art, … instead we are incorporating ourselves into a chain of events – the process of creating culturally viable, sustainable and recognizable images" (p. 101). Audiences, particularly newspaper readers, learn to read photographs much in the same way that text is read, and it is for this reason that newspaper sports photographs are specifically selected to be representative of the constructed media message. Not only are photographs presented throughout the various newspaper sections, but the placement, size and positioning of them all communicates certain aspects of a particular message to audiences.

Most of the research that has examined sports photographs has been conducted from a theoretical perspective that examines either media production selection practices, or the encoding of a preferred message, or the analysis of sports media content. Very few studies have focused on the role of audiences in decoding sports photographs (other than making assumptions about an ideal audience position), or how actual individual audience members create meaning. For example, Duncan (1990) draws on theories about the role of media representations in generating feeling, such as when images depict an athlete winning. This provides a tangible sense of emotion with which audiences can identify, by visually internalizing media messages of elation and victory. Although Duncan's seminal research on sports photographs has helped shape much of the subsequent sports media research on gender representations and image analysis, it does not heed Hall's warning about assuming an 'ideal audience' rather than an 'actual audience'. Much of existing research on reception of newspaper sports photographs is not based on empirical research with audiences, but rather theorizes using extrapolations based on the content of sports media production. In this study, it is therefore particularly relevant and important to understand *how* meanings are developed, through acknowledging Hall's advice to incorporate an actual audiences' 'reading' of sport photographs. These actual audience interpretations form the basis of the audience reception component of this tripartite study, which examines how seven elite athletes perceive New Zealand print media representations of athletes, particularly in terms of the way that sportswomen and women's sport is featured and the readings they assume from what is produced. However, these participants are unique, not only from the perspective of their involvement in sports research, as women, but also in terms of

their status as elite sportswomen, who are themselves frequently featured in media coverage. They are thus not regarded as 'a typical audience group', having a vested interest in favourable sports media coverage, but rather as a 'specialized audience group' who are perhaps more media savvy than the general newspaper reader or target audience. Moreover, their perception of sports photographs of other athletes reflects also their position as women who are 'informed sports fans'.

Summary

This review of literature has revealed how powerful discourses of (sports) journalism are in constructing consistent patterns of representation in sports media coverage that privilege sportsmen and disregard sportswomen. In addition, sports news is a reflection of media organizations, standardized media practices and media workers, where each aspect plays an important role in what is produced. Research reveals that the newsroom hierarchy is particularly important, as media decision-makers are intimately involved in the creation of preferred meanings of sports photographs, which in turn shape audience perceptions of sports, athletes and athleticism. The existing body of literature reveals how the interdiscursive contexts of professional journalism, sport and gender influence how media decision-makers select sports photographs, along with how these selections are used to convey messages about the sport, athlete or event that is represented.

Research suggests that the traditional media environment and general profession of journalism has long been a male bastion, preserved by the 'old boys club' where male decision-makers help maintain the status quo. Little appears to have changed despite increased numbers of female journalists now being employed. This male-oriented sports production environment further helps reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation, creating a situation where women are regarded as outsiders as producers of sports news and where coverage of sportswomen and women's sport is minimized. Therefore, gender plays a decisive role in sports production, not only from the perspective of the role played by discourses of gender in sports production, but also that of media workers' gender as they select those sports and athletes deemed newsworthy. Moreover, media production practices that revolve around male media workers constructing coverage of men's sports is aimed at appealing to male audiences. Therefore,

female audiences interested in men's and women's sport have to negotiate their own readings of what is represented. The media's implicit affirmation of dominant discourses of gender suggests that sport and femininity are not only incompatible, but their articulation challenges the very nature of dominant discourses of sport (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Burnett, 2001a; Pringle, 2001; van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). Thus, sports media decision-makers occupy powerful positions in controlling not only what features as sports news but also how sports and athletes are represented, providing audiences with a mediated worldview of sports (Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Mason & Rail, 2006; Thompson, 2002; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). What is produced is thus a combination of media decision-making and the taken-for-granted routines and standardized practices and processes inherent in discourses of journalism (Gitlin, 2003; Hardin, 2005; Milkie, 2002).

Although sportswomen's participation rates over the last thirty years have increased dramatically, studies have identified that women's sport continues to attract less than 10% of media attention in everyday coverage of sports. In addition, despite sportswomen receiving increased coverage during major sport events, women still receive less coverage than sportsmen and coverage continues to reinforce the sportswomen–femininity articulation. Moreover, discourses of sports journalism draw on a hierarchy of discourses such that the sports–masculinity articulation is reflected as being a natural union rather than a constructed one, which creates the perception that gender difference and being a woman are a natural cause of the disparity in media coverage. Furthermore, when media do feature sportswomen, media workers struggle to negotiate how to represent them as athletes and women due to the incompatibility of discourses of sport and femininity. As a result, women's sports and sportswomen frequently feature in ambiguous and ambivalent coverage. Studies have revealed that the media emphasize gender difference by describing sportswomen participating in *women's* sport, marking the 'otherness' of these sports in relation to the legitimate 'real' sports that men play. In addition, these production practices also influence how audiences engage with and interpret coverage, particularly audiences interested in women's sport.

Studies also suggest that the media convey differences between sportsmen and women by focusing on biological gender differences. Emphasizing gender-

based differences results not only in a hierarchy where male ideals are normalized, but also creates an environment where women's sport is *marked* according to gender and conveyed in relation to cultural beliefs about gender-appropriateness. In addition to sportswomen being gender marked as being different from and secondary to sportsmen, the media emphasizes sportswomen participating in sports culturally defined as being appropriate for females. Thus, when sportswomen are visually represented in relation to femininity in photographs, *gender* is framed as the differentiator and not media practices that stereotype athletes in line with dominant discourses.

The major exception to the broad trend of gender-based media coverage of sports is that during major international sporting events such as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, production practices focus greater attention on reinforcing the sports–nationalism articulation. By drawing on discourses of nationalism to convey a sense of national pride and patriotism, media coverage focuses on potential and actual medal winners and photographs that feature visible signs of national and cultural identity. Although major events create space for sportswomen to feature in greater media coverage, media continue to reinforce perceptions of gender differences through the sportswomen–femininity articulation. Moreover, although acknowledging sportswomen as national medal winning athletes, media continue to privilege sportsmen, regardless of their performances. Newspapers are therefore a powerful tool for conveying messages about gender, athletes and athleticism through the use of sports photographs. The re-articulation of dominant discourses in sports coverage helps reinforce existing perceptions about gender differences and sporting capabilities. As has been seen in the majority of New Zealand and international content analyses during major events, although sportswomen attract increased media coverage, these increases frequently relate to a few select national sportswomen, and are momentary and superficial at best, based purely on medal winning *and* idealized femininity. Media coverage continues to feature more articles and photographs of sportsmen during both major events *and* everyday sports coverage. Moreover, despite many researchers discounting content analysis as merely a measurement tool, its value lies in generating numbers and percentages that help identify *how* gender is conveyed in sports photographs, *how* coverage differs from one time period to another, and *how* athletes are represented in different contexts.

The accumulated research also shows that sports media production techniques and the content of sports coverage target male sports audiences, who are perceived to be more interested in sports than female audiences. What little research has been done on female sports audiences shows that media producers regard them as far less important than male audiences, which results in females having fewer opportunities to experience women's sports. Thus, the privileging of men's sports creates a vicious circle, which results in what has been described as the *symbolic annihilation* of women's sports and sportswomen (Tuchman, 1978a). Male sports audiences are presented with a wider range of sports photographs that feature sportsmen in combative and explosive action, capturing aggression, power and muscularity. The few women's sports given media coverage are those traditionally believed to be appropriate for women. Moreover, photographs depicting sports appropriate for women tend to feature sportswomen in close-up images, wearing short shirts or dresses and tight-fitting tops, or in swimwear that draws attention to their bodies and feminine appearance. These images appear to be constructed for male audiences, and limited attention is given sportswomen's athletic skills or sporting achievements. Female audiences are thus faced with the challenge of reading media images through incompatible discourses, which results in '*active negotiation*' of a positional response that initially entails adopting the preferred media message before forming either an oppositional or negotiated reading (Bruce, 1998; Duncan, 1990; Michelle, 2007). However, during major international sporting events, sports audiences experience changes, which reflect a more diverse range of sports being featured along with an increased number of female athletes. Yet, despite these changes, sportsmen remain privileged and coverage of sportswomen continues to be predominantly associated with feminine sports, resulting in sports photographs that focus on their physical appearance and sex appeal. Furthermore, Hardin et al. (2002) suggest that gender, and more specifically gender difference, "remains the dominant frame by which women are presented by sports media …making gender 'norms' so ubiquitous that it is difficult to remember that they are social constructs" (p. 65). In this way, differences between sportsmen and sportswomen in sports photographs helps shape social norms, to the extent that audiences recognize and accept these features at face value and perceptions are created about athletes in general, based purely on their gender rather than on sporting abilities or achievements.

CHAPTER 4: A NEW ZEALAND MEDIA PRODUCTION STUDY

The value of this research is that it provides insight into sports media production practices and the newsroom environment, in order to reveal how media workers go about making choices about what *becomes* sports news. All too often, sports research has examined the *content* of sports production without taking the *context* of production into account (Davis, 1992; Gee, 2009; Gruneau, 1989; Howe, 2008; Lowes, 1999; Silk, 1999; Silk & Amis, 2000). Seeking to address this gap in the existing scholarship, this context-based examination focuses on a range of aspects, including the roles and responsibilities of media workers, the influence of the organizational hierarchical structure, production pressures and constraints, and other internal and external dynamics that impact on what kind of sports news is produced. In her analysis of French sports media production, Gee (2009) suggests that "understanding how images and texts are selected for us to see and read cannot be undertaken in isolation from the institutional and social structures in which they take place" (p. 2). It is therefore critical in a study that investigates the circuit of communication (Hall, 1980b) to establish what assumptions, discourses and taken-for-granted processes and practices underpin media production.

The few existing sport production studies are divided between studies of television (Gruneau, 1989; Silk, 1999; Silk & Amis, 2000; Stoddart, 1994b), magazine (Davis, 1992), newspaper studies (Lowes, 1997; Theberge & Cronk, 1986), and interviews with media producers (Ferkins, 1992; Gee, 2009; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Lowes, 1999; Serra, 2005; Theberge & Cronk, 1986). What little is known about sports production practices provides limited understanding of how media selections are made and what discourses influence production, and the complexities and challenges that media workers face in creating sports news. Thus, my study includes an examination of relations of power as they operate through places, people and positions in terms of the production of sports news. The results are divided into three sections, where each explores the exercise and effect of power relations as embedded in:

- Places, roles and people (including the hierarchies inherent in particular job titles, how authority is negotiated and applied, and the structure of the newsroom as a working environment);

- Established routines and taken-for-granted journalistic practices at the institutional level (including general principles related to news values, the technical and aesthetic elements of photographs, the size and layout of the sports pages); and

- The application of these general principles to the production of sports news and selection of photographs.

Across all three sections there are common features centring on hierarchies and power relations, either in regards to individual people, their positional influence or to the discourses they use when making choices about what to include or exclude. A pivotal part of this newsroom study is determining the role played by *gender discourses* in sports news production. Therefore, establishing the gender composition of media workers and ascertaining whether this appears to influence decision-making outcomes was important.

The lack of female input into sports news content has far-reaching consequences for sport audiences, who, for the most part, are oblivious to the newsroom gender make-up or the bearing this may have on what is produced. Furthermore, journalists are themselves often unaware of the extent to which routine media practices are gendered, how they shape audience interpretations, or how social understandings of gender are constructed through sporting representations (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gitlin, 2003; Knoppers & Elling, 2004). Although sports news may be factually correct and truthful per se, audiences are encouraged to read sport in relation to preferred media messages. Gitlin (2003) argues that "the media are mobile spotlights, not passive mirrors of the society; selectivity is the instrument of their action. A news story adopts a certain frame and rejects or downplays material that is discrepant" (p. 49). The media therefore play an instrumental role in not only selecting what is represented but also in how it is featured. Furthermore, in this production study, data derived from observations and interviews with media workers offers valuable insight into the distinction between 'the things people do' and 'the things they say they do' in sports media production.

Media workers, their roles and the newsroom workspace

Newsroom power relations influence what becomes sports news through the types of freedoms and constraints that sports media workers experience in their jobs in relation to standard journalistic practices and procedures. Observing the newsroom as a working environment that produces a range of articles and photographs for public consumption provided an opportunity to identify how this space operates not only as a business, but also as a social environment. What happens in the newsroom and how individual media workers act, interact, and react is an important part of a production environment based around collective objectives and shared practices. How these socially constructed practices are developed and maintained by media workers, specifically sports journalists and those involved in the production of sports news, is thus an essential aspect of this research. By incorporating multiple forms of data analysis, I was not only able to study how media workers, collectively and individually, go about sports media production, but to also establish their perceptions in relation to those production processes and practices of production.

Although the newspaper editor authorized my access to the newsroom and the media workers, I was aware this did not necessarily mean that media workers would accept me. At the commencement of a similar production study in Canada, Lowes (1999) described how the editor's introduction "legitimized my presence" (p. 26) and enabled him to feel accepted by the rest of the news workers. Yet, at the onset of the first fieldwork observation period in 2006, my own experience was distinctly different. While the newsroom reception was genial, I sensed that my presence was regarded more as a distraction by the few sports media workers, who were already working under the additional pressures of Commonwealth Games coverage without the further burden of someone observing their activities. For example, the sports editor seldom looked up when I greeted him in the mornings, frequently neither acknowledging nor returning my greeting. In addition, despite knowing that I was interested in what he was doing, he never tried to talk to me after the first edition was completed, nor engaged in small talk, not even about my study. Given that the newsroom environment for sports is predominantly male-oriented, I was conscious that being female might impact on how I would be received (Jorgensen, 1989). Other media production participant

observation studies have revealed that not only is there potential for researchers to be regarded as outsiders, but also, more importantly, there is potential for a female outsider carrying out research in a predominantly male workspace to encounter challenges and obstacles that male researchers may not experience, due to gender dynamics (Jorgensen, 1989). Furthermore, research suggests that this gender dynamic may influence how those being observed behave, and may adversely affect the data (van Zoonen, 1994). Heeding these warnings, I prepared myself mentally before the observation periods for the possibility of opposition while gathering data, and carefully noted people's reactions and body language. Despite the general lack of interest shown by the sports editor, by quietly observing and being as inconspicuous as possible, I was able to gather material that provided extensive insight into how sports news is developed and sports photographs are selected.

People:

During the research, I identified four key individuals who played a vital decision-making role in the selection or processing of sports news or photographs. A fifth individual, who served primarily in a technical support role but possessed little power to influence what appeared, participated in this study because her role was a crucial link in photograph production.

- The male *editor* had been in this position for two and a half years, and had been involved in journalism for 22 years. His main journalism training was obtained on-the-job as he developed through the ranks in a variety of positions at seven newspapers, including the role of sports editor. He was responsible for the overall running of the newspaper, including setting priorities, ensuring high standards, and meeting the needs of advertisers and readers. His current position entailed managing sixty-five editorial staff and ten senior media workers.

- The male *sports editor* had been in journalism for 33 years, the last 15 years in sports. His training included a one-year diploma in journalism, with the rest made up of on-the-job training. He was responsible for the overall content and priorities of the sports pages, as well as writing sports articles. He managed

two full-time male sports reporters, and worked with the horse- and dog-
racing journalists and the female sports sub-editor. He reported directly to the
editor.

- The female *sports sub-editor* had 19 years of newspaper experience, the last
  two as the senior sports sub-editor. Her experience mainly consisted of on-the-
  job training. She was responsible for technical production of the sports pages,
  including layout, spelling, grammar and fact checking. During the
  Commonwealth Games she had additional responsibility for initial filtering of
  sports news and photographs to provide the sports editor with a manageable
  range of options. She reported directly to the chief sub-editor rather than the
  sports editor and her performance reviews were managed by the editor, with
  input from both the chief sub-editor and sports editor.

- The male *chief photographer* had 20 years of service. His main training was
  through on-the-job instruction, along with some seminars. He was responsible
  for photographers' work schedules to ensure required photographs were
  available for planned news stories, making suggestions for and exercising
  quality control over photographs submitted for publication, as well as taking
  photographs himself. He managed five photographers (four male and one
  female), two male photo technicians, and two graphic designers (one male and
  one female). He reported directly to the editor.

- The female *graphic designer* had five months service in the newsroom, having
  recently completed her Bachelor of Photography degree. Her main role was to
  assess the technical quality of photographs chosen for publication and to make
  required changes such as cropping and corrections. Although she worked with
  a variety of media workers, she reported jointly to the chief photographer and
  the editor.

Places: The newsroom workspace environment

Power relations are not only shaped by people and their roles, but can also be
influenced by the physical design of the workspace (Lowes, 1999). It was
therefore important to establish how the newsroom workspace was organized and
whether and how structural dynamics played a role in newsroom power relations.

The general newsroom workspace was open plan but organized into production sections (see Figure 7) that comprised a number of workstations, each containing a chair, desk, computer and phone. For instance, as circled within Figure 7 below, all the sports media workers were located together in the sports section. There was a central printer and fax workstation in the middle of the newsroom, and an archive and filing area. The areas not located within this open plan setting were the editor's office and meeting area, two section editor offices, the photographers' office, and the graphic design area. The open plan environment meant that discussions and phone conversations were generally audible to anyone in close proximity.
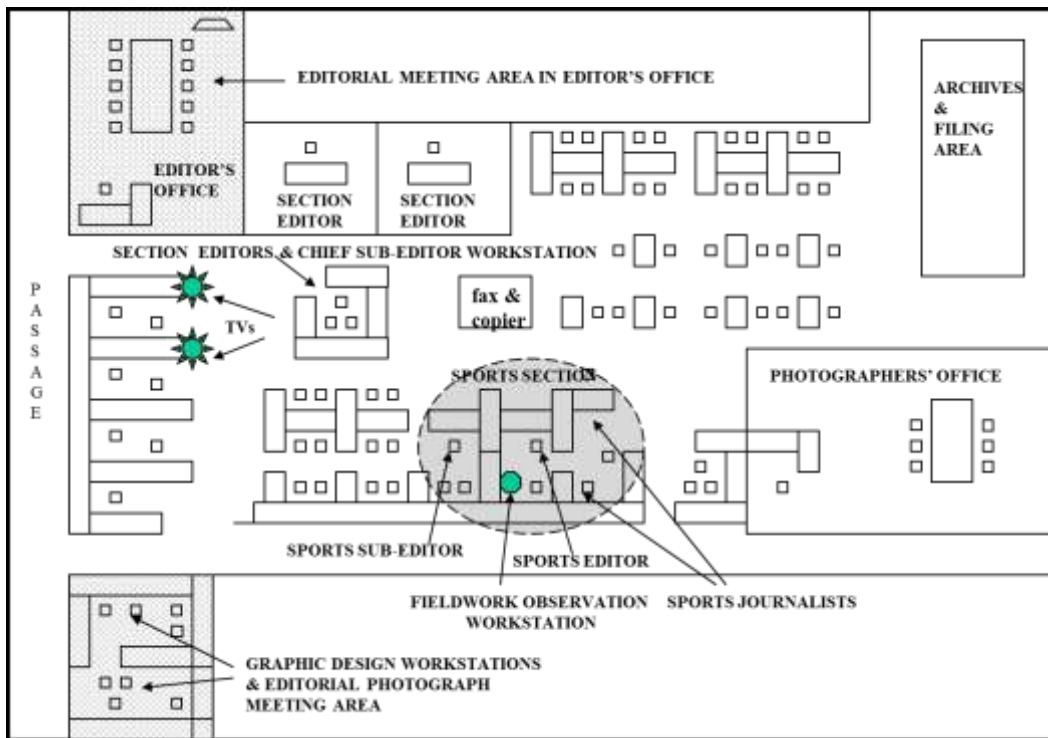
Figure 7. Newspaper newsroom workspace during 2006 and 2007 observation periods

However, despite this communal environment, I observed how media workers appeared not to worry about or feel restricted by this lack of privacy, as they freely expressed themselves during business and personal conversations. This set-up also reflected the newsroom hierarchy, with closed or more private spaces being occupied by senior media workers or specialist sections such as photography and graphic design. It also highlighted the differential power

relations between public space (the open plan office structure) and private space, the management offices.

Two televisions were suspended from the ceiling directly outside the editor's office and main passageway into the newsroom. During my fieldwork the televisions were permanently switched onto sports programmes. Their location meant that the sports media workers were kept abreast of breaking sports news and events. I noticed a variety of media workers watching the televisions during their breaks or in the course of their work. For the most part, the volume was barely audible and only when there were few media workers around, or when a national athlete was participating in an important event, would it be turned up so that it could be heard more clearly across the open plan newsroom. Throughout my study, I conducted my research at a vacant workstation in the sports section directly behind the sports editor's workstation. From this vantage point I observed most of the newsroom and noted not only the layout of the newsroom workspace but also the physical appearance of the workspace surfaces and partitions, and what lay on the desks and between the workstations.

My observations of the physical layout of the newsroom revealed an important way in which the articulation of sport and masculinity was manifested in the sports section. There were large posters of male motor racing, various male sports teams, and elite male athletes in and around the sports section. In addition, there were several magazine pages of female models posing seductively, and a 'girlie' calendar of semi-clad pretty models pinned up and publicly visible to the rest of the newsroom. As Davis (1997) has stated, "pin-ups of women commonly appear in settings where boys/men predominate, settings where appearing masculine has its greatest impact" (p. 53). The inclusion of these types of images in the sports section and not elsewhere in the newsroom reinforces Davis' argument; although including a female sports sub-editor, the space itself was conceptualized as a male domain and surrounded by male media workers. This display of sexualised images of women and hyper-masculine male sporting images reinforces discourses of gender, and more specifically the sports–masculinity articulation. On my first day back during the second period of fieldwork, I again sat behind the sports editor and documented my observations of the sports unit layout:

March 13, 2007 - Looked at images and notices around the sports area workspace. A signed calendar shot of Lisa Lewis 2007 and some pics of other girls in and around the area. Swimwear pics and some 'athletes'.

The 2006 calendar had been replaced with an autographed one of Lisa Lewis (see Figure 8), a young New Zealand woman whose claim to notoriety arose during an international rugby match in June 2006 when she ran across the rugby pitch wearing a skimpy bikini. The page on display featured Lewis in various sexualised poses.

Figure 8. The poster of Lisa Lewis that was pinned to the message board in the sports news worker area

The images mirrored those of swimwear models stereotypically featured in men's magazines: bikini-clad, slim women of European descent, with long blonde hair and blue eyes, posing seductively for the camera (Davis, 1992; Duncan, 1992). The calendar was centrally located in a visually prominent position in the sports section, and could be clearly seen across the open plan newsroom.

The graphic design workstation hosted the early morning photograph sessions prior to the editorial meetings, which commenced as soon as the editor sat down. The chief photographer usually organized these sessions with the editor, two of the male section editors and the female graphic designer, running through a range of thumbnail photographs on a large monitor screen. This group discussed possible photographs and any other graphics that were available, as they made notes of the various options. The editorial team members then moved into the

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editor's office, where they were joined by the rest of the editorial team for the daily meeting (which officially comprised all section editors, the chief photographer, and the chief sub-editor). A large whiteboard featured the week's prospective main news stories for each section, which was updated with changes as the week progressed, either before or during the editorial meetings. The second editorial meeting was held in the editor's office approximately half an hour after the first edition had been finalized. Most section editors and the chief sub-editor attended part of or the entire meeting. However, during both fieldwork periods I observed that the sports editor generally only came in to discuss the sports news, after which he left, while all other section editors generally stayed for the duration of the meeting. I also noted that no one from the sports section attended any of the photograph session, although sports photographs were discussed there. Although the editorial meetings included a variety of issues relating to sports, either about athletes or sporting events that were being considered for publication in other sections of the newspaper, the sports editor was not there to add input or comment on these discussions. These observations suggest a degree of detachment of the sports editor from the rest of the editorial team, not due to workspace layout or design *per se* but rather by his absence from places of power (i.e., the editorial meeting and photograph session). However, it was unclear whether his non-attendance was a personal choice or the result of a demanding workload and pressures of the job.

Positions:

Due to the central focus of this study on gender and power relations, the gendered make-up of the newsroom was important. The newsroom editorial team consisted of nine men and two women, most of whom attended the daily editorial meetings, with a few additional media workers making brief appearances to outline specific sections of current, international and business news. All but one of the editorial team appeared to be of European / Pakeha[8] descent. This gender and racial composition corresponds with international research findings that has revealed that power continues to reside with white, middle-class, male decision-makers,

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[8] Pakeha is the Maori name given to New Zealanders with European origin.

despite the increasing number of women (and people of non-European descent) being employed in the media sector (Carter et al., 1998). Although female media workers performed a variety of roles throughout the newsroom, there were few at senior management level and only one female media worker was assigned to the sports section; the sports sub-editor. This finding is also corroborated by other New Zealand research that reveals that the gender composition of sports journalists is that less than 6% of fulltime newspaper sports reporters are women (Bruce et al., 2007).

The majority of media workers involved in the production of sports news and photographs in this study were also male; however, due to the small size of the organization, the two female media workers comprised an atypically larger proportion of the overall group than has been identified in other research. The gender composition of the editorial team and sports section comprised 11 male (73%) and four female (26%) media workers. Outside of these senior positions there was only one key female sports media worker; the sports sub-editor. The preponderance of male sports media decision-makers and gatekeepers has also been identified in other New Zealand (Bruce, 2007) and international research (Davis, 1997; Hardin & Shain, 2005, 2006; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Macey, 2005; Miller & Miller, 1995; Miloch et al., 2005; Rowe, 2007; Smucker, Whisenant & Pedersen, 2003; Staurowsky & DiManno, 2002).

The editor

Power relations in the newsroom clearly reflected the hierarchical structure of the organization, with the editor in charge. Although he was approachable, extremely knowledgeable, and friendly with staff and the public, at the editorial meetings his direct attitude and no-nonsense responses plainly indicated his authoritative leadership style. Despite this, the twice-daily editorial meetings were generally conducted in a relaxed and informal fashion. However, there was never any doubt about who had the final say over newspaper issues and the editor would frequently make suggestions about news and photographs or who could be contacted for further background information in relation to a wide range of subjects. When asked in an interview about his overall production role, the editor stated:

It's basically three words, 'driving the news', and that's setting the news agenda for this paper around the … region. What are we going to write about in news, business, sport, features? What are we going to campaign on? What are we going to photograph and how's that going to sort of increase readership and sales? I'm the guy that divvies up the pie.

The editor essentially managed, directed, and co-ordinated the newspaper delivery through his editorial team, but with a firm hands-on approach. Although Louw (2001) maintains that "journalists become agenda-setters, creating 'the agenda' and setting the 'parameters' for what is discussed within a society" (p. 160), I would further refine his observation and suggest that it is more probable that it is the key decision-makers who are primarily responsible for establishing and controlling production *parameters* and developing *agendas*. For instance, the editor further clarified his role in producing the newspaper to a standard with which he would be satisfied; balancing readership appeal with the organization's advertising obligations. He stated that "[I] try and maximize the number of papers we sell, the time they get out on the street, marketing initiatives and new initiatives that might drive business … and I guess whether it's a success or not will be shown in readership and circulation". Moreover, ongoing remarks and comments noted during the fieldwork and interviews indicated the editor's awareness that sports news targeted a desired audience for newspaper sponsors and advertisers. Bignell (2002) maintains, "newspapers make money through sales, and need to maintain large circulation figures to stay profitable" (p. 80). Thus, in general, the editor's role was to ultimately ensure the newspaper successfully maintained its corporate objectives through effective and efficient management, whilst simultaneously juggling staff responsibilities and ensuring readership satisfaction.

In occupying a position of power, the editor drew on what he described as "executive decision-making processes" to ensure that the respective section editors were prepared for any extra workload expected of them and their staff during special occasions, such as the Commonwealth Games. For instance, he described how, prior to the Games, he would:

> … decide how much space we're going to dedicate in the paper. Do we have to make the paper bigger to get it in? Who's going to do the results? What time they're going to have to start. What the front page might be interested in and how much priority the front page is going to give to

something ahead of the sports pages. Staffing levels and obviously the technology, about how it's going to get there and what times it's going to get there.

The editor therefore considered all aspects of the major event coverage to ensure that the newsroom effectively incorporated and promoted the event in the best possible manner, without disrupting the existing sports news and daily general news production. The editor suggested his involvement in relation to the daily sports news and the overall production of the newspaper was an *advisory* one: "I will have been involved in a discussion on content and … may have driven some ideas that weren't on the agenda before or cross[ed] some [off] that were on the agenda before that I didn't think were valuable". Yet, it was clear his positional power provided him with unquestioned, status-driven authority in the newsroom. For example, sports media workers highlighted how the editor occupied a *prescriptive* role in the content and delivery of all sections of the newspaper, including sport. However, they accepted the editor's direction simply because it was "just the way things are". On other occasions media workers' comments implied that they accepted newsroom power relations and their own lack of agency in decision-making. For instance, one media worker described how the editor ignored his suggestion but stated "and I, I couldn't understand that personally … but, you know, I've just got to … go with the flow of the editorial decision. Sometimes I'm not going to agree". Similarly, other research has revealed that "journalists are socialized into an acceptance of the newsroom bureaucracy, hierarchical pecking-orders and the particular style of office politics operative in their newsroom. There is a relationship between hierarchical chains of command and the bureaucratized procedures that are operative" (Louw, 2001, p. 165). Thus, it would appear that newsrooms often have well-defined protocols and a hierarchical structure that is both closely regulated and strictly controlled.

The editor also explained on several occasions that, having risen through the ranks in a range of roles, he had acquired a good understanding of the issues his staff and the newspaper faced. In an interview, when asked specifically about his involvement in the sports news, the editor stated:

I might get involved post a game if I think there's a particular angle the newspaper should have that hasn't been taken and I say "right, I want a story on the crowd, why was it so low", and that's something that sport perhaps

doesn't think is so much of a sports story but I think it's an important [regional] story.

During editorial meetings, although there were some lengthy debates, discussions, and a few jokes made about what direction to take with certain storylines, comments made by the editor were rarely challenged. The editorial team seemed aware of each other's likes and dislikes and the language in the editorial meetings was often direct and colourful. For instance, after looking at a modified photograph attached to an article about mutilated sheep, in which a pixilated figure of a person also appeared, the editor angrily asked the chief photographer, "so why has the bloody picture been mutilated as well?" The editor then stressed in no uncertain terms that future photographs, where anonymity was requested, needed to be discussed with him before consent was given, and that rather than pixilating the image, a person's identity could be concealed through cropping. However, there were also a few instances when, despite no verbal objections or comments being raised as the editor pointing out that something should be done in a particular way, I observed a change in attitude and body language from media workers at the receiving end of his comments. These non-verbal responses indicated a form of resistance to and/or discomfort with what was suggested, which was evident in mannerisms such as shoulders being shrugged, an eyebrow raised, or lips pursed. The newsroom hierarchy was obvious and understood, with media workers perceiving the editor's use of power as a positional right, rather than being secured through discussion or agreement. On one occasion, when the editor's comment meant changing the lead sports page story, one of the sports media workers later despondently remarked, "he knows what he wants. He takes what he wants first and left us out in the cold". The editor was under no illusion that his decision-making frequently upset and infuriated his staff, but saw making decisions as an important part of his leadership role. When asked about an incident where he appropriated the main sports page's lead story for the front page without discussion, the editor said:

> Well, the front page would win; it has the final say. And there are times when you make a decision that's very unpopular and you just have to live with that…. And if it means taking the back page sports photograph, which happens periodically, not a lot, then that's what we'll do. And, of course it causes some grumpiness, but they find something else.

His remark reflects the editor acknowledging the power he has in enforcing decisions. Another example was noted during an editorial meeting when, after seeing all the available sports photographs on March 23, 2006, the editor stated "we're taking Valerie Vili in full; sports will use all other stories but just mention the shooter getting gold but nothing more". This directive not only determined what would be on the front page, but also influenced what the sports page would focus on (and exclude). Yet, sports news appears to be a very important inclusion in the newspaper even outside of the actual sports pages, as noted in other studies which suggest that "sports sell newspapers" (Creedon, 1998, p. 89). The producers of newspapers encode sports news through front page headlines or page headers, which the editor described as "teasers" that draw newspaper readers to "look at horror, shock, loss in the sports game, so there are emotive words that you can guarantee that you will get some response from" (editor). Thus, the editor highlights the way that news stories are constructed, in terms of the language and photographs used, to help influence audience interest and motivate them to purchase the newspaper.

The sports editor

Although the editor controlled the overall structure and newspaper content, each section editor managed his or her own distinct area of responsibility. The lines of authority were clearly demarcated, and when I asked the sports editor to describe the extent of control he had over the final sports page delivery, he stated:

> I don't know how to qualify that…. Well, most of it, I suppose. Yeah, yeah, the editor has the final say if he wants something different to what we're doing. He'll direct in that direction, so he has the final say.

His response revealed that although he managed the day-to-day sports section decision-making, the ultimate control over the newspaper resided in the editor's hands. In contrast, other media workers identified the sports editor as the principal sports news decision-maker. For example, when asked why a particular piece of sports news was left out of the sports pages, one media worker replied, "I'm not the sports editor, so it's not up to me to say". This reflects this media worker's implicit belief that the sports editor is the sport decision-maker. Therefore, despite the hesitancy of the sports editor himself in describing his positional newsroom

power, other media workers regarded him as controlling the sports news. However, despite this affirmation of his status within the sports section, I noted that outside of the sports pages the sports editor's input or opinions were neither requested nor provided.

From my observations, it appeared that the sports editor had a good relationship with his male sports reporters and the female sports sub-editor, who all seemed to work well as a team. When asked about the sports section he advised, "we're a three-person department including myself. I have two other staff members and then I have a sports sub-editor who is part of the sub-editor pool, but is specifically assigned to me". His comment suggested a division between the three sports journalists and the sports sub-editor, due to her connection to the sub-editor's section. When asked specifically about his working relationship with the sports sub-editor during the Commonwealth Games period, where her role was significantly altered, the sports editor reserved any personal opinions about her and reflected solely on her functions during that period. For instance, he described how she performed the role of "first filter" in selecting sports photographs, leaving him to "choose from out of what she'd whittled it down to". He also commented on her having overlooked some useful and usable photographs that he had found when scanning the various digital imaging sites during the Games, and others that the chief photographer had brought to his attention. Notwithstanding these few critical comments, the sports editor appeared confident in the sports sub-editor's abilities to manage the Commonwealth Games responsibilities. During my observations and from comments made by the sports editor, he lead his section in what appeared to be a laissez-faire manner and more by consensus. When asked specifically about who took responsibility for and scheduled sports assignments, he replied, "I guess the bottom line is me, but the three of us work pretty closely together, deciding what's covered and who covers what sports". This remark highlights his approach to just getting the job done with the least amount of hassle or interference.

The sports sub-editor

Contrary to sports studies that identify the marginal status women occupy in sports media, in her role as first filter, the female sports sub-editor occupied an unusual and particularly influential position in the sports section. As one of only

four sports section staff, she represented 25% of the sport media workers. And, as the sub-editor, she held considerable power and authority over '*making*' the news, as Louw (2001) describes here in relation to sports production more generally:

> Newspaper sub-editors have a whole range of techniques at their disposal to emphasize some news and de-emphasize other stories in accordance with editorial policy. This includes decisions about which page a story is placed on, where on the page it is placed, the size of the headline, whether a photograph will accompany the story and what sort of photograph will be used. (pp. 165-166)

In the two periods of study, the sports sub-editor's responsibilities were decidedly different. During the Commonwealth Games her position conferred her with significantly more power and control of the daily games sports news and photographs. Her early starts (three hours before normal working hours) entailed establishing how New Zealand athletes had performed the previous day and identifying potential stories for publication. This included pre-selecting photographs and articles off the news-wire before the sports editor's arrival, most of which he accepted without discussion. This acceptance reflected his belief in her abilities and acknowledgment of her sporting knowledge.

Yet despite the essential functions she executed as a sub-editor, her perception of her own power and influence reflected the workings of discourses of gender. For instance, she constantly discounted her positional power and sports knowledge, referring to herself on more than one occasion as "Who am I? Only 'Mrs. Average Housewife'". This finding ties in with other sports media research that suggests that, "once hired, women are socialized into a newsroom that emphasizes their inferiority in relation to journalism, and into a department that emphasizes their inferiority in relation to sports" (Hardin & Shain, 2006, p. 335). Although initially appearing either reluctant to acknowledge or unaware of her influential position over the sports page layout, when I specifically asked how much of the final sports page delivery she controlled, her response indicated a realization that she did exercise power over the content and development of each sports page. She stated, "I am totally in control of the way that it looks, the total look of the page.... It's really like that advertisement, 'we start with a blank page', I often think of that". The sports sub-editor also highlighted a clear understanding of the power of discourses of gender, discussing how she was able to use '*female*

intuition' to her advantage in her working relationship with the sports editor and draw on his faith in her judgement of photographs, stating that:

> Usually, you know, if I say that I really like this photo or it's a good pic and it's perfect for whatever the story, he will agree with me. It's this typical woman thing; you always let the man think it was their idea anyway. Because it is a little difficult being a woman in this job, because after all, what do women know?

Her views demonstrate her recognition that "women in sports journalism are 'outsiders' by virtue of their gender" (Hardin & Shain, 2006, p. 323), and reflect the tensions inherent in negotiating dominant discourses of gender and sport that mean women are not entirely accepted or appreciated within sports journalism. The sports sub-editor was clearly passionate and knowledgeable about sports; her life revolved around keeping up-to-date with sporting results. In an interview, she described how she researched sport using other media sources when she was at home: "I listen to a lot of news and I look at websites before I leave home in the morning", and "I usually have the radio on". She also discussed how she researched sports to "familiarize myself with all the local competitors that are competing … get my tips and pictures handy ... read as much as I can on the various different sports ...". She expressed her enthusiasm for a variety of sports saying, "there's very few sports that I don't like". Furthermore, she was the only media worker who openly described doing background research outside of the newsroom.

The chief photographer

My fieldwork revealed that power relations and the hierarchical structure of the newsroom resulted in the subordination of the sub-discourses of photojournalism. Many of the chief photographer's remarks highlighted his challenge of trying to please the various news sections and produce appropriate photographs that aligned with competing and often conflicting newsroom discourses. His main priorities related to capturing photographs that supported news values to "tell a story", and maintaining a photograph's integrity and aesthetic values. However, despite his title, the chief photographer had limited control over the photographs that were selected for publication or how they were featured. His perception was that photography and photographers were particularly disempowered once the

photograph had been taken and delivered. His view was implicitly supported by the sports editor who remarked that the photographers "have a say in the images they provide us, and you know the layout…. So, that's the say they have".

Newsroom policies about how photographs can be used and technically altered (cropped, manipulated) are designed to retain the integrity of the published images. For example, the policy allowing only minimal changes such as cropping or enhancement should, in theory, provide more power to the photographer. The sports sub-editor highlighted the importance of these protocols: "there are things that we have to adhere to and one is the policy of the layout of the paper and how it's supposed to be, rules and regs". Yet, several media workers explained that there was little in place to enforce the rules; a view that was supported by my observations. For instance, the chief photographer described his frustration at sports photographs being "compromised" by poor cropping techniques, over which the photographers had little control. He remarked irritably, "you know, you can't make a vertical into a horizontal! Although there are some sub-editors who might try!" He also explained how resizing a photograph sometimes resulted in an athlete "losing a leg", or having their "fingers cut off", or that cropping could "cut half a guy's head off". In another discussion, he angrily recounted how his photographers would prefer to "find another photo…. We like to do it that way rather than have a photo butchered by the mongrel sub!" When asked about how cropping and changes to photographs occurred in the newsroom, the editor remarked, "if we're cutting the bottom half of the photograph off particularly, he [the chief photographer] may be very vociferous in his defence of that photograph and want it changed. Sometimes that happens, sometimes it doesn't". This comment, and the observation of a particularly intense confrontation between the chief photographer and the sports editor (discussed below), highlighted newsroom power relations at play, and the hierarchical structure that provides media workers with differential access to control over what, where, and how photographs are published. Within this hierarchical structure the editor is positioned at the top, followed by the section editors, including the sports editor. Although the chief photographer led a team of photographers and managed the graphic design section, he had little power or influence over how photographs were used in the various sections. Outside of physically taking photographs and coordinating his team of photographers, his professional input was generally in an advisory

capacity. I observed how he struggled to balance the competing aspects of his role. For instance, after a concerned graphic designer showed him a proof with a heavily cropped photograph, he confronted the sports editor in the sports section, venting his frustration as he stated, "but what you're doing is undermining the whole emphasis of the picture". He suggested that rather than include an inferior photograph, it was preferable to find a more suitable replacement. However, the sports editor ignored his concerns and published the photograph in question without change. This action highlights the differential power positions between the sports editor and the chief photographer. But, as will become clear below, the hierarchical impositions and workings of power in the newsroom that control what media workers do, when and how, are all part-and-parcel of discourses of journalism that orchestrate media production standards, routines and practices.

Discourses of journalism

The central concepts of newsroom power relations and hierarchies were investigated in this study in relation to operational practices and the taken-for-granted approaches that media workers adopt. This was considered important in terms of identifying how what is produced is regulated, and more specifically, how it is created. Although media workers often have to negotiate competing newsroom discourses, what is produced reflects similar patterns in the types of representations featured, as well as considerable consistency in news formats. Therefore, newsroom routines and standard organizational practices were examined to establish how patterns emerged in media production and what role they played in the construction of preferred meanings and the encoding of media messages. The internalizing of desired news values and the naturalizing of routines and standards are described as important parts of the learning process for media workers, as cultural producers (Louw, 2001). This suggests that individual media workers have little control or influence over production practices and the dominant discourses drawn on, such that newsroom activities materialize as 'just the way things are done'. Further, in an analysis of New Zealand sports media processes, Bruce et al. (2007) suggest that for sports journalists, "their decisions, which are often explained as 'normal', 'natural' or 'commonsense' are in fact trained by on-the-job practices and years of consuming mediasport" (p. 156).

Therefore, understanding newsroom routines are important because of the influence they have on what media workers do and how sports news is produced.

Newsroom routines and the imposition of newspaper production practices

The eight weeks of fieldwork provided an opportunity to ascertain how sports media workers produce sports news through organizational practices and procedures. In addition, it also highlighted many of the taken-for-granted and automated newsroom routines that are a result of on-the-job instruction and years of decision-making and selection experience. For instance, Gitlin (2003) suggests that "news is managed routinely, automatically, as reporters import definitions of newsworthiness from editors and institutional beats" (p. 12). Thus, regular routines in media production encourage consistency in patterns of representation through standardized news formats. In my study, the newspaper production schedule meant that content for the first print run was required three hours after most of the media workers started work. The first editorial meeting often finalizing ideas about sports stories already on hand, when events had concluded, or as results became available. The editor highlighted how preparation and planning of the sports pages occurred:

> It can happen two or three days out, but the major work starts 24 hours out, so at ten o'clock today we farewelled today's edition and at two minutes past ten I have tomorrow's dummy in front of me. The dummy is what the paper's going to look like, how many pages it is, where the ads are, what the ad ratio is and we've gone through and worked out, right is that enough? They've allocated this much for sport, is that enough?

His comment highlights how space is allocated in advance across the various news sections, which not only guides but also limits the extent of freedom that section editors and sub-editors have in a preset layout. The sports editor and sub-editor used the dummy to discuss the layout options for sports news and photographs. This also reflected the typical amount of space available for sports news, with the editor mentioning that "each day's paper is predetermined and roughly stays the same from week to week, unless a special event is happening, which is always known well in advance". Therefore, the dummy standardized space availability, such that article lengths and photograph formats were

controlled. The bearing that the dummy had on sports news was reflected by the sports editor who stated:

> But all we can do is just fill the pages that are left once the ads are placed on them, that's the reality of them. We get a dummy or a schedule of ads each day and we're told these are your pages and we look at them and work out how best to use them.

His comment reflects the lack of control the news sections have over page layout before inputting the physical sports news and photographs into these pre-assigned spaces.

What counts as news

Discourses of journalism play an important role in the newsroom, where standard practices and journalistic routines guide media workers in relation to the news content and its relevancy, reliability and immediacy. Media workers attempted to ensure that what was produced reflected current or breaking news, as far as possible within the strict twice-daily print deadlines. Further, the hierarchy of news values not only determined what appeared in the various sections of the newspaper but also the allocated page space. For instance, in discussing which photographs could feature on the front page during the Games, media workers appeared to give priority to discourses of nationalism. During the interviews, media workers described the decision-making processes that went into selecting front page photographs. The editor remarked:

> We've identified for tomorrow's paper three or four issues we think are going to be page one photograph options, and you'll look for the most attractive shot on the day that you think that most people are going to get something out of. And that will mean that the story that goes with that is a front page issue, where it may not have been yesterday.

This suggests that a photograph has some power to influence what becomes front page news. The sports sub-editor remarked, "there are occasions where you get a good photograph and you frantically look for something to go with it", while the sports editor suggested that "normally it's story-driven rather than picture-driven, but not always". Photographs are therefore used in dual roles to either accompany text or to draw audience attention towards the text. Other sports research has also identified how photographs "make a significant contribution in selling newspapers

because adroit use and placement of photographs can make written media visually attractive and readable" (Vincent et al., 2003, p. 11). Therefore, the power of a photograph is not only that it visually conveys a message, but also that it is a means of drawing audience attention to a preferred media message. Many media worker conversations centred on photographs of well-known, elite athletes expected to win medals, and comments suggested their inclusion was nationally important and newsworthy because of the international nature and prestige associated with medal wins. Thus, the front page positioning was used to convey this message of worth. Moreover, through the patterns of consistency that discourses of journalism produce, there were numerous occasions when both the editor and the sports editor selected the same sports news for the front and main sports pages. However, I noted how the editor would state his decision about the use of the sports news at the editorial meetings, often without the sports editor's input or prior knowledge. If the front page sports news story or photograph was duplicated, the sports editor would have to change his story, as the front page assumed priority. This also highlights the hierarchy of news, such that sports pages are secondary to the front page. In interviews, media workers described the impact of sports news appropriation, with the editor stating that:

> It very rarely happens.… If sports have got something else, they'll go with that. If it's their strongest thing, there might be a discussion on how we can leave it in the back page lead.… You can cover an issue in two or three different ways and give both sections of the paper plenty to play with.

