Not bad...for a girl: Media representation of physical differences between the sexes: An analysis of the CBC coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens.

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Not Bad...For a Girl: Media Representation of Physical Differences Between the Sexes: An Analysis of the CBC coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens.

by Sarah Hie

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Communication Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
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Abstract

This study examines the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. The commentary delivered throughout the men's and women's events is explored for differences in the presentation of men's and women's physical abilities in sport. Using biodeterminist research and feminist criticism of biodeterminist research as a foundation for exploration of physical differences between men and women, this study examines the media's presentation of a 'natural' segregation between men and women in athletics.

Although much research has already been conducted on the media's representation of women in sports, especially as it differs from their representation of men in sports, little analysis has been given to the Canadian media and no analysis has exclusively focused on the representation of a natural segregation between the sexes. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis and determined that commentators viewed the physical abilities of men and women differently. Furthermore, direct statements of contrast between men and women in the commentary revealed a bias that favoured male athleticism and supported biodeterminist beliefs in women as inherently physically weaker.
Dedication

To my mom and dad for making me go to school every day even when I didn’t want to, and to my big sister for setting the example. Also for Karl who inspires me.
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to all the people in my life who have lent an ear during this entire process. I would like to extend my appreciation to the faculty members who have guided me through this process in one way or another and who have been so patient along the way: to Dr. Wittebols for jumping in at the last hour with both feet and providing great support and encouragement; to Dr. Bryant for her kindness and wonderful insights; to Dr. McCrone for her expert knowledge; to Dr. Howsam for her enduring support and belief in my abilities.

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Special thanks must be given to Karl Agnew for being a wonderful friend and confidant and also for putting in endless hours of his own time to assist me with the coding and data entry. Also deserving of many thanks are Tina Siegel and Robert Steadman for their tremendous encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis and because they were always available to talk it over.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sport, at first glance, appears to have little importance on the larger social issues. Sport is primarily about entertainment for both the athlete and the spectators. We teach our children that they are ‘there to have fun’ and that ‘it doesn’t matter who wins or loses’. However, athletics play an important role in the overall development of values and attitudes within our culture. Organized sport embodies many of the western mainstream values of competition, individualism, and personal/national achievement.

“Sport, as both a social institution and as a medium of communication, has become a conduit for the transmission of images, symbols, and meanings that are central to our society.” (Martyn, 2003: 159) It is this, perhaps, above all other reasons that makes sport such an important social aspect to study.

Since the early developments of the modern sport club/organization, women have struggled to find their place within this highly masculinized domain. Initial arguments circulating with the established medical community held that women’s physical frailty hindered them from all forms of athletic engagement. Over time, women began to illustrate their abilities to be active without irreparable harm to themselves or to their reproductive systems. Throughout the twentieth century, athletic women, time and again have surpassed the assumed limitations “predetermined” to them by their sex. Challenges to the “medically-proven” physical (and mental) limitations of the female sex have resulted in the re-evaluation of medical studies and, eventually, the re-organization of women’s athletics in varying degrees. The assumption that men and women are so inherently physically different that women would be at a distinct disadvantage in sport illustrates not only the importance of winning in athletic competition by western social
standards, but also remains the final social domain where gender segregation is not only legal and expected, but unchallenged and under-discussed. So assumed is the natural division between men and women the subject itself has been largely ignored. Other possible divisions have been little explored and the modern feminist movements leave the question unattended.

Although the contemporary women’s sports movement has not focused on the issue of sex differences in athletics, it has concerned itself with the issue of gender and sports. An emphasis on issues specific to gender (that is the social aspects which indicate feminine or masculine, rather than the physical which indicate female or male), has made its way into the discussion of women’s sporting rights. Since the mid 1980s, after most of the western nations had their own battles to secure the economic and political equality of sports for women and girls, much of the sports-feminist research has emphasized the social barriers to women in sports. This work has been tremendously valuable to the recognition of women’s athletic achievements and capabilities by challenging traditional notions of femininity. Much of this work has focused on the media’s representation (or lack therefore in many cases) of women’s athletics.

While the modern sports-feminist movement must be applauded for its excellent work in assuring the rights of girls and women to compete, have equal resources as men, and be given more important administrative and decision-making positions, the question of segregation remains underexamined. Assuming that physical limitations did, on average, exist for women, is it right to continue the enforcement of separate spaces? Should women not have the right to decide they would rather play alongside or against men, and risk losing, than be segregated? These questions, though well beyond the scope
of this thesis, require further examination. To be analogous, should girls be excluded from school subjects like science or mathematics simply because test scores show that boys have, on average, a greater aptitude in these areas? Should we lower the standards or expectations for girls in these subject areas?

To be clear, recent biomechanical and biological evidence argues that the physical differences between women and men do not show women at a significant disadvantage in athletics when the athletic event is divided according to height and weight. The degree of disadvantage for women is directly proportional to the general size differences between men and women. Athletic divisions according to size and height, like those found in boxing and wrestling, equalize the events and negate the need for sexual division. In many respects, this kind of division is the more equitable because, as we will see, research has revealed that differences are greater within sexes than between them. (Dyer, 1982) Nevertheless, the division between male and female remains the more “natural” division. Because the history of athletics has always asserted women’s physical inferiority and a need to protect women from injury by the dominant male, athletics has always been segregated.