Whereas the sports editor commented that during these situations, negotiations can occur:

> Well sometimes you may say "how much are you going to use?" Or, "are you going to use this as a tiny little 10cm story and postage stamp picture? In which case can we rethink this and make it just a pointer and we keep the story itself and you reconsider the picture you're taking. Or "are you going to use the bulk of the story?" Which might have to be slightly rewritten to suit a front page angle…. In which case we'll pull it completely and look for a new lead. Yeah, that's the way we try to influence it 'cause obviously you don't want to give up your lead and find out it's only 10-15cm used and which hasn't captured the whole story.

However, the editor's decisions at times resulted in feelings of frustration, tension, disappointment and anger among sports media workers, not only about wasted

time but also about the way in which decisions were conveyed. Yet, at the same time, they also show an unquestioned acceptance of the editor's power, as reflected by the sports sub-editor, who stated:

> We get angry. Well, we usually have to go looking for another lead for our page…. If you've got the page pretty much made laid out, yes, you tend to get a little tension and don't say anything, just bite your tongue.

During the Commonwealth Games, I noted about a dozen occasions when lead sports page stories were appropriated for the front page. However, this did not occur during the second fieldwork period. These different patterns in production reflect how discourses of journalism change when discourses of nationalism are drawn on by media workers during major international sporting events. During these high profile events, sports news was constructed as nationally important and therefore newsworthy enough to be prominently featured on the front page.

Every weekday during the editorial photograph sessions, I noted discussions between the chief photographer, the editor, section editors, and the graphic designer about which sports photographs could feature. On one Monday morning I was surprised when the editor ignored several photographs of the New Zealand Commonwealth Games women's triathlon medallists (silver, bronze and a fourth place), whose event ended just after the Saturday edition deadline. The men's triathlon had finished in time, with the Saturday weekend edition featuring three large photographs of the three New Zealand competitors. After observing some photographs of the female triathletes, which the chief photographer described as "excellent", the editor immediately made the remark that "they're old news by Monday morning". On returning to the sports section after the editorial meeting, I also noted that the sports sub-editor and sports editor had similarly disregarded the photographs of the women's triathlon. Although at first the editor's decision to ignore the women's triathlon successes appeared to relate to discourses of gender, particularly since the weekend edition had privileged the male triathletes, I realised that the motivation for excluding the sportswomen's successes actually related to discourses of journalism; namely newspaper print deadlines and the desire to publish current news stories. However, regardless of the reason for the decision, the exclusion of any sports photographs of these

medal-winning sportswomen further reinforced their marginalization in the major event coverage period.

In another example of the impact of discourses of journalism and the effect of the newsroom print deadline, I observed how the editor adeptly changed the front page to draw attention to a breaking news story, despite having little detail about the issue at hand. An unexpected withdrawal due to injury by New Zealand's top female cyclist, Sarah Ulmer, moments before the commencement of the road race, was announced at the Games. The first newspaper edition had already run and the formal Games press conference would be too late to meet the second edition deadline. The editor decided this news was too nationally important to be ignored and so included a small "taster piece" in the second edition as a breaking news story on the front page. He remarked that this was a way of "capturing readers' attention before the other national newspapers had the chance to cover the press conference". This front page change meant reducing the original lead news story to about half its first edition size, providing space for a small photograph and brief article about Sarah Ulmer's medical withdrawal from the race. The following day's newspaper contained an extensive article about her injury and her last minute decision to abandon the race, along with press conference photographs. Therefore, in this situation, discourses of journalism resulted in breaking news about a nationally important sportsperson being given priority over discourses of gender that would normally marginalize sportswomen.

Discussions about what image should feature on the front page from the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony also reflected the highly complex decision-making processes entailed in selecting photographs to convey preferred media messages. For instance, the editor highlighted his preference for a photograph of triathlete Hamish Carter as a New Zealand representative, stating "the Carter one showed some Kiwi faces, so here's Kiwis and the Games". Similarly, the graphic designer suggested, "I think Hamish Carter was a big thing, not just for the region, but for everyone. It's always a nice feeling seeing your country going onto something like that". Both of these remarks emphasized the importance of featuring a nationally recognizable *'Kiwi'* athlete. However, other media workers raised different viewpoints about the type of photograph that should be publicized on the front page. For instance, the sports editor "felt that the overall shot of the MCG all lit up with fireworks, was the best shot. It really stood

out", and the chief photographer agreed that "the fireworks … had a real point of difference". These two media workers' comments reflected their preference for photographs based more on aesthetic values that entertain, as a point of difference to elicit audience interest, whereas the earlier contrasting perspectives focused on news values relating to depicting a '*Kiwi*' athlete. Moreover, these opposing perspectives highlight the challenges media decision-makers face in selecting photographs and the discursive practices that come into play when preferred messages are constructed. In addition, the process of selection is difficult to qualify due to media workers making photographic choices and developing preferred messages with a particular implicit target audience in mind. Their assumptions about the composition of sports audiences are discussed in more detail below.

Practices of constructing sports news with a target audience in mind

The producers of sports news develop assumptions about which sports, athletes and events are the most newsworthy and important in everyday and major event coverage. The decisions media workers make while constructing sport news reflect the powerful role they play in making choices about what to feature and how it is represented, which audiences (and the athletes) have little input into or influence over. Thus, it was important to ascertain how media workers determine audience interests and what mechanisms are in place to measure their effectiveness and accuracy in meeting audience expectations.

The editor commented that the target audience was, "you know, the Joe-normal-person out on the street, just a normal down to earth sort of Kiwi", thus implying a male reader. In contrast, the female sports sub-editor remarked that:

> Our target audience as far as I can see is Mrs. Average-Housewife. It's not a businessman's newspaper, as much as they'd like it to try to be…. but Mrs. Average-Housewife that lives in [a small suburb] or whatever, she'll read the paper, her husband will read the paper. She'll like the interesting things about the shopping or the whatever, whereas he wants his rugby, he wants everything plain and simple, and easy to read, you know. That's how I see it anyway.

These two responses highlight the power of the broader sports–masculinity articulation that leads to an assumption that *sports* audiences are predominantly male. While not specifically stating that "Joe-normal-person" was male, the

editor's conversation revolved around male sports and his own sporting interests in a way that implied that he believed sports production primarily catered for a male audience. Similarly, despite the sports sub-editor proposing that Mrs. Average-Housewife was the main newspaper reader, her remarks about Mrs. Average-Housewife's *husband* wanting "his rugby" also implies that the sports section is aimed at men. Furthermore, her description of women being more enthusiastic about shopping helps reinforce discourses of femininity in relation to spheres of interest. Similarly, Gee's (2009) research of French media production, highlights identical worker comments about the target audience of French sports. As one journalist stated, "women don't read sports papers, they don't participate in sport as much, they aren't in front of the tv as much, or in the stadiums" (p. 57). However, despite media workers' assumptions about audiences, few formal sports surveys are commissioned to determine what sports local and regional audiences consider important, or the gender makeup of readers. Instead, it appears that the decision-making was based on the editor's and sports editor's sense of what makes good sports news, and their professional beliefs about the target audience. For instance, in response to a question about how the sports audience's interest is gauged, the editor remarked:

> Well we don't get a lot of feedback.… Then it's word of mouth or thankfully it's *my area of expertise* and I'm a sports player and sports follower, *so I'll know.* You know, I'll know myself really, what are we offering the reader in terms of sport.

Although the sports editor provided a similar response, he also stated:

> Our marketing people monitor which papers sell better than others. But, even then, you don't know why but *you can make some guesses, educated guesses.*

Their comments clearly indicating that the production of sports news is driven by media workers' assumptions about and experiences of what appears to work, rather than research about actual audience preferences. While the editor was confident in suggesting which sports news was important, the sports editor's remarks indicate a more tentative approach:

> You just have to make judgements of what you like and *hope* that that fits with what the reader likes.… Otherwise you'd be there anguishing for

hours over what some group of readers might or might not like. So, I guess *you just have to use your own judgement* and hope that it fits.

…You just write *what you think* is the best, most interesting angle and written story you can and hope that that's what people want to read.... You've just got to go with it and *use your experience and judgement* based on that experience and hope that it's close to the mark. You're never always going to get it a 100% bang on.

Despite the slight variance in these two senior decision-makers' comments, their views reflect how entrenched and powerful dominant discourses of journalism are; in this case, standard production practices become so taken-for-granted that consumer research appears unnecessary. Similarly, international sports production research highlights that "sports section gatekeepers determined content based more on their own sense about audience interests than on the audience itself" (Hardin, 2005, p. 72). Therefore, it appears that as long as media decision-makers ignore actual audience research or fail to look beyond their own intuition, sports coverage will continue to reflect the preferences of media decision-makers rather than the interests of sports audiences.

Discourses of photojournalism are subordinated by discourses of journalism

In the newsroom, a variety of different media workers were involved, individually and collectively, to ensure that sports news was produced effectively, efficiently and appropriately. One of the important figures whose position transcends the sports section as a key player in the production of sports photographs is the chief photographer, who has a dual role. First, the chief photographer must ensure that appropriate photographs are captured on assignment for the newsroom and support and guide media workers in their photographic choices; secondly he is responsible for overseeing the technical adaptation of selected images and ascertaining that a quality reproduction is produced that meets the necessary publication standards. Much in the same way that media workers adhere to discourses of journalism, the practices and processes of discourses of photojournalism structure how media photographs and photographers operate. However, much like media workers, the photographers' sense of what is of value to ensure that their photographs are used reflects taken-for-granted knowledge of

the types of images that include the necessary news, technical and aesthetic values. The important aspects of photojournalism therefore include the routines of planning and preparation to ensure that the most appropriate photographs are produced and that they meet the standards and criteria of media production.

Although the chief photographer is responsible for ensuring that the best possible photographs are created and for assigning photographers to take these images, he or she has little choice over what media decision-makers want to have images taken of. Prior to sporting events occurring, a number of judgment calls are made about which sports are important or valued by the editor and the sports editor, in order to ensure that resources are available when required. For instance, in this study, the preparation for the Commonwealth Games coverage commenced months beforehand, whereby the editor and sports editor examined how they would tackle the daily routines of producing sports news, how many photographers were required, and who would control the workflow for the major event coverage. Once these decisions were made, the chief photographer's input was called on in relation to assigning a specific photographer, ensuring their preparation for the event and the variety of sports they would need to cover. The chief photographer described how photographers assigned to multi-sport events, like the Commonwealth Games, are given additional time and opportunity to gain appropriate skills and techniques:

> We would make sure that that person was getting a good opportunity to shoot a lot of stuff that they perhaps hadn't shot before. You know we don't shoot a lot of badminton or bloody ping-pong or synchronized swimming…. So if those sports are happening in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games then we'd have that photographer go to shoot those events. There was a national track and field meeting on; you know it's a no-brainer that the photographer going to the Commonwealth Games will go and cover that. We'll roster them on to do that.

He also described how logistical issues at major events, such as coordinating sports scheduling, transportation and accommodation, often resulted in some sports and athletes not being photographed. Furthermore, planning also entailed establishing the number of photographers available to determine how best to coordinate them during particular events in relation to potential national medal winners or athletes expected to break national records. The sports editor stated that "sometimes you might either not have the shot you want, whether it be a

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medal dais shot or because the event was … sometimes shooting events get missed because they're in an outlying location". The chief photographer, commenting from his own major event experiences and of trying to get the best possible photograph, stated:

> You have to wait for the good shot and if the good shot's happening when the free roaming TV cameraman's standing between you and your subject then you're screwed. It can be very, very frustrating…. It does happen. Some high jumper or something just suddenly is, you know, had extra coco pops for breakfast or something and is coming out of the blue. If you can hear about it and get to it while you're photographing some long jumper who's going to come 4th and possibly going to do a personal best. If you can get to it, good, but there are occasions where you're going to miss something. You've got to just try and plan as well as you can.

Ensuring the availability of appropriate photographs to accompany sports stories is therefore the result of a great deal of preparation, skill, and sometimes a certain amount of luck.

In addition, discourses of photojournalism support the development of routines, which provide an important controlling mechanism that ensure order and consistency is maintained in what is produced and how it is *re-presented*. The sports sub-editor for instance suggested, "you look at the photographs and obviously the best photograph is going to go with it and they usually pick themselves. A good photograph will always, you don't have to be a genius to work it out". Other media workers highlighted that news, technical and aesthetic values promote a "good photo" in the selection process. However, depending on the photograph's context and content, all three values were not necessarily required to feature within an image, but they could affect the outcome of whether or not a photograph was published.

Technical and aesthetic values of sports photographs

The technical features of a good sports photograph were described in relation to the clarity of the image, the type of focus, lighting, colour and saturation, as well as the shape and size in terms of fitting in to the space layout. Some media workers described technical features, suggesting that photographs be "well lit" [chief photographer], "sharp" [sports editor], "fill the frame" [sports editor] and "of a certain shape" [chief photographer]. At the same time, their comments

frequently included words such as "you know", "obviously", and "as you are aware", suggesting a taken-for-granted assumption that the technical values of high-quality photographs are self-evident and universally understood. Their remarks also highlighted that unique photographs were highly regarded:

> It's always good to have something that you haven't seen before. [chief photographer]

> You're always hoping for a slightly different angle than the one that the rest have got. [editor]

Therefore, media worker comments reflected the value they placed on originality and a point of difference in photographs. In one editorial photograph session during the Commonwealth Games, while looking through the image options the chief photographer suddenly and loudly remarked "oh that's one. That's an excellent photo … it has to go in". Other media workers also immediately commented on the "unusual" and "eye-catching" uniqueness of the photograph to potentially attract audience interest. Additionally, what made it more significant was that their own photographer on assignment at the Games had taken it. Despite the image featuring a fourth place result, the photograph was published in large format on the main sports page, attached to an article about the day's sporting outcomes for New Zealand athletes at the Commonwealth Games. Independently, the sports editor also highlighted the photograph's exceptional elements:

> It's a photo of a backstroker just about to surface, to just about break the surface of the water after the start of the backstroke race, coming up in almost a bubble of water. I mean that was probably the standout picture.

The distinctiveness of this photograph resulted in it being selected over one of the more successful bronze-medal-winning New Zealand synchronized swimmers. Moreover, this choice reflects how competing discourses and values informing the field of sports journalism influence what becomes sports news. In this case, the unique features of a technically "good photo" won over a sporting success story that reflected news values. Further, the chief photographer highlighted that "there's heaps of technical things that can make a poor photo; bad focus, movement, whatever, bad lighting but [also] along the lines of just not being suspense, not having that action moment captured". Furthermore, the graphic designer described some of the basic media industry standards for digital

photograph quality, such as the size and the pixel count of the image: "if it's too small, I'll just say no. If we were to use it at a [large] size I know they'd want to, it's going to be grainy and gross".

At times, the way that media workers belaboured the choice of photograph reflected wider discursive struggles in the newsroom and in their personal judgements of what works and what does not work, particularly in relation to the aesthetic values of photographs. For instance, the sports sub-editor described how she found it difficult to include "arty" photographs because they contain "no news values". She described one recent photograph presented for consideration:

> The photographers decide to get arty. We had a league photo over the weekend taken specifically for the story so, and, I don't know what he was trying to do. I think he was wanting the main guy's face clear but everything else blurred. It was one of those and it just doesn't work.

She also revealed that, despite the chief photographer encouraging them to use the photo, she and the sports editor rejected it. Additionally, she remarked that photographers sometimes produce photographs that, rather than enhancing the sports story, actually compromise it by privileging aesthetic values over news values. She stated, "some photographers are very Prima Donna-ish and, you know, they take what looks good rather than what's a good picture to illustrate a story". Her comment highlights her belief that there are differences in priorities between those responsible for producing sports news and those who take photographs. These findings highlight how media workers constantly negotiate what makes a 'good' photograph in relation to their beliefs about news, technical and aesthetic values. Moreover, what is apparent is that those producing the sports news hold considerably more power and sway over what is selected than those who take the photographs.

News value of photographs

Although the likelihood of particular photographs attracting audiences was often discussed, only one instance arose when the possible effect on the photographed athlete was mentioned, despite concerns about the impact on the athlete ranked lower than the news value. For example, the chief photographer described how one of his own photographs had impacted on the featured athlete:

> I remember at one Olympics I photographed ... Aran Mackintosh really, really upset at his performance in the boardsailing. And he didn't like it and the management did like it. It summed it up …you've got to be there for the highlights and you've got to be there for the lows. And if, I think that, if the New Zealand public didn't occasionally see a sports person who's upset with their poor performance then they would think, well, you know, what are they there for? You should be upset about sport's poor performance and *that tells a story* that day as well. [emphasis added]

His comments highlight not only the position of power the media have in selecting a photograph to be published, but also the powerlessness of the featured athlete and the way in which a media message is created to 'tell a story'. The media workers also identified photographic qualities that connect audiences to specific news values. For instance, sports action photographs were particularly valued by media workers because of their ability to visually highlight the intensity of participation and feature decisive and important sporting moments. The chief photographer described them as "capturing a piece of action that changed the game … uninterrupted, you get the suspense and the action and the whole thing, you know". He went on to reflect how a photograph "captures suspense, you know, suspended motion. The moment, the decisive moment of the peak of the action…. The winning ball of the match. It's not a cricket action photo, it's that jubilation that tells a story". His use of 'you know' again implies the taken-for-grantedness of the value of action photographs in providing insight into the sporting atmosphere for those who were not there, and imparting a tangible sense of triumph, success, or excitement. Media workers also explained how they believe sports photographs engage audience emotion and feeling through featuring an athlete's physical expressions and movement. For example:

> … Valerie Adams' facial expression shot, heaving her discus [sic] was a good one 'cause it was just sort of almost animal, guttural. [editor]

> The most intriguing photos are when they've got some weird kind of gesture going on in their face, or something like that. Or, where they're caught in a moment … Rather than standing there and saying, "Hi. I've just won a gold medal". [graphic designer]

Media workers' comments also identified qualities in sports action photographs, such as intensity, suspense, excellence, emotion and capturing turning points, which helped connect audiences to important news values. For instance, the sports

sub-editor highlighted her perspective in relation to a "great sports photograph of Benji Marshall", a New Zealand-born rugby league player:

> I just find it a very strong pic that sums up the way he plays rugby league, and it's very hard to explain without actually seeing. It's just him passing the ball, but it's got movement in it, you can actually feel that ball being passed.

In highlighting the appeal of this action photograph, she focused on the news values of a *moment of action*, without referencing the photograph's technical composition. However, the editor highlighted that, at times, the priority given to a photograph's news value may result in "a slightly inferior shot, but it is the winning try" being published, due to the image capturing an important aspect of the event or game. In addition, the editor's mention of an "inferior shot" highlights how technical values, although important, are not always crucial if the preferred message of victory is still conveyed.

Discourses of sports journalism reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation

As discussed above, power relations in the newsroom are central in determining which discourses have the most influence on decisions. Therefore, understanding how the sports–masculinity articulation impacts what is produced is important. For instance, Gee's (2009) French production study "demonstrate[d] the subtle ways in which the taken-for-granted 'maleness' of sport perpetuated hegemonic control over sports media coverage" (p.64). In this New Zealand study, this *hegemonic control* was evident in the way that, without much discussion between the sports media workers, the majority of sports news featured photographs of men's sport and sportsmen. During both periods of observation, the majority of the sports news and photographs discussed by the sports editor related to sportsmen and men's sports. I noted that media workers repeatedly mentioned rugby and rugby league and there were always numerous rugby player photographs featured at the editorial photograph sessions. I asked the sports editor whether there were any sports that were *always* considered for coverage:

> When you say 'always', it's not like there's a hard and fast rule that there must be a story of a particular sport in that day's paper, but rugby would

fit that category, with it being a *national sport* and being so many *professional* competitions now…. That's probably the one sport that's more likely than not to have a presence in most papers, yeah.

The sports editor's response confirmed what I had noted in editorial discussions and in sports media workers' conversations, as the majority of local and national sports news centred on rugby.

To further clarify whose interests the sports pages catered for, I asked media workers what sports would predominantly appear on the sports pages. The editor remarked that, "whatever rugby does will get covered, and whatever it doesn't do it'll get covered because it's the national sport". Interestingly, this comment highlights how discourses of sport and gender influence media workers, as rugby discussions only arose in relation to men's rugby; there was not one comment nor one photograph of women's rugby participation featured during either fieldwork period. The majority of the news-wire articles I watched the sports editor scrutinize on a daily basis related to numerous pages of online rugby articles on men, whereas relatively few articles related to other sports or women's sports. This highlights a consistency in sports journalism that extends to the availability of newswire articles where the predominant focus too was on a few professional men's sports. The result of this emphasis is not only are there fewer options for articles on other sports, but it also inherently conveys a message about the value of the few privileged sports. International research suggests that the emphasis given to a few men's sports results not only in media workers engaging in "considerable selective construction and interpretation in the production phase" (Kinkema & Harris, 1998, p. 32), but it also supports the "active promotion of a hierarchy that results in saturation coverage of a small number of sports and the advanced neglect of most others, despite their substantial popular support bases" (Rowe, 2007, p. 400).

The normalizing of production practices that draw attention to a few men's sports and sportsmen is concerning because of the powerful effect that the sports–masculinity articulation has on sports practices and sports journalists' perceptions about what sports audiences want to see and read. To further establish whether there was any correlation between the media workers' personal sporting interests and what is represented in the newspaper, during my fieldwork, I recorded what sports were talked about and which appeared to be particularly important to media

workers. In addition, in interviews I asked participants to describe the sports that they liked to watch, participate in, or to read about. The sports editor, for instance, spent a lot of his time compiling the latest results of the local and regional seniors rugby and schoolboy rugby. In his interview he remarked, "I'm heavily involved in covering rugby, because it's grown in the years since it became a professional sport. I guess I'd have to say rugby because that takes most of my time". He wrote a number of weekly articles about the local and regional rugby teams and was one of five rugby panel judges whose team selections were published weekly in the sports section. Yet his passion for all things rugby was not isolated; a number of other media workers positively reinforced the general way in which rugby was privileged, with the sports sub-editor stating, "I love it, love it, but it does carry an extremely high profile", while the graphic designer added, "everyone's kind of sport - especially rugby - crazy". These findings of positive support for rugby are consistent with international research that has identified how media workers believe that men's professional spectator sport is "the stuff people want to read about [and] big time sports get you readers" (Lowes, 1999, p. 132).

However, in contrast to the general acceptance of rugby's important position, the female sports sub-editor had numerous photographs of world number-one professional tennis player Roger Federer lying on her desk. Although she made no comment about the photographs, and as the collection grew over time, I surmised that she was a Federer fan and this was her private collection. During an interview, while she was verbally running through the different sports for each season, she suddenly enthusiastically remarked, "Roger Federer. Wow. He's still my thrill. I saw him in Wimbledon last year". Her unexpected and unusually open comment, smile and expression suggested that she considered him not only to be a great tennis player, but also good-looking and sexy. My reading of her interest in Federer was further corroborated during my second fieldwork period, when she suddenly turned to the sports editor and exclaimed, "have you seen all the articles on Federer?". Although the sports editor did not acknowledge or make any response to her comment, the next day a large article entitled *Leisure time a plus for Federer* appeared on an inside sports page appended to a large, close-up, posed photograph of a smiling Roger Federer.

However, this was a rare example of agency on the part of women in sports production. Furthermore, when asked specifically about what the sports

pages lacked, the sports sub-editor stated that there are "a lot of tennis tournaments overseas that don't get covered, badminton and squash doesn't get very much cover". She highlighted that although the results section lists results of major events, few articles focus on these major international tournaments and fewer still feature sportswomen. The female graphic designer also suggested that sports photographs should be used more often to break the repetitiveness of current sports reporting, stating that "when I get polo pictures coming in, I think 'wow, that's cool, that's different'. It's not like rugby pics. You get the same stuff all the time, or soccer". These opinions reflect how these female media workers, unlike their male counterparts, would prefer more diversity and a wider range of sports news in the sports pages, including women's sport, rather than the current predominance of a few select men's sports. Yet despite the few concerns raised about the lack of focus on other sports, no media workers explicitly voiced dissatisfaction with the emphasis given to rugby, with the editor describing it as "what most people want to read about and it gets priority". However, as already noted above, while male and female media workers' commented about audiences *wanting / expecting* rugby coverage, their affirmations remained unsupported by actual audience research. Indeed, rugby appears simply taken-for-granted as being New Zealand's national men's sport, due to its historic importance and its ability to reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation. Moreover, during both observation periods, media workers said little about men's sport in the course of sports production. Although men's sport took up the vast majority of the sports production space (and the sports media workers' time), its inclusion as *the* focus of sports news was tacit, predictable and automated.

These findings thus reflect how powerful newsroom discursive hierarchies are in: 1) creating levels of importance in the types of sports featured that result in influencing what is featured or ignored, 2) prioritising issues of gender that predominantly privilege sportsmen and marginalize sportswomen, and 3) enabling a few males to occupy decision-making positions, who control what is produced. The period of newsroom fieldwork therefore produced valuable insight into the way that the workings of power operate in the newsroom in relation to a hierarchical structure which impacts on media workers' interactions, their roles and the workspace itself. In addition, the observation period highlighted a range of media practices, routines and assumptions that influence the production of sports

news. Production practices are particularly important because "the individual journalist is unlikely to be able to inject *much* personal perspective into the news – news culture and routines dampen most of the differences in viewpoint or experience workers bring to the newsroom" (Craft & Wanta, 2004, pp. 126-127). This suggests that discourses of journalism shape what is produced and highlights how pivotal they are to the production of consistent media messages. Moreover, what was also revealed was that at any given moment, media workers have the potential to draw on a number of competing discourses during the production of sports news. However, due to the predominance of discourses of sport that reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation, the preferred message is likely to reflect a male-oriented approach in the sports news, and possibly more so than in other news sections.

The representation of sportswomen and the focus given to discourses of femininity

Gender discourses play a pivotal role in how athletes and athleticism are conveyed within media production. In this study, the strength of the sports–masculinity articulation meant that discussions between media workers about articles and photographs of sportswomen appeared to be more laboured and demanding: media workers struggled to find appropriate ways to feature sportswomen without challenging dominant discourses of sport or straying too far from discourses of femininity. For instance, on several occasions as the editor, chief photographer, section editors and graphic designer reviewed photographs, their remarks about sportswomen focused on their physical appearance in relation to their sporting abilities or achievements. For instance, while reviewing the available sports photographs during the Commonwealth Games, the chief photographer, editor, and section editors discussed the lack of medals won by the New Zealand sportswomen, which one section editor put down to "the women's poor performances". A number of photographs featured Beatrice Faumuina, the New Zealand discus thrower, highly publicized by the media in the build-up to the Games as a potential medal winner. At this point another section editor remarked, "and have you seen the size of Beatrice and her excessive weight? I'm not that surprised by the result", implying that her failure to win a medal (she came fourth) was linked to her size. The other media workers within earshot all laughed and

proceeded to make other comments about the general appearance of women participating in the discus competition, with one stating:

> They all look like men, *too muscular* and all short. I was watching Maori TV the other day and one of the coverage commentators said about our NZ athletes – 'they're pretty compared to the rest of the pack who are all too muscular and butch'.

This media worker's response suggests that sportswomen who exhibit large muscles transgress gender norms, particularly in relation to negotiating discourses of sport and femininity, which implies that strength and physical power are *unfeminine* and *unnatural* for sportswomen. Moreover, the tacit agreement expressed by other media workers in relation to this comment reflects the way in which the sports–masculinity articulation presents a challenge for media workers, who often struggle to find appropriate ways to feature sportswomen as athletes *and* as women. In a similar French media production study, when media workers were asked what attributes encourage greater focus on sportswomen, one French reporter commented "it's better if she is shapely and cute than a shot put thrower, that's for sure" (Gee, 2009, p. 51). Additionally, in the present study, the section editor's remark about sportswomen "looking like men" and being "butch" immediately puts their sexuality into question and draws on stereotypical beliefs about muscular and strong sportswomen being lesbian (Hargreaves, 2000; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Stevenson, 2004).

The challenges sportswomen face in being featured in media coverage and the powerful influence that discourses of gender have in media production were highlighted by another French media worker in Gee's (2009) study, who suggested that "it's complicated for women. Guys don't have to be super good looking. If they play well and are strong, well, that's all that's needed. Girls need to have charm and beauty too. It's much harder for them" (p. 52). An example of the increased pressures and expectations that New Zealand sportswomen face was highlighted in a front page article that appeared after the editorial photograph session discussed above (March 22, 2006, p. 1), appended with a photograph of discus thrower Beatrice Faumuina looking crestfallen (see Figure 9). The headline *'Golden Girls Fire Blanks'* perhaps inadvertently reinforced the sports–masculinity articulation, using language discursively associated with male impotency.

Figure 9. 'Golden Girls Fire Blanks'
(*Waikato Times*, March 22, 2006, p. 1) Caption – '*Underwhelming: Beatrice Faumuina is out of the medals after throwing 10m shy of her best last night in the discus circle*'

Although the two sportswomen mentioned, discus thrower Beatrice Faumiuna and cyclist Sarah Ulmer, had previously been positioned in relation to preferred messages that positively promoted them as serious medal contenders, their failure to secure medals was featured as a personal and national defeat. The prominent placement of the article and large size of the headline and photograph emphasized this message. When I asked the editor how audiences had reacted to the article, he stated:

We got the most complaints about … the day we did the girls flopped, was it medal girls ... **'*Golden girls fire blanks'*.** Yep, yep, and that's an excellent response as far as I'm concerned. As it shows that we touched the buttons that day. It's our job to … intrigue, interest, provoke, and we successfully did it.

Despite readers objecting to the negative front page headline and article, the editor regarded the extensive public response as a positive sign of audience interest. Although typically, national successes during the major event were framed in relation to discourses of sport and masculinity, Faumuina's failure to win a medal was contextualized within discourses of femininity within the text, which proposed that she was *'looking to be carrying too much weight'*. The suggestion made in this comment, is that in being overweight, Faumuina is not only a failed athlete *but also* deficient as a woman for failing to conform to the ideals of femininity.

Another example of media workers struggling to find ways to represent sportswomen as athletes and as women was identified in relation to an incident that occurred when the sports editor was reading the news-wire. After reading several articles about New Zealand squash player, Shelley Kitchen, who had just won a bronze medal in the women's singles squash, he uncharacteristically and excitedly called out to the sports sub-editor, "yes, yes. Ha, ha. That's a great one". He then turned towards the sports sub-editor as he continued, "Oh I have to use this! … Have you read the story about Shelley Kitchen headed '*Massage and retail therapy'*? You have to find me a pic of Shelley!" The sports editor's unexpected reaction focused not on Kitchen's sporting achievement, but on activities discursively constructed as feminine such as shopping and spa treatments. However, when I asked the sports editor several weeks later why he selected that article rather than one focused on her medal win, he replied, "Oh, that was a long time ago now. I can't remember what the options were to be honest. I remember the story but I don't remember the alternatives. No, sorry my recollection is a little vague on that one". However, the sports sub-editor clearly recalled the article and her search for an appropriate photograph to go with it. She stated:

> Yes, yes, I remember. It was slightly different…. interesting because once again I think what happens with a lot of our stories, right throughout the paper, we forget who on earth is reading our paper … you have got to pick stories and illustrations that go to what I call our target market.

In this regard the sports sub-editor highlighted her belief that although this newspaper appeals more to a female readership, the sports pages are typically written for a male audience. However, what impressed her in relation to the Kitchen article was that it focused on interests that the female readership would appreciate. Her remarks highlighted a perspective that male and female sports audiences are discursively drawn to sports news in divergent ways; men are interested in news that reinforces the sports–masculinity articulation, whereas the appeal for women lies in news that articulates women to discourses of femininity and the traditional female domain.

In another example, when I asked the editor what attributes any athlete needed to be given media attention, he highlighted that they should be "successful" and "well-spoken", and that it was also helpful if they were "from within [this] region", and "people who the public looks up to". He further added:

> Glamour sort of people like Sarah Ulmer, because not only is she successful, well-spoken and great to deal with, she's good-looking, photogenic and generally co-operative, so that all helps. And not to say that an ugly person doesn't get coverage, but it's all part of the package. It's a glamour sport and she does it so well.

Although gender had not been specifically raised, as I had referred to "any athlete", the editor's reply revealed the type of characteristics that he would expect sports journalists to focus on for a *female* athlete in particular. Despite success being referred to as a key reason for including an athlete, his list of additional attributes highlighted how he considered features of idealized femininity important, rather than the athlete's sporting qualities. This focus on the physical attractiveness of sportswomen has also been identified in a range of international sports media studies (Booth & Tatz, 2000; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Feder-Kane, 2000; Hardin & Shain, 2006; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Kinkema & Harris, 1998). Frequently, photographs of sportswomen emphasize their physical appearance in a non-sporting context, which is assumed to encourage greater male interest.

When establishing whether there were any photographs of sportswomen that would be considered inappropriate to publish, the media workers provided conflicting responses that demonstrated the way in which different discourses intersect with and inform the field of sports journalism. For instance, the chief photographer highlighted the difficulty in capturing what he considered "acceptable" photographs of female netballers. He described their uniforms as "terrible" because "their skirts can be coming up when you're coming down", meaning that photographs capture what many media workers described as "knicker shots"; photographs that feature athletes' underwear clearly visible. He further remarked, "there's a lot of good netball photographs that we wouldn't even put forward 'cause of that and we would be held to account if we publish them by certain people". Moreover, he explained that in cases "where runners in their very short pants have had parts of their appendage exposed … you try and find something" else. His comments highlighted an aspect of modesty that he stood by in his photojournalist role, whereby he regarded both male and female athletes' genital areas as private. Yet despite the chief photographer being guided by these principles of appropriateness, the editor's perspective in relation to netball was different. He argued that:

> In our women's sport we get…. some negativity if we run 'knicker shots', which *you know* is the skirt coming up over the knickers. And, we ran one a year ago that we got some flak for…. Funnily …that won the best sports photograph because it was the key moment of the game…. She went over somebody's shoulders, dress flashed up and she landed on her head, got carted off the field and New Zealand went on to win the game from being behind. So it was the key moment, great shot, had to run.

The editor used "you know" to suggest this is a well-known aspect in netball, implying the problem lies more with the sports uniforms than with the media using these types of photographs. In addition, he used news values to justify the use of this specific "knicker shot", as it captured the game's decisive moment; a compelling imperative for its inclusion. The editor also acknowledged that photographs of athletes tend to "show body parts, male and female". This point reflects the competing discourses at play in the newsroom, whereby the hierarchical power relations enabled the editor to control what was featured in relation to his perceptions of newsworthiness, as compared to the chief photographer who was driven by issues of modesty and the production of

appropriate photographs. The newsroom hierarchy thus privileges news values over the discourses of photojournalism, which are subordinated. In addition, these news values are also evident when the normative context of sport changes, such as during a major international sporting event. At such times, this articulation is challenged and other discourses more closely aligned with nationalism and winning are brought to the fore.

Discourses of nationalism influence how athletes are featured

During the Commonwealth Games, media workers constructed sports news in a way that drew audience attention to national athletes, specifically those considered to have the potential to win medals or positively promote the nation, by giving primacy to discourses of nationalism. I observed how media workers deliberated over photographs and the performances of national athletes, particularly those expected to win medals or break records, before considering the inclusion of a range of national team members, who were discussed at every editorial meeting. The sports editor described the types of photographs he encouraged the photographers and graphic designer to make available, such as photographs of potential medal-winning national athletes, where he stated:

> Obviously you need to flag possible picture possibilities and let the photographers know about those. Diary them, so that we're not sort of caught out suddenly. Let them know that something was on, so it's all that type of planning.

This comment also highlights the importance of event preparation for the sports editor; despite not being at the Games and his lack of control over the photographers, he was able to encourage a focus on certain athletes, many of whom were women, or on specific events. An increased focus during international events on potential medal winning sportswomen was also identified in a Canadian study, where the authors argued that "part of the reason for the increasing media attention to women's sports during the Olympics may therefore be the stress placed on the medal count and on countries 'winning' the Games" (Mason & Rail, 2006, p. 29). Sportswomen become more newsworthy *because* they propel the nation into the limelight through securing medals; thereby creating positive nationalistic sentiment. Thus, discourses of nationalism play a powerful role in disrupting the sports–masculinity articulation during major events. During these

periods, sports news often features on the front page, which increases audience interest in the national team and medal tally. When asked about the conditions under which sports news and photographs make the front page, media workers suggested:

> It's generally around success, success, feel good, or crushing disappointment, depression or news that you think the majority of the readers are going to find exciting. What's on the front page has got to sell the paper…. You're trying to find things that you think will appeal to the biggest majority. [Editor]

> Generally it's something major, either something major good or something major bad. There's never really an in-between. [Graphic designer]

> It's got to stand up as either one of our athletes has broken a world record, which then becomes general news as well, because everyone would like to know that… A news story about sports people but not of the sport itself. [Sports sub-editor]

The sports–nationalism articulation therefore appeared to create space for media coverage of sportswomen during the Commonwealth Games, in contrast to the second period of study, where there was limited overall interest in sportswomen and women's sports. Therefore, sportswomen who reinforced the sports–nationalism articulation, particularly those who were expected to win or who performed beyond expectations, attracted greater media attention. For example, I noted how media workers enthusiastically discussed how a female gold medal victory and a scandal about a male New Zealand athlete that occurred almost simultaneously could be linked together. In the editorial meeting, the editor expressed the intention of combining "the success and drama on the front page … to make it more appealing to readers". My field notes also reflected his positional power in specifying which photographs were to be used and how the news should appear on both the front page and the sports pages:

> Front page to take the photograph of Valerie Vili, the 'after-shot' of her punching the air to celebrate her gold medal win, with a short article. But this is to be placed with an article about the New Zealand cyclist scandal [that sports news had advised the news editor about early that morning]. Front page will mention the other gold medal [New Zealand men's shooter, Graeme Ede] but leave the details to be covered in the sports pages. Valerie's story to be along the lines of a 'sob story' [a human-interest story] about doing it for the memory of her mother. [Thursday, March 23, 2006, field notes]

Following these remarks, the front page focused on Vili's medal win, with a large photograph after she received her gold medal, with no coverage of her on the sports pages. The main sports page featured Ede's shooting gold medal and the bowling women's pair's bronze medal win, with large photographs of the medal winners. However, the large photograph of the gold medal-winning sportswoman was attached to an emotive human-interest article about Vili triumphantly honouring her mother's memory. This contextual framing of Vili drew on discourses of nationalism to propel her to the front page ahead of a lesser-known sportsman; however, discourses of gender then repositioned her as a daughter rather than an athlete.

These findings thus revealed that sports news momentarily privileged athletes and sports that could be linked to national identity and success. Yet, the pattern of inclusion focused on sports photographs that featured success, medals and signs of national identity that were frequently prominently featured on the front page. This atypical front page focus on sportswomen by media workers suggests that success at internationally important events is a powerful leveller and creates space for sportswomen to embody the sports–nationalism articulation, as '*our*' national success disrupts the seeming incompatibility of the sports–femininity articulation. Moreover, independent of the gender of the athletes, media worker discussions focused on photographs that implicitly conveyed a sense of national identity. Although most photographs featured national athletes wearing their distinctive national uniforms, emphasis was given to signs and symbols of New Zealand identity, such as the flag, silver fern and the haka. These easily recognizable and conspicuous signs of national identity are important in sports production because they send a strong and positive preferred message of national pride and patriotism.

For example, media workers discussed the importance of promoting "kiwi qualities" or using a celebrated athlete in the front page opening ceremony photographs. One of the features of '*Kiwiness*' discussed at length during the major event was the use and prominence of photographs and articles about the haka. Many newswire articles related to the New Zealand team and supporters' use of the haka, and many of the photographs featured it being performed either before an event or to celebrate a Kiwi athlete's success. At the commencement of

the Commonwealth Games, there was no mention in the newsroom of the haka. However, as the Games progressed, it was discussed one morning in the photograph session, as one of the Pakeha section editor's stated, "man, they use the haka at every opportunity, it's just 'too much'. It's excessive, overkill if you ask me". I noted that other media workers nodded their agreement but said nothing, with no one defending its use. Yet, despite this remark, several articles and photographs were later published about the value of the haka to New Zealand culture and its connection to Kiwi identity. When discussing newspaper complaints in general in an interview, the graphic designer remarked:

> Actually, talking about that complaints thing, there was one. One of the editors made about being sick of having the haka on…. We were looking at getting a haka picture on there and he said, 'No. I'm sick of it!' [Graphic designer]

Her recollection corroborated my fieldwork notes, as she too had observed the section editor's frustration at the haka's overuse. Yet, despite this media worker's criticism, researchers have noted how the media frequently appropriate unique cultural and traditional symbols in an attempt to promote audience patriotism and national pride (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Edwards, 2007; Lowes, 1997; Smith, 2004; Tudor, 1998; von der Lippe, 2002; Wensing et al., 2004). Other New Zealand-based Commonwealth Games research focused on sport and the haka has highlighted that "there is always a danger that the media fails to grasp the in-depth knowledge that lies behind the cultural symbols" (Edwards, 2007, p. 183). Significantly, by the end of the Commonwealth Games this section editor's concerns about "overkill" in the use of the haka were recognized, as the editor discussed its overuse in editorial meetings. Shortly thereafter, several feature articles focused on the potential harm caused by both the prolific performance of the haka at the Games *and* the excessive reporting of it, which potentially minimized its traditional uniqueness and diluted its cultural significance as a 'Kiwi' custom.

Summary

Many of the assumptions made by media workers related to their understanding of what is important and what makes sense in sports news production, which sports warrant greater focus, and perceived audience interests. In taking these factors

into consideration, the interviews and fieldwork established not only 'what media workers say they do', but also 'what media workers actually do'. Practices of journalism play an important role in determining what becomes news and how preferred messages are constructed in relation to competing and often conflicting discourses. Most notably, sports media workers and practices support patterns of representation that are underpinned by and reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation. The workings of power in the newsroom are not only reflected in hierarchies of discourses, but also in organizational hierarchies, where the positions of individual media workers impact on the extent to which their views are considered in decision-making.

Standardized practices help to mechanize production and fast track the construction of sports news, allowing a certain amount of freedom to get on with the job. Yet, routine procedures also constrain how media workers are able to develop and present information, limiting their freedom to work and act outside of set parameters. These types of institutional and role-driven freedoms and constraints in media production are often overlooked in production research because much of journalism involves taken-for-granted approaches and their experience hides what are 'learned' behaviours and ways of doing (Grossberg et al., 2006; McCullagh, 2002; Silk & Amis, 2000). For instance, a predetermined newspaper template or page dummy imposes a rigid size and shape for the layout of sports pages, dictating where photographs are to be featured and the space available for articles. This consequently restricts media workers to working within these structural requirements. However, once in receipt of the page dummy, media decision-makers are able to select what they consider to be *appropriate* sports articles and photographs. Newspaper print deadlines are also a limiting factor, and something outside the control of the media workers. Therefore, what is produced is regulated through standardized media practices that media workers come to take for granted in sports production. Louw (2001) argues that these practical and logistical impositions are important because:

> News is constantly always skewed by the size, shape and position of the window-frame. But this skewing is not usually the outcome of conscious decision-making aimed at deliberately creating partiality. Rather, the window's position is the outcome of whatever set of practices, work routines and discourses journalists have been socialized into accepting as 'the way things are done' (p. 160).

Thus, Louw's argument and my observations support Stuart Hall's (1988) contention that media workers are "unwitting" partners who help maintain the status quo through perpetuating dominant ideologies within media coverage.

Competing discourses in relation to the selection of photographs revealed that media workers ranked news values as the most important and aesthetic values as the least important consideration in conveying sports news. However, media workers offered differing opinions about sports photographs and aesthetic values. The sports sub-editor described an "arty" sports photograph as being incongruous with dominant discourses of sport, despite the chief photographer and graphic designer conveying their appreciation of the image. The workings of newsroom power were also highlighted, in that regardless of who took the photographs, the power of selection lay beyond the chief photographer (and photographers in general) who had little decision-making authority over what appeared in the sports news. Additionally, discourses of journalism and photojournalism appeared to offer different definitions of what makes an appropriate or decent sports photograph in respect of the public exposure of athletes' body parts. The chief photographer's professional opinion appeared to match his personal belief that photographs of athletes should not demean or embarrass them. However, the editor, as the main newsroom decision-maker, placed greater emphasis on a photograph's news value, prioritizing photographs for their sports news value without much consideration for *how* the athletes were featured.

Discourses of journalism reinforced the sports–masculinity articulation and as a result the sports media privileged a preferred message ascribing high value to sports news about men's sports and sportsmen, and lower value to women's sports and sportswomen. Notwithstanding the general manner in which sports production marginalizes the efforts of sportswomen, this study also revealed that during major international sporting events, the sports–masculinity articulation was disrupted by the sports–nationalism articulation, which resulted in media workers featuring a much greater range of sports photographs of sportswomen on the sports and front pages. However, my research supports the claim that this 'bending of the rules' in media practices during major events relates more to an articulation of sport and nationalism than to any sudden egalitarian motivation (Eastman & Billings, 1999; Kinnick, 1998; Mikosza, 1997;

Stoddart, 1994a; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Sportswomen who performed beyond expectations or won medals were more likely to be discussed by the media workers and featured in sports news (including photographs). However, despite this articulation creating space for increased media coverage of sportswomen during the Commonwealth Games, an apparent contradiction between this articulation and discourses of femininity meant that these media production exceptions frequently represented sportswomen in ambivalent and ambiguous ways, as media workers struggled to find ways to appropriately articulate sportswomen to sport. This reflects how media workers are influenced by the context of coverage: sportswomen who won reinforced the sports–nationalism articulation, while those who lost were aligned with discourses of femininity, as failed women as well as defeated athletes. Although many of the media worker choices regarding sports photographs noted during the fieldwork were made without much comment or lengthy discussion, on those occasions when comments were made, they typically focused on sportswomen. Moreover, the remarks raised and the deliberations over selecting a suitable image highlighted how conflicting discourses of sport and femininity influenced the choices media workers make, such that photographs of sportswomen more frequently reinforced the sportswomen–femininity articulation, drawing attention to them as women rather than as athletes. Consequently, my observations of 'what media workers actually do' and an analysis of 'what they say they do' reveal the power that discursive newsroom practices have over the processes and people involved in selecting sport news. It reflects the taken-for-granted ways in which sports news privileges men's sports and sportsmen, whilst simultaneously disenfranchising women's sports and sportswomen by ignoring their sporting achievements or framing them in ambiguous ways in relation to discourses of femininity, to position them as women first and athletes second.

In the following chapter, I examine the *content* of sports coverage in four New Zealand newspapers during the same periods of time that the production fieldwork was undertaken. The content analysis focuses on the comprehensive measurement of the amount and types of sports photographs featured in the newspapers, while a subsequent semiotic analysis provides a more detailed evaluation of the way in which preferred meanings are embedded in a range of

selected photographs. Although the content analysis interrogates all sports photographs of male and female athletes featured across all newspapers pages during the two periods of analysis, the semiotic analysis examines a small subset of photographs of sportswomen, whose emergent themes evolved during the evaluation of the data. While the production stage of this research has determined 'the things media workers do' versus 'the things they say they do', the next chapter investigates 'what was done', in relation to the actual physical content of sports photographs of athletes in the newspapers used in this study.

CHAPTER 5: A CONTENT AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF NEW ZEALAND SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHS

Introduction

This content and semiotic analysis investigates two separate periods of newspaper production of sports photographs. The first period incorporates the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games coverage, while the second period is exactly twelve months later. In each period, the same newspapers and the same processes of collection, measurement and analysis were utilized to examine the newspaper content (see Chapter 2 for the specific methodologies undertaken in this study). Coverage was recorded and measured in cm^2 in relation to sports photographs featuring across the newspaper sections, identifying the type and nature of images, the context, framing, page and positioning, size, topic and the captions and headlines that accompanied each photograph (see Appendix 5 for descriptions of all data fields used in the newspaper content and semiotic analysis). These data was used to establish the emergent themes, trends, patterns and anomalies that arose within each period, as well as to identify any significant differences between the two periods. For the majority of the analysis, findings are discussed in relation to the number of photographs rather than the cm^2 space allocated to them. The space measurement will be used when examining the page space and comparisons of the physical size of images. As already suggested in the review of literature, although data relating to the number of photographs 'tells a particular story', these figures provide only limited insight into the messages the media produce. Therefore, the content analysis is complemented and strengthened by semiotic analysis, to help identify, compare and contrast the way in which sports photographs convey meaning and the complex challenges and competing discourses used in media coverage. Moreover, in combining these two methods of analysis, it was envisaged that greater clarity could be achieved in relation to establishing how and what meanings are preferred by media producers.

This content and semiotic analysis is presented in relation to four main themes that emerged during the data analysis process. The first theme focuses on the privileging of photographs of sportsmen and the marginalization of

sportswomen. The photographs are examined to establish how meaning is conveyed through the number and types of photographs of specific sports, athletes and events. The second theme examines the role of discourses of sports journalism and the emergence of non-gendered patterns of representation. In this analysis it becomes clear that normalized media practices and processes influence sports coverage. The third theme identifies how major events disrupt gendered discourses of sport, such that media coverage reinforces a sports–nationalism articulation. Moreover, the major event analysis emphasizes how certain athletes are privileged, and notes the importance that the media place on photographs that highlight national identity and success. The fourth theme focuses on discourses of femininity and how sports photographs of sportswomen either accentuate or ignore such discourses. The results also establish how, during different periods of coverage, the way in which sportswomen are featured can change significantly. Each theme is examined individually with regards to gender, to explore how power relations and competing discourses present in the newsroom are revealed in the selection of photographs and the ambivalent and ambiguous messages about sportswomen that develop out of these struggles. Essentially, the results indicate that sports media coverage is framed around the taken-for-granted assumption that sport is a masculine domain and is therefore culturally coded as masculine, whereby sportsmen and their sporting achievements are privileged.

Photographs of sportsmen reinforce an articulation of sport and masculinity

The content analysis reveals that sportsmen were featured in a greater number of photographs than sportswomen during both periods of research. Sport has traditionally been coded as masculine and, as such, the media convey sport in masculine terms and language that emphasizes physical strength and muscular power and frequently associates the playing field with a battle zone. For instance, Kane and Greendorfer (1994) argue that "because sport is ultimately about physical activity, sport offers an arena for reproducing concrete, everyday examples of male physicality, muscularity and superiority" (p. 31). In this way, media coverage suggests that sport is more suited to (and suitable for) men than women. The result of featuring the sports–masculinity articulation as the

dominant discourse in sports journalism is that its hegemonic status is not only taken-for-granted, but becomes difficult to disrupt (Hardin & Shain, 2005, 2006; Louw, 2001; Lowes, 1999). Thus, in line with New Zealand and international research, this study established that New Zealand newspapers privilege sportsmen in two specific ways. This is reflected firstly through the media emphasizing sportsmen and men's sport in a greater number of photographs and a wider range of sports, helping to perpetuate and normalize the privileging of sportsmen as standard media practice. Secondly, the relative absence of photographs of sportswomen and women's sport further supports the framing of sport as a male preserve.

Everyday period

Table 12. Everyday sports photos by newspaper and gender, 2007.

Newspapers	Editions	Female #	Male #	Mixed* #	Neutral# #	Total #	Total %
New Zealand Herald	25	25	383	9	21	438	35.0%
Waikato Times	25	37	316	7	17	377	30.1%
Herald On Sunday	4	11	257	4	9	281	22.4%
Sunday Star Times	4	12	131	3	10	156	12.5%
Combined Totals	58	85	1,087	23	57	1,252	100%
Percentages		6.8%	86.8%	1.8%	4.6%	100%	Percentages

* 'Mixed' denotes photographs featuring sportsmen and women together
# 'Neutral' signifies photographs featuring non-person specific settings such as sports arenas; equipment or stadiums, used in sports related media coverage (see Chapter 2 for the methodology associated with these categories).

The sports photographs were produced in two daily newspapers - *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Waikato Times*, and two Sunday newspapers - *The Herald on Sunday* and *The Sunday Star Times*. *The New Zealand Herald* contained the most coverage with 35% of all the sports photographs; *The Waikato Times* contained 30.1%, *The Herald on Sunday* featured 22.4%, and the *Sunday Star Times* contained 12.5%. The findings of the everyday analysis reveal that of the 1,252 sports photographs published in the four newspapers during this four-week period (see Table 12), 86.8% featured sportsmen and only 6.8% depicted sportswomen.

Sportsmen featured in 1,087 photographs, whereas there were only 85 photographs of sportswomen. Furthermore, the extensive and consistent focus given to sportsmen across all four newspapers provides a powerful message about

how the media effectively construct the sports–masculinity articulation through image selection. For newspaper audiences, the focus on sportsmen potentially conveys a message that it is acceptable and normative practice for sportsmen to be promoted and for sportswomen to be ignored. Overall, sportsmen featured in 13 times as many sports photographs as sportswomen.

Although the proportion of male sports photographs equated to 86.8% across all four publications, the percentages varied from 83.8% (*Waikato Times*), 84% (*Sunday Star Times*), 87.4% (*The New Zealand Herald*) to 91.5% (*The Herald on Sunday)*. In addition, despite the overall average for photographs featuring sportswomen being 6.8%, coverage in different newspapers also varied from 3.9% (*The Herald on Sunday)*, 5.7% (*The New Zealand Herald*), 7.7% (*Sunday Star Times*), to 9.8% (*Waikato Times*). These results also highlight the high volume of sport photographs featured in the two Sunday newspapers, especially the *Herald on Sunday*, which featured 257 photographs of sportsmen in the four editions (averaging 64 per edition), compared to the 25 daily editions of the *New Zealand Herald*, which featured 383 photographs of sportsmen (an average of 15 sports images per edition). Thus, everyday newspaper sports coverage clearly privileges sportsmen whilst simultaneously marginalizing sportswomen.

Major event period

In the major event coverage, despite an increase in the overall number of photographs of sportswomen, the dominant visual focus continued to be on sportsmen (see Table 13). Consequently, although sportswomen were more visible (21.6% of photographs), sportsmen still received more than three times as much coverage (70.7% overall). Thus, the sports–masculinity articulation was maintained.

Table 13. The major event sport photographs by gender and newspaper, 2006.

Newspapers	Editions	Female #	Male #	Mixed #	Neutral #	Total #	Total %
New Zealand Herald	25	140	415	22	19	596	38.8%
Waikato Times	25	105	309	18	31	463	30.2%
Herald on Sunday	4	45	187	7	12	251	16.4%
Sunday Star Times	4	41	174	5	5	225	14.7%
Combined TOTALS	58	331	1,085	52	67	1,535	100%
Percentages		21.6%	70.7%	3.4%	4.4%	100%	Percentage

While more sports photographs were featured in total (1,535) and sportswomen were featured in more photographs during the major event, the overall results highlighted the dominant focus on sportsmen, regardless of the period. As already discussed in the production chapter, by drawing on a range of discourses that inform the field of sports journalism, reveals that what is produced more frequently aligns with the prevailing dominant discourses. Thus, the privileging of men's sport during a major event (although in part this is shown to relate to the sports–nationalism articulation which will be examined in more detail later on in this chapter) essentially reflects the sports–masculinity articulation that dominates within sport, and further supports the power relations that operate in the media production environment. For instance, as already highlighted in the production study, one way of presenting a preferred message of newsworthiness and importance focuses on prominently displaying photographs of sportsmen on the front page during major events coverage. In this respect, the analysis reveals that sportsmen were featured in 2.5 times more front page photographs (43) than sportswomen (17). Even during the major event, the majority of front page photographs of sportsmen focused on non-Games coverage (26/43): where a range of sports including rugby, rugby league, soccer, cricket, rowing and motor racing were depicted. In these images, the majority of these photographs (81%) featured New Zealand athletes either alone or with an international competitor. Of the 26 non-Games front page male photographs, half were page headers (13), referring readers to articles and photographs presented elsewhere in the newspaper. In the remaining 13 non-Games front page photographs, no sportsman was represented in more than one photo. The 17 Games photographs overwhelmingly featured New Zealand sportsmen (16 out of 17), and included nine images of success, four highlighting controversy, two of athletes who failed to win a medal, and one each of the New Zealand flag-bearer and an injured athlete. This finding reveals that the media utilized a variety of front page photographs of sportsmen that focused on a range of elements, including success, defeat, injury and controversy. This finding also highlights the workings of power, such that in prominently positioning sportsmen in the newspaper conveys the preferred message that sportsmen are more important than sportswomen, regardless of the period of coverage, the sports events being participated in, or the success of the athletes.

Photographs of sportsmen feature their involvement in a wide range of sports

Everyday period

The everyday findings reveal that sportsmen featured in almost double the number of sports (41) as sportswomen (21) (see Table 14, which includes all sports where over 1000cm^2 space was allocated). Sports with a combined total photograph space of less than 1000cm^2 were grouped together in a category identified as 'combined other' sports; these comprised less than 5% of the total coverage.

Table 14. Everyday sports photographs by sport, gender, number and combined space allocated to each sport.

Everyday	FEMALE		Everyday	MALE	
Sports	Photo #	Photo cm^2	Sports	Photo #	Photo cm^2
Rowing	11	2,563	Rugby Union	314	53,926
Tennis	11	2,043	Cricket	264	56,213
Netball	10	2,836	Rugby League	120	23,764
Cycling	10	2,104	Soccer/ Football	68	8,972
Swimming	10	636	Swimming	35	6,085
Athletics	4	1,225	Rowing	21	4,213
Rugby Union	3	729	Basketball	20	3,417
Water-polo	2	505	Golf	19	2,988
Triathlon	2	443	Triathlon	14	2,178
Golf	2	72	F1 motor-racing	13	3,763
Surfing	1	174	Yachting	13	1,128
Cricket	1	55	Tennis	12	2,212
Rugby League	1	33	Surf-lifesaving	11	2,361
Soccer/ Football			Motor-sport	11	1,110
F1 motor-racing			Motor-cross	8	1,464
Basketball			V8	5	940
Yachting			Water-polo	4	1,314
Surf-lifesaving			Cycling	3	1,231
Motor-cross			Surfing	3	357
Motor-sport			Athletics	2	982
V8			Netball	2	407
Combined others	17	2,289	Combined others	125	11,052
TOTALS	85	15,709 cm^2	TOTALS	1,087	190,085 cm^2
Sports	Image#	Image cm^2	Sports	Image#	Image cm^2

The combined category of 20 sports for men included 7s rugby, A1 motor-racing, Australian Rules football, baseball, bowls, boxing, canoeing, cue sports, equestrian, ice-hockey, carting, multi-sports, jet-skiing, power boating, shearing, shooting, skiing, softball, squash and touch rugby. For women, the eight sports that comprised the 'combined other' category included bowls, cue sports, equestrian, hockey, ice-skating, indoor bowls, snowboarding and squash. The advantage of recording both the number and size of each photograph is that the allocation of space more effectively highlights the emphasis media give to certain sports, athletes or events. Men were featured in all sports in which women were depicted, as shown in Table 14, including netball, New Zealand's premier women's sport. Furthermore, although there were three photographs of women related to the dominant men's sport in New Zealand, rugby, none featured women physically playing rugby. Rather, two photographs featured a 92-year-old masters athlete actively demonstrating fitness techniques she thought would be of use for a regional men's rugby team, while the other featured a New Zealander who was the first woman to officiate for a UK men's Six Nations rugby match. Thus, the three photographs were related specifically to men's rugby, and did not depict sportswomen playing rugby *per se*. This also reflects the lack of clarity that surrounds media workers and audiences' understanding of the meaning of the term athlete / sportswoman, as the photograph of the master's athlete was appended to a men's rugby article, but she herself is not actually a rugby player. Rather, this image appears to have been included due to the incongruity presented by an elderly woman demonstrating stretching techniques to male rugby players. Moreover, these results highlight that, although rugby union is regarded as New Zealand's most nationally important sport, this discourse pertains to men's rugby participation only (Cameron, 1992). Furthermore, the exclusion of photographs of the New Zealand women's rugby team from the media limelight occurs despite their ongoing World Championship successes, which remained invisible in sports photographs and articles during the period studied.

Although sportsmen featured in a broad range of sports, over 70% of the images of men concentrated on four sports: rugby union, cricket, rugby league and soccer. This equated to 61.2% of all everyday photographs. In contrast, women were featured in fewer sports and only four sports accumulated more than a total of 2,000cm^2 of photograph space, compared to 12 men's sports. Moreover,

photographs of the top four women's sports of rowing (11), tennis (11), netball (10), and cycling (10) attracted significantly less coverage than the men's top four sports. Further, despite these four women's sports totalling nearly half of all women's sports photographs (49.4%), their coverage only equated to 3.4% of all everyday coverage. This reveals a significant discrepancy in how the top men's and women's sports are represented. For example, a comparison of the most photographed men's and women's sports revealed that cricket (56,213 cm^2) was designated almost 20 times as much space as netball (2,836 cm^2). Furthermore, photographs of men from this one sport received almost three and a half times more space than was allocated to all photographs of women. Even when the photographs relating to the suspicious death of Pakistan's cricket coach, Bob Woolmer, were excluded, men's cricket still accounted for more than 17 times the space of netball photographs. Yet, despite an enhanced focus on the four most nationally important or valued men's (70%) and women's sports (49.4%), the findings reveal that for every photograph featuring females in New Zealand's premier women's sport, netball, there were more than 31 portraying men in the men's premier sport of rugby. Moreover, the space allocated to men's rugby occupied 19 times as much space as was allocated to women's netball. These findings thus reveal how the New Zealand sports media draw on discourses of sport and gender in their construction of sports news.

Overall, not only are sportsmen featured in more photographs, but they are also shown in a wider range of sports than sportswomen. This finding provides powerful insight into a preferred media message that all sports are open to men, whilst also proposing, through the narrow representation of women's sport, that females are limited to fewer sports. Moreover, this visual privileging of sportsmen and men's sport reinforces the sports–masculinity articulation, especially through the focus on rugby, cricket and rugby league, which are seen as quintessentially masculine sports. This focus consequentially reinforces the preferred meaning that sportswomen and women's sports are of secondary importance.

Major event period

During the major event period of coverage, comparing the non-Games with the Games photographs reveals that there were fewer sports featured in the women's non-Games coverage (17 vs 24), while men featured in a greater variety of sports

during the non-Games coverage (31 vs 18) (see Table 15). The predominant media focus revolved around photographs of sportsmen, who were featured in 88.2% of all non-Games photographs. These findings again highlight how sportsmen are privileged in media coverage as the activities of sportswomen were almost completely absent outside of coverage of the Commonwealth Games. However, despite this overwhelming focus on sportsmen, once sportswomen did attract coverage, the photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen reflected similar patterns in the types of images that were represented. This will be examined in more detail in the following section.

Table 15. Major event photos depicting non-Games sports by gender, number and image space.

Non-Games	Female		Non-Games	Male	
	Photo	Photo		Photo	Photo
Sports	#	cm^2	Sports	#	cm^2
Athletics	10	1,410	Rugby Union	262	54,036
Waka ama*	7	2,445	Cricket	149	27,648
Golf	7	1,724	Rugby League	141	18,836
Netball	6	1,820	Soccer	60	6,957
Basketball	5	1,197	Motor racing	58	10,179
Soccer	3	608	Golf	39	5,793
Triathlon	3	118	Tennis	20	4,282
Tennis	2	94	Basketball	19	3,818
Rugby League	1	94	Athletics	8	652
Cricket	1	30	Boxing	6	1,281
Rugby League			Rowing	6	1,208
Motor racing			Yachting	6	406
Mountain biking			Mountain biking	5	1,373
Rowing			Triathlon	5	1,037
Boxing			Waka ama*	5	806
Yachting			Netball		
Combined other	14	1,788	Combined other	38	7,147
TOTALS	59	11,331 cm^2	TOTALS	827	145,465 cm^2
	Image	Image		Image	Image
Sports	#	cm^2	Sports	#	cm^2

* The sport of 'Waka ama' – a Maori term - refers to outrigger canoes and the events associated with this traditional sport which have been integrated into the New Zealand sporting arena.

Discourses of journalism produce some patterns of representation that support athletes being featured in similar ways

Although, the previous section of this chapter identified that the general pattern of coverage during these two periods of study helped reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation, the analysis also highlighted that when sportswomen were represented, albeit in a limited capacity, there were some remarkably similar patterns in the placement and types of photographs used. These patterns suggest that what is produced is influenced by the practices and routines that have developed within the media environment, which results in the content being produced in substantially similar ways, regardless of the gender of the depicted athlete. For example, the findings highlighted similarities in the patterns of results in two specific areas, 1) in relation to the proportional placement of sports photographs, and 2) in the types of photographs of athletes.

Similarities in the proportions of front page and sports page photographs

Findings from a range of international and local sports media studies highlight how sports news and photographs positioned on the front page of newspapers are considered newsworthy and valued more highly because of the prominent position and status assigned to front page news (Andrews, 2005; Bruce, 2005; Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Rowe, 2000; Vincent et al., 2003; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Furthermore, front page and main sports page photographs are described as attracting audience attention due to the immediacy and visibility of their placement and the preferred media message of importance based on this prime location (Fuery & Fuery, 2003; McKee, 2001). Analysis of the placement of photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen during this study revealed that despite the vast difference in the number of photographs of male and female athletes, the proportions were surprisingly similar with respect to the placement of those images on the front page and the main and inside sports pages. This highlights the power of discourses of journalism to influence and mobilize sports coverage and determine how athletes are represented.

Table 16. Everyday page placement of sports photos by gender, proportion and number of photographs.

Gender	Female		Male		Totals	
Newspaper position	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos
Front page	2.4%	2	3.9%	42	4.0%	50
General news pages	12.9%	11	5.1%	55	5.9%	74
Business pages			0.2%	2	0.2%	2
Magazine or other pages	1.1%	1	3.5%	38	3.1%	39
Inside sports pages	67.1%	57	67.1%	730	66.5%	832
Main sports page	16.5%	14	20.2%	220	20.4%	255
Totals	**100%**	**85**	**100%**	**1087**	**100%**	**1,252**

The analysis of the proportion of photographs on the inside sport pages revealed identical levels of representation for both sportsmen and sportswomen, with 67.1% of their photographs appearing there (see Table 16). Furthermore, the front page and main sports page data also revealed similar results, in that 2.4% versus 3.9% of photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen were featured on the front pages, while 16.5% versus 20.2% were featured on the main sports pages respectively. Thus, despite a notable difference in the overall number of photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen, these proportions suggest there is considerable uniformity in how photographs are represented in media coverage, a finding not discussed in other research literature. This unique aspect of sports media coverage suggests that once they feature in the coverage, sportswomen are subject to the same or similar patterns of representation as sportsmen.

Sports action photographs of athletes are the most valued representations

The results also highlighted patterns in the way that sports action (SA) and sports-related photographs (SR) reflected similar proportions of coverage for male and female athletes (see Table 17). Just as the media draw on a hierarchy of discourses of sport and gender, there appears to be a hierarchy of types of sports photographs. The type of photographs that are most frequently privileged suggests that sports action is considered more newsworthy in relation to sports. This value is therefore reflected in the privileging of a greater number of sports action photographs of both sportsmen and sportswomen, which were also allocated more space, thereby suggesting their greater newsworthiness.

Table 17. Everyday sports photo by type, gender, proportion and number of photographs.

Types of photos	Female		Male		Total	
	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos
SA[1]	56.5%	48	55.8%	607	52.9%	662
SR[2]	27.1%	23	23.6%	256	22.5%	282
M[3]			0.7%	8	0.6%	8
OTH[4]	12.9%	11	12.2%	133	17.1%	214
CO[5]	3.5%	3	7.6%	83	6.9%	86
Totals	100%	85	100%	1,087	100%	1,252

[1] SA denotes sports action photographs; [2] SR references sports-related images; [3] M reflects medals; [4] OTH denotes all other images; and [5] refers to images featuring sport coaches and officials (see Chapter 2 for the full list of data methodology details)

Over half of the photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen featured them in sports action (52.9%). Proportionately, the SA photographs of sportswomen comprised 56.5% of all women's photographs (48 of 85), similar to the 55.8% of men's SA photographs (607 of 1,087). In addition, the total space allocated to SA photographs (148,432cm^2) equated to 66.1% of all photograph space (224,702cm^2), highlighting that not only are action photographs given greater exposure and used more frequently, but they were also featured in a larger format. Moreover, there was little difference in the average size of sportswomen's SA photographs (244cm^2), which were 9.9% larger than those featuring sportsmen (222cm^2). However, just as with all the everyday coverage, sportsmen were featured in 12.6 times as many sports action photographs as sportswomen. The second most prominent type of photograph was the sports-related 'SR' category. Of all the men's photographs, 23.6% were SR, compared to 27% of women's photographs. This finding follows a similar pattern to that revealed for SA photographs, with SR photographs focusing 11.1 times more often on sportsmen. The data also reveals that SR photographs of sportswomen were, surprisingly, on average 21.7% larger than those of sportsmen. However, despite the similar patterns that were identified in the proportional allocation of different types of photographs, the vast difference in the number of photographs of sportsmen versus sportswomen revealed the glaring gender disparity in sports coverage as a whole, during this everyday period.

The major event coverage revealed similar findings regarding the types of photographs used to represent sportsmen and sportswomen and patterns in coverage. This again highlights the power of discourses of journalism; despite the

complexity of conveying sports news and competing discourses within the production environment, the similarities in the patterns of coverage that emerged attests to the influence of inherent sports media production routines and practices. The major event coverage totals revealed that the most prevalent type of photograph was SA, which accounted for over half (54.4%) of all photographs (see Table 18). Moreover, the space allocated to SA photographs was again larger than any other type of photograph (similar to the everyday findings), resulting in 66.9% of all space being assigned to sports action photographs. Additionally, the combined result revealed that 58.6% of all women's photographs were SA, almost identical to the proportion of the SA photographs of sportsmen (58.1%). There were similar proportional results found in the Games and non-Games SA photographs.

Table 18. Proportion and number of SA and SR sports photos of male and female athletes featured in Games and Non-Games coverage, and combined totals of the major event period.

Non-Games	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
Period	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos
SA	52.5%	31	58.4%	483	55.3%	519
SR	32.2%	19	23.2%	192	22.9%	215
Total Non-Games	**84.7%**	**59**	**81.6%**	**827**	**78.2%**	**938**
Games	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
Period	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos
SA	59.9%	163	57.0%	147	52.9%	316
SR	28.3%	77	21.7%	56	22.9%	137
Total Games	**88.2%**	**272**	**78.7%**	**258**	**75.8%**	**597**
Combined	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL	
Period	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos
SA	58.6%	194	58.1%	630	54.4%	835
SR	29.0%	96	22.9%	248	22.9%	352
Total Combined	**87.6%**	**331**	**81.0%**	**1,085**	**77.3%**	**1,535**

The SR photographs totals during the Games, non-Games and the combined major event results each attracted an identical proportion of 22.9%. This remarkable corresponding pattern of representation again suggests that, once they receive coverage, sportswomen are subject to the same discourses of journalism as sportsmen. Moreover, there were only minor gender-based discrepancies identified between the proportion of SR photographs of sportsmen (ranging from 21.7% to 23.2%) and sportswomen (ranging from 28.3% to 32.2%). This

congruence suggests that newspapers maintain a relative balance in the type of sports photographs used, regardless of the depicted athletes' gender. Nonetheless, the greater number of photographs of sportsmen highlights their continued dominance within sports coverage; irrespective of their athletic achievements or the sports being participated in, with sportsmen featuring in more than 70% of all photographs during the major event period. Thus, the analysis of photographs presented strikingly similar patterns of coverage during both periods of coverage.

An articulation of sport and nationalism creates space for media coverage of sportswomen

During major international sporting events, when the nation is effectively 'put on show' under a media and entertainment spotlight, research suggests that there is a 'bending of the rules' in relation to normative sports media coverage of sportswomen (Eastman & Billings, 1999; Kinnick, 1998; Mikosza, 1997; Stoddart, 1994a; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). A part of this rule bending is the disruption of the sports–masculinity articulation that occurs during events such as the Olympics, Commonwealth and Pan American Games, and the World Athletics Championships, where a wider range of national athletes are shown competing in a broader range of sports than are conventionally featured in everyday coverage. Thus, typical media coverage intersects with and is interrupted by discourses of nationalism. For instance, in an analysis of Canadian newspaper content, Mason and Rail (2006) maintain that "with the high levels of nationalism invested in the Olympic Games, the performance of both men and women take on significant symbolic dimensions" (p. 29). Therefore, in drawing on the sports–nationalism articulation, the media focus on the potential for national success and emphasize unique qualities of national identity, which in turn creates space for sportswomen to be more prominently featured as members of the national team, potential medal winners, and as athletes.

Media coverage of major events creates space for greater prominence and an increase in photographs of sportswomen

The results highlighted how media coverage reinforced an articulation of sport and nationalism during the major event period, through increased numbers and greater prominence of photographs featuring sportswomen. There were almost four times as many photographs of sportswomen during the major event period as in the everyday period (331 vs. 85) (see Table 19), whereas the number of photographs of sportsmen were remarkably similar.

Table 19. Major event and everyday coverage by gender and number of photographs.

Periods	Female		Male		Mixed		Neutral		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Major event	331	21.6%	1,085	70.7%	52	3.4%	67	4.4%	1,535	100%
Everyday	85	6.8%	1,087	86.8%	23	1.8%	57	4.6%	1,252	100%

Although the major event results in Table 19 reveal that women featured in 21.6% of all sports photographs, this significant increase in media attention only materialized because of the focus given to female athletes at the Commonwealth Games. This was clearly apparent when the major event photographs were sorted into Games coverage (see Table 20) versus non-Games coverage (see Table 21).

Table 20. Games sports photos by gender and number of photographs in each newspaper.

Games	Female	Male	Mixed	Neutral	Total	
	#	#	#	#	#	%
New Zealand Herald	118	113	12	10	253	42.4%
Waikato Times	82	68	11	17	178	29.8%
Herald on Sunday	36	46	5	4	91	15.2%
Sunday Star Times	36	31	5	3	75	12.6%
TOTALS	272	258	33	34	597	100%
Percentages	45.6%	43.2%	5.5%	5.7%	100%	Percentages

Table 21. Non-Games sports photos by gender and number of photographs in each newspaper.

Non-Games	Female	Male	Mixed	Neutral	Total	
	#	#	#	#	#	%
New Zealand Herald	22	302	10	9	343	36.6%
Waikato Times	23	241	7	14	285	30.4%
Herald on Sunday	9	141	2	8	160	17.1%
Sunday Star Times	5	143	0	2	150	16.0%
TOTALS	59	827	19	33	938	100%
Percentages	6.3%	88.2%	2.0%	3.5%	100%	Percentages

The featuring of 272 photographs of sportswomen within the Games coverage compared to the 59 related to non-Games coverage is a stark indication of how the media 'bend the rules' during major events. The proportion of photographs of sportswomen increased from just over 6% in non-Games (and everyday coverage) to almost 46% in the Games coverage. What is also clearly manifested is that there were 5% more photographs featuring sportswomen (272) than there were of sportsmen (258) in the Games coverage. Although this represented relatively few photographs (14), it highlights a considerable change in media emphasis compared to both the non-Games and everyday coverage of sportswomen. The only newspaper publication not to have more photographs of sportswomen than sportsmen during the Games was *The Herald on Sunday*, which had 10 more photographs of sportsmen. The results in Tables 19, 20 and 21 highlight that men's sport is important all the time, as there was consistent coverage given to sportsmen; it was only in the context of the major sporting event that sportswomen became highly visible. This suggests that when the media focus on issues relating to national identity and sporting successes on the world stage, sportswomen become more newsworthy.

The space created during the major event for sportswomen to feature more comprehensively, via the sports–nationalism articulation, not only reflected a greater number and proportion of photographs (and greater page space in cm^2) but also a greater diversity in the representation of sportswomen through the placement and the types of photographs used, which differentiated this time period from the everyday coverage. There were notable increases overall in the number of photographs of sportswomen featured both on their own and in the 'mixed gender' photographs. One of the most distinct changes in the findings was the enhanced prominence of photographs of sportswomen on the front page, drawing immediate visual attention to the activities of 'our' national elite sportswomen (see Table 22). The 17 front page photographs of sportswomen represented a 750% increase from the two everyday front page photographs. Moreover, despite the substantial increase in photographs between the two periods of study, the 17 major event front page photographs represented 5.1% of all photographs of sportswomen, compared to less than half of this (2.4%) during the everyday period (see Table 16). Furthermore, 15 of the 17 front page photographs

featured the Games, whereas only two were of non-Games activities (an identical number to the everyday front page photographs of sportswomen).

Table 22. Major event page positioning of sports photographs by gender, number and percentages.

Gender	Female		Male		Mixed		Neutral		Totals	
Newspaper position	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Front-page	17	5.1%	43	4.0%	5	9.6%	8	11.9%	73	4.8%
General news pages	31	9.4%	59	5.4%	8	15.4%	4	6.0%	102	6.6%
Business pages			3	0.3%					3	0.2%
Games special pages	25	7.6%	23	2.1%	5	9.6%	4	6.0%	57	3.7%
Magazine or other	39	11.8%	40	3.7%	8	15.4%	9	13.4%	96	6.3%
Inside sports pages	191	57.7%	786	72.4%	23	44.2%	36	53.7%	1,036	67.5%
Main sports page	28	8.5%	131	12.1%	3	5.8%	6	9.0%	168	10.9%
TOTALS	331	21.6%	1,085	70.7%	52	3.4%	67	4.4%	1,535	100.0%

An analysis of the context of photographs of sportswomen revealed three primary groups: 1) images highlighting potential or actual sporting successes (10); 2) photographs of sporting failure (4); and 3) human-interest shots (3). There were seven front page photographs of New Zealand cyclist, Sarah Ulmer. This considerable focus on Ulmer may be explained by her previous outstanding international successes, specifically her 2004 gold medal win at the Athens Olympics. The media prominently positioned her on the front page to carry the hopes of the nation forward for the New Zealand audience (Bruce, 2009). At the commencement of the Commonwealth Games, the media used a range of front page photographs of Ulmer that related to her potential to secure a medal, but her later withdrawal from the event, due to injury, also drew media attention. The only other athlete to appear in more than one front page photograph was New Zealand shot-putter, Valerie Vili, who featured in one photograph during the opening ceremony and another after winning a gold medal. A further two photographs of front page 'success' featured sportswomen holding their medals, with one athlete waving the New Zealand silver fern flag overhead after her medal winning performance. The two non-Games photographs of sportswomen both reflected human-interest stories, one featuring a New Zealand waka ama coach and her Australian team, and the other the New Zealand women's netball coach signing autographs for fans. The greater front page focus during the major event coverage clearly reinforces the argument that discourses of sport and gender can

be disrupted or 'bent' during major events by an articulation of sport and nationalism. Successful sportswomen are able to momentarily break through onto the front page as they convey messages about 'our' collective national victories.

In contrast, the number of front page photographs of sportsmen was practically identical in both study periods (43 during the major event and 42 in the everyday period). However, despite the disruption of dominant discourses of sport and masculinity, with sportswomen being elevated to a more prominent front page position, sportsmen still received two and a half times more front page coverage than sportswomen. This suggests that, despite their overall successes and medal winning performances during the major event, the increased *value* conferred on sportswomen is short-lived and context specific, as front page coverage outside of the Games coverage itself conveys the message that sportsmen are more newsworthy and important.

In addition, greater emphasis was given to photographs featuring sportswomen and men depicted together ('mixed' gender category) during the major event period, promoting a sense of prominence to '*our*' athletes (see Table 22). This focus draws attention away from the sports–masculinity articulation, and helps reinforce national identity and unity by visually reflecting male and female athletes together: 63.5% of the 52 major event 'mixed' photographs were Games related (33), while only 36.5% reflected non-Games coverage (19). The Games 'mixed' photographs featured the New Zealand team together at the opening and closing ceremonies, or athletes competing in mixed gender sports such as badminton, tennis, swimming and hockey either participating or shown together at the various events. For instance, there were six photographs of the New Zealand badminton mixed doubles silver medal winners, Daniel Shirley and Sara Petersen. Furthermore, in swimming, hockey, basketball, shooting and athletics, male and female athletes were featured in photographs where they were not necessarily competing together but supporting each other or preparing together. However, in the 19 non-Games photographs, few featured male and female athletes participating together. This suggests that media coverage during major events draws on a greater number of photographs depicting the national team together, which helps reinforce the sports–nationalism articulation, with media emphasizing positive messages about 'our' unified national team, regardless of the athlete's gender.

Nationally important and potential medal-winning sportswomen feature in multiple sports photographs

An important part of the featuring of photographs of national athletes during major international sporting events is the focus given to *'our'* team winning, enhancing national pride and patriotism; a national sportswoman's success is conveyed as a New Zealand victory. Moreover, through drawing on discourses of nationalism during major events, media coverage interrupts the dominant sports–masculinity articulation. However, this process of communication is complex, because of the number of competing discourses that inform the field of sports journalism. For instance, there were considerably more occurrences of sportswomen featuring in multiple photographs in the Games coverage than in the everyday coverage (see Table 14). The media focused greater attention not only on a wider range of sports but also on more athletes (Table 23).

Table 23. Sportswomen reflected in multiple photographs in major event coverage.

Sports	Athlete	Medal winner (MW) or Potential Medal winner (PMW)	# of photos	Combined photo size cm^2	Games or non-Games
Shotput	Valerie Vili	MW - Gold	29	5,245	Games
Cycling	Sarah Ulmer	PMW	29	3,225	Games
Discus	Beatrice Faumuina	PMW	19	2,420	Games
Triathlon	Sam Warriner, Andrea Hewitt & Debbie Tanner	MW's – Silver, Bronze & 4th place	11	3,064	Games
Swimming	Hannah McLean	MW - Bronze	8	2,289	Games
Netball	Irene van Dyk	MW - Gold	8	1,771	Games
Athletics	Kate McIlroy	PMW	8	1,761	Games
Squash	Shelley Kitchen	MW – Silver & Bronze	8	1,674	Games
Shooting	Nadine Stanton	MW - Bronze	8	1,616	Games
Mountain biking	Robyn Wong	PMW	7	1,507	Games
Swimming	Helen Norfolk	PMW & MW - Bronze	6	876	Games
Synchronized swimming	Nina and Lisa Daniels	MW - Bronze	6	694	Games
Netball	Jodi Te Huna		3	288	Non-Games
Waka Ama	Irene Roberts and team		2	907	Non-Games
Basketball	Angela Marino & Divya Singh		2	614	Non-Games
Athletics	Monique Williams		2	343	Non-Games
Gymnastics	Nikki Jenkins		2	331	Non-Games
Hockey	Tara Drysdale		2	249	Non-Games

Sportswomen who featured in multiple photographs were represented in close-up images, helping to centre attention on them as individuals, rather than showing them in full sports action or portraying them in group or team settings. Two athletes were each featured in 29 photographs; however, New Zealand shot-putter Valerie Vili's 29 photographs were substantially larger than the 29 of New Zealand cyclist, Sarah Ulmer. Vili's photographs totalled 8.5% of all photograph space allocated to sportswomen during the major event coverage, and 10.2% of all Games photographs of sportswomen. For some athletes, a greater number of photographs did not necessarily equate to greater space; clearly revealing that the size and number of photographs do not necessarily correlate. For instance, the 19 photographs featuring Beatrice Faumuina, the third most photographed sportswoman, accounted for 2,420cm^2 of space, while New Zealand triathletes Samantha Warriner, Andrea Hewitt and Debbie Tanner were featured in only 11 photographs, but attracted a higher combined space of 3,064cm^2. Seven of Faumuina's photographs related to her potential for medal success, a further two were set in the athlete's village prior to the event commencing, while the remaining 10 related to her failed medal attempt. However, all 11 triathlete photographs related to their potential and actual successes. Moreover, the media focus on Faumuina drew attention to her as a person, prior to the Games in a non-sport setting, and suggested her importance as a distinguished and well-liked New Zealand personality. Five other athletes were each featured in eight photographs with a similar allocation of space for each. Although bronze medal winners, swimmer Helen Norfolk and synchronised swimming pair Nina and Lisa Daniels were depicted in six photographs; coverage of Norfolk appeared throughout the course of the Games, where the media referred to her as a potential medal winner in a valued sport. However, the relatively unknown synchronized swimming duo only featured after their unexpected win, appearing to suggest that the sport and these athletes were consider unimportant by New Zealand media prior to their win. By focusing attention on potential and actual medal-winning sportswomen in multiple photographs during major events, the media help promote a sense of national identity and pride.

During the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, more than half of the 31 medals won by New Zealand athletes were secured by sportswomen (51.6%), with one medal secured by the mixed doubles badminton team (see Table 24).

Table 24. Games - New Zealand medal standing by gender, numbers, percentage and medal type.

Medal type	Male medals	Female medals	Mix gender medals	Total medals	Percentages %
Gold	4	2	0	6	19.4%
Silver	6	5	1	12	38.7%
Bronze	4	9	0	13	41.9%
Totals	14	16	1	31	100%
%	42.5%	51.6%	3.2%	100%	

However, the majority of the medals won by sportswomen were bronze (9), equating to 56.3% of the women's medal count. The balance comprised two gold and five silver medals. Newspaper articles reported negatively on the women's bronze medal haul, suggesting that coming third was a poor reflection of athletic performance. However, this negative textual discourse was not consistent with the positive messages conveyed in sports photographs, which featured photographs of sportswomen, including several bronze medal winners, smiling and proudly holding their medals and the New Zealand flag.

Through an extensive analysis of each of the photographs of sportswomen, it was revealed that much of the newspaper build-up, both in the articles and photographs, prior to the Games revolved around potential medal winners, past successes, and the state of preparedness of the athletes. Many of the photographs featured during the Games focused on success, winning, and the display of medals. The full sample of images depicting sportswomen's victory was identified and a montage created to establish any similarities and difference across the images within each of the themes. From this, a representative sample were analysed in a more in-depth process of semiosis, (see Chapter 2 for the methodology attached to the processes of semiosis), which resulted in 17 photographs being selected and analysed in relation to the types of signs and objects encoded within them that drew attention to the athlete in particular ways, and for a variety of reasons. More specifically, these images were examined to establish how media discursively construct meaning through the images and text

that are published in respect of sportswomen. A reading of these photographs drawing on Peirce's process of semiosis, highlights how an automated progression of meaning making can occur as audiences read the signs, objects and interpretants, which are further developed in a triadic process of induction, abduction and deduction (Jensen, 1995d; Short, 2007). Moreover, as each photograph that featured a sportswoman was analysed to identify *what* and *who* was featured, a semiotic analysis was undertaken to establish the signs and symbols featured within the image that help create messages about the athlete, the sport, athleticism and performance. In examining each photograph individually, meaning could be attributed to the content and context of the image, how it was framed, what featured alongside the image in the form of text, and what signs and symbols helped support this reading. For instance, one victory image that received comment during the production study reflected Samantha Warriner, a New Zealand triathlon silver medallist (Figure 10). The photograph featured her crossing the finish line with arms extended in a *'Jesus like pose'*, a term the chief photographer used to describe an athlete coming through the finish-line with outstretched arms, their head back and eyes closed. The manner in which she is featured, reflects signs of her relief, exhaustion and a faint smile to signal her happiness at crossing the line, and an image that focuses solely on this athlete as the centre of attention. The crowd behind her are blurred and suggest their unimportance in relation to the athlete, who is centre stage. The visual signs of Warriner's national identity are clearly evident in the words *New Zealand* printed on her distinctive black and white national uniform along with the silver fern logo that has become recognized as a New Zealand cultural symbol. This photograph supports a reading of national pride and identity as well as reflecting *'our'* New Zealand success. Furthermore, the photograph highlights that this New Zealand athlete, despite being a woman, is in this instance brought into the sporting discourse through signs of her success and national identity. Winning is therefore a powerful means of interrupting the hegemonic discourses of sport, which more often marginalize female athletes, but in the case of major event coverage creates space for winning sportswomen to be recognized as athletes *and* as women.

Figure 10. New Zealand triathlete silver medallist, Sam Warriner
(*Herald on Sunday*, March 19, 2006, p. 76). Caption –'*Runner up: New Zealander Samantha Warriner crosses the line for triathlon silver at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games*.

The findings also revealed that in certain team sports, the media appeared to single out individual athletes to capture reactions that conveyed a preferred message about winning. For example, the photograph of netballer Irene van Dyk (Figure 11) again captured an athlete in a moment of success, much like the previous photograph of triathlete, Samantha Warriner. Signs of her obvious jubilation immediately after the New Zealand team secured a gold medal are reflected in her jumping in the air with her arms thrown up above her head, mouth open as if she is shouting for joy. Yet in this image, signs of van Dyk's happiness outweigh any obvious signs of exhaustion or relief that were evident in Warriner's image. Moreover, both images focus on a single female athlete – which is unsurprising in the triathlon event as it was just this athlete coming through the line at that moment. However, in the netball photograph, van Dyk has been singled out by the photographer as a specific player, rather than in capturing a group or team response to the final whistle. The photograph also shows that this is a New Zealand sportswoman, focusing attention on her identity as a member of

the national team, through the black and white uniform with its distinctive silver fern symbol.

Figure 11. New Zealand netballer, Irene van Dyk
(*New Zealand Herald*, 27 March 2006, p.1). Caption – *'Sweet success: Goal shoot Irene van Dyk leaps for joy at the final whistle and victory over the Australians'.*

Van Dyk's outfit simultaneously links her with dominant discourses of femininity, accentuated by the wearing of a short dress that signifies the sport of netball, and exposes her long legs and a large amount of bare flesh. Although the photograph was taken from above and looks down on the athlete, which researchers suggest conveys the photographer's power and the vulnerability and subordination of those being featured (Barthes, 1972; Bignell, 2002; Duncan, 1990), this does not appear to be the situation in this photograph as the athlete appears both powerful and the centre of attention. In addition, the large photograph ($838cm^2$) was prominently displayed in the middle of the front page of *The New Zealand*

Herald, attached to a headline that read *'Silver Ferns win'* in bold letters. This photograph captures signs of the spontaneous elation and uninhibited joy as the athlete is depicted jumping in the air, featuring both the motion and her emotional response to the success. Unlike a posed photograph, in capturing the athlete's natural response to the victory that help generate a strong sense of tangible feelings being reflected in the image, with which audiences can identify. Thus, in publishing these types of 'winning moment' photographs, the media provide visible signs of victory, joy and elation that also convey strong messages about national pride, success, and the power of the represented athletes.

Another type of 'success and celebration' photograph that is frequently featured and reflects key visual signs and symbols of winning are those that include medals, the national flag, bouquets, the podium, and close-ups of the successful athletes. These photographs focus on medals worn around the neck or clasped in an athlete's hand, visually illustrating the ultimate sporting achievement. In addition, the media often use these constructed, posed photographs, where the athletes hold up and present their medals to the photographers, who capture images that can be used as a 'public celebration' as audiences share in the national victory. For instance, in the same newspaper that featured the previous photograph of New Zealand netballer, Irene van Dyk, there was also a similarly large posed photographs (836cm^2) of the entire gold medal-winning netball team featured across the inside sport page (Figure 12). This photograph highlighted the successful woman's team all together wearing their national black and white uniforms with their newly awarded medals on display. The athletes posed with their bouquets (a further signs of success) for obligatory team photographs. This photograph, in addition to featuring successful New Zealand athletes who also happen to be women, conveys a range of messages about these sportswomen – who are happy (smiling faces), successful (the medals), young and feminine (neat long hair all tied up in ponytails), with some of the athletes kissing their medals and huddled together in a unified fashion.

Figure 12. The New Zealand silver ferns gold medal-winning netball team
(*New Zealand Herald*, March 27, 2006, p. C1). Caption – *'Moment to savour: The Silver Ferns celebrate with their gold medals after defeating Australia in the Commonwealth Games netball final last night'*

The photograph ultimately embodies a positive preferred message about success and happiness that is visibly tangible. However, within the context of the media coverage of this major sporting event, this posed photograph also conveys a message about national success and pride at '*our*' collective New Zealand victory. Another photograph of a New Zealand gold medal winner, Valerie Vili, (Figure 13), makes use of a number of signs of sporting success and national pride that are commonly used in media coverage, such as the tears and smile that reflect overwhelming emotion and joy, relief and pride at her triumph; the flag, although not clearly evident as it drapes around her shoulders and covers her back, symbolizes nationhood and national pride; the bouquet being an additional symbol of winning; and the gold medal naturally constitutes the ultimate sporting award. In addition, beneath the flag and alongside the flowers, the national black and white uniform is visible along with the New Zealand silver fern logo. The close-up focus on Vili reveals her wiping tears from her smiling face, while also highlighting her jewellery - a wedding band, gold bracelet and earrings. This featuring of a range of traditional signs and symbols that are connected to discourses of femininity, position Vili as not only a successful athlete, but also as a successful woman. Thus, for some sportswomen who secure medals, the more typical media approach of drawing on discourses of femininity to marginalize female athletes is transformed within dominant discourses of nationalism, resulting in them being positively valorised as successful sportswomen.

Figure 13. New Zealand shot-put gold medal winner, Valerie Vili
(*New Zealand Herald*, March 25, 2006, p. D2). Caption – *'Proud moment: Valerie Vili has lived up to expectations, taking gold in the shot put'*.

Sportswomen who reinforce the sports–nationalism articulation feature more frequently in photographs

Not only were more photographs of sportswomen featured in the Games coverage, but sportswomen were depicted participating in an increased range of sports (30) (see Table 25 for Games and Table 15 for non-Games coverage). By comparison, fewer sports were featured in the everyday coverage of sportswomen (18) (see Table 14). The addition of these sports is again linked to the medal-winning potential of athletes participating in them. For instance, a number of additional sports featured in the Games coverage but did not appear in the non-Games or everyday coverage, such as badminton, bowls, discus, shooting, shot-put, squash, synchronized swimming, and weightlifting. However, although both the New

Zealand men and women won silver medals in basketball and the same number of photographs appeared featuring each team, the space allocated to the men (1,589cm^2) was more than double that of the women (698cm^2). A similar finding arose in the women's and men's hockey; although neither team won a medal and there were eight photographs of each team, the space allocated to men's hockey photographs was over 12% larger than that featuring women's hockey.

Table 25. Major event photographs depicting Games sports by gender, number and photo space.

Games	Female		Male		Mixed		Total	
	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo
Sports	#	cm^2	#	cm^2	#	cm^2	#	cm^2
Cycling	42	4,801	32	5,279	2	480	80	10,944
Athletics	38	6,822	47	11,655			89	18,702
Shot-put	29	4,856					31	5,683
Netball	28	6,633					29	6,648
Swimming	26	5,456	37	8,485	3	524	67	14,474
Discus	17	2,348					17	2,348
Triathlon	11	3,064	19	3,280			31	6,434
Shooting	11	2,401	17	3,822	2	357	30	6,580
Squash	9	1,689					9	1,689
Hockey	8	1,971	8	2,552			16	4,523
Mountain biking	7	2,657	2	341			9	2,998
Basketball	6	698	6	1,589			12	2,288
Synchro swimming	6	694					6	694
Weightlifting	5	1,320	8	3,067			13	4,388
Bowls	5	508	5	703			10	1,212
Gymnastics	4	1,232	4	465			8	1,698
Badminton	2	228	3	437	6	1,761	11	2,426
7s rugby			21	3,713	1	120	22	3,833
Boxing			9	1,317			9	1,317
Balance / other	18	2,992	40	7,794	19	4,358	98	19,491
TOTALS	**272**	**50,376 cm^2**	**258**	**54,504 cm^2**	**33**	**7,601 cm^2**	**597**	**118,376 cm^2**

Table 25 reflects the number of photographs of sportswomen in the individual sports that received the greatest attention during the Games period. In addition to the inclusion of badminton (discussed above in relation to an increase in mixed gender photographs), sports such as bowls, gymnastics, hockey, mountain biking, shooting and weightlifting were all represented during the Games period, yet these sports were noticeably absent in both the non-Games and everyday coverage.

During the major event, although numerous athletes were expected to do well and many featured in photographs to highlight their potential for success, not all medal-winning sportswomen received the same amount or type of media attention. For instance, New Zealand sportswomen won medals in bowls, synchronized swimming and weightlifting, yet few photographs of these winning sportswomen were published. This lack of exposure suggests that these victories were either unexpected or that media decision-makers regarded the athlete or sport as unremarkable until after a medal was secured. Moreover, when sportswomen were featured, media messages were frequently ambiguous, which suggests that a range of competing discourses informed the preferred media message. This ambiguity also highlights how disruptions to the dominant discourses of sport can result in mixed messages being produced in relation to athletes, sports or their performances. For instance, although a New Zealander won a weightlifting medal, only five weightlifting photographs of sportswomen were featured. Four were of New Zealand bronze medal winner, Keisha-Dean Soffe, and one featured Canadian silver medal winner, Marilou Dozois-Prevost. Research reveals that sportswomen participating in sports such as weightlifting are rarely featured in everyday coverage due to certain sports being traditionally aligned with masculinity, and the power of photographs to visually reflect strength, muscularity and power. However, during major event coverage, when nationalism and winning intersect with discourses of gender, space is created for sportswomen to be featured outside of the standard repertoire of women's sports (Daddario, 1998; Hargreaves, 1993; Markula et al., 2010; Vincent et al., 2003).

For these reasons it was important to conduct a semiotic analysis of these uncharacteristic photographs to establish how successful sportswomen were framed within the major event media coverage. Although there is no single *fixed* or *static* meaning of any media representation (Hall, 1980b, 1997a), the value of a semiotic analysis of a sub-sample of photographs is that it helps identify features encoded in the image, which reflect newsworthiness. For instance, in a photograph featuring Keisha-Dean Soffe, New Zealand's only female weightlifter at the Games, taken moments after her weightlifting medal win, a strong message of success as a New Zealand athlete and as a woman is conveyed (Figure 14). Despite her participation in a sport more often associated with masculinity, and despite the obvious signs of her muscularity, power and physical strength, the

immediate visual message created is positive. The photograph of Soffe captures her reaction and expression, appearance, clothing and surroundings; each aspect providing visible details that are read in the decoding process, as one interpretation builds on another and then is further reinterpreted until meaning is created. A semiotic reading of this photograph of Soffe, both at a denotative and connotative level, suggests that she is a successful and powerful New Zealand athlete, who is also a woman, as evidenced by her breasts, feminine facial and body features. The signs that provide this reading include her clothing and logos that highlight her national identity as a New Zealander.

Figure 14. New Zealand weightlifting bronze medal winner Keisha-Dean Soffe (*New Zealand Herald*, March 23, 2006, p. C16). Caption –'*Awesome: Keisha-Dean Soffe celebrates after lifting a personal best*'.

Her tight-fitting clothing also reveals Soffe physical form, which challenges the stereotypical slender feminine ideals of sportswomen more frequently featured in media coverage, as she not only appears overweight in comparison to the idealized feminine physique, but is also muscular and powerful looking. The

weightlifting bar at her foot draws attention to the sport she is participating in, and her facial expression, body language and clenched fist punching the air all reflects her delight at her success. The headline of the article reads "*Keisha's call home: 'Dad, I got a medal'*" and the photograph caption reads "*Awesome: Keisha-Dean Soffe celebrates after lifting a personal best*", both of which further positively reinforce her sporting achievement. The caption clearly pays tribute to her accomplishment of beating her *personal best* as an athlete, whereas the headline text reflects ambiguity, because the photograph does not reflect the '*call home*' that was mentioned and it positions her as a daughter, rather than a successful athlete. However, other newspaper editions did use the photograph that this text alluded to, where at the medal ceremony Soffe was captured in an image on the podium using her cell phone, telling her father of her success. Soffe is featured in the photograph above as a successful national team member competing at a major sporting event, and, the fact that she is also a woman is rendered immaterial to the preferred message conveyed in the image and the caption. Moreover, in this reading of the photograph of Soffe, the media can be seen to be visually reinforcing the sports–nationalism articulation, whilst the headline positions her as a daughter. Thus, the challenge for media workers is that they must negotiate competing discourses to find ways to represented sportswomen and women's sports. In this way, the media message produced for successful athletes was in positively validating them as being 'real' athletes and powerful representatives of national identity.

The findings also revealed that the inclusion of many of the lesser-publicized sports could be attributed to a potential for athletes to win medals. For example, shooting has over many years generated a number of medal wins for New Zealand, and hence during the run-up to the Games the media focused attention on and created expectations about the potential for further national successes in this sport. Although there were no shooting photographs in the non-Games or everyday coverage, there were as many shooting photographs in the Games coverage as there were of women's netball, a semi-professional sport and New Zealand's national women's sport (Cameron, 1992). The similar number of photographs featuring netball and shooting reveals too that coverage is modified during major international events as media extend their offerings to include amateur sports not otherwise given attention. Obviously, this study does not

suggest that shooting did not warrant the level of media attention it received during the Commonwealth Games; rather, it questions why shooting (along with various other minor or amateur sports) is entirely ignored in everyday sports coverage.

This study also identified that the sports–nationalism articulation is not only limited to major event coverage. The non-Games photographs revealed that an average of 2.5 times more space was allocated to sportswomen participating in an international waka ama competition held in New Zealand, than was devoted to local athletics (see Table 15). The waka ama photographs on average were 349cm^2, whereas the average size of the athletics photographs was 141cm^2. The substantial size of the waka ama photographs suggests the media considered them to be particularly newsworthy and important, even though most of the images featured women mainly in close-up and out of competition, rather than in sports action shots. Further analysis revealed that all the waka ama photographs were published in two newspapers (*The New Zealand Herald* and *The Waikato Times*), and that the event, at Lake Karapiro, occurred in their circulation regions. Moreover, the coach of the Australian waka ama women's team, who appeared to be the centre of attention in the photographs, was a New Zealand Maori woman who now lives in Australia. The media focus on this international event held within New Zealand demonstrates how nationalism intersects with sports news to draw attention to a sport that is culturally important and of particular interest to a New Zealand audience. This is further highlighted by the fact that the regional newspaper, *The Waikato Times*, featured five of the seven women's waka ama photographs, all five men's, and three of the four mixed gender photographs.

Sports photographs favour a select group of New Zealand and well-known international sportswomen, who are more frequently featured in sports action images

As has been shown above, discourses of nationalism are an important part of media coverage of sports. Photographs are a useful medium by which athletes can become visual representations of national identity. During the everyday period of this study, the majority of photographs of sportswomen (70.6%) focused on New Zealanders (see Table 26 and 27). The relevance of nationalism to representations of sportswomen was deemed an important issue, and this analysis specifically

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took into consideration the nationality of each sportswoman; an aspect which few other studies have investigated.

Table 26. Everyday coverage of sportswomen by type of photograph and nationality.

Athlete nationality	Photographs of New Zealand sportswomen only		Photographs of international sportswomen only		Photographs of both N.Z & international sportswomen		TOTALS	
Type of photo	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos	# of photos	% of photos
SA	30	50.0%	13	65.0%	5	100%	48	56.5%
SR	19	31.7%	4	20.0%			23	27.1%
OTH	8	13.3%	3	15.0%			11	12.9%
CO	3	0.5%					3	3.5%
TOTALS	60	100%	20	100%	5	100%	85	100%
	Photo space cm^2	% of space	Photo space cm^2	% of space	Photo space cm^2	% of space	Photo space cm^2	% of space
SA	6,445	64.6%	2,381	84.0%	2882	100%	11,709	74.5%
SR	2,687	26.9%	272	9.6%			2,960	18.8%
OTH	810	8.1%	180	6.4%			990	6.3%
CO	50	0.5%					50	0.3%
TOTALS	9,993 cm^2	100%	2,833 cm^2	100%	2,882 cm^2	100%	15,709 cm^2	100%

The only other New Zealand newspaper content analysis that investigated this issue identified that New Zealand athletes were featured far more prominently than international athletes in the 2002 Commonwealth Games media coverage (Wensing, 2003).

Table 27. Everyday coverage of sportswomen by percentage of type of photo and nationality.

Everyday Athlete nationality	% number of photos				
	SA	SR	OTH	CO	TOTALS
Photographs of New Zealand sportswomen only	62.5%	82.6%	72.7%	100%	70.6%
Photographs of international sportswomen only	27.1%	17.4%	27.3%		23.5%
Photographs featuring both N.Z & international sportswomen	10.4%				5.9%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Athlete nationality	% space of photos				
	SA	SR	OTH	CO	TOTALS
Photographs of New Zealand sportswomen only	55.0%	90.8%	81.8%	100%	63.6%
Photographs of international sportswomen only	20.3%	9.2%	18.2%		18.0%
Photographs featuring both N.Z & international sportswomen	24.6%				18.3%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In my analysis of everyday coverage, greater photographic emphasis was given to New Zealand sportswomen. In addition, the majority of these photographs reflected sportswomen in SA (56.5%, see Table 26), with New Zealand sportswomen featuring in 62.5% of SA photographs and international women in 27.1% (see Table 27). The balance of the SA photographs (10.4%) featured New Zealand sportswomen competing against international competitors. Of the SA photographs, 35 (73%) featured a single athlete alone, without the inclusion of an opponent, other competitors or team members, suggesting the media valued this individual approach more during this coverage period. Only 27% of the SA photographs (13) featured more than one athlete, including five that depicted New Zealand and international athletes in combative competition. Moreover, these five combative photographs secured almost a quarter (24.6%) of all the SA space, reflecting a substantially greater size of image than the 13 SA images that focused only on international women (20.3%). On average, the size of the SA photographs was slightly larger for New Zealand sportswomen than for international sportswomen ($214cm^2$ vs. $183cm^2$). However, photographs of New Zealand and international sportswomen competing against each other were more than twice as large (averaging $576cm^2$). Of the five photographs of combative action, three featured participants in an international women's cycle tour hosted in New Zealand, one was of New Zealand in netball competition against Australia, and one was of a New Zealand water polo player being challenged by a Cuban defender. These five large photographs accounted for 18.3% of all the photograph space allocated to sportswomen and took up more space than all 20 photographs of international sportswomen, which featured 18 different women or groups of women. Only two international athletes appeared more than once: tennis player Martina Hingis and Australian tour cyclist Oenone Wood, who each featured in two photographs. All other international sportswomen featured were well-known competitors such as tennis stars Kim Clijsters, Monica Seles, Anna Kournikova and Maria Sharapova, and track athlete Florence Griffiths-Joyner.

In summary, then, these photographs of sportswomen appeared to suggest a media hierarchy that is constructed around news values that favour competitive interaction between New Zealand and international opposition, privilege well-known or successful New Zealand athletes, and also acknowledge well-known,

successful international sportswomen. Furthermore, in much the same way that the media favour men's sports action photographs, so too was greatest emphasis placed on women's sports action images. This also reveals how the media rate SA photographs as a valued means of visually 'telling a sports story', through the featured athlete's capability, where the selected moment of motion conveys the preferred messages about the sport, athlete or event.

A further finding is that the majority of sportswomen were featured in sports traditionally associated with discourses of femininity (see Chapter 2 for details about gender-based and culturally appropriate sports). For instance, the participation of sportswomen in sports such as tennis, swimming, gymnastics and ice-skating sanctions characteristics of lady-like decorum and grace to be exhibited (Brookes, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Markula et al., 2010). In the everyday period, only a few photographs featured other sports. Moreover, the majority of the photographs featured sportswomen wearing sports attire culturally considered 'feminine', such as body-hugging swimming costumes, tennis dresses exhibiting cleavage or bare legs, or loose skirts and tight fitting tops or dresses, helping to emphasize and draw attention to the female body. In the majority of the photographs, the overwhelming visual focus in these images draws attention to sportswomen's bodies, attributed in part to the attire worn in competition and the close-up nature of the image. The everyday coverage of photographs of sportswomen therefore focused more on individual sportswomen, particularly well-known New Zealand and internationally successful sportswomen who participated in sports traditionally associated with women and the ideals of femininity.

An analysis of the major event photographs of sportswomen (see Table 28 and 29) revealed surprisingly similar results to those identified for the everyday coverage, where the media reinforced the sports–nationalism articulation. The most prevalent type of photograph was again that of sports action, which accounted for 58.6% of all photographs of sportswomen. Although only 33 photographs (10%) featured New Zealand sportswomen competing against international athletes, these again were presented in a larger format (averaging 250cm^2) than those of New Zealand sportswomen (averaging 183 cm^2) or international athletes (averaging 151cm^2).

Table 28. Major event coverage of sportswomen by type of photograph and nationality.

Nationality of athlete	New Zealand women		International women		Both N.Z & Int. athletes		Combined Total	
Type of photos	# of photos	%	# of photos	%	# of photos	%	# of photos	%
SA	138	54.1%	25	58.1%	31	94.0%	194	58.6%
SR	73	28.6%	4	9.3%	2	6.0%	79	23.9%
SRF[1]	9	3.5%	8	18.6%			17	5.1%
M	14	5.5%	3	7.0%			17	5.1%
OTH	18	7.1%	3	7.0%			21	6.3%
CO	3	1.1%					3	0.9%
TOTALS	**255**	**100%**	**43**	**100%**	**33**	**100%**	**331**	**100%**
Type of photos	Photo space cm²	%	Photo space cm²	%	Photo space cm²	%	Photo space cm²	%
SA	28,965	61.7%	3,471	53.3%	7,373	89.0%	39,808	64.5%
SR	9,594	20.5%	676	10.4%	907	11.0%	11,177	18.1%
SRF	2,440	5.2%	1,508	23.1%			3,948	6.4%
M	2,988	6.4%	460	7.1%			3,448	5.6%
OTH	2,396	5.1%	401	6.2%			2,796	4.5%
CO	531	1.1%					531	0.9%
TOTALS	**46,913cm²**	**100%**	**6,515**	**100%**	**8,280 cm²**	**100%**	**61,708 cm²**	**100.00%**

[1] The SRF denotes images as being 'sports related flag', where athletes are reflected out of sports action and incorporates flags as a key indicator of identity.

The proportion of each type of photograph was also similar to that found in the everyday coverage. More than half the sportswomen's photographs were SA (58.6%) and almost a quarter SR (23.9%). However, during the major event period, two additional categories of photographs were identified that did not appear in the everyday coverage: photographs reflecting sportswomen with medals (M), and athletes featured with the official or an unofficial flag (SRF). These two photograph categories helped the media subtly reinforce the sports−nationalism articulation, by conveying visible signs of success and national identity. There were 17 photographs of sportswomen with flags (5.1%) and 17 of sportswomen with medals (5.1%), equating to a just over a tenth of all photographs of sportswomen (10.2%), and taking up a similar percentage of space (12%). This small difference reflects the use of larger sized photographs (averaging between 202 cm² and 232 cm²) featuring flags and medals to emphasize patriotism and victory during major events. This trend has also been identified by other researchers, who suggest that it helps reinforce an articulation of sport and nationalism, as well as emphasizing New Zealand's unique *'Kiwi'*

characteristics (Bruce & Scott-Chapman, 2010; Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Smith, 2004; Wensing, 2003; Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004).

Table 29. Major event coverage of sportswomen by percentage and type of photo and nationality.

Athlete nationality	% number of photos						
	SA	SR	SRF	M	OTH	CO	TOTALS
Photographs of New Zealand sportswomen only	71.1%	92.4%	52.9%	82.4%	85.7%	100%	**77.0%**
Photographs of international sportswomen only	12.9%	5.1%	47.1%	14.3%	14.3%		**13.0%**
Photographs featuring both N.Z & international sportswomen	16.0%	2.5%					**10.0%**
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Athlete nationality	**% space of photos**						
	SA	SR	SRF	M	OTH	CO	TOTALS
Photographs of New Zealand sportswomen only	72.8%	85.8%	61.8%	86.7%	81.8%	100%	**76.0%**
Photographs of international sportswomen only	8.7%	6.0%	38.2%	13.3%	18.2%		**10.6%**
Photographs featuring both N.Z & international sportswomen	18.5%	8.1%					**13.4%**
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

When comparing the results of the major event and everyday coverage, a number of unique findings emerged in relation to photographs featuring the national identity of athletes. Although at major international sporting events there are numerous world champions and distinguished international sportswomen, during the major event period only 13% of all photographs of sportswomen focuses on only international athletes, while in the everyday coverage greater emphasis was given to photographs featuring international sportswomen only (23.5%) (see Table 27). However, these percentage-based results ignore the overall number of photographs. While the number of photographs of international athletes (43) featured during the major event coverage more than doubled that published during the everyday period (20), their overall proportion was less. This suggests that during major events, emphasizing national identity and focusing on '*us*' and '*our*' athletes in media coverage is more important than featuring photographs of '*them*' and '*their*' athletes (i.e. non-New Zealand sportswomen).

Although the importance placed on national identity during major events was highlighted in relation to the content analysis findings, a more powerful method of revealing the sports–nationalism articulation was realized using semiotic analysis. During the major event, the media used three types of photographs to draw audience attention to signs and symbols of national and cultural identity. The *first* type of image featured New Zealand athletes in sporting action wearing outfits that visually displayed their national identity through team uniforms and national colours, symbols and logos worn on clothing, or a tattoo on an athlete's body. The *second* type focused on the performance of a Maori 'haka', which is now frequently performed during international sporting events, where New Zealand national identity and pride are at stake (this will be discussed in more detail below). The *third* type of visual image denoting cultural or traditional symbols of national identity included those featuring the official national flag or the black and white silver fern flag commonly seen at international sporting events, or the use of the silver fern on athletes' uniforms or other sporting apparel that drew attention to this unique symbol of '*kiwiness*'. In such images, national identity is revealed by athletes draping themselves with or holding aloft the national or silver fern flag – as a visual sign of success, personal achievement, and national pride. Either of these flags immediately distinguishes the athlete's New Zealand identity, in much the same way that another country's flag would be read as 'non-Kiwi'. Therefore, national identity is featured in photographs where national team uniforms, flags, and other cultural performances and traditional symbols visually convey signs of *'Kiwiness'*.

As revealed above, the content analysis highlighted how coverage of sportswomen focused more frequently on New Zealand athletes than on international athletes. A part of the initial measurement process involved visually identifying and quantifying each athlete's nationality and this process was supported by the presence of national uniforms and these other distinguishing signs of origin, which then become key elements in a semiotic analysis of signs of national identity. The power of photographs to reinforce cultural recognition is highlighted by Bignell (2002), who suggests that they produce a 'double message' in that they "appear to denote their subject without coding it, but when subjected to a semiotic analysis, they reveal the cultural codes of connotation at work" (p. 99). Photographs repeatedly featured athletes in national team colours during the

Games, helping audiences to identify not only *'our'* athletes but also *'their'* athletes through photographs that featured distinctive visual signs. Similar research suggests that "constructions of identity frequently involve the use of stereotypes, both of the home nation (us) and the competition (them), and are particularly prominent in coverage of major sporting events" (Wensing et al., 2004, p. 208). Many of these stereotypes are more easily and readily identified in photographs, due to an image's readability and visual immediacy (Hardin et al., 2002; Rowe, 1999).

Some photographs featured multiple signs of national or cultural identity, such as the photograph of New Zealand's Samantha Warriner (Figure 15), who won the triathlon silver medal and featured in a large photograph ($731cm^2$) on an inside sports page of *The New Zealand Herald* (20 March 2006, p.4). Running in her distinctive New Zealand black and white uniform with the number '22' painted on her right thigh and shoulder, the photograph captures Warriner mid-stride passing spectators holding both the silver fern flag, with the words '*New Zealand*' clearly visible, along with the official New Zealand stars and union jack national flag.

Figure 15. Samantha Warriner captured in action
(The New Zealand Herald, March 20, 2006, p. c4). Caption – 'Break-neck speed: New Zealand Samantha Warriner, 34, turned in one of her best efforts to take silver in the women's triathlon'

The athlete's gaze is focused solely on the road ahead as some spectators are shouting and clapping as she passes by. Other spectators wearing Australian colours clap and take photographs of something in front of Warriner, which indicates that another athlete may be slightly ahead of her. This photograph clearly features the New Zealand athlete as the central 'object' of this image. The photograph, taken by New Zealand photographer Chris Skelton, explicitly captures the athlete as she passes the flags that are signs of 'Kiwi' identity. These visual signs of New Zealand national identity are recognizable to New Zealand audiences, who are immediately aware of these distinctive markers of identity, and thus create a strong sense of national identity, while clearly identifying Warriner as one of '*us*'.

In an examination of all the photographs of sportswomen, the black and white of the New Zealand sports uniform and apparel stood out visually within a vast range of colour photographs. Often, little other than a black and white swimming cap with the letters '*NZL*' and the distinctive national black and white patterns in the athlete's sportswear identified them as New Zealand athletes. A representative example is a photograph featured in Figure 16 that captured New Zealand swimmer Melissa Ingram's backstroke race in a medium sized photograph ($287cm^2$).
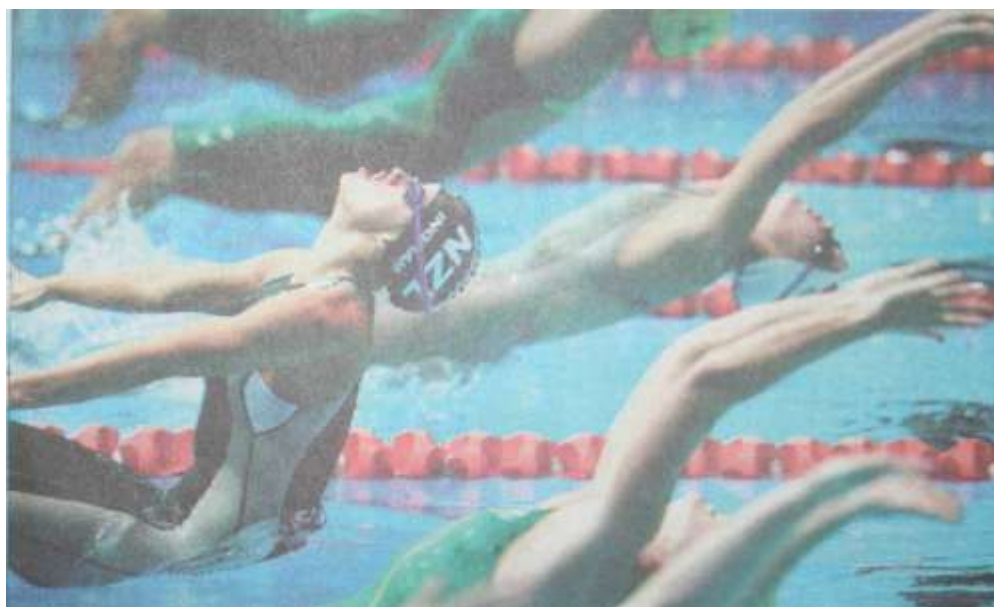
Figure 16. New Zealand swimmer Melissa Ingram
(*The Waikato Times*, March 25, 2006, p. D8). Caption – *'Stretching out: New Zealand's Melissa Ingram competes in the 200m backstroke'*

The distinctive black swimming cap with the white letters '*NZL*' and her name on it, and the black, grey and white costume, contrasted with those of the other swimmers. The visual focal point converged on the New Zealand swimmer, which is unsurprising since the photographer, Iain McGregor, was one of the few New Zealand photographers sent to cover the Games. This photograph, therefore, introduces *'our'* New Zealand athlete in sports action, who is reflected in amongst *'them'*, the other indistinct, unidentifiable and unimportant swimmers. The positioning of Ingram's head and taut muscle tension in her neck and arms visibly captures the physical power and exertion of her push-off, although this image also clearly captures her obvious late departure in relation to the other participants displayed alongside her. Despite Ingram's gender appearing more ambiguous in a unisex swimming costume, there are visible signs of breasts in the tight fitting swimsuits of at least one other swimmer. The caption *'Stretching out: New Zealand's Melissa Ingram competes in the 200m backstroke'* provides minimal insight, revealing only who the New Zealand swimmer is and the event in which she is participating. Thus, the focus of this photograph and text appears to lie in capturing a New Zealand athlete at the start of a race, without any indication of her result in the reading of image and the text. Moreover, selecting an image that captures her take-off after the rest of her opponents does not bode well either for the race outcome. Thus, the media are shown in this content and semiotic analysis to reinforce the sports–nationalism articulation during the major event, not only through highlighting the importance of *'our'* sportswomen based on the number, type and placement of photographs, but also visibly supporting this articulation by selecting photographs that feature unique signs and symbols of national identity.

The analysis of the major event photographs of sportswomen also revealed how large photographs were used to depict combative action between New Zealand and international sportswomen (see Table 29). While the average size of the combative SA photographs ($238cm^2$) was only marginally larger than the average size of photographs featuring New Zealand sportswomen ($210cm^2$), it was 70% larger than the average size of photographs of international athletes ($139cm^2$). This suggests that New Zealand media focus greater attention on New Zealand athletes in action during major events, especially when there are opportunities to display a fighting spirit, powerful sporting challenges, and fierce contestation coupled with national identity and success. Semiotic analysis was

employed to establish how messages were conveyed in these combative photographs. Such photographs were atypical for media coverage of sportswomen and while they were used infrequently overall during the Commonwealth Games (16%), the considerably larger size of the photographs visibly highlighted the dramatic action of physical contact and sporting challenge between the players. Although international research suggests sportswomen are more frequently aligned in media coverage with discourses of femininity, during major events discourses of sport and nationalism disrupt discourses of femininity so that sportswomen are represented in similar ways to sportsmen, using discourses of sport and masculinity that focus on power, strength and aggression (Bruce, 2009). Therefore, these types of combative photographs interrupt normative media practices. The photographs featured New Zealand sportswomen in attack or possession mode, keeping the challenger at bay as they moved forward or defended their position.

Figure 17. New Zealand hockey player Honor Dillon and a Scottish defender. (New Zealand Herald, March 17, 2006, D17). Caption – 'Attack: Honor Dillon weaves through Scotland's defence'

A variety of signs within each photograph revealed the extent of the physical contestation, such as through the athletes' actions, facial expressions, and arm movements as athletes were being pushed, held back or restricted in their movement by the opposition. For instance, in Figure 17, the hockey players are

shown with arms intertwined, their hockey sticks crossed in front of them as they both lunge forward and tussle for ball possession. Motion is reflected in the hockey players' body positions and the spray of water rising in front of the sticks as they clash on the wet surface. These signs all highlight the intensity of the contact between these two players. Although the photograph is a moment of suspended motion, it captures a sense of the intense movement these athletes are exerting on each other and themselves, and fluidity of their action and interaction.

A similar display is exhibited in Figure 18, where the basketball players lunge forward, as the player in white attempts to move around to block the New Zealand attack.

Figure 18. New Zealand basketball player Angela Marino and Indian opponent Divya Singh (*Herald on Sunday*, March 12, 2006, p.60). Caption – *'Better: Angela Marino takes on Divya Singh during an improved Tall Fern performance against India'*.

In both photographs, the athletes are featured in mid-stride, capturing motion in the awkward position of their bodies. In the basketball photograph, hair is flying up behind both the basketball players and the ball itself is caught mid-bounce. Sports action photographs frequently feature intense, focused and serious expressions on players' faces, illustrating determination and concentration, with opponents' eyes firmly fixed on trying to secure possession. In these images the

players' total engagement is revealed in their physical contact with each other as arms stretch out to deny the opponent's challenge for the ball, or hands or sticks reach forward to secure possession, and shoulders are used for balance and to block their possession. These photographs illustrate the powerful rivalry in women's sport and support an articulation of sport and aggression, which is culturally seen to be masculine. Similarly, Figure 19 features a photograph of two netball players facing-off in the 'official' non-contact position, with hands by their sides, fingers outstretched ready to make a move for the ball. This photograph clearly captures the athletes' determination in this challenging position, despite the unnaturalness of their stance, rigid body postures and the lack of facial expression on either player. Neither athlete is looking at the other, appearing to rather be focused on something or someone outside of the frame of the photograph. This type of forced contact is an unusual aspect of this photograph; most of the 'combative' images feature athletes in moving action where they are challenging each other for possession, rather than this tense and rigid waiting position.

Figure 19. New Zealand netballer Casey Williams and Australian's Sharelle McMahon (*Waikato Times*, April 1, 2006, p. c9). Caption – *'Face-off: New Zealand's Casey Williams and Australia's Sharelle McMahon prepare for battle in front of a partisan crowd'*.

In addition, these larger sized photographs immediately centre audience attention on national players in a contested international setting. This again highlights how dominant discourses of sport and femininity are interrupted during major sporting events while discourses that focus on power, strength, and battle are brought to the fore for sportswomen.

Outside of major international sporting events the most visible sportswomen are those who most closely conform to dominant ideals of femininity

The way in which athletes, particularly sportswomen, are featured in media coverage reflects the complex ways that power relations operate, and the competing discourses that inform the field of journalism. For instance, some of the challenges facing sportswomen in respect of their media representation relate to:

  - the dominant discourses of sport that privilege men and ignore the contributions of women,
  - the disruption that major events produce when discourses of nationalism create more space for sportswomen, and,
  - the ways that discourses of femininity are more frequently brought to the fore when sportswomen are represented.

For the most part, media coverage articulates sport to men (and masculinity), and hence the minimal and sporadic inclusion of photographs of sportswomen is rendered problematic because of the incompatibility of discourses of sport and femininity. Gender is thus seen to play a powerful role in how discourses of sport are conveyed and become understood. Moreover, when gender is communicated in media coverage, it act as a differentiator between sportsmen and sportswomen, such that what men do is *'sport'*, and what women do is imitate sport or at best engage in an inferior version of it – i.e. *'women's sport'*.

Sportswomen are represented in large photographs that draw attention to them as women

When women were featured at all, which was only infrequently, everyday sports coverage focused on well-known national or international sportswomen

participating in a few select sports. In this way, dominant discourses of sport that inform the field of sport journalism maintained the predominant focus on sportsmen, without any significant disruption to the sports–masculinity articulation. Analysing not only the type and quantity of representations of sportswomen but also the form and context of media coverage highlighted how photographs of sportswomen were framed. Only 12% of the everyday coverage of sportswomen featured them in large format photographs, with the balance of the representations being more or less evenly distributed between small (44%) and medium (45%) sized photographs. The average size of the women's small photographs equated to 32cm^2, the medium averaged 220cm^2, while the large averaged 620cm^2. Owing to a comparatively small number of photographs featuring sportswomen in the everyday coverage (85), the 15 largest photographs were examined in detail (Table 30).

Table 30. Everyday photographs of women by size, sport, position, nationality and photo type.

Athlete(s)	Photo size cm2	Sport	Page Section	Nationality of athlete	Type of photo
Casey Williams & Sharelle McMahon	1,458	Netball	Inside sports	NZ / Australian	SA
Monique Williams	672	Athletics	Inside sports	NZ	SR
Unidentified cyclists in NZ tour	630	Cycling	Inside sports	NZ / Int	SA
Maria Tutaia	601	Netball	Inside sports	NZ	SA
Justine Henin	594	Tennis	Inside sports	Belgian	SA
Nelson rowers	513	Rowing	General News	NZ	SR
Un-named paddlers	472	Kayaking	General News	NZ	SR
Sarah McSweeney	425	Athletics	Inside sports	NZ	SA
Rose Jacob	420	Rugby	General News	NZ	SR
Unidentified rowers	410	Rowing	General News	NZ	SA
Irene van Dyk	379	Netball	Inside sports	NZ	SA
Kelly Mason & Yamira Caballero	367	Water polo	Inside sports	NZ / Cuban	SA
Kairango Vano	357	Tennis	Main sports	NZ	SA
Whitney Sabine	348	Kilikiti*	Inside sports	NZ	SA
Kim Clijsters	322	Tennis	Inside sports	Belgian	SA
TOTAL	**7,972cm^2**				

* The sport of *kilikiti* is a derivative of the game cricket and has become popular in New Zealand predominantly through the Polynesian community.

Despite these 15 images representing only 17.6% of all photographs of sportswomen, their combined space totalled over half the space allocated to everyday photographs of sportswomen (50.7%). While the majority of these 15 photographs featured New Zealand athletes (87%), three depicted New Zealand and international athletes in competition against one another, and only two featured international athletes, both of whom were well-known, professional tennis players. Furthermore, as already identified in Table 16, no particular women's sport was emphasized in everyday media coverage, with nine different sports being featuring in the 15 largest photographs and only netball, tennis, rowing and athletics attracting more than one photograph. The majority of the photographs were SA (73%), with the balance being SR (27%). Although large photographs typically suggest newsworthiness, none of these photographs were published on the front page and only one photograph was prominently positioned on the main sports page. The balance of the photographs featured in the inside sports pages (10) and the general news pages (4), thereby indicating lesser importance, despite their large size. However, the sizable photographs drew attention to the individuals represented, not just as an athlete but also as a woman. This was achieved through emphasizing traditional feminine attire and in revealing athletes' bodies and their feminine appearance.

The majority of photographs featured sports traditionally associated with women and strongly articulated to femininity, or sports seen as culturally acceptable for women to participate in. Only one highlighted a sport strongly associated with masculinity and the person featured was not depicted playing the sport. All of the photographs featured sportswomen wearing either short dresses, skirts, body-hugging uniforms or swimming costumes. The close-up photographs also drew attention to the athletes' bodies, due in part to the sporting apparel exposing some breast or the buttock area. This type of emphasis on sportswomen's physique draws on discourses of femininity, which may influence the selection of photographs that focus on and accentuate signs of gender and centre attention on the woman rather than on the athlete. This pattern of representation was not isolated however to the everyday coverage, and will be discussed further below, drawing on the results of a semiotic analysis of a number of photographs that featured in the Games coverage.

Relatively few sportswomen warrant widespread media attention

The everyday analysis revealed that relatively few sportswomen appeared in multiple photographs (see Table 31). For those athletes who featured in more than one photo, the overall space allocated to their coverage was comparatively small. However, similar to the findings of the analysis of large photographs of sportswomen, those sportswomen featured in multiple photographs also participated in feminine or gender-neutral sports. Moreover, they featured in outfits that highlighted their feminine physique in close-up photographs where bare flesh, breasts and buttocks were again visible.

Table 31. Sportswomen reflected in multiple photographs in everyday coverage.

Sport	Athlete(s)	# of photos	Photo space cm^2
Swimming	Hannah McLean	5	295
Cycling	Catherine Cheatley	3	548
Equestrian	Katie McVean	3	349
Athletics	Monique Williams	2	786
Waterpolo	Kelly Mason & Yamira Caballero	2	505
Rugby	Rose Jacob	2	492
Triathlon	Rebecca Dubber	2	443
Tennis	Martina Hingis	2	306
Rowing	Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell	2	301
Tennis	Abigail Guthrie	2	296
Cycling	Oenone Wood	2	189
Golf	Natasha Krishna	2	72
Netball	Vilimaina Davu	2	17

Although the most photographed athlete, New Zealand swimmer Hannah McLean, was the subject of five photographs, four were small and only one was medium-sized. In comparison, New Zealand cyclist, Catherine Cheatley, featured in two medium and one large photograph. And, the total space for the two photographs of Monique Williams was 672cm^2 (one large and one medium image) and featured the second largest photograph of a sportswoman in the everyday coverage. Only three athletes were represented in three or more photographs, whereas the majority of sportswomen featured in just two images or a single photograph. This suggests that in the everyday coverage, media workers regarded images of sportswomen to be of secondary importance, which was further conveyed by the lack of multiple photographs of individual sportswomen.

As already highlighted in Chapter 4, media workers appeared to struggle to find appropriate ways to represent sportswomen as both capable athletes *and* as women. This challenge reflects the difficulties in disrupting dominant discourses of sport that inform the field of sport journalism. Moreover, sport has traditionally been coded as masculine and typically associated with strength, power and muscularity (Lines, 2001; Rowe, 2000, 2004), and is thus more easily and readily articulated to men (and by association masculinity). Thus, discourses of sport appear to be at odds with discourses of femininity. Additionally, the taken-for-grantedness (and hegemonic status) of the sports–masculinity articulation becomes difficult to disrupt. For example, despite the lack of audience surveys, the media workers in this study suggested that women's sport and sportswomen were 'not what the audience want'.

As noted, media coverage of sportswomen has historically focused on those sports associated with femininity, where the emphasis is on grace and a 'feminine' physique rather than on muscularity, power or strength (Brookes, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Markula et al., 2010; Mason & Rail, 2006; Vincent et al., 2002). Furthermore, research has revealed that gender differences in sports coverage "may be underlined in the clothes and physical appearances of men and women" (Duncan, 1990, p. 25), such that the uniforms worn by sportswomen are more likely to conform to cultural codes of 'women's clothing'; including dresses, skirts and tight-fitting, body-hugging uniforms and swimwear. In sport, these types of clothing are the visual 'signs' and 'objects' of gender - women's clothing - and help to signpost gender difference, drawing attention to the female body rather than to the sporting action. Moreover, research suggests that the visibility of a number of sportswomen, such as tennis players Maria Sharapova and Anna Kournikova, focuses more on their physical appearance than on their sporting abilities or successes (Bruce, 2005; Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Davis, 1992; Duncan, 1992; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Lines, 2001; McDonald, 2000; Rowe, 1999). This was supported in the content analysis, which identified that sportswomen participating in feminine sports were given greater attention. Further insight can be gleaned from semiotic analysis of an article and small photograph of Maria Sharapova (Figure 20), which appeared to reflect an ambivalent message about Sharapova. Although the article used a quote Sharapova made about her state of health, the text and headline drew on

discourses of masculinity to frame an explicit message about Sharapova being a sexually appealing woman. The bold article headline *'Body Beautiful'* immediately drew attention to the article and attached small photograph (9cm^2) positioned on the inside sports page. Due to the minute size of the photograph, the athlete's identity was not instantly apparent in the image; rather it shows a female tennis player in action, either having just struck or about to strike the ball.

Figure 20. International tennis player, Maria Sharapova
(*New Zealand Herald,* March 11, 2006, p. D2). Headline only – *'Body Beautiful'*

A number of signs of the gender of this tennis player are revealed. The athlete is wearing a light blue tennis skirt and matching sun visor and a tight-fitting black tank-top that reveals her exposed arms and bare shoulders. Through reading the photograph and the text in relation to both the denotative and connotative elements in this constructed framework the image is captured from an elevated position, revealing her blonde hair beneath her visor and her bare legs appear to be extremely long in relation to her body. Signs of her sporting action are featured in her body position, as the suspended motion captures her in mid-swing, her skirt

flaring up behind her with both feet slightly off the ground. There appears to be no ambiguity or ambivalence in the photograph itself. It is only through an analysis of the text and the image together that this ambivalence (and media ambiguity) is revealed. The first part of the text highlights who the athlete is, Maria Sharapova, and goes on to reinforce the sporting context with Sharapova stating that her body "just isn't ready". However, the '*Body Beautiful*' headline and the sarcasm implicit in the lines in the body of the article "Poor Maria Sharapova" and "looks fine to us" clearly suggest a male production context. Moreover, in using the collective pronoun "us", this comment also denotes a masculine consumer audience position as well. Therefore, despite the photograph and the majority of text being framed within a sporting context, the headline helps deflect attention towards Sharapova's physical appearance and an implied heterosexual male production and audience context. Moreover, with the majority of media coverage of this sportswoman more frequently representing her in relation to dominant discourses of idealized femininity (Bruce & Saunders, 2005), this article appears to follows a similar pattern, justifying the inclusion of this article by referencing Sharapova's looks rather than her sporting achievements or skills.

Another example of this type of media framing relates to a non-Games photograph of Australian golfer, Carlie Butler, published on an inside sports page of *The New Zealand Herald* during the major event period (Figure 21). The medium-sized photograph (253.5cm^2) took up half the space allocated to an article on the impending New Zealand open golf tournament for women. The photograph caption read: *'Lining up: Carlie Butler of Australia could be a starter in New Zealand'*, under a headline *'New Zealand Open for Women'.* Yet despite it being a New Zealand tournament, the large attached photograph of a potential Australian participant, rather than a New Zealander, suggests local media considered this overseas player to be more newsworthy than any of the local competitors. Analysing this photograph through a process of semiosis reveals a number of signs relating to the gendered nature of the focus, and more specifically how discourses of femininity are reinforced within the photograph.

Figure 21. Australian golfer, Carlie Butler
(*The New Zealand Herald*, March 17, 2006, p. D19). Caption - *Lining up: Carlie Butler of Australia could be a starter in New Zealand'*,

The image draws attention to Butler, revealing her to be a slim female, toned and youthful with long blonde hair. The qualities helping to emphasize her femininity include her low-cut blouse, where the photograph composition draws the eye to her cleavage as the central focal point. Butler's silver heart-shaped locket is highlighted suspended in her cleavage line, drawing attention to and emphasizing her breasts and partially visible white bra. The top half of her body reveals exposed skin, with her bare arms, neck and cleavage clearly highlighting the fact that this golfer is a woman. Butler's long blonde hair flows out from under her cap and down onto her bare shoulders. There are a range of other signs and objects that highlight her femininity, such as make-up and jewellery. She appears to be wearing lip-gloss or lipstick and her fingernails are long and manicured. Butler is

wearing large hooped silver earrings, a distinctive silver necklace and locket, silver bracelets on both wrists, and rings are also partially evident on both her hands. Other research has also identified how sports media privilege sportswomen whose appearance is more aligned with dominant ideals of femininity, therefore seeming to suggest that stereotypically attractive sportswomen are inherently more newsworthy (Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Feder-Kane, 2000; Vincent et al., 2003; Walton, 2005). Moreover, Bruce and Saunders (2005) highlight that:

> The strength of the link between sport and masculinity is also shown in the ways that some sports organisations encourage, and even demand that, female athletes wear make-up, dresses and jewellery in public in order to appear appropriately feminine. (p. 61)

Thus, visible signs of adornment for women help not only to differentiate gender, but also convey a sense of femininity. Amongst the visual signs that highlight Butler as an athlete are the golf putter in her hand, her golf shoes, and the labelled cap and clothing. Although Butler's eyes are not visible, due to her dark sunglasses, her gaze is appears to fall behind the photographer. The blurred green background, the putter, her attire and her stance suggest that she is on a golf course. Thus, through a reading of the photograph in conjunction with the headline and caption at both a connotative and denotative level, a range of competing and intersecting discourses of sport and gender are constructed by the media to support a preferred message that reinforces idealized femininity.

During major events, discourses of femininity remain powerful for sportswomen

This study not only revealed that media coverage during major event reinforces the sports–nationalism articulation, thereby creating space for increased emphasis on the activities and successes of sportswomen, but that dominant discourses of femininity nonetheless remained powerful. While the content analysis revealed that sportswomen were most often featured wearing sportswear immediately before, during, or after their events, some of the sports-related photographs displayed them wearing bikinis and bra-like crop-tops during 'private' practice sessions outside of competition. For instance, in Chapter 2, I presented an example of how the process of semiosis automatically operates, which focused on

the sports article and photograph of New Zealand swimmer, Helen Norfolk. This was examined in detail there, and the results of this analysis will now be considered in this section (see Figures 3, 4 and 5). The headline and photographs clearly drew attention to her physical appearance, with the text reading '*Norfolk in best shape yet*' (*Herald on Sunday*, March 12, 2006, p. 54). The photographs featured Norfolk in a small pink bikini, one featured in a page header introducing the main article about the swimmer. The main sports page text header read: '*Norfolk Broad: Helen Norfolk looking good for a medal*' (*Herald on Sunday*, March 12, 2006, p. 52), a play on words highlighting her feminine appearance. The text and photograph of Norfolk focused on her as a woman rather than an athlete, the media appearing to target a predominantly male audience. From an analysis of the framing of the article and photograph in relation to its content and context, reveals the media primarily drawing on dominant discourses of femininity as they construct the preferred media message, while discourses of sport were challenge and subordinated in this example.

Further evidence of the complexities inherent in media coverage of sportswomen was identified in the content analysis of the major event photographs. The results highlighted that despite sportswomen being more strongly articulated to discourses of sport in the photographs featured during the Games coverage, the types of photographs selected and the focus conveyed by the media emphasized women's sport and sportswomen in line with discourses of femininity. The largest 15 photographs of sportswomen published during the major event coverage highlighted similar results to those identified in the largest 15 photographs from the everyday coverage. An array of athletes and sports were featured (see Table 32). However, the major event photographs were almost double the size of those that appeared in the everyday coverage ($12,431cm^2$ vs. $7,972cm^2$); this being a 56% increase in space. Moreover, due to the much greater number of photographs of sportswomen published during the major event coverage (331), these 15 photographs only represented 4.5% of the sportswomen's photographs, yet they occupied 20.1% of the *space* allocated to women's photographs ($61,707 cm^2$). This highlights the substantially larger size of these images and, unlike the majority of the everyday photographs, the major event ones were not restricted to the inside sports pages but rather, featured throughout the newspapers.

Table 32. Major event photographs of women by size, sport, position, nationality and photo type.

Athlete(s)	Photo size cm2	Sport	Page	Origin of athlete	Type of photo	Games or non-Games
Kate McIlroy	1,305	Athletics	Inside sports	NZ	SA	Games
Sarah Ulmer	988	Cycling	Magazine	NZ & Int	SA	Games
Rosara Joseph	954	Mountainbiking	Inside sports	NZ	SA	Games
Jana Pittman	874	Athletics	Games Special	Int.	SRF	Games
Honor Dillon & Lauren MacLean	858	Hockey	Inside sports	NZ & Australia	SA	Games
Irene Roberts and team	851	Waka Ama	General News	NZ & Australia	SR	non-Games
Irene van Dyk	838	Netball	Front page	NZ	SA	Games
Silver Ferns team	836	Netball	Inside sports	NZ	M	Games
Beatrice Faumuina	765	Discus	Inside sports	NZ	SR	Games
Nadine Stanton	750	Shooting	General News	NZ	SA	Games
Samantha Warriner	731	Triathlon	Inside sports	NZ	SA	Games
Shelley Kitchen	709	Squash	Main sports	NZ	SRF	Games
Nichola Chellingworth	697	Swimming	Inside sports	NZ	SA	Games
Samantha Warriner	646	Triathlon	Games Special	NZ	SA	Games
Hannah McLean	627	Swimming	Inside sports	NZ	SA	Games
Totals	**12,431cm²**					

Only one photograph appeared on the front page, New Zealand's netball goal shooter, Irene van Dyk, jubilantly leaping in the air at the moment the final whistle blew at the Commonwealth Games and the team secured a gold medal (analysed earlier). Only one athlete featured twice in sizable photographs - Samantha Warriner, who won a silver medal in the triathlon (also examined earlier). All except one photograph captured women competing at the Games. The non-Games photograph featured a New Zealander - Irene Roberts – now living in Australia, who was competing with her Australian based women's waka team at an international competition held in New Zealand. There was only one photograph of an international athlete, Jana Pittman, who won the hurdles gold medal for Australia. A recurring theme throughout these photographs was the focus on potential winners and success. The only Games photographs not showing successful medal-winning athletes were all of New Zealand athletes: Nichola Chellingworth, who qualified for a swimming semi-final, Honor Dillon competing in hockey against Canadian Lauren MacLean, and Beatrice Faumuina, whom the media had earlier hyped as a potential medal winner, but who came fourth.

Two thirds of the photographs were SA (10), two were SR, two featured national flags, and one featured the New Zealand netball team with their gold medals. However, as noted for the everyday sizable photographs, the majority featured sportswomen participating in traditionally feminine sports or those sports not considered male or masculine. The close-up composition of these photographs also helped emphasize the athletes' gender and feminine appearance. This was again accentuated via the feminine attire worn by these athletes, who were featured wearing body-hugging swimwear or tight fitting uniforms, short skirts and low cut blouses, revealing exposed arms, legs, cleavages, stomachs and buttocks. Although athletes' uniforms generally allow them to have free movement, the way in which media highlight visible signs of gender difference, and the female body in particular, helps draw audience attention to female athletes as women first and foremost (Feder-Kane, 2000). Therefore, although major events create greater space for sportswomen to feature in media coverage, discourses of femininity continue to influence how sportswomen are represented.

The only large photograph that featured an international sportswoman reflects the effect of intersecting discourses. In a photograph featuring Australian track athlete, Jana Pittman (Figure 22), the athlete's obvious delight at her victory is reflected in her extremely broad, toothy smile and ecstatic facial expression as she firmly clenches the Australian national flag in both hands, drawn up to her chest. The caption reads, '*Jana Queen: Aussie hurdles queen Jana Pittman: She has the braces, the engagement ring and the gold medal'*. The caption and the photograph draw attention to a range of signs that suggest Pittman's heterosexual status. This includes the reference to her engagement ring that is also visible in the photo, helping shift focus away from the clear signs of her muscularity in a close-up photograph where her bare shoulders and arms accentuate her powerfully built upper torso and are inconsistent with discourses of femininity. In addition, the caption also highlights her conspicuous dental braces, which impart a sense of youthfulness that is expressed in a manner suggesting immaturity as Pittman clasps the flag in front of her.

Figure 22. Australian hurdles gold medal winner, Jana Pittman
(Sunday Star Times, March 26, 2006, p. S8). Caption - *'Jana Queen: Aussie hurdles queen Jana Pittman: She has the braces, the engagement ring and the gold medal'*

The various signs evident in this image reflect the power of intersecting discourses that deflect attention away from discourses of sport and onto femininity. Thus, the text detracts from the face value reading of the visual signs of the photograph, which suggests 'woman as successful athlete', and encourages a reading of 'athlete as successful *heterosexual* woman'. In addition, the caption also uses the word 'queen' twice to gender-mark Pittman as female, while highlighting her successful winning status and sporting superiority at winning the gold medal. Other research has also identified that the sports media frequently use the word 'queen' in relation to potential or actual medal winning sportswomen as a means of reflecting their importance, in highlighting success, and in drawing attention to their femininity (Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Wensing et al., 2004).

Outside of these 15 large photographs of sportswomen, there were a number of photographs featured during the major event coverage that reinforced discourses of femininity either in relation to the visual framing or context of the photograph. This is problematic for sportswomen as they struggle to be unconditionally acknowledged as athletes in relation to discourses of sport. Yet the taken-for-grantedness of a hierarchy of discourses of sport and gender challenges the way in which sportswomen are represented in that discourses of femininity focus on them as women rather than athletes. The only photograph featuring an international sportswoman participating in a traditionally masculine sport featured Canadian weightlifter, Marilou Dozois-Prevost, who won a silver medal (Figure 23). The photograph was featured in an article with the headline *'Dodgy but it's terrific to watch',* which described the women's weightlifting event and drug controversies that frequently surround athletes involved in this typically 'muscle-bound' sport.

SMILER: Marilou Dozois-Prevost of Canada wins the snatch but was denied the gold.
PICTURE / BRETT PHIBBS

Figure 23. Canadian silver medal weightlifter, Marilou Dozois-Prevost (*The New Zealand Herald,* March 18, 2006, p. D3). Caption - *'Smiler: Marilou Dozois-Prevost of Canada wins the snatch but was denied the gold'*

The photograph of Dozois-Prevost featured her wearing a tight fitting outfit that revealed her slim, feminine physique, long blonde hair, and finely chiselled features, a notably uncharacteristic stature for a weightlifter, male or female. The

caption read: *'Smiler: Marilou Dozois-Prevost of Canada wins the snatch but was denied the gold'*, and the article described her as *"a lithe, athletic, blond, ponytailed teenager from Montreal"*. The gold medal winner, who was not featured in any photograph during this period, was described as "a squat, muscly Indian policewoman". In addition, the photograph of Dozois-Prevost contrasts notably with the one examined earlier of New Zealand weightlifting medal-winner, Keisha-Dean Soffe, in so far as the media focused solely on Soffe's medal win and identity as a New Zealand winner without reference to her physique. Yet the inclusion of Dozois-Prevost, as a non-New Zealand, non-gold medal-winning sportswoman, immediately suggests her newsworthiness yet not in relation to sports per se, but rather by drawing attention to her physical appearance and away from the 'masculine' sport she was participating in, thus reinforcing the sportswomen–femininity articulation. The photograph and text emphasize the novelty of her physique, unusual in that she appears feminine and slender in a sport generally requiring strength and power, which is more typically identified in relation to discourses of sport and masculinity and visually associated with well-built, muscular and typically thickset athletes, rather than in relation to discourses of femininity and attractive sportswomen. However, this article was also unusual because it suggested watching women's weightlifting was entertaining and enjoyable, stating the event was "compelling viewing and terrific theatre"; perhaps in part due to the contrast between the Canadian weightlifter "who knows how to emote expertly for the cameras … with a Colgate smile", and the gold medal winner, described as a "grim faced policewoman… [who has] twice been suspended for returning positive drug tests". Despite the text reporting on the 'otherness' of Dozois-Prevost's opponent, she is positively represented in the media coverage drawing on dominant discourses of femininity. She is described as a small, blond, smiling, young, white woman in comparison to her opponent, who was not featured in a photograph and was represented negatively as an Indian woman not fitting in; a policewoman and someone with power and muscularity, who is also conveyed as a cheat. This framing of the media message highlights the challenges that sportswomen face in being taken seriously as athletes within discourses of sport without the media falling back onto discourses of femininity, that either positively or negatively frame them in relation to their physical appearance and traditional gender roles and expectations.

Another example of the conflicting messages that media conveyed about sportswomen was identified in a semiotic analysis of a photograph of New Zealand squash bronze medal winner, Shelley Kitchen (Figure 24). As discussed in the production chapter, the framing of Kitchen's photograph and the attached text highlighted a sense of ambiguity as media workers appeared to struggle to represent her as both a woman and an athlete. Despite her medal, the text drew on discourses of femininity to prefer a message about her as a woman. The photograph features two squash players in serious sports action who are captured through the glass wall looking almost directly at the camera, which is positioned at a lower angle than the players' eye level, as there is a sense of looking up at the action. The photograph features Kitchen closest to the camera, in front of her opposition, Nicol David of Malaysia. Both players are avidly focused on the ball, which is out of view in the photo, but the stretched body angle of Kitchen and her racquet positioning and fluid follow through suggests that she has just made contact with the ball and it is still in motion.

Figure 24. New Zealand bronze medal winning squash player, Shelley Kitchen (*Waikato Times*, March 21, 2006, p.22). Caption – *'Bronzed: Shelley Kitchen of New Zealand, right, beat Nicol David of Malaysia for the women's squash single bronze'*.

This is also reflected in David's body stance as she watches the ball and prepares herself for the return. The unusual perspective of this photograph is captured in the face-to-face on-court close-up action that was unavailable in squash before the introduction of a fully enclosed glass court that allows newspaper audiences to experience what grandstand spectators would be privy to at the event. A number of signs reflect that these are sportswomen, including the clothing they both wear - skirts and tight tops with no sleeves that again reveal arms, shoulders, thighs and

legs exposed in close-up. For Kitchen in particular, due to the nearness of the photographer, her slender body and seemingly long blonde hair [9] are clearly visible signs of femininity in the image, which also highlights the lean muscle definition in her legs and arms. Another sign that the photograph reveals is the importance of this event, which is highlighted both in the fact that this photograph and article are in the newspaper (squash is typically ignored in everyday coverage) and that the grandstand behind the players is filled with spectators in an obviously state-of-the-art sports facility. Yet, accompanying this serious action photograph of two squash players, the headline reads '*Massage and retail therapy beckoning'*, immediately disrupting the discourses of sport that have been engaged by the photograph. Through drawing attention to a casual remark Kitchen made about her non-sporting intentions after winning her medal, the media introduce ambiguity by emphasizing her feminine interests rather than her sporting achievements. The suggested inference is that Kitchen, as a woman, is preoccupied with shopping and massage, to contrast and contradict the photograph that reflects her as a serious athlete. Thus, the media coverage not only failed to fully acknowledge her medal win, but also trivialized her achievement and worth as an athlete. Furthermore, the text continues to contradict the sporting discourses reflected in the photograph, by stating that, "squash is notoriously hard on the body and the concern was Kitchen's long, lean frame would be knocked around by her torrid schedule this week". This language usage suggests that Kitchen, as a woman, is *fragile*, and creates an impression that, despite her medal win, she is potentially not capable of enduring the stressful commitment competitive sport requires. Thus, the combination of the photograph and text highlights the conflicting and contradictory messages that media workers construct in relation to sportswomen, whereby in an attempt to reconcile competing discourses of sport and gender, winning sportswomen are momentarily characterised by the media as women first and foremost, rather than serious athletes.

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[9] Shelley Kitchen has dark hair, but the lighting in this image or on the court makes her hair look blonde.

The role of photographs of the haka at major events

In the initial analysis, although photographs of the haka were identified and recorded separately within the data as photographs of sportsmen, the immediate value of these images to this research was overlooked. Despite every photograph published of the haka during the major event featuring the male athletes performing the haka, the traditional practice of this male-only ritual is in itself a gendered issue, and is thus a crucial part of this study of sports, cultural, gender and national identity.

Table 33. Haka articles and photographs during major event coverage by size, sport, type of image, performers and occasion of performance.

Gender of participants	Sport / Event	athlete, team or individual performing	Type of image	Article size cm2	Image size cm2	Page	Occasion	Games or non-Games
Men	Opening ceremony	NZ team Haka	photo	636	384	Front page	Opening ceremony	Games
Men	Rugby 7s	7s team haka	photo	741	266	news	Gold medal, rugby 7s	Games
Men	Swimming	Swim team haka	photo	290	290	news	Gold medal, Moss Burmester	Games
Men	Swimming	swim team haka	photo	715	240	general	Gold medal, Moss Burmester	Games
Men	Criticism of Haka	cartoon of opening	cartoon	281	36	news	Criticism of Haka	Games
Men	All Black rugby team	All Black team haka	photo	1014	446	news	Recession impact on rugby	non-Games
Man	Rugby 7s	Liam Meesam	photo	152	152	Games Special	Gold medal, rugby 7s	Games
Men	Rugby 7s	7s team	photo	1502	886	Games Special	Gold medal, rugby 7s	Games
Men	Swimming	NZ swim team	photo	396	30	Inside	Silver medal, Dean Kent's	Games
Men	Rugby 7s	NZ 7s rugby team	photo	532	176	Inside	Gold medal, rugby 7s	Games
Man	Criticism of Haka	Dave Currie	cartoon	924	588	Inside	Criticism of Haka	Games
Man	Criticism of Haka	Dave Currie	cartoon	50	18	Main sports header	Criticism of Haka	Games
2 Men and 1 woman	Criticism of Haka	non-Haka photograph, tallest and shortest NZ athletes	photo	663	438	Main sports	Criticism of Haka	Games

Although research has revealed the inaccuracy of the popular belief that the New Zealand 'All Blacks' haka is a 'war-dance' (Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005), the traditional practice of performing the haka in sport stems back to its use at

international rugby matches in the early 1900s, and it has subsequently been use during a range of international sporting events where New Zealand national identity and pride are at stake. In a sporting context, the haka is said to be used to inspire athletes and audiences, to challenge the opposition and to honour triumph (Edwards, 2007; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Smith, 2004). During the Commonwealth Games, there were 13 articles about the haka (see Table 33); nine were photographs of the haka being performed, three cartoons about the haka, and one photograph of the tallest and shortest NZ athletes at the Games. There was only one non-Games haka reference, which related to an article about the recession affecting sport, particularly rugby, and a photograph featuring the All Black rugby team performing it. All of the images depicted men performing the haka, although in one photograph sportswomen were seen in the background, watching the performance. Seven of the photographs related to New Zealand medal wins for rugby 7s and swimming, six for gold medals and one silver medal. One photograph was on the front page, featuring the men from the New Zealand national team performing the haka at the Games opening ceremony. The photographs ranged in size from a small page header photograph of 18cm^2 through to a large Games Special page photograph of 886cm^2. Interestingly, however, three of the images were cartoons that focused on the overuse of the haka at the Games, which was the subject of four critical articles. Media criticism was levelled at New Zealand chef de mission Dave Currie, whose caricature featured in two of cartoons. The third cartoon depicted a winning athlete and an official handing out medals. The use of these haka photographs and the articles about the haka are important in this study because they reflect the power of the media in constructing preferred messages about what is presented and the meanings and values associated with these representations. Moreover, the content findings reveal that the haka was only featured in 13 articles and images across the four publications used in this research, highlights that it was in fact only minimally featured in the newspapers during the Games. Further, no females were shown to be participating in it and it was predominantly performed as a result of male athletes securing gold or silver medal wins. These are interesting findings and help clarify issues raised in Chapter 4 and 6 about the appropriate use of the haka at sporting events.

Summary

The content and semiotic analysis revealed that sportswomen continued to be relegated to the inside sports pages, and played a secondary role in relation to sportsmen. Despite the suggestion that content analysis offers limited insight and is an 'unfashionable' research tool, this method of analysis has provided useful insight into '*how*' sportswomen were featured in newspaper photographs and '*what*' types of representations were given greatest focus, as well as the sportswomen and sports that were privileged. In addition, the use of semiotics has provided greater insight into the range of signs and objects featured in photographs and how text is used to either support or frame a preferred meaning, which is then more likely to be automatically and culturally 'read', internalized and given meaning in a taken-for-granted manner by audiences and media workers alike.

The use of two distinct periods of analysis provided an opportunity to ascertain the differences between everyday and major event coverage of sportswomen. The limited coverage of sportswomen during the everyday period (6.8%) suggests that men's sport is ascribed greater cultural value and reinforces the sports–masculinity articulation, a suggestion supported by the non-Games coverage, in which sportswomen featured in only 6.3% of all sports photographs.

Although greater emphasis was given to sportswomen during the Commonwealth Games, the results highlighted three key ways in which sportswomen became newsworthy, which were when they: 1) participated in feminine or gender-neutral sports; 2) were featured in close-up, in sportswear that emphasized their feminine physical appearance; and 3) were potential or actual medal-winning athletes, who thus communicated a positive message about national success and national identity. Although sportswomen were represented in a greater number of photographs during major events, the selected images revealed a struggle to find appropriate ways in which to represent sportswomen as both athletes *and* as women. Thus, photographs of sportswomen often featured them in both ambivalent and ambiguous ways, due to the incompatibility of dominant discourses of sports and ideals of femininity.

The findings of this study also highlighted that despite the power of dominant discourses of sport that privilege sportsmen and men's sport, there were

times when space was created for media coverage of sportswomen. However, the increase in focus on sportswomen was neither generalized nor systematic, and sportswomen were not necessarily featured in the same ways, nor did they receive corresponding levels of coverage. The findings also identified four emergent themes in this study of sports photographs, which will be further addressed below.

Theme 1

There was no disputing the fact that media coverage in both periods of study privileged photographs of sportsmen, such that during both the everyday and non-Games coverage, sportsmen featured in over 80% of all photographs. Not only were there more photographs of sportsmen, but they also featured in a greater variety of sports and these images were more prominently positioned on the front page and in the main sports pages. This suggests that the media considered sportsmen and men's sport to not only be more important than sportswomen and women's sports, but also more newsworthy. Moreover, the predominance of photographs of men was compounded by the insignificant number of photographs of sportswomen outside of the Commonwealth Games coverage. These findings align with other sports media research and support the view of Birrell and Theberge (1994), who suggest media marginalization of sportswomen "conveys or confirms the impression that women are not an important part of the sport world and their accomplishments do not deserve our attention" (p. 347). The results of this study have highlighted the powerful effect that dominant discourses of sport (and gender) have on what is produced by the media.

Theme 2

The analysis also highlighted a number of similarities in the way that sportsmen and sportswomen were represented during the periods analysed. This study provided a more in depth analysis to reveal how, once athletes (male and female) receive coverage, media practices and processes normalize and provide consistency in sports coverage. Although what is produced in terms of sports photographs reflects the complex way that different discourses are preferred in different circumstances, the emergence of clear parallels in the nature of the coverage of sportsmen and sportswomen was unexpected. The patterns that emerged related to the similar proportions of front page, main and inside page

photographs of athletes, and the similar proportions of types of photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen. Despite the significant difference in the actual number of photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen, the proportion of everyday photographs that featured on the inside sport pages for sportsmen and sportswomen was identical. Another corresponding feature was the proportion of sports action and sports related photographs. The remarkable aspect of this finding was that the results were similar across both periods of study and four different newspapers, encompassing 1,535 sport photographs published during the major event coverage and 1,252 during the everyday coverage. Despite an extensive review of international sports media research, no other study appears to have identified this type of proportional result. Moreover, these patterns suggest that discourses of journalism function as a stabilizing factor and ensure that some modicum of consistency is achieved in sports coverage, as limited as it may be.

Theme 3

The findings identified that major events disrupt gendered discourses of sport, such that media coverage during this period reinforced the sports–nationalism articulation. Moreover, the major event analysis emphasized how certain athletes were privileged and became important in media coverage because their presence and success highlighted national identity and triumph. For instance, both the content and semiotic analysis demonstrated how, during the major event coverage, the media frequently drew on visible signs of national identity in the photographs, which helped encourage a sense of patriotism and further reinforced the sports–nationalism articulation, creating space for sportswomen to become more visible as *'our'* athletes. This finding mirrors the observation made by Wensing (2003), who revealed that New Zealand sports media utilize "unique qualities and characteristics" (p. 56) within sports photographs that reflect '*Kiwiness'* by focusing on national identity markers such as flags and other nationally and culturally specific signs (see also Bruce & Scott-Chapman, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Markula et al., 2010; Smith, 2004; Tudor, 1998; von der Lippe, 2002). One of the most notable signs of national identity was the New Zealand national or silver fern flag.

The semiotic analysis also provided insight into how photographs of sportswomen, much like media texts, constructed preferred meanings that

supported shared social and cultural understandings about sport. Although sportswomen were given increased media attention during the major event, increased coverage mostly reinforced either the sports–masculinity articulation or the sports–nationalism articulation. Moreover, despite appearing to be at odds with dominant discourses of femininity, combative representations of New Zealand women competing against international opponents reinforced an articulation of gender and nationalism, and captured a sense of 'our' powerful New Zealand athletes in battle against 'them'. For example, four combative photographs remained focused on sports deemed appropriate for women, whereas when photographs of 'masculine' sports were featured, their inclusion was predominantly based on victory. The message revealed through semiotic analysis was that sportswomen cannot escape dominant discourses of gender, and more specifically, that discourses of femininity have a powerful hold over what it means to be a woman regardless of athleticism, sporting success or failure. In taking these nationalistic dimensions into account, sports photographs focused attention on the national identity of *our* athletes, *our* team uniforms, *our* medals, *our* successes, *our* flags and *our* haka, rather than those of non-New Zealand athletes or *their* successes, which may have resulted in diminishing *our* achievements.

The sports photograph is a powerful tool that the media use to construct a visual preferred message, which audiences read and create meaning from. Duncan (1990) maintains that "if a photograph shows an athlete triumphantly winning a race, viewers can identify with the person's success" (p. 24). Thus, sport photographs provide visible evidence of sporting successes and national triumph. During the major event period, it was not only actual medal winners who received increased media focus; many sportswomen expected to win medals also featured. This kind of media coverage of major events generates a self-fulfilling prophecy, where audiences expect to hear about national medal winners and the media emphasizes those athletes with the potential to 'give the audience what they want'. However, as found in this study, photographs, captions and headlines relating to potentially successful and medal-winning sportswomen also highlighted cultural constructions of idealized femininity alongside an emphasis on national identity and success.

Theme 4

This study has highlighted that media coverage drew on discourses of femininity such that sports photographs of sportswomen either created ambivalence or ignored issues of gender. The content of photographs reflected the struggle that media workers appeared to have in finding ways to appropriately represent sportswomen as athletes *and* as women. For instance, the largest photographs of sportswomen in the everyday period predominantly focused on New Zealand athletes and featured sports traditionally associated with women and strongly articulated to femininity.

Despite there being a larger number of photographs during the major event period than the everyday period, similar trends were identified. One key difference, however, was that there were a greater number of photographs of sportswomen prominently positioned on the front and main sports pages. A number of sports researchers have suggested that the prominent placement of photographs, especially on the front page, helps to capture the audience's attention and to promote the sale of newspapers, magazines, or other media products (Andrews, 2005; Bruce, 2005; Fuery & Fuery, 2003; McKee, 2001; Vincent et al., 2003). Semiotic analysis revealed how photographed sportswomen typically appeared in sportswear that conformed to traditional cultural codes of appropriate feminine clothing; including short dresses and skirts, which have historically been fashioned to accentuate a woman's grace, elegance and feminine appeal (Brookes, 2002; Bruce & Saunders, 2005; Daddario, 1998; Hart, 1972; Lee, 1992; Lenskyj, 1998; Tuggle & Owen, 1999). The predominant use of photographs of sportswomen that featured them in either feminine or gender-neutral sports suggests that the media workers selected representations that best reinforced the sportswomen–femininity articulation. In this way, the media conveyed a preferred message that women's sport and sportswomen are more newsworthy when photographs connect them to dominant cultural beliefs of idealized femininity. However, in doing so, the media often focused negatively or positively on a sportswoman's physical appearance rather than on her athleticism, creating ambiguity about the meaning being conveyed and a sense of ambivalence about the athlete and her achievement. This media struggle and the difficulties sportswomen face in being recognized in relation to their sporting achievements is highlighted by Kane and Greendorfer (1994), who argue that media:

ambivalence serves an … important function – that of allowing those in power to acknowledge (and therefore to accommodate) the social changes that have taken place within the last two decades while simultaneously offering resistance through the maintenance of the status quo.… Females, not males, are subjected to conflicting and contradictory messages about their physical abilities and accomplishments as serious sportswomen. (p. 39)

Therefore, as found in this study, despite increased coverage during major events that disrupted dominant discourses of sport, this bending of the rules was only half the story, as the space created for sportswomen was only temporary. Notwithstanding the competing discourses that intersect, disrupt and interrupt media coverage of sport in different circumstances and at different times, the preferred media message appeared to be that sport and femininity are essentially incompatible and irreconcilable.

CHAPTER 6: AUDIENCE RECEPTION OF NEWSPAPER SPORT PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE SPORTS MEDIA

The third section of my tripartite study examined how a New Zealand based audience group interpreted and made sense of sports photographs, and expressed their perceptions of the role media play in representing sports, athletes and athleticism. This audience group was made up of seven elite New Zealand sportswomen. The inclusion of elite athletes as audience members has only, as far as I am aware, been undertaken in one other New Zealand based sports media study (Thorpe, 2007). The few sports audience studies that have been conducted have focused on sports fans (Bruce, 1998; Thorpe, 2007), or on randomly selected members of the general public (Billings & Angelini, 2007; Duncan & Brummett, 1989, 1991, 1993; Lines, 2002). The inclusion of these elite athletes, as audience members who are themselves (or are not) represented in the media, will therefore add to a very small body of local sports media audience reception research. Moreover, another unique aspect of this participant group is that the majority of these sportswomen participated in the 2006 Commonwealth Games and were featured in New Zealand newspaper coverage of the event, while the balance represented New Zealand at the previous Olympic Games, and are all internationally recognized medal winners. The inclusion of such high profile sportswomen offered a rare opportunity to establish how they, as athletes who are more frequently marginalized in media coverage, interpret and make sense of sports photographs. Moreover, these elite sportswomen have first-hand experience of mediated sports, and must frequently negotiate the reading of photographs of themselves, providing invaluable insight into their own "sense of social reality" (Ruddock, 2007, p. 27) of being portrayed in New Zealand and international media.

As outlined Chapter 2, when creating understanding from photographs, audiences draw on their own personal, social and cultural experiences in relation to the contextual framing of the photograph as encountered in a particular medium. As in the case of other media, audiences shape their perceptions of photographs by negotiating a range of potential discursive readings, in an approach that is both complex and multifaceted (Ang, 1991; Hartley, 1982;

Michelle, 2007; Schroder et al., 2003). While these participants may share some common understandings and experiences of being photographed by the sports media, it was their personal perceptions that were considered extremely valuable for the purposes of this research, both as athletes *and* as women. Building on the findings of the production and content analysis chapters, which identified recurring themes of female subordination, marginalization and disregard, elite sportswomen's perspectives were sought to establish: what impact the lack of media coverage had on these elite athletes; their interpretations of the gendering of sports photographs; the role the media play in their own sporting codes and in shaping their understanding of their own achievements, and their perceptions of their own public image.

Very little research has focused directly on how audiences make sense of sport photographs in printed media (Davis, 1997; Duncan, 1990; Lines, 2002; Whannel, 1998). Newspaper sports photographs introduce audiences to a limited range of images of sports events, which media decision-makers have selected as being newsworthy. Yet, for the most part, existing research suggests that "producers usually view the audience in an ideal or imagined form rather than using actual audience feedback" (Davis, 1992, p. 15). Moreover, audiences in general have little or no say over what moments are represented, which sports are given preference, or which athletes are featured. However, audiences do have control over how they choose to engage with and assign meanings to those representations (Davis, 1992). The dearth of New Zealand based sports audience research means both sports media and researchers rely, for the most part, on various implicit assumptions about audiences and the meanings they give to sports photographs.

Audience receptions of sports media photographs

Newspaper sports photographs connect audiences to representations of live sporting events, highlighting those aspects the media deem newsworthy, such as important moments, controversies or celebrations. With the escalating use of visual communication in global media broadcasting (Barry, 2005; Dake, 2005; Smith, 2005; Smith, Moriarty, Barbatsis & Kenney, 2005) and with increased focus on sports - media relationships (Andrews, 2005; Coakley, 1998; Lowes, 1999; MacNeill, 1998), understanding how audiences interpret and make sense of

sports photographs is important and worthwhile for researchers, the media and sports organizations alike. However, although audience studies help highlight the social and cultural impact and importance of sport in society, they can "never claim to find the truth about audience practices and meanings, only partial insight about how audiences use the media in a specific context" (Schroder et al., 2003, p. 17). From a theoretical perspective it is suggested that audiences read newspaper photographs as authentic and untouched representations (Barthes, 1981; Dyer, 1997, 2002; Hall, 1997a). Further, discourses of (sports) journalism are so entrenched within society that audiences become familiar with how sports news is conveyed. The privileging of certain sports and athletes is taken-for-granted and the repetitive nature of newspaper content and the standardized layout become second nature for audiences (Lowes, 1999; Turner, 1997b). Although photographs may invoke a range of meanings, Bignell (2002) suggests that newspaper photographs are powerful tools that "function as the 'proof' that the text's message is true" (p. 96). However, much of this theoretical conjecture is untested in respect of sports news audiences, and it is therefore important to establish how actual audiences decode and create meanings in relation to newspaper sports photographs.

Although there is a dearth of female sports audience research, due in part to women traditionally being considered outside of the typical targeted sports audience, my study does not draw on a general female sports audience *per se*. The 'actual audience' in this study rather comprises a small niche audience of elite New Zealand sportswomen, whose input has either been omitted or discounted in the majority of existing sports media research. However, I believe that the experiences and perceptions of this little studied specialist audience group allow insight into what it means to be a sportswoman, how sports media coverage impacts on sportswomen – as athletes, and as women, and what role women's sport plays in New Zealand society in general.

This audience reception chapter is thus organized around the main themes that emerged in relation to the interviews conducted with seven elite sportswomen, which highlighted how differential power relations between media and athletes and media and audiences come into play. Moreover, the participants' responses revealed their own struggle to negotiate a reading of sports photographs that appropriately identified or acknowledged them as athletes *and* as women.

This struggle was also revealed in the production chapter, as sports journalists negotiate a range of competing and often conflicting discourses in the course of sports news production, which frequently results in sportswomen being represented in ambiguous and ambivalent ways. Thus, the elite athletes' responses highlighted the challenges they face in interpreting sports photographs, which audiences in general would encounter. However, these participants are unique due to their elite athlete status and prior experiences and knowledge of media practices. In the analysis that follows, athlete comments are either paraphrased or when direct quotes are used they remain anonymous to protect the athletes, all of whom at the time of the interviews were reliant on an ongoing positive media relationship for publicity and sponsorship. In addition, references to particular sports, events or people have been omitted to maintain this anonymity. While the focus is directed at how these sportswomen interpret sports photographs, discussions ranged widely around media coverage in general as well as on the specifics of a number of photographs that they described or brought to my attention.

The findings that emerged out of the audience interviews were individually appraised and are discussed selectively below in relation to four keys themes:

◉ Discourses of sports journalism and the power of photographs
◉ The media reinforcing the sports–masculinity articulation
◉ Photographs of sportswomen that reinforce discourses of femininity
◉ Discourses of nationalism that create space for the inclusion of sportswomen

In my analysis, a key consideration is the workings of power, particularly in relation to how the athletes described the media's power to select one photograph over another, the subsequent positioning of it in the newspaper, and their perspectives on the photographs' encoded meanings. In addition, audience power was identified in relation to their control over the decoding of sports photographs and the process of meaning creation. Moreover, the following analysis reveals the powerful effect that discursive practices have in terms of influencing audiences' perceptions and their contextual understandings of gender and gender difference in relation to sports photographs.

Discourses of sports journalism and photojournalism

Discourses of journalism play a powerful and influential role in embedding meanings into sports photographs that become implicitly understood and assumed by audiences. These meanings are constructed through media routines that help generate consistency in patterns of representation, such that the repetition of particular types of sport photographs reinforces how audiences come to perceive what constitutes a 'good' sports photograph. This discursive knowledge is developed through the uniformity in photojournalism production and the way that newsroom decision-makers select photographs that 'tell a story' that audiences not only understand but also appreciate. Due to this study investigating newspaper sports photographs as its central focus, it was important to initially ascertain the newspaper reading habits of the participants. While only one participant described herself as an "avid daily reader", most of the athletes regarded themselves as regular newspaper readers. One participant stated that she read the newspaper "probably like once or twice a week", whilst another remarked, "most weekends I'll read the local Saturday paper, and a Sunday paper. Not much during the week". Despite their personal reading activities, most of the athletes revealed how sports photographs were the key attraction to the newspaper, while the text took a secondary position. One sportswoman described how she was drawn to the sports photographs first "because I can relate to it, and it shows the honesty of sport. Not all the bollocks that the media try to put with it". She later clarified that the media 'bullocks' was the way the media manipulate stories to suit a preferred media message and use posed photographs to sensationalize it, rather than offering a sports action photograph that 'shows the honesty of sport'. This reading of photographs by this athlete aligns with Hall's (1973) suggestion that "news photos witness to the *actuality* of the event they represent...(and) carry within them a meta-message: 'this event really happened and this photo is the proof of it'" (p. 188).

The power of media photographs lies in their ability to be read in a variety of ways without a dependency on text. However, within the encoding process, media workers utilize text to help communicate a preferred meaning. For instance, the inherent values that photographs draw on, such as their aesthetic qualities or technical construction, help reinforce the preferred message being effectively

conveyed, but also potentially limit how it is decoded. Michelle (2007) describes the way that some audience members have a heightened attunement to features of textual construction, such that meanings are produced within a 'mediated mode', and the text is evaluated as a production. In this mediated mode, audiences assess the visual content on display along with the text, to establish a cohesive reading of the two aspects together, whereby the resultant "mediated-aesthetic receptions often take the form of a positive or negative evaluation of the quality of such features" (p. 203). For example, several of the participants suggested that a good sports photograph is "anything that's a little different" and "something you haven't seen before". The athletes conveyed an appreciation for both the aesthetics and technical values of photographs that feature unusual and unique angles and diverse types of images. Other athletes stated that the photograph was a powerful media message on its own, and text was often immaterial and frequently at odds with their interpretation of images. For instance, one athlete stated "I would be quite comfortable to just look at the pictures, if they were good enough", while another added "I don't really look at the caption that much, I'm not, I really just brush over it". Thus, for many of the participants, the use of text was perceived as unnecessary, adding neither value nor meaning to the process of decoding the sports photograph as the image could be positively evaluated on its own.

The types of sports photographs used and values athletes attribute to them

Many participants' comments about sports photographs appeared to focus on the Commonwealth Games or the types of coverage that are featured during major events. They made positive comments about these major event sports photographs being 'good' in comparison to the usual "boring rugby or cricket photographs" featured in everyday coverage. Several of the athletes conveyed positive perceptions about sports action photographs, which feature the essence of the sporting moment and where the vigorous intensity, emotions and determination of an athlete are visible. One participant remarked that good sports photographs show "action or kind of hands up as the buzzer sounds at the end of the game, where it hasn't been posed, or it's a really natural shot". A number of athletes' comments highlighted their preference for the action photographs that the media more frequently used, as opposed to posed photographs, which they described as

"dull" and "uninteresting". One athlete reflected on a spontaneous photograph of her that she considered as a private moment in a public setting, immediately after winning a gold medal. She stated:

> There were photographers all around us that we were totally oblivious of. You couldn't see either of our faces, but it just captured the moment for both of us, of what we'd done. No posing, no bollocks, no looking at the camera.

This athlete emphasized the value she placed on the photograph as it captured the spontaneity of her sporting achievement being realized. Additionally, her reading of it also highlights a photograph's power to effectively encapsulate something that the portrayed athlete holds to be true, as a *real* and emotive feeling being depicted. Moreover, because the photograph featured the athlete herself, not only does it reinforce the perceived *actuality* of what was reflected (Hall, 1973), but it also highlights the denotative level of meaning that Michelle (2007) refers to as being the centre of focus within a '*transparent mode*' of audience reception. However, it is also obvious that the athlete's reading is not just in relation to the '*text as life*' scenario that Michelle (2007) proposes, but takes it to another level altogether because of the athlete's "firsthand" (p. 196) experience, which leads her to perceive the image as 'a window on the world', and as reflecting an unmediated reality, where, in essence, there is no "lack of separation" (p. 197) between the image and reality. Another athlete highlighted her appreciation for the 'authenticity' and 'realism' of a photograph that 'captured the moment', as she states:

> If it shows the actual exertion and performance, rather than just a glamour shot. Like if it shows someone giving it absolute death, pushing themselves to the limit, on the edge. Because I can relate to it, and it shows the honesty of sport.

Again, the athlete's remark connects to Michelle's (2007) transparent mode of reception, as the participant appears to suggest that photographs demonstrate irrefutable proof of real events, and constitutes an untouched and authentic representation of the captured sporting moment. Thus, despite the athlete suggesting that these types of photographs appear to mirror reality, they are in fact mediated, discursively constructed to prefer media messages, as they represent a selected moment of sports news. These findings concur with Lester's (1996)

examination of the inherent power of photographs to communicate specific messages that appear to be unmediated, rather than audiences having to rely on media texts. Consequently, photographs offer the media the means of presenting news through a medium audiences assume, for the most part without question, to be a truthful representation. For instance, Thwaites et al. (2002) argue that:

> Newspaper photographs are able to suggest the presence of an event, and its sheer actuality as an experienced reality. Because of their innate capacity to capture light reflected from real objects, photographs offer themselves as more real, more authentic than other forms of representation, and are thus an important part of media discourse. (p. 151)

Therefore, media photographs are a powerful media tool because they appear to re-present 'the real,' which aligns with many of the athletes' own taken-for-granted assumptions that photographs are 'unmediated', and further supports the theory that most audiences accept photographs as authentic and factually true representations (Frosh, 2003; Lester, 1996; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Thwaites et al., 2002; Wells, 2003).

Reading personal and public sports photographs

The strong sensations and meanings that sports photographs produce as audiences interpret them reflect the power of photographs as a media tool. The athletes struggled to negotiate a reading of their own photographs, yet felt comfortable in critiquing other athletes' photographs. Many of their initial comments when discussing photographs of themselves focused on action photographs offering a way of examining their sports performance. Five of the seven athletes specifically made similar comments in regards to their initial response to their own photographs, with one athlete stating, "I'm usually a lot more critical. Yeah, I look at my technique". In addition to commenting on their sporting technique, a number of the athletes questioned the media's choice of photograph and the motivation for particular selections, with one athlete commenting:

> If I look at a photograph of myself I tend to reflect on if it was a true indication of that particular sporting performance, or if it was just a certain shot that the photographer / newspaper thought would be good to put in the paper.

Therefore, this seasoned athlete appears to understand how the media construct a preferred meaning through their choice of photograph, which tends to influence a particular audience reading. When asked to describe a specific photograph of themselves that they valued, many of their choices focused on small photographs capturing playful and personal non-sport moments that reflected their personalities and light-heartedness, rather than larger images of serious sporting action. The types of comments made are highlighted in two athletes' comments about their favourite photographs. One participant stated that she really liked a photograph taken at the end of an event that portrayed her "really relaxed, like we were giving a wave to our family, a friend or something and it was only a tiny photograph on a little bit of write-up, it was just quite cute". The other athlete stated, "I was walking back to the athletes' area and I poked my tongue out to my coach. It actually shows *me*, it was just a 'ha, ha, I did it' you know!". These two responses highlight how certain photographs, although showing an athlete at a serious event, can capture the more light-hearted side of an athlete's personality and feelings. Moreover, when describing sports action photographs, the majority of the participants' remarks highlighted their reading of the depicted athletes' facial expressions. One athlete noted how she focused on "the expression on people's face[s], usually. Just to see how they're reacting at that moment. Then you see what position they're in or what they're doing at the time", while another similarly suggested that "it's something about the emotion or you can feel it you know, from the pictures. You can feel, or you can try to feel what they're feeling, what they are experiencing at that particular point". These comments suggest that sports photographs provide an opportunity for audiences to internalise what is visually represented, as they interpret what is depicted.

The relationship between media workers and sportswomen

Preservation of a positive media-athlete relationship was described by all seven athletes as important, not only in relation to the way in which they were featured but also to their sport. The athletes' remarks highlighted their awareness of the powerful position that sports journalists occupy and the importance of maintaining an amicable relationship with the media for the sake of their sporting codes, despite having had bad experiences with individual reporters. The media were described as having enormous influence in terms of shaping perceptions about

sports and about athletes in general. The athletes highlighted how sports photographs impact on audience perceptions and their awareness of the value their sporting code placed on positive media messages. For example, one athlete stated, "we rely heavily on the media. The sport isn't a high profile sport but we do want the media to be our friend because the image holds its own if the image is positive". This participant's suggestions therefore highlight that, despite the minimal coverage her sport received, the slightest positive media coverage was better than none at all. Another athlete stated how the media have a "huge impact. Massive. They are the ones that report what they want to report – and the public have no other way of getting to know people in the public eye, apart from the media". Such comments reflect a clear understanding of the workings of power between the media, sports organizations and athletes, where sports reporters and photographers hold the upper hand as key players within the media.

Participants raised numerous concerns about the way in which the media portrayed sportswomen and how difficult it was to remain positive about media coverage. Most of the participants described how media workers have misinterpreted their comments or lacked knowledge about their sport or themselves and, as a result of this, sports news about them has been factually incorrect, vague or redundant. Moreover, in several instances the athletes highlighted how they had been embarrassed because of inaccurate representations or being misquoted by journalists. For instance, one athlete described how one news story had used outdated information about her being injured, which actually related to a year earlier, confusing everyone about her current state of health. Another athlete described an incident when a light-hearted comment made in the presence of a reporter, while chatting about the trip over to the previous Olympics, turned into the *'Quote of the Week'*. Her remark had been totally taken out of context, making her not only unpopular with her coach but also the New Zealand team officials. Another athlete also highlighted that the "media [was] not really listening to what I'm saying"; whilst another highlighted that "I've been misquoted. Well, it was taken out of context and I ended up in a roaring argument with a member of our national body because he believed I should go public to retract the comment that was quoted". This athlete's comments highlighted frustration at the powerful position the media occupy and the negativity that their

inaccurate reporting attracts, particularly the potential harm they generate for their sporting code and personal relationships. Such comments also highlight the usefulness of researchers soliciting 'insider' knowledge about the way in which the media construct sports news, as athlete could reveal their own experiences of reports being modified to suit a preferred media message.

Journalists putting a spin on news stories

Although the athletes were clearly concerned and upset about factual errors being published, they appeared more frustrated and disappointed with journalists who were unprepared or who had limited knowledge about the athlete, her sport, or the event about which they were writing. One participant stated:

> I always think that if I was going to have a job like what they're doing, then I'd do a lot of research before I ever interviewed anyone. Because I wouldn't want to look stupid!

Another athlete commented:

> I think New Zealand media is generally very ill informed and lacking in research and knowledge of other sports, outside mainstream sports of course. Some reporting that has been done on our sport, for example, has been almost comical, in terms of how little the journalist knows about [my sport], participants, and tactics.

These criticisms of New Zealand sports journalists by the athletes highlight their opinion that this lack of preparation by journalists is not only unprofessional but also reflects a disrespect for them as athletes, which they take to be a sign of indifference for women's sport. The athletes' assessments of media workers being ill-informed about women's sports and sportswomen is supported by existing research on American media coverage of women's basketball, which reveals that the female audience "perceived that many commentators had little understanding of the flow and dynamics of the women's game" (Bruce, 1998, p. 384). Thus, in the struggle to negotiate meaning out of ambiguous media coverage of sportswomen, female audiences create their own oppositional readings as they decode the sports news. Moreover, due to the substandard way in which the athletes felt that media workers treated them, several highlighted how they critically evaluate articles written about themselves. For instance, one athlete revealed how she only read the text to ensure its accuracy, as she stated "I usually

check the texts for inconsistencies or anything that puts my sport in a bad light". Another remarked, "I'll probably scrutinize it a little bit more if it's my comment, although I know it's usually taken out of context 50% of the time". Another athlete maintained:

> I'll notice the picture first, and then if it catches my eye I'll go to the text. But I'm pretty cynical now so I tend not to look so much at the accompanying headlines, more to the caption of who the picture is about or what event.

This athlete's comment reflected her mistrust of reporters misconstruing or misleading audiences through text, while also revealing her belief in media photographs as being relatively authentic and unmediated.

When asked what specifically drew them into reading the text, one athlete reflected that for her, "a newspaper's all about catching the eye of the reader. I mean if the headline doesn't catch your attention, they're not going to read the article". Describing the media captions, another participant stated, "don't they always try to sensationalize though the caption and try to make it sound bigger and better than it is"? Another athlete also described the text as only being valuable when the context of the news topic was unclear, as in the case of a seemingly arbitrary photograph of an athlete; here, the text would clarify the preferred message, such as relating the athlete to "a drugs scandal or something". In addition to the statements raised about media workers being poorly prepared and misquoting information, several participants highlighted how journalists were prone to "putting their own spin on the stories", rather than applying the facts provided by the athletes. One participant illustrated how she prepared for media interviews and described how she scrutinized what had been printed about her:

> I'll read to see what they've written and whether they've interpreted what I've said correctly or whether they've tried to put a spin on it. And whether I'm going to put a big black cross by that reporter's name, 'cause you do need to be aware of those things so next time you get a request from them you need to be astute about what you say to them or how you go about saying it, so that they can't do that to you again.

This athlete therefore revealed how journalists frequently develop their own angle on news, taking comments out of context to convey *their* story, rather than what the athlete sees as *the* story. Drawing on women's own experiences of the athlete-

media relationship helps clarify the problematic nature of sports news, not only for athletes but also for audiences, who are seldom aware of such inaccuracies, the context of the reports, or the narrative frames that media workers develop.

Although most of the participants' comments focused on New Zealand media, questions were raised about what specific or significant differences they had experienced in relation to local and international media. Several athletes remarked that international media arrived at interviews well informed and knowledgeable about the athletes and their sporting events. One participant recounted an interview prior to a major international championship, and stated "because it's such a big event the media that comes in to interview us, they usually know more about the sport". For a number of the athletes, this knowledge made it easier for them to communicate with foreign journalists, whose familiarity with their sport and sporting nuances demonstrated professionalism and was taken as a sign of integrity. For instance, one of the more experienced athletes conveyed her opinion that international sports reporting was more objective, as she stated:

> I think international media is more sophisticated, less personal, more on the facts and more positive than New Zealand media. I don't think international media scrutinise or put down their local sportspeople like the media here in New Zealand do. They focus on the event, and describe the performance without determining whether it's a success or a failure, as New Zealand media do.

Not only did she describe international sports journalists as being better prepared and more informed, pointing to a higher level of professionalism, she also highlighted her frustration at the critical and often disparaging way that local media construct sports news.

Yet not all the participants were discouraged by local media coverage. A few athletes highlighted what they believed was the advantage of local media, who they suggested were more interested and knowledgeable about New Zealand athletes, as people and in relation to their sport. One athlete stated:

> The media does vary quite a bit from… home; I guess we're quite lucky at home because our country wants to know what's going on with us.

Another athlete stated:

> The local media know me, and often, international media don't. So media [interviews] pre-and-post a local race would be far more intense than international [ones].

This athlete highlighted her perception that interviews with local media were 'more intense' due to their enthusiasm and interest in her as an local athlete, spending time asking for facts that she believed would interest local, partisan audiences about her sporting endeavours.

The media reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation

Most gender-based sports media research reveals that the print media privilege sportsmen and men's sports at the expense of sportswomen and women's sport (Len-Rios et al., 2005; McGregor & Fountaine, 1997; Pedersen, 2002; Pemberton & Shields, 2004; Vincent et al., 2003; Vincent et al., 2002; Wensing, 2003). Numerous reasons have been identified for this singular focus, which media workers justify by claiming they are merely giving audiences what they want or expect (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Hardin, 2005; Lowes, 1997, 1999; Messner et al., 2006). However, as already revealed in Chapter 4, due to a hierarchy of discourses that prevail in the newsroom, certain media representations dominate while others are subordinated. For instance, discourses of sport have traditionally been coded as masculine and linked to power and aggression, strength, muscularity and combat (Daddario, 1998; Mason & Rail, 2006). In this way, when drawing on discourses of sport the media reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation by implying that men are '*real*' athletes, while women, by default, are subordinated as second-rate athletes. Moreover, emphasizing gender-based differentiations in media coverage appears to legitimize men's sporting dominance as a *natural* consequence of this articulation and as a result of gender, drawing attention to inherent reasons rather than any external influence being associated with the construction of difference. This focus on biological factors in turn helps strengthens and justifies the media marginalizing sportswomen.

For these sportswomen, the powerful role that the sports–masculinity articulation has played in their own lives was reflected in their consistent acknowledgement of the predominant emphasis on men's sports and sportsmen in New Zealand sports news. And, although this masculine bias was seen as problematic in relation to the exposure of their individual sporting codes and

themselves, the participants appeared to accept it. One athlete suggested that this was "just the way it is in New Zealand", despite the impact that it had on sportswomen and women's sport. The participants often described their frustration at the lack of media coverage of sportswomen and the way in which the media focused greater attention on men's sports and sportsmen. One participant remarked that media coverage of sportswomen is "very much still underdone in comparison to male representation, but you know you take what you can get". A number of studies suggest that New Zealand's sporting fanaticism is comparable to religious zeal, such that media preach a sermon of men's sport to devout followers (McGregor & Fountaine, 1997; Richards, 1999; Smith, 2004). Yet the enthusiastic fervor that is characteristically seen in relation to men's sports, particularly men's rugby, prompts the question - 'if men's sport is close to the heart of New Zealand's national identity', then where does women's sport stand?

What the media focus on in men's sports

The extensive focus given to rugby received the most consistent response from the athletes. For example, one athlete commented on the media frenzy about "all things rugby". Their comments suggested the New Zealand media construct a hierarchy of sports that focuses first and foremost on sportsmen as *real* athletes, and then on a few commercialised, professional sports such as rugby union, rugby league and cricket. Male All Blacks rugby players were described as being elevated by the sports media above all other athletes and sports in New Zealand. Yet when asked to described how they experienced mediated rugby, the participants used words such as "aggressive", "violent", "punching people on the rugby field", and "extremely physical". Their comments emphasized the negative physical side of the sport, rather than focusing on anything positive or meaningful.

This type of association of men's sport and aggression was also revealed in Edwards' (2007) study of sport and identity in New Zealand, where he suggested that local sporting norms were "often identified with masculine values and characteristics such as toughness, roughness, strength and speed, and as such are seen to portray men in a more favourable light than women" (p. 180). In highlighting what they believe the media favour in sports coverage, the athletes' comments reveal the sports–masculinity articulation as the norm. Moreover, other New Zealand research has identified that the media frequently privilege reporting

about sportsmen that involves aggression and violence within sports coverage (Bassett, 1984; Bruce, in press; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2005; Pringle, 2001, 2005, 2007; Richards, 1999; Smith, 2004), which Trevelyan and Jackson (1999) suggest is "intimately linked with what is culturally considered to be admirable and appropriate male behaviour" (as cited in Pringle, 2007, p. 362).

For example, the athletes highlighted the way in which media photographs of sportsmen feature them in vigorous and powerful action shots. These elite athletes suggested that newspapers make extensive use of men's action photographs, which they considered to be both appealing and striking. One athlete described men's action photographs as "dynamic" and argued that "they always like to show men doing something dynamic. They're never posed. They're always in the midst of action". Several of the participants discussed the status of different types of sports photographs and suggested that audiences value action photographs over the less appealing and "boring" posed photographs. For example, one athlete suggested that in using sports action photographs, "you're actually seeing the person in their sport, you're not seeing a pose", while another highlighted how such images help emphasize "the action and exhilaration of a sports performance".

The pervasiveness of media coverage of men's sports

The power of the sports media was reflected in several assumptions the athletes made that not only reflected media pervasiveness in their own lives but also how, through the sports media, sport has become a global entertainment product. Several of the participants suggested the coverage of men's sports creates the perception that everyone knows about high profile male athletes, because of the extensive media coverage given to men's sports. For instance, one athlete stated that "for newspapers specifically … because the two major sports (well, so the media tell us that they're major!) cricket and rugby are both male dominated … hence more coverage of men". Yet while elite New Zealand sportsmen are positioned by local media as global sporting icons, one participant described her surprise in finding out this was not in fact the case. She described a conversation with an American sports coach:

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> I remember when I went to America in 2001 and I was training and there was a coach there, and his wife had just had a baby and they'd named him Jonah, and I said "oh like Jonah Lomu?" And he asked " Jonah Lomu, who's Jonah Lomu?" He had no idea. And, it was like when Jonah Lomu was so massive!

Although sports entertainment is increasingly broadcast to global audiences, this athlete's remark highlighted her perception, informed by local media coverage, that rugby is "big everywhere", and everyone should know about one particular New Zealand All Black rugby player, Jonah Lomu.

Media focus on sportsmen despite the type of event

The participants were conscious not only of the fact that local media privilege men's rugby, but also that sportsmen are emphasized to a much greater extent than sportswomen. For instance, a number of the participants involved in sports events in which both men and women compete described how male journalists give male athletes priority at these events. The resultant gender-based and gender-biased coverage was concerning for them, as their winning performances were often ignored. One athlete described the struggle she faced at being continually overlooked, despite winning a number of events during a national competition, and stated:

> We'll have media come in and the majority of the time they'll choose the males to interview…. Every time there was anything in the media after I won last year it was either on the male race and nothing on the female, or it was on the male race and maybe a mention of my name or maybe a quick shot. And, if it was in print, then, yeah, it would just be like a sentence.

She was particularly frustrated that the media not only ignored her but also marginalized her achievements, whilst her male counterparts were given media attention. Moreover, to add insult to injury, another athlete stated that, "if a male in a high profile sport does something not even related to the sport you'll hear about it still", thus highlighting the pervasive nature of men's sport coverage and amplifying the marginalization of women's sports. In another example, one athlete described her frustration at the media sidelining sportswomen, as she stated:

> I'm just amazed at how there's no parallel between sports. Between men and women within the various sports. I mean women's rugby just doesn't get the noticed like men's rugby does.

Although rugby is regarded as New Zealand's national sport, this status only applies to men's rugby; women's rugby is not given the same media attention or consideration. Research suggests that the lack of media focus on women participating in the national men's sport is not uncommon (Birrell & Theberge, 1994b; Brookes, 2002; Bruce, in press; Thompson, 1999, 2002, 2003; Wright & Clarke, 1999). The sports media limit coverage that highlights sportswomen participating in nationally important 'men's sports', because women's participation is perceived to challenge the very nature of sporting masculinity. Birrell and Thegerge (1994) argue that "preserving the sanctity of such spaces is particularly necessary when women are moving into traditional male worlds and privileges" (p. 342). In privileging coverage of men's rugby, the media position men as the real participants and sportswomen as interlopers. In addition, by positioning certain sports as either a male or female activity, the media shape how audiences interpret men's and women's participation in that sport. In Lines' (2002) study of British teenagers' perceptions of media coverage, one youth stated "it doesn't appeal to me at all, especially rugby with women playing. I think because you expect the skills of the men's game and you just don't see it there, there's no charisma or anything, it's not as appealing" (p. 207). This youth therefore suggests that women play a poor imitation of real rugby, i.e. men's rugby. Other research findings have similarly suggested that sportswomen participating in *men's sports* challenge the sports–masculinity articulation, resulting in media coverage of sportswomen's participation being conveyed in ambiguous or ambivalent ways, such that audiences often do not take sportswomen seriously (Daddario, 1998; Hardin & Shain, 2005; Hargreaves, 1993; Jones, 2006; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Lenskyj, 1998; Markula et al., 2010; Pirinen, 1997; Vincent et al., 2003; Walton, 2005). These examples thus highlight how the media reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation by privileging sportsmen, despite men and women competing together or in the same events, and regardless of their skills, successes or achievements.

'It has to be big' for sportswomen to be considered newsworthy

The majority of the participants expressed the opinion that the media reinforce a sporting hierarchy, where sportswomen needed to do more than men to create media interest or for their achievements to be considered newsworthy. For instance, to illustrate her perception of how the media privileging of sportsmen influences what sportswomen have to do to get coverage, one participant irately asserted:

> I think a female's behaviour has to be a little more extreme before it captures the attention of the media. A woman has to do something extremely spectacular or different before she actually gets focused on.

Another athlete also added:

> I feel that if we want to get focused on more, we need to achieve more. If we did something the equivalent of a male, I still don't think we'd get the same media attention *as them*, we need to do something extra.

Both athletes expressed their irritation and disappointment at the disproportionate gender-based media coverage of sportswomen. These participants' perceptions that sportswomen have to "do something extremely spectacular or different before she actually gets focused on" are supported by other researchers who have identified that media coverage expectation for sportswomen are different from sportsmen, and that they have to achieve or do more to be considered newsworthy (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Messner et al., 2006; Morley, 1992).

Criticising how the media fail to promote women's sports unless they meet or exceed the successes of sportsmen, one participant stated, "rugby and cricket and netball, you know, take priority. And, if there isn't enough room, we [sportswomen] might get pushed into the corner or might not feature at all". As this participant suggested, despite netball being "probably …the highest profile women's sport in New Zealand", the media often limits coverage of it when men's rugby requires more space. Additionally, one athlete despondently suggested that although netball featured as the leading women's sport, it is "very much still underdone in comparison to male representation. But, you know, you take what you can get". She was not the only athlete to be critical of the poor coverage of sportswomen in general, as well as at the Commonwealth Games. For instance, another athlete described her own experience of media inadequacy

during the Commonwealth Games, stating "there was stuff printed that was based on assumption, not fact. But still printed as if it were fact. Not malicious at all – or derogatory – just ill-informed".

Media power is reflected in the way that media decision-makers choose what to feature in the sports pages as sports news, and how certain successes are only reflected in the results columns. For instance, athletes highlighted how, in the normal course of media coverage, although many New Zealand sportswomen are continuously breaking personal best records and national records, the predominant media coverage of sportswomen appears during major international sporting events, and even then only focuses on potential or actual medal wins or spectacular performances. For example, one athlete highlighted that despite international sporting events happening throughout the year for most sports, little, if any, coverage occurs for sportswomen other than "if we broke the World Record overseas, then that gets put in the paper. So it's only really when there's a big thing on, otherwise nothing much gets reported". Another athlete described how media create unrealistic expectations about potential medal wins without seeking athlete input and the 'true' facts, as she stated:

> You win one medal and they [the media] automatically assume that you're going to win another. Like, they put all these expectations on me prior to the games. I've been trying to train in a new discipline …they're not interested in that story, [or] that I went there not expecting anything.

This athlete's comment suggests that the media follow their own pre-determined storylines that ignore the real story and discount the actual facts.

The athletes' comments also highlighted that not only are sportswomen treated differently by the media and expected to do more in order to warrant coverage, but what is produced is often subjectively developed to drive publicity and create audience excitement, rather than constituting objective journalism. The athletes' opinions are consistent with existing research that suggests that media workers actively engage in a process of selection as they construct preferred messages for publication (Kinkema & Harris, 1998). Furthermore, the athletes maintained that the media overrate athletes' chances of medal wins, and this negatively impacts on those athletes who fail to secure a medal, regardless of the athlete's own personal expectations, potential for success, or actual performances.

How a change in media coverage during major events is received

The impact and power of the sporting hierarchy is reflected in the way in which the media privilege certain professional sports and essentially ignore the rest. The athletes remarked on how they enjoyed the range of different sports photographs that are featured during major events, which are absent from everyday sports news. One athlete remarked:

> They had a little section I think every day about it [the Games] and I thought it was really good because it was a really good chance for a minority sport to actually get some coverage… It did seem a bit different looking at a paper and having all this different stuff to read, you know. It wasn't just eight pages of rugby and two of cricket or whatever. It was actually quite interesting. And also you know there were some pretty cool pictures as well.

This athlete suggests that major events provide an opportunity for varied and 'interesting' coverage, in comparison to what they considered to be mundane and monotonous everyday sports news focused on men's rugby and cricket. Other comments also highlighted the athletes' appreciation of sports photographs featuring a diverse range of sports and athletes during the Games, as with one participant who stated "you see some really cool shots that … are really interesting". Another remarked about seeing a gymnast "doing her ribbons, she was a rhythmic gymnast, she had a ribbon in her hand, and they put that on the front and I thought that was really, really cool", while another stressed her enjoyment of the difference in coverage "like when weightlifters go to the … Commonwealth Games…. And it's really awesome to see … all these unknown sports or sports that don't get much media coverage".

However, in the course of these discussions about the change in approach by the media during major events, participants also revealed how the majority of focus features sporting successes and medal wins. Although they agreed that winning was vitally important, the athletes criticized how the media ignored other outstanding factors they perceived audiences would be interested in, such as personal best times being beaten and national records being broken. In one example an athlete stated:

> …I can remember this year at [the] World Champs …the teams [performed] awesome … we had New Zealand records going and we had

P.B's [personal bests], but … compared to the rest of the world they'd just moved it up just a little bit faster, a little bit higher.

Another highlighted her irritation at negative comments about performance:

Well I was quite annoyed with Trevor Mallard's comment … he made a comment saying something like we have all these forth placings, it was something along those lines, I can't remember his actual quote. But that really irritated me because we have all these athletes from New Zealand that are you know breaking … personal bests and stuff and that's all you can ask for, you know, that's all they've got control over.

Moreover, most of the athletes consistently highlighted their avoidance of media coverage during major events. In regards to newspaper coverage, one athlete described how "very rarely would I read the papers" and another commented, "when we're overseas I don't worry about it". A third participant advised that "usually [our event] is live on Euro-sport, so we're unable to watch", while another stated "we're still at the [event when] it's played". For some athletes, their managers and coaches filtered media through to them if it was positive, as one athlete stated: "I'd get enough information from our team management to know what I need to know and just leave the rest of my headspace to focus on what I need to focus on". Another added, "the coaches probably will but … we're too focused on what we're doing".

The participants expressed how powerful, intrusive and distracting media coverage can be, particularly the media tendency to raise audience expectations and make assumptions about sporting outcomes, with participants suggesting that hyping coverage of success frequently has a bearing on athletic performance. For example, one participant remarked:

As soon as you start reading all these things you start taking on the expectations that the news reporter has written. Like for me, I really don't want that to affect the way I'm going to [perform].

Another athlete described her frustration at the lack of control athletes have at what is featured; as she stated that "how you're perceived [is] totally in the hands of how the media want to report you". Moreover, another participant suggested that "I think if / when you start to actually believe the stuff that's written about you – even surveys – then you're in deep, deep trouble". Her comment highlighted how important it is for some athletes to distance themselves from

media coverage during competition. Another athlete described the media presence as "overwhelming", as journalists not only demanded details about their sporting activities but also pried into their personal lives. One athlete described how the media presence negatively affected her performance and attitude during an event, stating:

> The media and my appearance in the media cost me … a medal … end of story! … I get so much crap with trying to keep my sport p.c. in the media. I thought to myself that the last thing this sport needs is to have a very angry, swearing, aggressive, nasty woman … that's shown on prime-time television…. And I'm just picturing, before I went out, it was like I can imagine what the news stories would be … blown out of proportion, if they, they're picking up all these swear words and I'm grrr and rrr, grinding my teeth and I'm talking to myself rrrrroar and screaming.

For this athlete, her attempt at toning down her mannerisms and language, to be more media friendly, resulted in her being "too relaxed" to compete effectively, something she regretted as she felt she should have "just kept swearing and said 'fuck the media' you know", in order to spur on her performance. Although the participants were aware of the important role media play in conveying sports news, their comments highlight how athletes, at times, found the presence of photographers and journalists, who were always close at hand during major events, to be disruptive and a challenge while attempting to focus solely on their sporting objectives.

Dominant discourses of femininity that sportswomen have to negotiate

> A common theme running through research on the representation of gender is that the media will focus on different sports according to an ideological distinction between what are seen as male-appropriate and female-appropriate sports…. Female appropriate sports are those in which the desired qualities – style, grace etc. – are those stereotypically attributable to femininity (Brookes, 2002, pp. 128-129).

As Brookes' statement highlights, media coverage relies on cultural perceptions of gender difference as a means of distinguishing and differentiating sportswomen from sportsmen. This is achieved through the media concentrating on sports traditionally considered appropriate for females, particularly sports that accentuate aesthetic features that are considered feminine and lady-like. Historically,

discourses of gender have reinforced perceptions of women's vulnerability and physically weakness, creating an impression that these are natural limitations that restrict women's sporting participation, rather than constructed ones. Moreover, media research suggests that the media draw on these outmoded assumptions of gender difference and regularly stereotype sportswomen by selecting photographs that accentuate feminine physical features, such as focusing on breasts, faces and women's crotch area. These photographs highlight biological gender differences to emphasize and reinforce sportswomen's physical appearance (Brookes, 2002; Hardin et al., 2002; Hardin et al., 2005; Mason & Rail, 2006; Rowe, 1999). For instance, Duncan (1990) suggests that:

> The most glamorous female athletes tend to be the ones most frequently chosen as subjects for photographs. In this way, sexual difference may be highlighted and emphasized; the consequence of coupling comments on athletic prowess with allusions to sexuality may be the trivialization of the sporting accomplishments of these women. (p. 29)

Sport audiences are therefore more frequently confronted with sports photographs of physically attractive sportswomen, and these preferred meanings then become synonymous with newsworthiness for female athletes. This type of media stereotyping also shifts focus away from sportswomen's sporting abilities and achievements towards their desirability and physical attractiveness, and targets the interest of a predominantly male audience (Hardin, 2005; Lowes, 1997, 1999). Furthermore, this type of stereotyped and male-oriented coverage of sportswomen not only benefits male audiences, but also makes viewing experiences for fans of women's sports more difficult in regards to their enjoyment (Bruce, 2007). Thus, the female sports audience negotiates a reading of sports photographs of sportswomen that reinforces the sportswoman–femininity articulation, which focuses on *the woman*, rather than on *the athlete*. These photographs appear to be at odds with the typical representations of sportsmen, which are constructed using dominant discourses of sport and masculinity. Media workers therefore select photographs that reflect preferred messages about sportsmen and sportswomen, which in turn shape how audiences come to perceive an athlete and their athleticism in relation to these gender-based choices.

"You are a woman first and athlete second"

The challenge for sports audiences interested in women's sport and sportswomen is that not only is there a lack of coverage of sportswomen, but also that what is featured is more frequently constructed using the sportswomen–femininity articulation, which appears to be incompatible with discourses of sport. The preferred media messages constructed within these *feminine* sports photographs are potentially limiting for female sports audiences, as they interpret and come to understand women's sports through a narrow definition of women's sports newsworthiness. A number of the participants expressed their dismay at the way that media either marginalize or sexualise sportswomen, where media focus is given to "glamorous sportswomen". However, despite their apparent frustration at the media attention on the physical appearance of sportswomen, these seasoned sportswomen also appeared to accept it as just the *norm* within New Zealand sports media coverage and society.

In addition, in line with research on the content of media coverage of sportswomen, the participants highlighted how the media frequently focused on non-sporting or secondary information about sportswomen (Birrell & Theberge, 1994b; Burnett, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Kinkema & Harris, 1998). By focusing on their home and domestic responsibilities, media play a powerful role in re-contextualizing sportswomen as women first, and only secondly as athletes. One athlete described her own experience of media drawing on conflicting discourses of gender when she was interviewed for a women's magazine. She had assumed that her athletic skills and sporting achievements were going to be discussed; yet the journalist's questions focused solely on issues relating to diet and nutrition. The athlete's initial excitement about the interview turned to disappointment as the journalist not only totally ignored her sporting achievements, but assumed that she would naturally know about diet and nutrition because "I'm a woman". Yet despite her distress at this media worker's assumptions about the sportswomen–femininity articulation, in the course of reflecting on this incident, she indicated her partial acceptance of the media drawing on stereotypical beliefs about sportswomen, "because girls, I suppose, are more into that [diet and nutrition]". She later added, "and the thing is a girl's going to read that article more than a guy is, because girls … we worry more

about that sort of thing". This athlete thus acknowledges her own personal perspective and anxiety about the idealized feminine body image, as she states '*we worry*'. Her comments also highlight how pervasive discourses of femininity are, as sportswomen often face a complex struggle in wanting to be recognized as athletes without compromising their status as women.

These findings mirror those identified by Bruce (1998) in respect of female basketball fans, who "did not object to commentary on aspects not directly related to the game; it was the overemphasis on these factors at the expense of technical analysis or representing the players as athletes that the viewers critiqued" (p. 384). Gender is therefore considered to be an important differentiator in media coverage. Thus, the way that media feature sportswomen has the power to influence audience perceptions about them as women and their sporting abilities, which are depicted as being different to sportsmen. In another incident, a participant described how an Australian newspaper article about one of their national women's sports teams drew on gender stereotyping of sportswomen in a way that demeaned them and challenged their serious sporting profile. She stated:

> The Aussies have said of late that "they're going to quit wine and chocolate until after the World's".... [The media] pick up silly things like that, so what importance does that have in terms of winning the world champs, do you know what I mean?"

This athlete questioned the relevance of this non-sports related comment, suggesting that the media appear to take female sports less seriously, by including this kind of inconsequential information that positions women's sport as being different from men's sport. Moreover, these two athletes' examples highlight how the media appear to feature sportswomen in an ambivalent fashion, which reinforces the sportswoman–femininity articulation, but is inconsistent with discourses of sports.

Discourses of sports journalism and photojournalism play a powerful role in how sportswomen are represented in line with discourses of gender. The participants highlighted how the media workers not only made assumptions that women's sports and sportswomen are incongruent with men's sport and sportsmen, but also use photographs of sportswomen to visually illustrate gender differences. The athletes drew attention to the way that media stereotype

sportswomen by accentuating sportswomen's bodies in sexualised ways, which one athlete described as "derogatory to female athletes". Another participant described how she particularly hated sports photographs that feature sportswomen's underwear, stating how their own team photographer "always seems to have photos of us that are great action shots that aren't showing our crotch". Yet the newspapers always appear to use photographs "when they're crotch shots or … you know, your dress is halfway up your head". Another participant suggested that photographs of sportswomen:

> … always seem to be crotch shots or shots that are kind of derogatory. We don't see the boys or the A.B's [All Blacks], who always seem to have their shorts being pulled down and showing their cracks, on TV or in the newspaper.

As this athlete suggests, photographs of sportswomen are not subjected to the same value systems that prevail for sportsmen. Research similarly reveals that sportswomen (unlike sportsmen) are featured in photographs that emphasize their feminine appearance and female attractiveness, rather than their athleticism or skilled performance (Duncan, 1990, 1992; Duncan & Brummett, 1989, 1991; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Duncan et al., 1994).

The challenges sportswomen face in being represented as athletes and as women

The power of discourses of patriarchal femininity within sports journalism is highlighted in the way that sports photographs frequently focus on attractive sportswomen and sexualise them for the benefit of male audiences. This tendency not only differentiates women's sports from men's sports but also subordinates and objectifies sportswomen based on their physical appearance rather than their skills and achievements. Such objectification may also negatively discourage female audiences from being interested in the sporting achievements of sportswomen, as they are forced to negotiate a range of readings that may conflict with their discursive understandings of sport. Many of the participants described how they disliked photographs featuring them during their sporting activities or at the end of a sporting event. Their aversion to these photographs related to their discomfort at being depicted when they look "sweaty" and "dishevelled". Moreover, their comments appeared to reflect discourses of femininity, as they

described their concerns about how audiences would perceive sports action photographs that represented them as physically unappealing women.

The athletes' apprehension aligns with other research that has identified that women appraise their own appearance from a masculine perspective using what is described as the *male gaze* (Brookes, 2002; Davis, 1997; Lines, 2001; MacNeill, 1994). For instance, Davis (1992) suggested that "women viewers are thought to assume the voyeuristic masculine subject position … as women idealize men's standards for femininity" (p. 28). Many of the participants' remarks revealed this internalised cultural message that women should be pretty and feminine at all times, yet this was constantly challenged by sports photographs which they believed deviated from this ideal. As an example of the type of sports photographs that athletes disliked of themselves, one participant stated "they're the ones that you're sitting there and you still look like a beast". Another athlete highlighted how some photographs featured her looking "blotchy and wrinkled" after sports activities, which she described as "ugly". And another stated, "man, you just don't like looking like a bit of a dog, do you?". When asked what she looked at first in her own sports photographs, one participant stated, "I look to see how bad my zits look! It's the only physical hang-up I have really", while another stated "I don't want to be perceived as really … like kind of masculine". In focusing on their appearance, the athletes revealed anxieties relating to the power that media photographs have to *re-present* them as unattractive or to spotlight physical features that they regarded as personal inadequacies, which they feared audiences would perceive as unattractive and unfeminine.

However, not all the athletes shared this concern. One of the athletes revealed her intense dislike of the way that she was expected to behave and appear in front of the media, as she stated "I refuse to be walked all over, I refuse to be nice and smile for the camera. I'm sick to death of just trying to be the poster girl for my sport … I'm not allowed to be human". This athlete clearly highlighted her frustration at the media trying to develop an image of her that not only made her feel disempowered, but also felt unnatural and restricted her from being herself, as an athlete and a woman.

The power of dominant discourses of femininity was highlighted in the way that these participants struggled to negotiate sports photographs of

themselves in relation to their depicted physical appearance, which was frequently at odds with their understanding of what a woman should look like. Several of the participants' comments highlight how discourses of femininity become so instinctive and taken-for-granted that they are drawn on automatically without thinking. For instance, one athlete described the media using "old, outdated photographs", something that was immediately evident to her, but perhaps indiscernible to audiences (and media workers). Several referred to "obvious" features of outdated photographs, such as changes in hair colour, length and styles, or outdated team uniforms that were used in previous events. The athletes suggested that not only was the use of these old photographs a sign of media indifference and disregard towards sportswomen, but it also exemplified the kind of inaccurate coverage that "only happens to sportswomen". One participant stated, "they're still using an old photo with bleached blonde hair taken from a big upward angle, so all I had was this big fat neck and this blonde hair. It was incredibly unflattering", while another athlete voiced her frustration at the media using a photograph "from five years ago, that kind of thing. You'd think … will you just update your files mate' you know, 'find out'. It doesn't take much!"

In addition to using outdated photographs, the athletes raised other issues about photographic techniques that resulted in unappealing photographs being produced. For example, one participant recounted how a telephoto lens zoomed in and disfigured and distorted her appearance: "it was a massive close-up … I was on the medal dais but I had the biggest smile and you could see all my gums and stuff. It was so gross". Although the athlete was immensely proud of her medal-winning achievement, she was embarrassed by what she perceived to be an "awful photograph", which prevented her from telling anyone about the article. She added, "I was so annoyed when they put that in and I didn't tell anyone that I was in the magazine". Her comments demonstrate the struggle she had in negotiating the conflicting discourses of sport and femininity, on the one hand wanting her sporting success recognized, but on the other being more concerned about other peoples' perceptions of her appearance.

Glamorous sportswomen receive greater media coverage

Many of the athletes revealed the problematic way in which the media focus attention on 'glamorous sportswomen' rather than on sporting achievements, and

the way in which this approach frequently resulted in sportswomen being perceived as less capable athletes because of being women. For instance, one athlete suggested that sportswomen are portrayed as "less aggressive / more personality like [and] visually appealing" in media coverage. This type of exposure therefore challenges the sports–masculinity articulation and strengthens the sportswomen–femininity articulation. Similarly, Lines (2001) argues that "female sports stars are often compared to the feminine ideal, and those that receive amplified coverage are constructed as (sex) goddesses" (p. 287), which is problematic, especially for youth audiences who are potentially more likely to accommodate these perceptions than adults (Klomsten, Marsh & Skaalvik, 2005; Lines, 2001, 2002). This type of media emphasis results in audience attention being drawn away from the sporting achievements of sportswomen and towards their physical appearance. Several of the athletes suggested that "glamorous sportswomen" were given greater newspaper space, regardless of the sport being featured or their achievements, which results in the trivialization of sportswomen.

Additionally, a number of the athletes' comments revealed their complex struggle to negotiate the sportswoman–femininity articulation. For example, one participant highlighted her pleasure at looking at photographs of professional tennis player Anna Kournikova, who she positively endorsed by saying, "oh she's feminine". This positive focus on a sportswoman's appearance was similarly highlighted when one athlete described her sporting role model: "she was really beautiful, she's got this great smile and tall and blonde and gorgeous. She was also, she was just everywhere, in magazines and ads and things like that, she was awesome". Her comments reflect the significance and value she placed on this particular sportswoman's physical attractiveness, and more surprisingly perhaps, there was no actual mention of her role model's sporting skills or achievements. This response suggests that this athlete has internalised an understanding of worth for sportswomen that is informed by dominant discourses of femininity, and reveals how she has positively taken up a dominant masculine position in evaluating sportswomen. These athletes' perceptions thus correspond with research that suggests that many girls and women embrace the idealized images of femininity that the media present in magazines and newspapers, as they see them as something to which they should aspire (Duncan, 1990; Hargreaves, 1993; MacDonald, 1995; Nava, 1992; Oliver, 2001; Ward & Benjamin, 2004).

Yet other athletes highlighted not only their awareness of the dominant readings, but also their frustration and resentment of the negative way that sportswomen are represented. For example, one athlete stated that coverage of sportswomen reflects "some sort of covert sort of discrimination or sexism hidden in the midst, just in the way in which it's written, the photos that they show". Another athlete responded to a question asking when do sportswomen get more media coverage, by commenting:

> When we're beautiful. Like little things, like, I mean Anna Kournikova's a prime example. Couldn't play tennis for shit really in comparison to a lot of her other counterparts and yet she was always gracing the cover of magazines and newspapers because she was so beautiful and attractive.

The tone used to convey this point expressed her frustration, as a woman and an athlete, that for some sportswomen such as Kournikova, newsworthiness is correlated with sex appeal rather than sporting skill and achievements. Unsurprisingly, a few other participants made similar negative comments about the media's sexualization of a few sportswomen. For instance, one stated, "they pick the more glamorous tennis players … because they might sell the paper more, you know. It's pretty, and it's nice to see a female rather than a dirty ol' rugby player", while another added "it's almost like for women they're more interested in capturing the person as opposed to what they do…. I hate stereotypes". A third suggested that the media focus on "sex appeal [because] that's what male journalists think people (other men?) want to read" [athlete's bracketed comment]. Several studies similarly reveal that by focusing on glamorous sportswomen, the media convey the message that feminine attractiveness is an essential ingredient in creating audience appeal, and often appears more important in coverage of sportswomen than sporting abilities or achievements (Claringbould et al., 2004; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Lines, 2001; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Stevenson, 2004; Tebbel, 2000). Moreover, Lines (2001) argues that "the sporting 'heroine' is constructed for the male gaze, with men positioned as the dominant audience of mediated sport" (p. 291), suggesting the marginalization of both female audiences and sportswomen.

These participants also drew attention to other contributory factors that encourage greater media coverage of a few, select women's sports and sportswomen. With the exception of just one athlete, the participants all

highlighted their opinion that some outfits worn by sportswomen, particularly bikinis and tight-fitting leotards, appear to generate greater media focus and audience attention. One athlete for instance suggested that dress codes were inconsistent across sporting codes, as some sports regulated for traditional modesty and formality in the clothes worn only by the women, while others were the complete opposite, with sportswomen's bodies being publicly exposed in body hugging and revealing uniforms. The examples of beach volleyball and shooting were put forward to illustrate the confusing contradictions that sportswomen face, where uniform violations in either code may result in disqualification. One participant revealed that:

> Beach volleyball has a maximum width on their togs of 4 inches… [whereas shooters] are not allowed to go more than 4 inches above the knee and … shoulders must be covered. … If shorts go more than 4 inches above the centre of the kneecap, [shooters] get disqualified! … If [shooters] don't have sleeves on shirts [they] are disqualified.

In this case, the athlete suggested that the clothing regulations for sportswomen appear extreme for both sports. Other research had revealed that in the case of beach volleyball outfits worn during the 2000 Sydney Olympics, "anything over 6cm (2 in) at the hip is banned. The men competing in the same sport will wear singlets and shorts. Why such a contrast in attire? Because… the media still prefers to represent women as sexual commodities" (Tebbel, 2000, p. 136). Other athletes also negatively commented on beach volleyball in relation to its recent introduction as an Olympic sport, with one participant commenting, "I'm sorry Sue, it's not an Olympic sport, [it's] an entertainment", while another said the focus on this sport relates to "its sex appeal to a male audience". Additionally, other participants remarked that sportswomen get limited media attention "unless they have short skirts to flash their knickers, like in tennis and netball". Many of the athletes' comments noted how photographs of sportswomen appear more visually geared for male audiences than for female audiences. Moreover, these athletes highlighted how they struggled to negotiate the multiple competing and often conflicting discourses of sport and femininity that come into play when attempting to decode photographs of other sportswomen and of themselves.

The challenges for sportswomen in negotiating discourses of sport and femininity

The issue of power relations and hierarchy within sports relates not only to dominant discourses of sport privileging sportsmen and subordinating sportswomen, but also to the ranking of sports based on perceived values that are attributable to men's sport versus women's sport. For instance, many of the athletes highlighted that the media focus not only on a few feminine sportswomen, but also on a few sports that highlight the sportswomen–femininity articulation. Participants remarked that "the only real sportswomen that really get noticed in New Zealand are probably the Silver Ferns", due to it being "the highest profile women's sport in New Zealand". Other sports mentioned in relation to newspaper photographs of sportswomen were tennis, cycling, swimming, rowing and hockey. These choices correspond with research that suggests that media favour photographs of sportswomen that support the sportswoman–femininity articulation by embodying gracefulness and aestheticism (Bruce & Chapman, 2006c; Daddario, 1998; Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Messner, 1998; George et al., 2001; Hardin et al., 2005; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Mason & Rail, 2006; Vincent et al., 2003).

Participants also commented that the media appeared to use sports photographs of sportswomen during major international events that contrasted with the standard feminine images. They drew on photographs that featured a range of uncharacteristic expressions of aggression on athletes' faces, or where they were shown in (unflattering) sporting action. One athlete revealed how she was encouraged by her coach and the media to "be yourself" in front of the cameras as she attempted to motivate and prepare herself for an event. She explained how her confrontational expressions generated "greater audience interest and appeal" because "they capture something different" from the typical run-of-the-mill photographs of sportswomen, remarking that, "I'm not allowed to look aggressive except when I'm on camera and actually competing, when they [manager and media] like me to scream". This athlete revealed that at the height of competition her manager encouraged her to channel her energy into aggressive displays and intense facial expressions that helped motivate her performance, which in turn produced attention-grabbing media photographs, "which is good

publicity for the sport. It's interesting". However, this athlete also suggested that for sportswomen, these types of sports photographs are the exception rather than the rule, as she was only allowed to do this in front of the cameras in competition. Somewhat differently, another athlete remarked:

> there's a motor-cross rider … she got a special award at the Halberg Awards.... Up and Coming … when they're doing different sports, something more akin to 'wow, woman doing a man's thing', I think they tend to get more attention.

This athlete's remark suggests that when the media break free from the traditional narrow frame constructed about women's sports and feature photographs that highlight new terrain, there is potential to attract new audiences. These examples highlight the challenges that sportswomen and female audiences face in negotiating media coverage of women's sports and sportswomen. Many of the athletes' comments reveal the powerful hold dominant discourses of sport and gender have over creating perceptions about sportswomen in relation to idealized femininity. And, despite wanting to be accepted and reflected as active and successful athletes, these sportswomen also emphasized their desire to be perceived as feminine as well.

Discourses of nationalism override the sports–masculinity articulation

Media power is reflected in the way that sportswomen are almost invisible in everyday sport coverage. As shown in Chapter 5, only 6.8% of the everyday sports photographs analysed featured sportswomen, revealing New Zealand's newspaper sports news production to be gender-biased. Yet despite this 'everyday' marginalization, it was also revealed that during the major event coverage, the number of photographs of sportswomen substantially increased (21.6%). Sportswomen were depicted in a wider range of sports and in larger format photographs that were featured more prominently on the front and main sports pages. The apparent change in media attention reflects the multiple competing and often conflicting discourses that sports audiences draw on as they attempt to decode and make sense of media messages during the sporadic periods of increased coverage. During 'everyday' periods, the discursive power relations

that operate within the sports media, which are largely taken-for-granted, are generally positioned to reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation. However, during major international sporting events, when the nation is brought to the fore in an international arena, sports news is discursively constructed in relation to the sports–nationalism articulation to differentiate between '*our*' athletes and '*their*' athletes in ways that promote the endeavors and successes of New Zealand athletes as nationally important and newsworthy. Due to this change in the contextual framing of sports coverage during the Commonwealth Games, it was important to establish what understandings these participants formed about what is produced, and what impact this may have had on their own performances, experiences and motivation as athletes. Four prominent themes emerged:

- ◙ Sporting successes are newsworthy
- ◙ The front page features nationally prominent sports news
- ◙ Medal winners are nationally important
- ◙ The use of the haka in sport is firmly tied to national identity.

'Doing it for the nation'. The newsworthiness of international sporting successes

The challenge for sports audiences lies in negotiating the discourses that are represented in photographs of sportswomen and giving meaning to what is featured. For these participants, as elite sportswomen themselves, the process of making sense of sports photographs entails not only drawing on their own personal perceptions of sports news in general, but also in evaluating media power to promote or ignore them and the implications of this on athletes, their sport, and wider sports audiences. One participant described media coverage of her Commonwealth medal-winning achievements, stating how it "makes me proud that I'm giving New Zealand coverage internationally for a positive reason!" Her remark highlighted how her international success provided impetus not only for her own sense of national pride, but also in producing a similar response for wider New Zealand audiences. Another athlete described her own unexpected medal win in line with the media creating "such a positive spin of it, they were really awesome". Both athletes therefore revealed how their personal sporting successes were positively promoted in the media as national public victories.

Similar findings about sporting successes being linked to patriotism have been identified in New Zealand sports research, which suggests "world-class sporting triumphs have become a major feature of the country's sense of its own internationalism" (McGregor & Fountaine, 1997, p. 38). Sporting victories help elevate the nation's image for local audiences as '*our*' New Zealand success at achieving a medal, which the media prominently feature in addition to '*their*' defeat. This encourages audiences supporting the national team and creating a sense of patriotism and national pride in '*our*' achievements. Moreover, several of the athletes commented on the surprising acclaim they received due to positive media coverage of their victories. One athlete stated, "when I came home, how exciting it was to be home and have all these things in the paper and for people to know who you are, but not to know who they are. Quite crazy", while another added, "it's lovely for us and lovely for our sponsors to hear that [we've won a medal], we're very lucky". Although several of the athletes argued that the media differentiate between sportswomen and sportsmen in a way that generally privileges the men, one highlighted an appreciation for not being the centre of media attention, as she stated:

> … if a female athlete does well you hear about it and they get their time but they don't necessarily get anything else. I say that's a good thing, as you don't want people knowing everything in your life anyway.

Despite acknowledging that sportswomen are treated differently to sportsmen, this participant expressed relief at the media only focusing attention on her sporting achievements rather than on her private life.

Notwithstanding the personal sacrifices made by these athletes to achieve at national and international sporting events, most of them described themselves as ordinary, down to earth New Zealand women, committed and dedicated to participating in and promoting sport. Moreover, many of them commented on the role of other people - coaches, mentors and inspirational role models - who had helped them on their shared journey of sporting success, which they framed as 'doing it for the nation'. For instance, one athlete stated:

> You have lots of people that you know you're representing. You know, like when you're singing the national anthem and you can look out in the crowd and you think, 'shit I'm actually representing these people, I'd better'… you know.

This athlete highlighted, through her own personal experience, how she felt the heightened demands in an international sports arena due to public support and the responsibilities associated with being a national ambassador for her sport. This remark also clearly highlights the powerful effect of the media reinforcing the sports–nationalism articulation, in such a way that this athlete actively engaged with and rationalized its message. Yet not all the athletes expressed a sense of patriotism or national obligation regarding their sports participation, as one participant stated:

> I … never tried to fit in with this whole one team one spirit thing, because it's an individual sport. I'm there for my own purposes…. If that sounds wrong, I don't care. I'm not representing New Zealand; I am there to win my medal. I have slogged my guts out for my medal. If New Zealand was paying for everything fine, I'll do it for them, but again, that won't motivate me. I'm not doing it for them!

This athlete's comment highlights her lack of identification with the sports–nationalism articulation, as she reflects more on her own intrinsic personal drive and determination rather than any extrinsic and nationalistic influences. Moreover, the disingenuous way that media often ignore sportswomen or suddenly include them because they do something unexpected, such as win, was also highlighted by one participant, who stated:

> And all of a sudden I made the final, get the media down here, they had no plans whatsoever to ever show a single [photo] of me on the news. And all of a sudden, I made the final and 'woof', half a dozen people jump in the car and drive out.… It was ridiculous.

Her remark highlights her belief (from experience) that the media frequently only perceive sportswomen to be newsworthy when they win, as few photographers were assigned to cover her event and it was only after she secured a spot in the finals that the media became interested in her.

Front page sports news is of national importance

As already revealed in Chapters 4 and 5, the newspaper front page is regarded as the most coveted position for both positive and negative news stories and photographs, such that audiences come to perceive this prominent position as conveying a message of newsworthiness (Andrews, 2005; Bruce, 2005; Fuery &

Fuery, 2003; Vincent et al., 2003). Drawing on discourses of journalism, the media emphasize certain high profile sports news through eye-catching, large photographs and bold, provocative headlines that will attract audience attention to the front page (Louw, 2001). The featuring of sports news on the front page reflects what newspaper editors believe audiences most want to know about and what is considered to be important, exceptional, scandalous or controversial [sports] news (Bruce, 2005; Fuery & Fuery, 2003; Rowe, 2000; Vincent et al., 2003). Although topics and issues may vary, the placement of sports photographs and sports articles on the front page communicates a message about the exceptionality of the athlete or related situation. For many sporting celebrities, their private lives and off-field activities are frequently splashed across the front pages of the newspaper (Bruce, 2005; Rowe, 2000).

Although a few participants mentioned how the media often included sports controversies, disgrace or defeat on the front page, little detail was provided about their views on why this was done, or the effects of it for athletes or audiences. The participants' comments rather reflected more on the positive type of sports news that is represented on the front page. One participant commented, "it's obviously something quite juicy … so I'll have a quick squizz to see if it's anyone I know". Another participant described how the media hyped front page stories to encourage newspaper sales, but in general, she thought front page sports news was "positive … the action and exhilaration of a sports performance. And sharing/empathizing with, the emotion of whatever the pic is – i.e. victory/pain/defeat". These participants' remarks reveal how front page sports photographs are indicative of something special or unique, and different to those that feature on the sports pages. Additionally, front page news was described as featuring upbeat aspects of sporting successes, major victories and international achievements. One athlete remarked, "I'm stoked because it's so hard to get on the front page. And it's just wicked when you see someone you know or a team that have made it onto the front page, not just the sports page". Another athlete commented, "I think they're cool. Because they're obviously there 'cause they've done well, if it's for a positive thing, it's a high achievement". One participant described her own experience of appearing on the front page as "a proud public moment of success". In addition, many of the participants' remarks highlighted how difficult it was for any athlete to become front page news. For example, one

athlete suggested that, "it makes you feel proud, knowing how much it takes to get there. It makes you feel good", while another revealed her opinion that often, front page coverage of sports news was about sharing a special national message of success. She stated:

> Just think of the America's Cup. I just take the headlines on the front page of today's paper, it's more than sport I think. You know there's so much put into it from New Zealand, the money part, the sponsors' side of it and that probably makes it more than sport and it's therefore nice to be recognized.

This athlete's perception of front page coverage of sporting victories reflects the sports–nationalism articulation, where media effectively publicize and promote a unique sense of national success, pride and patriotism.

Medal winners as national heroes and role models

For many of the participants, the powerful influence of media in shaping audience perceptions about the value of international sporting successes was described as playing a decisive role in the choices they made about their own sporting pursuits. Moreover, for many of the participants, the winning of a gold medal was not only regarded as the ultimate sporting achievement, but also appeared to suggest the suitability of the winning athlete as a role model. For instance, several of the participants described how media coverage of successful athletes had stimulated their initial sporting aspirations. One athlete admitted that, at a young age, after seeing photographs and other media coverage of 'an Olympian', she wanted to become one herself, without much forethought about which sport she could compete in. She stated:

> I don't know if I had an actual person. I had the Olympians, [who] I saw as role models for me. I didn't really have a chosen sport; I just loved all sports, female or even male. I used to watch Danyon Loader winning or Mark Todd winning his gold medal and [remember] wanting to go to the Olympics. So I think it's probably more so an Olympian, than a netball player or a rugby player or something like that.

These comments highlight the powerful messages that media coverage of Olympic sporting successes, especially gold medal-winning achievements, generated for this athlete who perceived this positive coverage as a persuasive motivator for her to become involved in sport. Given the marginalization of

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sportswomen in everyday media coverage in New Zealand, audiences and young female athletes have less "access to either real or mediated sporting role models" (Lines, 2001, p. 298). It is only when the media profile international sporting victories that involve athletes participating in amateur and minor sports that dominant discourses of sport are disrupted and the sports–nationalism articulation creates space for sportswomen to feature as potential role models.

The participants tended to have corresponding opinions about successful athletes making good role models. Greater media attention is given to medal-winners who are characterized as national heroes and publicly celebrated in the media to the extent that athletes are promoted as positive role models and exemplars of good self-discipline and personal integrity. These positive attributes were evident in the range of comments the participants made about their own personal role models and mentors. Moreover, they named a number of different athletes, both male and female, in a range of sports frequently unrelated to their own sporting code, as having been important in their own sporting development. While the majority of their mentioned role models were medal-winning athletes, the descriptions of them focused on their being "committed to hard work", and how they "selflessly promoting their sport", were "humble" and had "mana". For instance, New Zealand athletes such as windsurfer Barbara Kendall, equestrian Mark Todd, swimmers Danyon Loader and Anna Simcic, netballers Bernice Mene and Waimarama Taumaunu, and squash player Susan Devoy were all mentioned. For many of these athletes, their choice of role model early on in their careers was based on the media's personification of them as sporting celebrities. However, in a few cases the participants met them at events and were able to establish their own perceptions of them as people. It was only when the participants started to become more serious athletes that a role model in their chosen sport was described as being more important.

The participants also described the winning of medals, especially 'gold medals', as the epitome of sporting success. Many of their own role models had been gold medal winners, and one athlete remarked that, "I kind of looked at her and thought 'I want to get to where she is'". Another athlete stated, "I just wanted to play like her and I just wanted to be her really". The participants highlighted how successful athletes appeared to be represented 'everywhere'; in magazines, newspapers, and on television, making these sportswomen seem larger than life.

In describing what it was that was admired most about her sporting role models, one participant reflected that:

> Every time I saw, read or heard about her, she was just giving it 150%. In competition, she'd always [finish the event] just totally spent. In training, she trained like a mongrel and I just thought that was wicked. To see a girl giving it totally and utterly everything, not caring about what she looked or sounded like. It was just awesome. Very motivating.

This participant saw her role model's absolute commitment and unwavering focus on her sports performance, without concern for her appearance, as the sign of a true athlete. Yet this comment also creates the impression of it being unusual to see a sportswoman "giving it her all" without apparently caring about her appearance. In addition, this response also contradicts what many of the participants had focused on in respect of photographs of themselves, where appearance was very important. This highlights the challenges faced by sportswomen as they try to negotiate the inconsistencies and contradictions between discourses of sport and dominant discourses of femininity, and as they struggle to be accepted as successful athletes *and* as women.

Some participants remarked that sporting achievements were made more tangible when they saw sportswomen being successful, despite facing difficulties and hardships they could relate to, in the belief that "if they did it, then so can I". Several of the athletes highlighted how they accepted and managed the responsibilities of being a role model and appearing in the public and media spotlight. For example, one athlete stated:

> When you've been lucky enough to be put in that privileged position, every time someone comes up to me and asks if they can just have a yarn or have a photo or whatever, it's really humbling.

However, several other participants revealed that excessive media exposure creates enormous pressure on athletes, who are constantly on display and judged as role models, both on and off the sports field. For instance, when describing her own situations of being well-known and continuously recognized for her sporting achievements, one participant stated:

> You're always wary, whenever you're out in the public. When you're in your car, you can't just give someone the one-two, you know. You've got to think 'shit there could be a little girl watching', you never know where

you're going to be you know ... I've been in that situation out at dinner and you know some little girls have come up to me and asked for my signature and stuff. So you know you always have to be wary of the context in which you're in and making sure that you're not putting that at detriment.

Another participant described how important sporting role models are and the effect that they can have on youth:

Because there's so many other influences on youngsters today – and not necessarily good ones. Even in the sporting field, there's corruption, drugs, prima donnas, athletes who are just out of control off the field. I think having role models at a young age can not only influence someone's athletic career for the better, in terms of giving them morals and ethics on the court, but can also influence how they conduct themselves off the court, such as being 'a good bugger'.

Although not all youth simply assume what is featured in the media (Buckingham, 1993), this stereotyping of successful athletes as role models is problematic, as not all successful athletes are always positively featured in the media. Moreover, during major events, it is difficult to escape the positive messages that are featured throughout the newspaper about sports being nationally important, such that successful athletes are reflected in photographs that feature national symbols and signs linking them visually as heroic citizens.

The 'haka' heightens a sense of 'Kiwiness'

How the media reinforce the articulation of sports and nationalism during major events was discussed by each of the participants in relation to the cultural value and use of the Maori haka. Several of the participants' comments focused on the narrow-mindedness of New Zealand media coverage of the Commonwealth Games, particularly in relation to negativity around the haka. For instance, one participant described her "disappointment" with the approach taken by the media, which she perceived to be "unpatriotic". Another athlete suggested that the media "just can't make comments if they're not there. It's a special moment and I think when someone achieves then they deserve it", while another added, "I thought the haka was awesome and I think they were just kind of nit-picking when they were saying that they [the athletes] were overdoing it". Participants argued that the media criticism of the haka was more an attack on the New Zealand team's values and principles. For instance, one participant suggested the media "don't really

understand the whole, the whole dynamics of the team". This athlete revealed the importance of team unity at international sporting events and the value ascribed to the haka in bringing the Kiwi team together. Another athlete suggested that the media "were just trying to find something to comment on basically. Kind of like the New Zealand way, you know, you need to complain about something", as she demonstrated her opinion that the media position was not only unjust, but also unfounded. Another athlete remarked:

> It's the media's interpretation of what was a very powerful, inspiring, motivating part of the NZ team. Something that was designed to do nothing but build the team spirit and performance of the NZ team. So for our own country to bag the team, the team chef de mission and the actual performance, again, is pretty ill-informed. Anyone that has had a haka performed for them by their team mates, away from home, will know that it's one of the most inspirational and/or humbling experiences you can have as a Kiwi sportsperson. Whether it's the haka, or a completely different sign of respect/congratulations that the team had done, the media would have found something to pick at! It's the nature of our local media in NZ, as sad as that is!

This participant expressed her obvious frustration with New Zealand media demeaning something that the athletes worked so hard to encourage, not least because it engenders both national pride and team unity. The athletes' responses highlighted too their disappointment with New Zealand media criticizing the performance of the haka, which they viewed as a personal attack on the national team and deflating the positive sentiment that the national team had worked so hard to instil through the use of the haka.

Athlete comments highlighted how their sense of national pride was heightened during international competitions when the haka was performed. They revealed how the haka is used to symbolically celebrate Kiwi sporting success, while also helping to promote New Zealand's unique cultural identity. One participant recounted her own personal experience of the haka saying "you know, you're in a different country and for a bunch of Kiwis to do that, and you know it's special, and it's from where you're from and all that kind of stuff. It's great!" Her description emphasized the importance of the haka in bolstering a New Zealand athlete's sense of cultural belonging and national identity. Another participant described the haka being used by her team to build team spirit and motivation, as she stated:

> We're just so patriotic, we're so about New Zealand, we're so about Kiwi, we're so about … just anything that we can hold on to … when we go away … we're such a small nation and there's these big nations that you know, that have a lot of money and have a lot of arrogance and things like that, but we've just got so much pride and anything that we can use, you know, it just helps.

This participant regarded the haka as a way of embracing and promoting 'Kiwiness', uniting the athletes by drawing on their national pride. For those athletes competing overseas who spent long periods away from home, the use of the haka "remind[ed] the rest of the town where we came from (and be proud of it!), and the locals loved it!". While reflecting on the powerful role that the haka assumes for New Zealand athletes and audiences, the athletes also highlighted various other overseas practices of patriotism that they had encountered overseas. For instance, one participant stated: "you go to America and there are all these American flags hanging outside their houses … [and at rugby matches] all these Australians there dressed in their flags". In the same way that other nations use signs and symbols to communicate national identity, these participants felt that the haka communicated a sense of New Zealand identity.

Yet some of the athletes raised concerns that the traditional and cultural significance associated with the haka were often confused or ignored. One athlete remarked, "I'm a little bit touchy about that subject. More so, because I don't believe that the haka should be something that should be thrown around for any Tom, Dick or Harry, or for any odd reason". Although accepting that its use is special, she added, "I believe that it is uniquely Aotearoa, it is us. I just think that we must just make sure that we're using it properly and making sure that we don't demean its mana by any means". Several other participants similarly raised concerns about the haka's Maori origin and its misuse. For example, athletes drew attention to the haka's traditional practice of being a male ritual associated with battle and in challenging the opposition, with one athlete stating:

> The haka is a challenge to be performed by men. It is not a 'welcome home', it is not a 'congratulations', it is not a 'I'm proud of you', it is a challenge!… It's overused, the fact that they get … women to perform it as well, like they did in Athens, it's wrong. If you're going to use something cultural, do it in its proper context! And it's a war challenge.

Another participant revealed how the haka was inappropriately used:

> Every time someone did well in Athens everyone would gather up in the Kiwi camp and be welcomed back with the haka, you know. 'We live, we live, we die, we die' – welcome back! Ha, ha. The women are all out there and I'm thinking - 'NO! Women DON'T do the haka!'

Although being a very proud non-Maori New Zealander, this elite athlete was particularly distressed at the inappropriate inclusion of women performing the haka. Yet no other athlete mentioned women participating in the haka, and only one athlete indicated that for women's sports there were other Maori customs that were used to ensure that the appropriate cultural customs were followed:

> We don't use it…. We have our way of calling, we have 'waiata', we have 'mihi' and things like that. So we just express ourselves in other ways.

Although a few athletes commented on the frequent used of the haka, with one participant noting that, "the more you do it, the more maybe it's fallen down, it's no longer precious or special or whatever it may seem", while only one participant explicitly stated that, "in my opinion, the haka was overdone". Therefore, the athletes perceived that the media criticism of the haka was not only unjustified, but also produced a certain amount of unnecessary negativity towards what is regarded as a positive symbol of '*Kiwiness*'.

Summary

This audience reception chapter has investigated how sports photographs of sportswomen are given meaning by actual audience members, and the extent to which their interpretations and perceptions correspond to the findings of other audience research. Ruddock (2007) posits that "the media offer us a ranges of images and ideas that we can ignore or reject, at the same time they create a common cultural archive on which we all draw in making sense of the world, ourselves, and other people" (p. 26). Although my participants were all elite New Zealand sportswomen, they were also women with different backgrounds, life experiences, educational qualifications, socio-economic statuses, and came from different sporting codes and from different regions of New Zealand. As elite athletes and as women however, their interpretations and personal experiences of media coverage have provided similar and consistent insights into the use of sports photographs by the media. While their versions of events and explanations revolved around their own sporting codes and media experiences, the themes and

trends that emerged reveal significant overlaps in these sportswomen's' experiences and perspectives. Yet there were also some interesting discrepancies in the way that these athletes described their own perceptions of and experiences with the media. The most significant finding of this component of the study relates to the complex ways that these athletes, as sportswomen and female audience members, struggled to negotiate the discursive power relations of sports, gender and journalism. This audience study has helped highlight the powerful role sports photographs play in constructing preferred media messages about sports, gender and femininity, which influence audience perceptions of sportswomen, athleticism and femininity, through the medium of images and sports news in general.

The participants' comments also revealed their struggle to negotiate space that allowed them to be recognised as women *and* as elite athletes. They acknowledged how New Zealand media reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation that privileges sportsmen with greater opportunities for visibility and ascribes them cultural value as *real* athletes. As a result, sportswomen's efforts, successes and achievements are not only virtually invisible in media coverage but are also more frequently related to a sportswoman–femininity articulation, implying their second-rate status. While the participants emphasized how media privilege a few professional men's sports and sportsmen, the importance of these concerns related not only to the lack of exposure for sportswomen, but also to the effect of media reinforcing the sports–masculinity articulation as the measurement of value and newsworthiness for all sports and all athletes. International research similarly suggests that "mainstream sport could be read as 'male-stream' sport as patriarchal values are perpetuated by decision-making that entitles men to exclude women's participation and marginalise women's ('Cinderella') sports…" (Burnett, 2001b, p. 72). However, some of the athletes, despite feeling affronted by the overwhelming focus on men's sport, appeared to accept this situation as "that's just the way it is". The apparent taken-for-grantedness of the focus on sportsmen and men's sports further highlights the powerful influence that dominant discourses of sport have within media, as the sports–masculinity articulation has, at some level, evidently been internalized by these athletes as the norm.

Moreover, the participants described how media not only treat sportswomen differently from sportsmen but also frequently portray women's sport and sportswomen in an ambiguous and ambivalent manner. Participants described a range of sports photographs where media reinforce discourses of femininity to emphasize gender differences between sportswomen and sportsmen. Hardin et al. (2002) argue that, "when media frame their sports coverage with sexual difference, they cannot help but belittle women's athletics and fail to present them fully and accurately" (p. 65). Thus, the participants' comments reflect an awareness of the media targeting a male audience through sports photographs that accentuate sportswomen's physical appearance, particularly in sports traditionally deemed feminine and appropriate for sportswomen. Moreover, the athletes revealed that photographs not only focused on glamorous sportswomen but also featured sportswomen's underwear to draw attention to the female body. Several of the participants viewed this focus on male audience interests as reflecting media disregard not only for sportswomen, who are marginalized, but also for female sports audiences.

The media were also described as occupying a powerful position in relation to sporting codes, athletes' reputations and perceptions of sportswomen. Discourses of sports journalism and the messages media produce about athletes and their achievement were revealed to be very influential for these participants, as athletes and as female audience members. A number of the athletes described their frustrated not only at the media portrayal of sportswomen as secondary and unimportant, but also at the unprofessional manner in which sports reporters managed their interviews with sportswomen. Participants identified various practices of journalists that excluded or marginalized them within news stories, such as inaccurate and misleading articles about them, the use of outdated photographs, having limited knowledge of the athlete or her event, or reporters ignoring winning sportswomen at events but interviewing fourth or fifth placed sportsmen at the same event. These types of exclusionary practices have also been identified in international media research (Claringbould et al., 2004; Hardin et al., 2002; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Pedersen & Whisenant, 2003) and reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation that typically results in privileging sportsmen and ignoring sportswomen.

Despite the challenges the sportswomen faced in negotiating how they were featured or perceived during everyday media coverage, the convergence of multiple competing and often conflicting discourses during major international sporting events results in a momentary disruption of the status quo. During major events the media reinforce the sports–nationalism articulation, creating space for sportswomen to be featured more frequently and prominently. The participants revealed that gender *appears* to be inconsequential in media coverage of major events and sportswomen, who have the potential to be medal-winning athletes, frequently feature in photographs that clearly depict visual signs of national identity. Featuring large and colourful photographs of nationally successful athletes on the front page of the newspaper and in other prominent positions encouraged a sense of national pride and patriotism in this audience, who are admittedly different from the typical everyday sports audience. Further, the signs of national identity frequently selected in sports photographs focus on highlighting unique characteristics and symbols of '*Kiwiness*', such as the national flag and silver fern emblem, and the performance of the Maori haka. The participants' comments revealed their sense of national pride at being able to witness the performance of the haka at international events, and their own experiences of how overseas audiences viewed it as an impressive display of New Zealand culture. The majority of the athletes were critical of New Zealand media criticism of the haka, suggesting that it was easy for the media, who were not at the Games, to not appreciate or understanding the role its performance played in unifying the national team and in creating a powerful sense of national identity for the athletes who were away from home and representing *the nation*. Thus, the majority of the participants created an oppositional reading of the media coverage of the haka, by drawing on their own experiences of the haka's performance at the Games to view it as being appropriate and positive, where it was regarded to be an important sign of New Zealand national identity.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF EMERGENT TRENDS

As this research has documented, dominant discursive practices within society play a particularly powerful and influential role in shaping media messages, particularly in relation to gender. Through integrating a theoretical framework that takes into consideration Stuart Hall's cultural studies perspective and feminist cultural studies theorizing, this tripartite study centred attention on gender to examine the ways in which sports photographs of female athletes convey messages about the newsworthiness and value of women's sports, sportswomen and athleticism. A fundamental consideration of this study was how media workers and audiences negotiated the complex circuit of communication and the ways in which dominant and marginalized cultural discourses of gender, sports and nationalism were engaged with and made sense of through routines and practices involved in newspaper sports production and audience reception. Thus, attention was focused on the choices media workers made in respect of the selection of sports photographs and the types of preferred media messages featured, as well as the manner in which a group of elite sportswomen created meanings about sports photographs and sports news in general. Within each area of study, it was important to ascertain how discursive practices, people and power relations influenced the production of preferred media meanings, and the way in which audiences generally create a range of potential responses to sports photographs and their perceptions of the sports media.

Moreover, this study took into consideration the warning heeded by Fenton (2000), who argues that "we need to adopt a holistic concept of mass communications that accepts the process of communication as a complex interaction of unequal relationships of power" (p. 738). In many respects, this unequal power relationship is a direct result of the media's control over what is produced, and the limited power audiences have to influence this process. As revealed in this research, media decision-makers used their own judgment and experience to construct what became sports news, with little reference to audience research or surveys of audience interests. Moreover, audiences draw on dominant discourses to support their interpretations of the gendered messages about male and female athletes that are embedded within sports photographs.

In addition, of particular concern from a feminist cultural studies perspective that draws on Peircean semiotics is the way in which gender stereotypes were constructed in sports media that focused attention either on feminine sportswomen, or accentuated sportswomen's physical appearance and attractiveness as the newsworthy aspect of coverage, rather than their sporting abilities and performances. Moreover, the prevailing perspective that conceives sport as inherently masculine was shown to be problematic for sportswomen, as it reinforced the sports–masculinity articulation, creating assumptions about the incompatibility of women and sport and naturalizing biological gender differences between sportsmen and sportswomen. As I have argued, emphasis on these gender differences results in a hierarchy that privileges sportsmen and encourages the perception that sportswomen are less able or athletically inclined; giving rise to media coverage that marginalizes, trivializes or ignores their achievements. Thus, by consistently focusing on photographs of men in physically aggressive and dynamic sports action creates the perception that these are essential qualities of sport, whereas featuring sportswomen in passive and graceful images reflects their difference to and inconsistency with these essential sporting qualities. The process of media valuing 'the masculine' within sports results in 'the feminine' being deemed inferior and secondary to the real thing, thereby encouraging greater attention to sportsmen and men's sport. Discourses of sport and gender therefore impact not only on the amount of media attention sportsmen and sportswomen receive, but also contribute to the way in which they are represented in media coverage. Thus, understanding what role gender plays in media production and audience reception is critical, as the choices media workers make about what to publish (and what is ignored) in turn shape how audiences read and create shared cultural understandings about what it means to be an athlete and perceptions of athleticism.

This discussion chapter therefore examines what aspects of production, content and semiotic analysis, and audience reception are interrelated, and how codes and signs embedded within sports photographs contextually frame the meaning making processes in relation to gender. In examining gender as the central aspect of this study, focus is given to the workings of power that feature across and between all three research components, the hierarchies that are developed and maintained, and the way that dominant and marginalized

discourses support the construction of preferred meanings. The findings of this study expose how discursive practices concomitantly help promote men and masculinity whilst simultaneously subordinating women and femininity, which in turn influences how sports audiences' perceptions of athletes and athleticism are created.

Power relations in the complex circuit of communication

Practices of journalism play a pivotal role in what becomes news, as media workers negotiate a range of discourses in the course of selecting photographs or articles for newspaper publication. Power relations are central to which discourses have most influence in a particular context. For instance, in respect of the power relations influencing media production, sports media workers draw on discourses of journalism, sport and gender, where standardized practices support certain representations predominating as they reinforce dominant discourses of sport. Thus, the workings of newsroom power are not only reflected in discursive hierarchies but also in organizational hierarchies, where media decision-makers are able to shape what is produced. As found in this study, despite the chief photographer's professional abilities and skills at controlling which sports photographs were made available for use, it was the editor and the sports editor who had the ultimate power of selecting individual sports photographs. Therefore, the chief photographer, and photographers in general, occupied marginalized and subservient roles, despite their initial vital role in creating photographs. In one example, a media worker described the chief photographer's reaction to one particular alteration of a photograph, in which he "starts going red and fuming out the ears and he runs off and sorts them out. Well, as much as he can, as sometimes you've just got to let it go", reflecting the chief photographer's inability to do much besides raising his objections to the intended change. Moreover, as the head of the newsroom, the editor occupied a powerful position that resulted in him managing a range of responsibilities, which included influencing how sports page news was produced. In turn, this shaped how the sports editor was able to perform his job and highlighted the constraints he experienced as he managed the sports pages. In addition, although the sports sub-editor had extensive sporting knowledge and held a key production position in sports, she was not only restricted in what she could do, but also subjugated herself as she downplayed her

position and abilities, describing herself as "Only 'Mrs. Average Housewife'".
Therefore, not only do newsroom discourses play a powerful role in relation to
how male and female media workers act, but they are also an important influence
on what is produced and how it is represented.

Understanding the content of newspaper sports photographs is an
important aspect of identifying the power relations operating within the complex
circuit of communication, because this content reflects what media decision-
makers consider to be valuable and newsworthy within sports. Therefore, what is
produced is as a direct result of the wider discursive practices that sports media
workers engage in, which in turn helps shape audience perceptions about sports,
athletes, events or activities. In addition, the selection of sports photographs is
important not only in terms of what is featured, but also what is absent, as these
preferences suggest what can also be ignored or subordinated through a lack of
coverage. Findings from this study reveal that there were significant similarities
across the content of the four different newspapers in the way that sportswomen
and sportsmen were represented. Moreover, although sports photographs can be
interpreted and given different meanings by different people due to the polysemic
nature of texts, in many instances media worker and elite athlete perspectives
were strikingly similar. Research suggests that this is due to media workers
drawing on wider discursive practices that are culturally familiar and normalize
what is produced, thereby helping to limit the ability of audiences to create
divergent readings (Bignell, 2002; Fiske, 1990; Press, 1991, 2000; Schrøder et al.,
2003). These choices further highlight the powerful role that media play in
influencing not only audience perceptions but also those of athletes, who are
engaged in a complex media–athlete relationship. In this research, elite athletes
shared their opinions, which highlighted that those who construct sports news
have significant control over shaping audience perceptions of sports and athletes
in general. Drawing on their own experiences with national and international
media, the athletes revealed the powerful role journalists play in the gathering of
information about athletes and the importance of maintaining an amicable
relationship with the media for the sake of their sporting codes, despite their own
negative experiences with individual journalists in some cases. Moreover, the
athletes' comments highlighted their frustration at the central position media
occupy and their own limited power to correct inaccurate reporting along with the

potential harm that "ill-informed" media workers potentially cause in relation to public perceptions of themselves, their sports, and of sportswomen in general. The athletes also identified how journalists develop sports news as they construct a *mediated* story rather than what the athlete experienced as *the* story.

Discourses of journalism and photojournalism

Media workers are often unaware of the extent to which standardized media practices are gendered and how media representations help shape audience perceptions or construct shared social understandings of sports, athletes and athleticism (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gitlin, 2003; Knoppers & Elling, 2004). Discourses of journalism play a particularly influential role in not only determining what is produced in newspapers, but also where sports news is featured and how the athlete or sport is represented. In the development of a hierarchy of news values, media practices and routines predetermine not only what will appear in various newspaper sections but also construct preferred messages about whom or what is featured through the selected content that is encoding with meaning. In controlling what is produced, media decision-makers make a number of judgment calls in advance about what is important and valued in news, including sports news. The choices made by media workers more often reflect dominant discourses than those that are marginalized, thereby helping maintain the status quo and social norms through what is represented within sports news. For instance, the media workers and athletes all qualified their individual understandings of what makes 'a good sports photograph', wherein a number of similar features, technical qualities and attributes were described that related to the inherent news values that are represented. Therefore, the routines and standards developed around media photographs provide production and representational consistencies, and also function to control media workers' and audiences' perceptions of worth. Therefore, the power of sports photographs resides first and foremost in the hands of those who select the images - the media workers, and more specifically media decision-makers. Then, to a lesser extent, audiences are able to exert a limited amount of power over the meanings they create as they read and interpret photographs. And finally, there is the featured athlete, who is in effect powerless to influence what is produced, yet has the most to lose or gain from what is represented.

Standard media practices help to mechanize and fast track the production of sports news. Yet routine procedures constrain how media workers are able to develop and *re-present* information, limiting their freedom to work outside the set parameters of professional journalism. This highlights how institutionalized discourses of journalism are, as they conceal the power that is inherent in standardized practices that are taken-for-granted as the normal way of 'doing journalism', which are in effect learned behaviours and shared media experiences (Grossberg et al., 2006; McCullagh, 2002; Silk & Amis, 2000). For instance, the predetermined newspaper page dummy creates a rigid size and shape for the sports page layout that directs where and how photographs and articles are to be featured. Moreover, these routinized standards support audiences in recognizing sports news and other news in the newspaper, as well as clarifying what is newsworthy through headlines, article and photograph sizes, and the positioning of the sports news content. These practices again reflect a hierarchy of importance, implied through the prominent positioning of photographs on the front page and main sports page, these being the most important, followed by the inside sports page and other pages of the newspaper. Meaning is ascribed to photographs through a number of implicit and explicit features that relate to where they are located in the newspaper or the contextual framing of the photograph itself.

Within the production process, discourses of sports journalism also function to provide consistency in what is represented. Although sportsmen feature far more prominently in sports photographs, my analysis of patterns in the placement of photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen revealed that despite the vast discrepancies in gender-based coverage, the proportional representations were surprisingly similar for front page, main and inside sports pages for a variety of types of photographs. The patterns that emerged suggest that discourses of journalism are an effective means of controlling and organizing sports coverage of sportsmen and sportswomen in substantially similar ways. For instance, during the everyday coverage similar gender-based results were identified for sports photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen on the front page, comprising 2.4% and 3.9% of all sports photographs respectively, and on main sports pages (16.5% and 20.2%). Despite the notable differences in the number of photographs overall, these gender-based proportions suggest there is considerable uniformity in how

photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen are represented in media coverage. Similarly, patterns emerged in relation to the types of photographs featured, which were predominantly those reflecting sports action and sports-related content. In this case, the gender-based ratios in sports photographs of sportswomen and sportsmen were remarkably similar. In many ways, these patterns suggest that images of sportsmen and sportswomen are evaluated and treated similarly in media coverage, despite the glaring overall disparity in the number of sports photographs of sportsmen and sportswomen. Discourses of journalism therefore play an influential and powerful role in constructing sports news in a way that then becomes implicitly understood and assumed by audiences.

The gatekeeper role and the target audience

Media decision-makers made it clear that their professional judgement and experience enabled them to know what sports audiences want, need and expect in sports news. Furthermore, they saw no reason for or value in market research or audience surveys, in light of their own proficiencies. For instance, the sports editor stated, "you just know … and use your experience and judgement based on that experience". In addition, the editor suggested his previous experience as a sports editor helped him know what appeals to sports audiences without the need to poll audience opinions. International research has also identified that "sports section gatekeepers determined content based more on their own sense about audience interests than on the audience itself" (Hardin, 2005, p. 72). The fact that men occupy the majority of these gatekeeper roles encourages the production of androcentric sports news that focuses on men's sports and sportsmen first and foremost. For instance, the female sports sub-editor suggested that "our target audience as far as I can see is Mrs. Average Housewife, it's not a businessman's newspaper … she'll like the interesting things about the shopping or the whatever, whereas he wants his rugby". Her remark mirrors dominant discursive beliefs about gender and genre, such that women's interests are connected to discourses of domestic femininity, whereas men's are linked to discourses of sporting masculinity. Sport news is therefore produced in relation to these beliefs and constructed to reinforce the sports–masculinity articulation, focusing on men's sports and sportsmen for the pleasure and entertainment of a male audience. And it is from this perspective as well that photographs of sportswomen are

constructed, as their producers feature the sportswomen–femininity articulation, rather than dominant discourses of sport.

Even when complaints were received about sports news from newsreaders, the editor saw this as an "excellent response … our job is to intrigue, interest, provoke, and we successfully did it". Thus, the editor regarded any feedback, in this case audiences' oppositional or negotiated readings of the context or content of delivery, as a sign of having successfully stimulated interest, rather than a critical assessment of production itself. This reflects the impervious nature of the media and the roles media decision-makers, as gatekeepers, adhere to as they construct preferred messages in line with dominant discourses that encourage the maintenance of the status quo. Research indicates that the majority of sports media workers are male, and those in decision-making positions are also more likely to be male, and this gendering of the newsroom helps to affirm masculine practices, male interests, and the preponderance of coverage of men's sport through discourses of sports journalism. Although more women are qualifying as journalists, international and New Zealand research reveals that there are still limited numbers of female sports journalists being employed, and those who are, are more likely to cover women's sport (Bruce, 2002; Hardin, 2005; Hardin & Shain, 2005, 2006; Kian & Hardin, 2009; Macey, 2005; Miloch et al., 2005;).

The marginal place of women in media production

The inclusion of two female and three male media workers as participants in this study provided an opportunity to observe whether gender plays a role in the production process and how hierarchical power is realized within newsroom practices. The fact that the majority of the editorial media workers were men supports the international evidence that fewer women secure senior media production roles. My findings similarly correspond with international research that reveals that few women break through the glass ceiling and those that do, either reproduce male business practices or focus on genres that are constructed to interest women such as the women's pages, the entertainment magazine, or general news rather than hard news or sports news (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Miloch et al., 2005).

In the case of the two main female media workers participating in this study, while neither occupied an editorial or senior management role, both played vital

roles in relation to the use and preparation of photographs, one focusing on the selection and placement of sports photographs, and the other fulfilling a technical support capacity. The sports sub-editor had a certain amount of power to influence what was produced, particularly during the major event period. In addition, she was able to usurp greater influence by using her experience and knowledge of the sports editor's preferences to her advantage.

Although there was little doubt that the sports sub-editor had extensive knowledge of sports and was extremely capable in her job, on a number of occasions she downplayed her role in the production process and her sporting expertise by described herself as "Mrs. Average Housewife". However, despite minimizing her ability to influence media processes she nevertheless elucidated the challenges women face in sports media, as she stated "it is a little difficult being a woman in this job because after all what do women know?" Moreover, she disclosed how her life revolved around sport, reading the newspaper after work to critique what she had produced and working hard to be prepared for the next day's schedule, something that none of the male media workers alluded to. Her experiences mirror concerns that other researchers have raised about the role female media workers play. As Hardin and Shain (2006) suggest, "women's struggles are complicated by their consent to the dominant values of the sports/media complex. Their general acceptance of sports as a male domain conflicts with their individual struggles for 'equal' status and value in sports departments" (p. 335). Thus, female media workers occupy a difficult position in the newsroom, wanting to be accepted and 'fit in' but having to compromise their own innate sense of being women in order to do so. For female sports media workers, a part of the process of exhibiting conformity involves promoting men's sports and sportsmen as the most valued and newsworthy, which results in giving them prominent positions in the newspaper.

Front page use and newsworthiness

Overall, it was acknowledged by both media workers and audiences that sports photographs and articles positioned on a newspaper's front page conveyed a message of newsworthiness and importance. Although at times front page sports news also featured controversies, defeats, and scandals, during major events the prominent display of photographs of athletes on the front page took on preferred

messages of success and victory, supporting audiences in creating positive readings of national identity and pride. The elite athletes suggested that sportswomen were treated differently in respect of prominent newspaper placements, such that "as sportswomen, we have to do more to be recognized", which also reflected their understanding of the inherent values associated with newspaper placements and positioning. For instance, one participant described her own experienced of appearing on the front page after a medal win, as "a proud public moment of success", while other athletes who knew what it took to become front page news reinforced the specialness of a front page feature.

In this research, while increased numbers of front page photographs of sportswomen appeared during the Commonwealth Games, sportsmen continued to feature more prominently, regardless of the period of coverage, the sports events being participated in, or the success of the athletes. This privileging of sportsmen and men's sport conveys a message that they are more valued and important than sportswomen. Moreover, despite sportswomen attracting a greater amount of coverage during the Games due to their international successes and medal-winning performance, the increased emphasis given to sportswomen was short lived and context specific. In this study, there was minimal front page coverage outside of the Commonwealth Games event itself for sportswomen.

The sports–masculinity articulation

There were very few occasions when media workers spent much time discussing men's sport or laboured over photographs of sportsmen, although there were vast quantities to choose from on a daily basis. Moreover, during both observation periods, media workers had few discussions about men's sports in the course of sports production. Although men's sports took up the vast majority of the sports production space (and the sports media worker's time), its inclusion as *the* focus of sports news was tacit, predictable and automated. This suggests that the process of men's sport production is uncomplicated or at least lacks much negotiation or contestation between those who construct sports news. In drawing on dominant discourses of sport, traditionally coded as masculine, producers construct sports news around taken-for-granted sporting norms, which results in the privileging of sportsmen and men's sport. Moreover, audiences appear to accept and expect this focus on men's sport, as voiced by several of the elite athletes who described it as

being "just the way it is". On a number of occasions media workers suggested that sports news merely reflects "what the audience wants". This privileging of men's sport was also conveyed in relation to the volume of articles readily available on the newswire focusing on a few professional men's sports, with far fewer articles relating to other sports or to sportswomen. The assumption that men's sport is naturally more important and is more highly valued by sports audiences has a powerful effect on the way that media workers produce sports news.

The media workers and athletes noted how the majority of New Zealand sports coverage focused on photographs of men's sports, particularly men's rugby. The participants considered this emphasis to be a natural result of rugby being "New Zealand's national sport", and several participants suggested there was no other sport in New Zealand that was as important as rugby. It was thus unsurprising that rugby coverage featured so prominently throughout the course of this study. However, in their descriptions of rugby, both media workers and the elite athletes expressed their impressions of this sport as "rough, physical" and "aggressive", and many of them appeared frustrated at sports pages being inundated with action photographs of male rugby players. During both periods of study, newspaper content featured substantially more action photographs of men's rugby than any other sport, helping create the impression that rugby is internationally important. Saturation coverage appeared to lead one athlete to assume that 'everyone' knows about Jonah Lomu, a New Zealand rugby All Black player. This highlights the powerful way that discourses of sport shape audience perceptions about sports news, and the wider discursive struggles that sportswomen contend with in relation to sports and gender.

Additionally, the emphasis given to photographs of sportsmen in media coverage creates the impression that men's sport is inherently more interesting and appealing than women's sport, rather than its higher profile being a result of discourses of sports journalism or based on media workers' choices. Moreover, this message of greater worth is conveyed in the consistent and overwhelming focus in newspapers of photographs of sportsmen. For instance, sportsmen were featured in a total of 1,087 everyday and 1,085 major event photographs, whereas there were only 85 everyday and 331 major event photographs of sportswomen. Although these numbers are a damning indictment of how producers empower men's sports and subordinate women's sports, it was also important to examine in

more specific detail how women's sports and sportswomen were featured in general in media coverage, particularly during the major event period, when sportswomen appeared in almost four times as many sports photographs as during the everyday period.

The challenges of representing sportswomen in sports photographs

The emergent themes in the photographs of sportswomen suggested there was a media hierarchy of value attached to them, one that gave primacy to images of sportswomen participating in feminine sports, well-known and successful New Zealand athletes, and successful and physically attractive international sportswomen. In addition, even though there were fewer sports photographs featuring New Zealand sportswomen in competitive interaction against international opponents, the size and positioning of these photographs suggested their news value and importance in sports news. The majority of the photographs of sportswomen featured them competing in sports traditionally associated with discourses of femininity, and in sports purported to exhibit long-established ideals connected with 'lady-like' decorum and grace – i.e. non-aggressive or non-contact sports such as gymnastics, ice-skating, swimming and tennis. Moreover, the majority of photographs of sportswomen featured them wearing sports attire culturally deemed feminine, such as body-hugging swimming costumes, dresses accentuating cleavage or thighs, or short skirts and tight fitting tops and pants that drew attention to the female body. Gender discourses were therefore seen to play a pivotal role in that way that media workers selected and featured photographs of sportswomen, and the manner in which preferred messages were constructed. For instance, images of female athletes were frequently framed by incompatible discourses of sport and femininity. Moreover, the findings illustrated that at different times, and in relation to different contexts, sportswomen who succeeded and won medals at the Commonwealth Games were positively conveyed in media coverage using discourses of sports and masculinity, whereas those who failed were framed in a negative way through discourses of femininity. Furthermore, the photographs in general more frequently embodied gender difference when featuring sportswomen, focusing on and emphasizing their physical appearance as

women rather than their sporting achievements or skills. In this way, gender discourses are used to in media coverage to hierarchically disempower women in sport, which ultimately results in a struggle to reconcile the competing perceptions that are created about sportswomen, as athletes *and* as women.

Sportswomen as athletes and as women

For many of the athletes, although sports photographs were seen to feature a sportswoman "giving it her all" in a positive way, images that captured the intensity of sporting competition were also frequently seen as portraying sportswomen as unfeminine or "masculine like", and this was perceived as problematic. Thus, the athletes experienced the powerful inconsistencies that exist in media coverage between discourses of sports and gender, such that the sports–masculinity articulation is represented as the norm, while the sports–femininity articulation appears to be incongruous. Several of the participants highlighted that due to these gender-based discrepancies, media expectations of sportswomen are different to those relating to sportsmen, which results in sportswomen having to do something extraordinary to be given media attention. For instance, the athletes highlighted that although many New Zealand sportswomen regularly break personal best records and national records, the predominant coverage of sportswomen during major international sporting events focuses attention on either potential or actual medal winners who provide spectacular performances. For example, one athlete stated "if we did something the equivalent of a male I still don't think we'd get the same media attention as them, we need to do something extra". The sports–masculinity articulation generally impedes how sportswomen are portrayed, which was evident in the way that media workers appeared to struggle to find appropriate ways to feature sportswomen, without challenging dominant discourses of sport or straying too far from discourses of femininity. Moreover, the strength of dominant discourses of sport meant that media workers openly discussed photographs of sportswomen, whereas the majority of men's sports photographs were selected without discussion or pause.

Capturing feminine ideals in photographs

The media workers demonstrated an unspoken appreciation for attractive and slender female images, as reflected in the content of published photographs of

sportswomen, which corresponded with dominant cultural ideals of femininity. The editor referred to attributes an athlete needed to receive greater media attention in the following terms: "glamour sort of people like Sarah Ulmer because … she's good looking, photogenic and generally co-operative". However, these attributes only related to sportswomen, as sportsmen were not discussed in the general context of selecting sports photographs for publication in this manner. However, the two female media worker participants both privately, in the interview setting, made comments highlighting their appreciation of the appearance of tennis player Roger Federer and some of the New Zealand rugby players. Yet it was not only male media workers who commented on glamorous and feminine sportswomen, as several of the female participants expressed similar opinions. For instance, one athlete, in describing her sporting role model, stated "she was really beautiful, she's got this great smile and tall and blonde and gorgeous". Her description mirrored the way in which media coverage emphasized sportswomen in line with their appearance rather than sporting ability. Many of the athletes suggested that although, in general, sportswomen received limited newspaper coverage, attractive sportswomen were given more attention, often regardless of their sporting achievements. These comments thus highlight a degree of media subjectivity, whereby media workers reproduce discourses of gender in photographs that draw attention to feminine and attractive sportswomen, regardless of their sporting skills. Additionally, in wrapping up his comment about Sarah Ulmer's attributes and glamour, the editor had stated, "and, not to say that an ugly person doesn't get coverage, but it's all part of the package". This seemed to suggest that for sportswomen, their sporting skills and achievements are not sufficient to gain media attention, and they are more likely to secure media exposure if they have looks and personality, as well as sporting success.

The focus on women's sports outfits

The media workers and athletes provided a range of opinions about the types of photographs that appeared in newspapers that differentiate between sportsmen and sportswomen. Moreover, a number of the opinions raised suggested that many of the images focused on the physical appearance of sportswomen and drew attention to their bodies. Not all the media workers agreed that this type of focus

was unacceptable, and their responses reflected newsroom power relations at play, as the editor selected certain photographs being used and the context of the image, whereas the chief photographer highlighted his concern about them being deemed objectionable by audiences and athletes. For instance, the chief photographer highlighted the difficulty in capturing what he considered "acceptable" photographs of female netballers, due to their "terrible" and revealing uniforms, which regularly resulted in "knicker shots". Yet a number of the athletes discounted the role of the sports dresses or shirts being worn, while the editor suggested that these types of sports photographs were acceptable and even depicted winning moments that had to be featured, despite athletes' underwear being featured. The athletes also drew attention to the way that media stereotype sportswomen by accentuating sportswomen's bodies in sexualised ways. Although male athletes experience the same 'wardrobe malfunctions' during sports participation, these athletes suggested that the media rarely publish sports photographs of sportsmen that audiences would consider objectionable or indecent. This implies that photographs of sportswomen are not subjected to the same value systems that prevail for sportsmen. These findings also reflect the competing discourses at play in the newsroom, where the editor's hierarchical power enables him to control what is featured in relation to his perception of newsworthiness, compared to the chief photographer who is guided by a desire to reproduce *appropriate* photographs that conform to certain principles and morals. The newsroom hierarchy thus privileges news values controlled by the editor rather than discourses of photojournalism, which are subordinated. Additionally, the choices made by media workers and what is reflected highlights the audience's limited power or ability to influence what or how representations are featured or given meaning.

With the exception of just one athlete, the participants suggested that some outfits worn by sportswomen, particularly bikinis and tight-fitting leotards appeared to generate greater media focus and audience attention. Moreover, the sporting dress code was described as being inconsistent across sporting codes, as some sports regulated for traditional modesty and formality in the clothes worn only by women, while others were the complete opposite, as they encouraged sportswomen's bodies to be publicly exposed and flaunted. In addition, due to the way that media accentuate sportswomen's bodies in beach volleyball, this code

was negatively described as "not a sport … it's entertainment", because the outfits encourage a male audience to admire the women as sexual objects rather than as athletes.

The reading of sports photographs by elite athletes

The way in which media workers and sportswomen described their reading of sports photographs highlighted a general consistency in decoding practices. For a number of the female participants, their first impressions of sports photographs focused on examining sporting technique and appraising the athlete's body language. They also remarked on the powerful impact of facial expressions due to their readability. Yet all of the elite athletes expressed difficulty in evaluating sports photographs of themselves, and almost seemed embarrassed to acknowledge that they looked at them; as one athlete stated "to be brutally honest, I try very hard not to look at photos of me". This athlete was particularly concerned about her appearance and what audiences would think of her. Other sportswomen also commented on the problematic nature of being featured in sports action photographs, as illustrated by one athlete who maintained that "they're not flattering…. And … I don't want to be perceived as really … like kind of masculine". This athlete was anxious that her sportswear accentuated her muscular frame, which she described in terms drawn from dominant discourses of gender that construct muscularity, sweat and brute force as natural and acceptable for men but not for women.

MacNeill (1994) suggests that this practice of reading images is not unusual and that "women are voyeurs also, looking through 'male eyes' to determine what the 'ideal' female body is and to rank themselves according to standards set by the media" (p. 284). Although happy to be photographed during sports action, one athlete preferred the opportunity to get changed after the event before consenting to have photographs taken, because she felt that her appearance during events portrayed her as unfeminine and therefore unattractive. Rather than recalling the sporting moments depicted in the photographs with pride, these athletes' attention focused on their appearance and the assumptions other people would make about them. The athletes' concerns revolved around wanting to be perceived as feminine, yet they also revealed that sports action photographs made this an almost impossible task.

The athletes' struggles with wanting to be considered feminine were further exacerbated as they acknowledged how greater media coverage is given to more feminine and "sexy" sportswomen. The content analysis results supported this suggestion that greater attention is given to sportswomen competing in feminine, female or gender appropriate sports, as identified in Metheny's (1965) gender-based classifications of sports. This type of media coverage that focuses on discourses of femininity "identifies the competitors as women first and then athletes" (Feder-Kane, 2000, p. 213), and conveys the impression that sportswomen should be appreciated for their looks rather than their sporting abilities. Arguably, this practice of objectifying sportswomen may discourage a female audience from being interested in the sporting achievements of sportswomen, in that they have to negotiate a range of readings that may conflict with their perceptions of discourses of sport. For instance, several of the elite athletes were highly critical of the inclusion of beach volleyball in the Olympics, and were even more disparaging about the rules governing the clothes female athletes have to wear to participate in this code.

Negative readings of muscular sportswomen

Strong and muscular women appear to pose a powerful threat to discourses of sport, particularly in relation to the sports–masculinity articulation that privileges sportsmen in media coverage. The muscle definition and the power and strength required by women in sport appeared to be problematic for both the media workers and the athletes, especially as it challenged dominant discourses of femininity. In repeating the criticisms raised in television coverage of international female discus competitors suggesting that they are "all too muscular and butch", one male media worker indirectly highlighted the typical stereotyping that muscular sportswomen are subjected to, while also questioning their femininity and sexuality. Dominant discourses of gender associate muscularity with masculinity, and hence powerfully-built women, particularly those involved in sports culturally deemed to be 'men's sports', are frequently perceived as lesbian (Cahn, 1994). Booth and Tatz (2000) maintain that issues of physical strength and power are conditional and that "muscular women still walk a fine line between … fulfil[ling] their destinies as wives and mothers – [and what is considered] aesthetically pleasing and excessive muscular development" (pp. 205-

206). Thus, calling into question the sexuality of muscular sportswomen reinforces dominant beliefs that muscularity and masculinity are synonymous and traditionally associated with men, such that *real* women are required to physically differentiate themselves from men, and evaluated in relation to ideals of femininity: weak, graceful and fragile.

Positive readings of muscular and successful sportswomen

Although a few photographs viewed by media workers during the Commonwealth Games depicted muscular sportswomen involved in sports such as weightlifting, discus and shot-put, no negative comments were raised about *medal winning* sportswomen, nor were comments made about their sexuality. Moreover, none of the elite athletes who described a range of sports photographs of sportswomen raised any criticism of photographs that featured muscular sportswomen or those involved in sports deemed inappropriate for women. It was only in relation to photographs of themselves that concerns were raised about perceptions of muscularity being associated with masculinity. Further, an athlete participating in a sport deemed male appropriate revealed the positive media response she received, as they featured her in a number of "pretty good" sports photographs.

For one sportswoman who won a gold medal, the contextual framing of her success drew on discourses of nationalism as she was propelled onto the front page ahead of a lesser-known sportsman who had also won a gold medal. However, despite her success and prominent placement, coverage featured her victory in line with discourses of gender, repositioning her as a daughter rather than an athlete. This again suggests that New Zealand sportswomen involved in men's sports or athletes whose appearance deviates from the idealized feminine image attract positive media coverage when they are successful, yet failure results in criticism of not just the athlete's inability to win, but also of their lack of conformity to feminine norms – as I will address further below. Thus, media workers' comments implied that sportswomen who exhibit large muscles transgress gender norms, a suggestion that links muscularity with dominant discourses of gender and masculinity, whereby strength and physical power are deemed natural and normal for sportsmen and are consequently regarded as *unfeminine* and *unnatural* for sportswomen.

Media indifference to sportswomen and the construction of mediated sports news

The media were described by athletes as following their own predetermined storylines, frequently ignoring the actual facts supplied by the athlete or their management, using old news or old photographs, and discounting the *real* story. In addition, a number of the athletes criticised New Zealand sports journalists for their lack of preparation or research about them or their sports, which was seen as not only unprofessional, but also taken as a sign of disrespect for them as athletes and of indifference towards women's sport.

The athletes suggested that not only are sportswomen treated differently to sportsmen by the media, but they are expected to do more in order to warrant coverage, and what is produced is often subjectively developed to drive publicity and hype audience interest rather than provide objective journalism. Moreover, the second-rate position ascribed to sportswomen was described in relation to the way that journalists appear to approach sportsmen first for input at mixed-gender events, rather than interviewing an athlete on the basis of their individual merit or result. One athlete stated, "we kind of expect it now, when the media come in that they'll want the boys, they don't want the girls". Thus, sportswomen learn that sports journalists more frequently privilege sportsmen, despite competing at the same events and the performances of sportswomen sometimes outshining those of sportsmen. Yet despite voicing her frustration at media ignoring her and her team-mates, this participant further added "and, if they do want the girls …we always complain if they do want us, because we want to look pretty and stuff!" Her response clearly highlights the problematic nature of media coverage of sportswomen, and the wider discursive struggles to reconcile women's sports participation with dominant ideals of femininity. Moreover, media coverage that features sportswomen in stereotyped sports photographs that visually project idealized feminine attributes encourages female athletes and audiences to believe that a feminine physical appearance is the measure of worth that is most valued and important, rather than their sports achievements and skills.

The ambiguity of media coverage of sportswomen that links to performance

Media workers appeared to treat sportswomen differently based on the context of the event and their sporting achievements. Although research reveals that discourses of sport are negotiated and frequently disrupted by discourses of nationalism during major events, this change is more evident for medal-winning sportswomen. In one instance, after an unsuccessful performance one sportswoman, who had previously featured prominently as a potential medal winner, was subjected to a more personal attack in media coverage that focused on her build as signaling a lack of form. One media worker suggested that her *failure* related to her physical appearance and "excessive weight", sentiments that were carried over into the newspaper coverage for that day's events. This reading of sports photographs by media workers highlights the powerful effect discourses of gender and femininity have in shaping assumptions of women's athletic ability. Yet it also reflects the contradictions that sportswomen face, in that despite her appearance and supposedly 'excessive weight' remaining the same throughout the period of coverage studied, this athlete had been praised and positively validated in the days running up to the final event. This contradictory coverage reveals how media workers are influenced by the context of sports news; sportswomen who win are incorporated within the sport–masculinity articulation, while those who lose are aligned with discourses of femininity, as failed women first and then as defeated athletes.

Sportswomen are not only tied to discourses of femininity through their appearance but also their actions, as reflected by the sports sub-editor and sports editor. One particular example highlighted the stereotypical perceptions of gendered interests and activities with which women are associated, in a headline entitled *'Massage and retail therapy beckoning'* about bronze medal squash player, Shelley Kitchen. The use of this article and headline, selected by the sports editor, directed audience attention towards the stereotypical cultural clichés associated with women and away from the athlete's medal winning performance. Despite the preferred meaning that the male sports editor constructed about the athlete's *spa treatment*, which could have been perceived as negative, the female sports sub-editor interpreted it as a positive message for female sports audiences. These findings highlight how individuals assume dominant discourses of gender,

as well as illustrate how media workers' gender and own interests and beliefs encourage certain assumptions about audience appeal, rather than surveys and research into actual audience preferences.

Another example of media drawing on dominant discourses of femininity when constructing sports news about female athletes related to the media incorporating gender-based and gender-biased coverage. This results in male and female athletes not only being interviewed differently but also for different purposes, as highlighted in an athlete's experience of being interviewed after winning a major competition. She assumed that her sports magazine interview was about her recent achievement, but was disappointed to learn that they merely wanted her perspective on "diet and nutrition", without mentioning her sporting success. Yet despite her frustration at the nature of the interview, the athlete immediately defended the magazine's approach by reflecting on dominant cultural beliefs that as a woman she would "naturally" know about healthy eating habits, which "we girls … worry more about". Her response highlights the athlete's acceptance of dominant discourses of femininity, and reflects the tension sportswomen face in on the one hand striving to be acknowledged by the media as athletes, yet also desiring to be regarded as feminine. Moreover, despite participants expressing their dismay at media marginalization, several of them remarked that "that's just the way it is", in a manner which suggests they accepted this as a natural consequence of being a woman. This highlights the discursive power of the sports–masculinity articulation, in that even these seasoned sportswomen recognized their second-rate position as athletes and appeared to accept it as the norm.

Discourses of nationalism create space for successful sportswomen

Discourses of nationalism play a powerful role in disrupting the sports–masculinity articulation during major international sporting events, such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. In these instances, media coverage of sportswomen momentarily becomes nationally important and athletes who convey a sense of national identity feature more prominently. Yet, in this study the patterns that emerged in sports photographs that attracted greater media coverage were not generalized, but rather focused on success, medals and signs of national identity. Many such images were prominently positioned on the front page.

Moreover, this atypical focus by media workers on sportswomen suggests that success at internationally important events is a powerful leveller and creates space for sportswomen to be featured, especially those who are successful. This emphasis on '*our*' national victories in media coverage also disrupts what is otherwise a deeply contradictory articulation of sports and femininity.

However, the data clearly revealed that this privileging of photographs of sportswomen was short-lived and only related to the Games coverage, as the dominant visual focus throughout the overall period of the major event coverage continued to privilege sportsmen, who featured in more than three times as many photographs (70.7%) as sportswomen (21.6%). Furthermore, the elite athletes' responses highlighted the challenge that audiences have in negotiating a reading of sports photographs of sportswomen, due to the often conflicting discourses media workers draw on as they construct sports news. This was particularly apparent in examining the way in which photographs of sportswomen suddenly featured either when they made it to the finals or after a medal win, having been ignored before the final event despite a successful build-up.

Media ambivalence was also observed with media workers deliberating over photographs and the performances of national athletes, particularly those expected to win medals. On many occasions, sportswomen who had won medals were not even mentioned in the meetings, nor were photographs presented in the editorial photograph sessions, yet for other sportsmen, despite no photographs being available; these were sourced prior to that day's print run if media workers asked for them. At times it appeared that the choice of photographs drove the news story, while at other times it was the story that drove the selection of photographs. Moreover, during the Commonwealth Games there was a substantial increase in photographs of sportswomen (272), which resulted in more photographs being published of them than of sportsmen (258). This suggests that winning is a powerful means of interrupting the hegemonic state of discourses of sport, and creates space for successful sportswomen to be recognized as athletes *and* as women.

This privileging of successful sportswomen was, however, conveyed in relation to dominant discourses of femininity, where sportswomen were seen in numerous close-up photographs, wearing traditionally feminine sportswear that emphasizes gender difference by displaying the female body. For example, in

terms of the contextual framing of one gold medal winning sportswoman, although her success provided her with an opportunity to feature in a large sized, close-up photograph, her victory was conveyed through the headline in relation to discourses of gender, which repositioned her as a daughter rather than an athlete. The close-up photograph reflected an emotional but smiling sportswoman with tears running down her cheeks, holding the winner's bouquet with the national flag draped around her neck, yet the medal was only faintly visible behind the flowers. These signs and symbols of gender and national identity exhibited within sports photographs are also important, as they help frame the preferred media message and, in this case, contextualize the sportswoman as a successful New Zealand athlete, which audiences visually read and assume.

Signs and symbols of national identity

Although the majority of the photographs featured national athletes wearing their distinctive national uniforms, there were a number of different signs and symbols of national identity drawn on during the major international sporting event period. For New Zealand media, these included the national flag and the silver fern flag, apparel that highlighted the silver fern emblem, and the performance or reference to the haka. These easily recognizable and conspicuous signs of *'our'* national identity were shown to be important in sports production because they were believed to encourage audiences' national pride and patriotism. Thus, media workers selected photographs in which these clearly distinguishable features drew attention to local and national athletes, as they supported the construction of a sense of affinity with the athletes and potentially increased audience interest. During the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony, for example, media workers discussed the importance of promoting 'kiwi qualities' and using a celebrated and distinguished athlete on the front page, as a means of promoting immediate recognition. The editor commented that their choice was "all about pageantry and the Carter one showed some Kiwi faces, so here's Kiwi's and the Games". One of the features of '*Kiwiness*' discussed at length during the major event was the prominent use by the media of photographs and articles about the haka, which was or became increasingly contentious due to perceptions of the detrimental effect its overuse could have on its meaning and value associated with it.

However, the majority of the athletes described their sense of national pride being heightened during international competition when the haka was performed to symbolically celebrate Kiwi sporting success and help promote New Zealand's unique cultural identity. One athlete conveyed her experience of having the haka performed while overseas, which she felt was inspiring for the athletes and audiences alike. The athletes further described the haka as being important for the national team in terms of helping build team spirit and uniting the athletes at the major event. Most of the athletes' comments focused on the positive effects of the haka, while there were some concerns raised about the traditional and cultural significance associated with the haka being confused or ignored by those performing it at these events, as well as the possibility of it being applied in a culturally inappropriate way. Thus, concerns were two-fold: one set of concerns relating to overuse of the haka by athletes, as had been emphasized within media coverage, and another pertaining to the impact of this on the value or mana of the activity. It was only the female athletes who suggested the inappropriateness of the haka in relation to women's participation, which was linked to their concern about the haka being taken out of cultural context, rather than negativity about the use of the haka in a sporting context. However, what was clear in this study and has been similarly identified within other new Zealand research is that "the use of the *haka*, as a powerful identifier and cultural symbol, attracted a great deal of media attention" (Edwards, 2007, p. 183). This therefore suggests that the haka is an important and powerful sign associated with New Zealand national identity, which national athletes and audiences have come to expect and accept as a part of major international sporting events.

Summary

My observations of what media workers actually do, as opposed to what they say they do, reveals the complexity of newsroom hierarchies, power relations and their outcomes. The production of sports news and the selection of sports photographs are a direct result of competing discourses, where certain ones dominate and others are marginalized. Further, the findings highlight how the wider discursive struggles that challenge those who construct sports news also impact on those who consume it. The taken-for-granted nature of coverage that privileges men's sports and sportsmen by giving them greater exposure

simultaneously disenfranchises women's sports and sportswomen, by ignoring their sporting achievements or by reframing them in an ambiguous or ambivalent manner in relation to discourses of femininity. Discourses of sports journalism therefore play a powerful role in relation to the way that media workers construct preferred messages and audiences interpret and create perceptions about athleticism, athletes and sporting events. Moreover, when gender is conveyed in media coverage it acts as a differentiator between sportsmen and sportswomen, such that what men do is *'sport'*, and what women do is imitate sport or at best engage in an inferior version of it; *'women's sport'*.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight that not only are sportsmen featured in a greater number of photographs but they are also shown to participate in a wider range of sports than sportswomen. This finding provides powerful insight into a media message that posits that virtually all sports are open to men; whilst also proposing, through the narrow representation of women's sport, that they are limited to fewer sports and their participation is less newsworthy or important. Moreover, this visual privileging of sportsmen and men's sport reinforces the sports–masculinity articulation, while depicting sportswomen in relation to idealized femininity helps normalize audiences' perceptions of the problematic sportswomen–femininity articulation. When sportswomen were featured, the media selected sports photographs that supported the production of preferred messages that reinforced idealized femininity, rather than highlighting their sporting skills, achievements and athleticism. For the elite sportswomen involved in this study, the powerful role that this sports–masculinity articulation plays in their own lives was reflected in the way that they consistently acknowledged and appeared to accept the predominant emphasis New Zealand media place on men's sports and sportsmen. There was very little audience resistance to the stereotypical coverage, although this was revealed to be problematic in relation to their own media exposure and that of their individual sporting codes. However, androcentric and stereotypical coverage was taken-for-granted as "just the way it is", and most of the elite athletes did not explicitly challenge the gendered status quo in terms of contesting the patriarchal values underpinning New Zealand's sports news production.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

So what is '*the message*' that newspaper sports photographs convey in relation to gender specifically, and is it really that important? As this study has revealed, the answer to these questions is both problematic and complicated. The fact is that reading sports photographs and creating meaning is not only based on individual experiences and beliefs, but also arises through shared cultural understandings and perceptions in society about gender, sports and the media. Media workers and audiences cannot disconnect themselves from the wider discursive struggles that exist, which profoundly influence the types of sports photographs selected and the messages that become discursively constructed in relation to them. Across all three components studied – production, content and reception, hierarchies and power relations were seen to play a critical role in relation to individuals and their positional influence and through the discourses used in encoding or decoding sports photographs. Yet, it would seem then that, in the media production / audience relationship, the workings of power mean that power firmly resides with media decision-makers, who play a vital role in shaping social understandings of sport and gender. However, production occurs in relation to a range of internal and external conditions, and is shaped by organizational structures, hierarchies, journalistic practices and newsroom routines encapsulated within discourses of sports journalism, which media workers draw on in the production of sports news. In addition, as media workers discursively construct a preferred message in relation to the selected sports photograph, a range of possible dominant and marginalized discourses are negotiated.

Gender plays a key role in both the production and reception of sports photographs, in relation to media workers drawing on discourses of gender, and audiences creating meaning in relation to athletes' gender, as well as the gendered composition of media workers and audiences. With the continued exclusion of women from many decision-making positions in media production, along with media practices drawing on gendered discourses, the resultant gendered sports news appears to strongly influence audiences' interpretations and social understandings of sportswomen and women's sport. Thus, the way in which sports, male and female athletes and events are presented is inevitably problematic

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for audiences of female sport, and more specifically for female audiences. For instance, similar to international research, this present study reveals that during both periods of sports coverage, the majority of sports photographs privileged sportsmen and men's sport. This favouring of sportsmen extends beyond a simplistic featuring of a greater number of images of men, but rather visually reifies 'a message' that reinforces the sports–masculinity articulation; it tells a story that sport is essentially masculine.

Of particular significance within this study was the way in which discourses of journalism, and more specifically sports journalism, support the creation of consistent patterns in the production of sports news. Representations of sportswomen and sportsmen were found to be substantially similar. Much traditional content analysis drew attention to gender-bias that was based on raw numbers, such that meaning was attributed to the overwhelming emphasis on sportsmen and the negligible coverage of sportswomen, interpreting this to be media discrimination against sportswomen. In contrast, this study highlighted the strikingly similar gender-based proportions of coverage of sports action and sports related photographs of athletes on the front page and sports pages during both the major event and everyday coverage, which was unexpected and extraordinary. These findings clearly revealed that when sportswomen feature in media coverage, they are subject to the same discursive patterns of coverage in sports as men. Just as for men, sports action photographs featured most frequently, which not only implies their greater news value, but also revealed the occurrence of identical pattern in the proportional coverage of sports action photographs of male and female athletes, despite the significant privileging in terms of the raw number of photographs of sportsmen.

However, the starting point of my research was that of going beyond the already acknowledged favouring of photographs of sportsmen – which the content analysis confirmed – to establish how the visual medium of the photograph is used to convey meaning. Using semiotic analysis, the content findings were augmented through a process by which the visual signs and symbols conveyed within photographs were examined, to establish how messages are discursively constructed within images and the ways in which any accompanying text either supports or contradicts the image message. The value of integrating semiotic analysis is that it greatly enhances the didactic process of understanding how

media workers encode meaning and audiences decode them, in relation to the types of sports photographs published. It is only more recently, however, that researchers interested in gendered discourses in the sports media have combined both content and semiotic approaches in their studies. The value of this approach in my analysis of photographs of sportswomen suggests that similar research should be conducted using a combination of content and semiotic analysis of photographs of sportsmen, to establish what is discursively constructed within preferred media messages in respect of sportsmen and men's sports.

This study also highlights that despite the best of intentions, when media workers draw on their years of experience in sports journalism and make judgements about what is valued and newsworthy in sports news, this does not necessarily correlate with what audiences actually want nor does it provide media workers with the knowledge of who the real sports audience is (or could be). In describing their 'target' audience, media workers' comments highlighted their perceptions of an assumed rather than an actual audience, as it was clear that little direct surveying or monitoring of the newspaper sports audience is undertaken. As has been raised in a number of sports production studies (Hardin et al., 2002; Jones, 2006), I recommend that the sports media make use of surveys and research to establish what current *and potential* audiences' interests might be; ensuring that their offerings serve a broader audience, including fans of women's sports, the result of which would inevitably benefit the media through encouraging more sales from this potential target audience.

The power of the photographic preferred message was revealed in the way that it naturalizes how media workers and audiences accept the privileging of sportsmen as 'the norm'. In this study, there were few occasions when this message was read in a negotiated or oppositional manner. In addition, the power of images is also developed through the way that audiences' perceptions are influenced not only in relation to the preferring of meaning of *how* or *what* is depicted for sportsmen, but more specifically how, images of sportswomen reinforce the sportswomen–femininity articulation, rather than articulating sportswomen to sporting discourses. Thus, photographs of sportswomen are in themselves 'a message'; one that suggests an incompatibility between discourses of sports and femininity. This conflict was also recognized by Birrell and Theberge (1994), who argued that "the representation of female athletes available

to us through the media restrict our imagination about what women athletes can accomplish and what their performances mean in a cultural sense" (p. 346). Moreover, in this present study the majority of the elite athletes highlighted their acuity in relation to media practices that marginalize sportswomen. Although these elite sportswomen appeared to accept preferred media messages, they also clearly demonstrated their frustration at the inherent marginalization of coverage of sportswomen, which they voiced as inaccuracies in reporting, the lack of media research and the use of outdated information. They are, thus, aware that the sports media frequently present misleading, ambivalent or ambiguous media coverage of sportswomen. However, despite the elite athletes' acuity, the powerful yet complex role played by hegemonic masculinity in sport was evidenced through the way that these elite athletes appeared to not only accept their marginalized position, but also largely took for granted the prominence of sportsmen and men's sports as "just the way it is". Their comments also help highlight how audiences and athletes may have limited ability to either influence what is featured or how it is presented.

This study further reveals that when sportswomen are featured, the selected sports photographs draw attention to them as women. The selected sports photographs more frequently accentuate their physical attractiveness, with close-up images drawing attention to their breasts and feminine physique, and dominant discourses of domestic femininity are used to construct preferred media messages that are targeted at predominantly male audiences. The concern about this type of media coverage is that it not only ignores audiences interested in women's sports, but makes it challenging for sportswomen to negotiate what it means to be a woman *and* an athlete. Moreover, despite momentary increases in coverage of sportswomen during major international sporting events, which researchers suggest reflects positively on sportswomen (Bruce & Chapman, 2006; Hardin et al., 2002; Jones, 2006; Mason & Rail, 2006), the majority of focus continues to emphasize nationally successful women, and focuses more on those sports traditionally deemed appropriate for women or those sports described as being 'gender-neutral'. However, during the major event period too, other exceptions to typically everyday coverage of sportswomen were also apparent. For instance, the media appear to attempt to encourage audiences' sense of patriotism and national pride in large sized, close-up photographs depicting New Zealand sportswomen in

combative interaction with an international opponent. These photographs are discursively constructed in ways that reinforce the traditional sports–masculinity articulation, but in a way that is conveyed as unproblematic for these sportswomen. This rule bending in women's sports coverage is the result of discourses of nationalism challenging and disrupting the norms of discourses of sports and gender, promoting sportswomen as members of the national team, which creates space for them to feature *as athletes*. However, it is also too simplistic to assume that increased media coverage of sportswomen will necessarily provide better or improved exposure or any sense of permanency for sportswomen in general sports news. Thus, the bending of rules is in essence rather a refocus of attention on particular sportswomen, who are embraced as exceptional 'sports stars', rather than any form of consistency in featuring female athletes in general. Therefore, researchers should be wary of any sense of complacency that these fleeting moments of apparent media partiality towards sportswomen during major events will in any way change the way that they are featured in everyday coverage. In fact, this change is not only artificial but also superficial due to its transient nature. Although sportswomen attract substantially greater media coverage during major events, in my study the majority of this coverage replicates that of everyday reporting, featuring sportswomen participating in feminine appropriate and gender-neutral sports and of images accentuating women's physical appearance and feminine bodies.

What this present study and the work of numerous other sports media researchers has convincingly elucidated is that there is little need for more research proving that media coverage privileges sportsmen; this *problem* is well established both in New Zealand and international research. What is needed now in sports media research is for greater focus on deconstructing the sports–masculinity articulation, and identifying ways that discourses of sports and gender can be rearticulated to ensure that all athletes feature in ways that acknowledge them as athletes and as individuals, regardless of their gender or the sports that they are participating in. In addition, what is also now required is that the knowledge that researchers have developed about the privileging of sportsmen and men's sports and marginalization of sportswomen and women's sport be now implemented into some form of action to change the way that media discursively construct preferred messages about athletes and athleticism. These strategies need

to be actively pursued through public awareness campaigns, such as through targeting school sports programmes where focus is given to creating gender awareness and in highlighting the value of sport as a means of shaping social and cultural understandings about society in general.

While every effort was made to include as many elite sportswomen participating in a range of sports into this study as possible, the reality was that only nine of the original 25 elite sportswomen initially approached responded to the request and then only seven were able to make themselves available for interviews or participate via e-mail. Although this resulted in fewer elite athletes participating in this study than anticipated, the range of responses and their vast experience with local and international sports media offered a good depth of information about their experiences and personal perceptions of sports photographs and the sports news in general. In addition, with only two athletes participating in the same sport, their comments highlighted the exposure given to six sporting codes and their media reception at local, national and major international sporting events. Moreover, these participants are themselves all Olympic and Commonwealth Games medal-winning athletes, which provided valuable insight into the manner in which the media treated them before, during and after their victories, as well as the way in which their media exposure has made them well-known personalities, role models and spokespersons in New Zealand.

While it was originally proposed that this study would also include focus group discussions with a number of senior school students to establish their impressions of sports photographs and media coverage of sports news, due to the scope of this tripartite study this additional step was removed. I believe, however, that studying the sports media using a multi-method approach that draws on the perceptions and experiences of a broad range of audience user groups is preferable, if time and resources allow.

As technologies evolve and new forms of mass media develop online, it is hoped that the role of existing, traditional journalism will also change to be more inclusive, as new ways of featuring a broader range of sports and athletes are created. In addition, through these new avenues of mass communication, I foresee increased opportunities for sports audiences, athletes and researchers to be able to access and assess the use and inclusiveness of these sites, through the various

interactive mechanisms that most online technology offers, which is currently largely absent in traditional media. In addition, the inclusion of audience voices being developed as a matter of course within alternative press, online media platforms, and in sports and social networking sites, may in fact be the catalyst for traditional media, such as newspapers, to re-examine their whole way of being and transform themselves to not only compete for further audience attention, but also to ensure that those being addressed and represented are also able to have their say.

APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SHEET FOR MEDIA PARTICIPANTS

PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF NEW ZEALAND ATHLETES IN PRINT MEDIA

Brief Outline of the Research Project

There have been a number of local and international research studies looking at the sports media. The main focus of research has revolved around the text and/or the images that appear in newspapers or on television or radio. However, there has been very little research that explicitly looks at the production of sports media images, or at the meanings that are conveyed by them, or how readers interpret them. My study involves examining the processes involved in the production and delivery of the sports content of New Zealand (daily and Sunday) newspapers. My specific focus is on the photographic representation of athletes. The first stage of my newspaper data collection period is during coverage of the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, commencing on Wednesday 8 March 2006 and ending on Sunday 2 April 2006. The second period will cover the same time period in 2007. This study is designed to allow insight into the production of newspaper sporting images, to examine the images that have been reproduced and to establish how audiences, including athletes, receive this visual communication.

At a high level this research aims to establish how New Zealand sports media workers go about selecting and reproducing images of athletes in newspapers and how this delivery is received. It is not just a matter of establishing what is reproduced but also more precisely why, how and with what end result. By taking into account media worker practices, training, experience and the professional media environment, I hope to develop a picture of the internal and external pressures experienced in the production of the sports pages of New Zealand newspapers. It is in line with this aspect of my study that I believe you will be able to assist by providing me with information on sports media production. This production investigation is the first step in a wider analysis that incorporates the examination of the content of the sports media and how audiences make sense of photographic images in sports media.

This three-tiered approach will present a greater opportunity to examine each aspect without isolating any of the steps that make up a complete circle of communication. The production stage will be the first step examined, to establish the processes involved and selection criteria of media professionals who determine which images are used in the newspaper sports section. Once the newspaper has been produced the next step will be to investigate the physical content that has been produced, whose images are captured and what activities have been highlighted. The final stage will be to explore the reception of the newspaper content. This reception phase will shed light on some of the interpretations and meanings that newspaper readers, and some of those athletes captured in images, attach to newspaper sports photography.

Confidentiality and Use of the Data
As a participant, you may choose to remain anonymous or to be fully or partially identified by name and occupation. The data collected will be used in the production of a PhD thesis, and appropriate research articles and presentations. The attached Consent Form outlines the confidentiality options available to you.

Your involvement
Participation may entail any of the following potential interactions:
- Formal and informal interviews

- Field observation of the processes involved in the production of newspaper sports pages
- Discussions on observed activities, feedback on supplied transcripts and clarification
- E-mail and / or telephonic communication

It is specifically intended that all involvement will be carried out with the least disruption to your daily activities and with limited interruptions. Note taking and audiotape recording will be utilized wherever convenient and possible.

Participant's Rights
As a participant you have the right to:
- Refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any further questions about the study which occur to you during your participation
- Request for transcripts changes, as required, due to errors of fact or to expand on content
- Be given access to your individual transcript and to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded
- Contact my supervisor to discuss any issues or concerns that you may have in respect of this study.

Records
All records from the interviews and field observation process will be kept confidential. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research process. Access to the raw data is limited to the researcher and her University supervisors.

Participation
If you wish to participate in this study, please read the attached form - Appendix 2: Consent Form for Media Workers– and sign it accordingly. If you have any queries, comments or questions about this study please feel free to contact me using the details stated at the bottom of the Consent Form.

Researcher: Sue Chapman
Ph:
Email:

Supervisor: Dr Toni Bruce, Department of Sport and Leisure Studies, University of Waikato
Ph:
Email:

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM FOR MEDIA PARTICIPANTS

PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF NEW ZEALAND ATHLETES IN PRINT MEDIA

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** and have had the details of the study explained to me. I freely agree to participate in this research study, to be conducted by Sue Chapman, a PhD student in the Department of Sport and Leisure Studies. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out below:

1) Sue Chapman may conduct a variety of face-to-face interviews, discussions and/or follow-up interviews with me relating to the newspaper production of sports images. These interviews and discussions may be recorded on audiotape. I, the participant, have the right to decline to discuss any issue or aspect raised during interviews or within any of the discussions. After having read the transcript, I have the right to request amendments due to errors of fact or omissions, or to delete any information with which I am uncomfortable.

2) I understand that Sue Chapman will keep all interview records confidential. I also understand that due to the nature of the PhD research process, her supervisors Dr Toni Bruce and Dr. Carolyn Michelle will be the only other individuals who have access to the raw data. The audio recording will also be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research process. The transcribed audio or written data collected by Sue Chapman will be used in the production of her PhD thesis and research articles and presentations. I understand that my privacy and confidentiality will be protected in line with the selection that I make below, and that if a pseudonym is chosen, that this will be used in any publication or presentations based on this study.

3) I understand and accept that Sue Chapman may be involved in field observation sessions during the newspaper production phase. I agree to her participation and for her to ask questions, when appropriate, about the criteria used and images that are selected within this process.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular question in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out below:

I choose: **Full disclosure [   ]   Partial disclosure [   ]   Full confidentiality [   ]**

Complete the relevant details below, adding a pseudonym where required

Name (or pseudonym): _____
Age: _____
Position (or generic descriptor): _____
Year (s) in position:_____ Employer (or pseudonym):_____
Signature of participant: _____
Signature of researcher: _____
Date: _____

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

To: Susan Chapman
Cc: Toni Bruce

From: Sue Bradley: Administrator
            For the School of Education Ethics Committee

Date: 16 December 2005

Subject: Ethical Approval

The School of Education Ethics Committee considered your application for ethical approval for the research proposal:

> "What you see is what you get (influenced by): The visual representation of New Zealand athletes in print media"

The following was the outcome of that discussion:

Recommendations:

a. That the researcher consider the implications of giving participants the choice of using their name, since there may be follow-on implications regarding the identifiability of others. (p 10)

I am pleased to advise that this application has received ethical approval.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Ted Glynn
CHAIRPERSON
School of Education Ethics Committee

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MEDIA WORKERS

Proposed questions for media workers:

What is your job title?

Can you briefly describe what your job entails?

What role do you play in the production of the newspaper sports pages?

How long have you been in this position?

What training or experiences have prepared you for this role?

How many people do you work with?

    Specify – directly and indirectly?

Who do you report to?

What type of technology do you use in your role?

What do you enjoy most about your work?

What do you least enjoy about your work?

How much of the final sports page delivery is within your control?

    Are there limits that are in place such as using certain photographers,

    black and white images rather than colour ones,

    space restrictions?

Are there certain sports that will always get coverage? Please expand

Are there certain athletes that will always get coverage? Please expand

What sports did/do you participate in?

What sports do you personally prefer to watch, go to, or read about?

When it comes to international sporting events – what types of things do you do before the event to prepare yourself for it?

What types of things does the organization do before the event to prepare for it?

How do you go about covering the multitude of sports that are then available?

Specifically at event such as Olympics and CW Games where sports run concurrently?

How do the photographs get provided for use?

Do the photographers have a say in the physical layout of the image?

What time frame do you have to make the necessary image choices?

Who writes the captions that go with the images?

Do the journalists and the photographers work together or is the tying-in done back in the production area?

How do you decide which sports or athletes get covered for a particular newspaper edition?

Who decides when sports images get used in areas other than the sports pages – and specifically front page coverage?

Do the journalists and photographers ever come back with comments about the production?

Who owns the photographs and how are they stored?

If you have no good images, do you ever have to reproduce images taken previously?

What is the process involved in using images belonging to Reuters or other news wires or professional freelance photographers?

APPENDIX 5: DATA FIELDS FOR NEWSPAPER CONTENT ANALYSIS

Data field titles	Types of information reflected
Name of newspaper	WT=Waikato Times, NZH=New Zealand Herald, HOS=Herald on Sunday, SST=Sunday Star Times
Unique input number	#
Newspaper page number	p.#; FP= front page; SE= special edition/guide
Day and Date	Day of week, dd Mm YYYY
Sport	Name of sports reflected
Com Games or Not	X = Comm Games; IN=International; NA=National; RE=Regional; LO=Local; O=overseas
Gender	M=Male; F=Female; MIX=mixed; NEU=netural
Identify individual/s or team	Names of the individual(s) or team featured
Article Position/ Location	FP= front page; MS= main sports; ED = editorial; INS= inside sport; news or magazine
Article Focus	E= sporting event; P= athlete/team; S= stadia/facilities; O= organisation (e.g., IOC); I= issue (drugs); N=News **or** OTH=Other
Theme of article or report	What is featured in the column
Article Type	E= Event report; P= Preview; F= Feature; R= Results; C= Column;ED= Editorial; HE= Header
Article Size (cm2)	Includes headline, text, and image/s
Image (cm2)	Measure image by itself, even though it is also included in 'article size'
Identify individual/s or team	Names of the individual(s) or team featured
National ID	Nationality of featured player(s) or teams
Gender	M=Male; F=Female; MIX=mixed; NEU=netural
Image Focus	SA=doing sport/in action; SR=sport related/ passive; SRF=sport realted, flag; M=medal/ceremony; NON=not sport; CO=coach; OTH=other
Type of Image	P=photograph (live); H=head/mugshot; L=logo; GR=graphic; CAR=cartoon; C=Colour; BW=black & white
Representation of the Body	HEAD = Head or mostly head & shoulders; W=Whole Body; P=Parts of Body
Colour/B&W	C=Colour or BW= black & white
Photographer	Name and agency
Caption	Text attached to the image

APPENDIX 6: LETTER OF INVITATION TO ELITE ATHLETES

10 February 2007

Dear _____

I am writing to ask if you would be interested in being interviewed for a research study on how the New Zealand sports media represents female athletes. This study is being done by Susan Chapman for her PhD in Sport and Leisure Studies at the University of Waikato and I am writing in my capacity as her chief supervisor.

Dave Currie provided me with your email address and is aware of the aims of the study. I guarantee that your email address is being used only for this invitation and will not be kept on file or used for any other purpose. You are one of 10 top New Zealand female athletes who have been approached.

I encourage you to consider being part of this unique study which attempts to explore the experiences of a range of people impacted by the sports media - including sports media workers (journalists, editors, photographers, etc.), female athletes who do (and do not) get coverage, and young women who read newspapers.

Since her first major news gathering period was during last year's Commonwealth Games, Sue would like to interview you about your opinions of coverage during that period, as well as your experiences in general.

If you would like to know more, please contact Sue directly at _____or phone on _____. You may also contact me at _____or phone no _____.

If you decide to participate in this research, Sue would set up an interview at a time that would fit in with your work, training, competing and personal life commitments. The interview can be in person, by telephone, email or MSN messenger, or another form of communication that is appropriate for you. She is based in Cambridge but could travel anywhere in the North Island to meet with you.

I believe this is an exciting study that would give you the chance to voice your opinions about how the media cover female sportswomen in this country.
If you are not interested, I would appreciate an email letting me know.

Regards,

Toni Bruce, PhD,
Senior Lecturer
Department of Sport and Leisure Studies
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton

APPENDIX 7: INFORMATION SHEET FOR ATHLETE PARTICIPANTS

PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF NEW ZEALAND ATHLETES IN PRINT MEDIA

Brief Outline of the Research Project

There have been a number of local and international research studies looking at the sports media that have revolved around the text and/or the images that appear on television, in newspapers or on radio. However, there has been very little research that explicitly looks at the production of sports media photographs, the meanings that are conveyed by them, and how readers interpret them. This study examines the processes involved in the production, delivery and audience reception of the sports content of New Zealand newspapers (daily and Sunday). My specific focus is on the photographs of athletes.

In the reception phase, which is the phase in which you are invited to participate, I will examine how newspaper photographs of athletes are interpreted by audiences. A key focus of this study is to establish what meanings are given to photographs of New Zealand's elite athletes captured as they perform at international and local sports events. How the audience responds to these photographs and interprets them is important to help understand what expectations are developed in respect of athletic performance within the New Zealand context.

Your involvement
Your participation will involve:
- An interview in which newspaper sports photographs will be discussed. This will take approximately one hour in length and will be recorded on audiotape.
- The interview may take the form of a face-to-face meeting, e-mail communication, or via telephone, depending upon your availability.
- A transcript of our discussion will be supplied to you following the interview. You will have the opportunity to provide feedback, seek clarification or to have any comments or information deleted that you believe does not accurately reflect your intended meaning or interpretations.

It is specifically intended that the interview will be carried out with the least disruption to your daily activities and with limited interruptions. Note taking and audiotape recording will be utilized to ensure accuracy in recording your comments.

Confidentiality and Use of the Data
As a participant, you may choose to remain anonymous or to be fully or partially identified by name and sport. The data collected will be used in the production of a PhD thesis, and ensuing research articles and presentations. The attached Consent Form outlines the confidentiality options available to you.

Records
All records from the interview and the feedback will be kept confidential. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location. Access to the raw data is limited to the researcher and her University supervisors.

Participant's Rights
As a participant you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the interview at any time
- Ask any further questions about the study which occur to you during your participation or thereafter
- Request transcript changes, as required, due to errors of fact or to expand on content
- Be given access to your individual transcript and to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded
- Request to withdraw your data from the study up until you have signed off your transcript
- Contact my supervisors to discuss any issues or concerns that you may have in respect of this study.

Participation

If you wish to participate in this study, please read the attached form - Appendix 8: Consent Form for Athlete Participants – and sign it accordingly. If you have any queries, comments or questions about this study please feel free to contact me using the details stated at the bottom of the Consent Form.

Researcher: Sue Chapman
Ph:
Email:

Supervisor: Dr Toni Bruce, Department of Sport and Leisure Studies, University of Waikato
Ph:
Email:

APPENDIX 8 : CONSENT FORM FOR ATHLETE PARTICIPANTS

PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF NEW ZEALAND ATHLETES IN PRINT MEDIA

I have read the **Information Sheet for Athlete Participants** and have had the details of the study explained to me. I freely agree to participate in this research study, to be conducted by Sue Chapman, a PhD student in the Department of Sport and Leisure Studies. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out below:

1) Sue Chapman may conduct an interview with me either via a face-to-face meeting, e-mail communication or a telephone conversation. These discussions will be recorded on audiotape. I, the participant, have the right to decline to discuss any issue or aspect raised during the interview. Additionally, I am aware that I will be supplied with a transcript of our discussions relating to sports photographs published in the newspapers. After having read the transcript, I have the right to request amendments due to errors of fact, omissions, to expand on any of the content or to delete any information with which I am uncomfortable.

2) I understand that Sue Chapman will keep all interview records confidential. I also understand that due to the nature of the PhD research process, her supervisors Dr Toni Bruce and Dr Carolyn Michelle will be the only other individuals who will have access to the raw data. The audio recording will be kept in a secure location. The transcribed audio and written data collected by Sue Chapman will be used in the production of her PhD thesis and research articles and presentations. I understand that my privacy and confidentiality will be protected in line with the selection that I make below, and that if a pseudonym is chosen, this will be used in any publication or presentations based on this study.

3) I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time or to decline to answer any particular question and I may withdraw my data from the study up until I have signed off on the final transcript. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out below.

I choose: **Full disclosure [   ]   Partial disclosure [   ]   Full confidentiality [   ]**
Complete the relevant details below, adding a pseudonym where required

Full name: _____ Age: _____
Pseudonym (if required): _____ Yrs in elite _____
Elite sports that you play: _____
# of Commonwealth Games:_____
Primary sports training venue: _____
International medals & records: _____
Participant Signature: _____
Researcher Signature: _____
Date: _____

APPENDIX 9: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ELITE ATHLETES

- How successful would you consider your sports career to be thus far?
- What types of things motivate you when you go to an event?
- What goals do you set for yourself before an event?
- How do you feel that the local media report on your events / sports and activities?
- Have you experienced any differences in the way that local and international media works?
- When you look at a sports photograph, what attracts you to the image first? Why?
- When you look at a sporting photograph of yourself, what do you reflect on? Why?
- How much notice do you take of the text – captions and headlines - that go with the photographs (your own and others)?
- Can you remember a media photograph that got published that you really liked? Could you describe it and tell me what you really liked about it.
- Can you remember a media photograph that got published that you hated? Could you describe it and say why you disliked it.
- What are your first impressions when you see a sports photo on the front page of the newspaper?
- Do you feel that sportswomen are given enough media coverage, text and image?
- Are there times when sportswomen get focused on more than usual? Why do you think this happens?
- Whilst you're competing at an international event do you read the newspapers sports section or watch the televised sports commentary about your event? How does this make you feel?
- Do your family, friends or partner keep newspaper clippings and photographs for you (or for themselves of you) when you're competing?
- Growing up, who did you consider to be your sporting role models? Why, what is it that you enjoyed or liked about this particular athlete?
- Do you think that youngsters interested in sports need sporting role models? Why?

  The balance of the questions will be driven by what was raised above and through using the newspaper photographs as a prompter.

- Are there any sports photographs that stand out to you as really good? What do you like about them?
- What sports stood out to you that were captured photographically in these newspapers?
- Were there any athletes that appeared to stand out from within those newspapers? And why do you think they were given such focus?
- In general, what words would you use to describe the photographs of sportsmen that are most often represented in the newspaper?
- In general, what words would you use to describe the photographs of sportswomen that are most often represented in the newspaper?
- Were you surprised by any of the photographic sports coverage in these newspapers? If yes, what was it that you were surprised about?
- What impact do you think the media have on the way an athlete is received by the general public?

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