A key agent in the formation of social opinion regarding women’s physical abilities has always been the media. The women’s 800 metre run in 1928 was removed from the 1932 games because a local newspaper reported on the exhausted appearance of the athletes at the end of the race. (Hall, 2002) When Gertrude Ederle swam the English Channel in 1926, a London newspaper did not have time to withdraw the editorial claiming that her failure was an example of women’s physical inferiority. (Fausto-
Women and Sports

Sterling, 1992) That she beat the men’s world record by two hours must have been astounding!

Current media representation analysis has focused almost exclusively on the American media and particularly on the social aspects of women in sports. Media bias in favour of male events and the trivialization of female athletes are the primary concerns of most current research.

Focus of the Present Study

This study examines the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. Although much research has been conducted on the media’s representation of women in athletics (and especially at the Olympic Games), almost none of this work has taken a Canadian perspective. Only the Toronto Globe and Mail has been evaluated on its representation of women in sports, and only in comparison to the New York Times. This is significant for Canadian sports feminists because, although there are many cultural similarities, there are also known differences in media reporting styles and broadcasting regulations which potentially alter the manner in which women’s sports may be valued in the Canadian media.

This thesis borrows the definition for sport from Hall (2002: 4). “In a word, I mean organized sport, indicating that the learning of game skills becomes institutionalized through teaching and systematic preparation and that organizations evolve...whose purposes are to prepare competitors and regulate the competitions.” Because this thesis is intended to analyze the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s
coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, a sport will refer to any event established by the International Olympic Committee as an Olympic event.

That the media have only been studied for gender issues in the representation of women and sports poorly reflects the contemporary biomechanical and medical challenges to the belief in the 'natural' separation of men and women in physical competition. This thesis attempts to fill this gap in the research by synthesizing the biomechanical and medical research regarding women's physical abilities with an analysis of the media's representation of women sports at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. Ultimately this thesis will address the question: to what extent does the CBC represent the medical view of an unnecessary physical separation between men and women, or the popular view of a natural separation between men and women?
Chapter 2: History of Women and Sports

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, more women were beginning to engage in active forms of recreation, but these numbers remained small and restricted. Activities considered most suitable, by not only the established medical community but also the women themselves, included such recreational pursuits as tobogganing, swimming, and skating. (Hall, 2002) The popularity of the bicycle, combined with a new sense of modernity, brought about by the prospects of the twentieth century, introduced a new form of leisure activity for many women that was out-of-doors, healthy, and physical, but that did not interfere too sharply with Victorian ideas of decorum. (Hall, 2002) The bicycle brought women out of doors like no other physical activity at the time.

This new form of recreation did not go unchallenged by the medical community as ideas about its effect on the physical and moral stability of women circulated. Both female and male medical practitioners held varied views of the benefits and dangers to female cyclists. While there were some practitioners who held that cycling might be beneficial for women, there were many others who believed the activity was “injurious and should not be tolerated.” (Hall, 2002: 18) Hall (2002: 18) notes that the most commonly held view at the time was a fear that the “saddle was not suited to female anatomy, the uterus would be seriously jolted, and ‘pelvic mischief’ would befall the poor woman who rode during her menstrual period...What concerned some doctors far more was the potential...that riding a bicycle ‘produces in the female a distinct orgasm.’”

The belief in the separate roles for men and women during the nineteenth and, indeed, well into the twentieth century is mirrored in the beliefs about separate physical capabilities. Certainly, the effect of the bicycle saddle on male reproductive organs was
of no interest to the established medical community. Some of the earliest examples of the
debate on women’s ‘natural physical limitations’ occurred during this time. In 1873 Dr.
Robert Barnes argued that the “functions of ovulation, gestation, labour, lactation, the
menopause, in turn all dominate over the entire organism of woman.” (Hargreaves, 1994:
45) A woman’s physical ability was already strained by her role as potential mother. It
was held by some that excessive amounts of physical exercise would drain a woman of
her reproductive function, thereby threatening the very existence of the human race.
Constitutional overstrain, as it came to be known, was a profound argument against the
physical education of girls in school, and was widely supported in the medical
community (Hall, 2002). The combination of malnourishment and poor muscle
development in women, caused primarily by the sedentary lifestyle of the middle and
upper class Victorian female, is the most probable reason that so many women fainted at
even light forms of physical exercise. (Hargreaves, 1994: 45)

Approaching a New Century: 1890-1920

By 1890 changes were occurring in both men’s and women’s sporting activities. For
men, the first modern Olympic games, founded by Pierre de Coubertin, took place in
Athens in 1896. Coubertin’s views on women’s participation in these games were less
than flattering. Coubertin felt that sporting achievement was best held by men only and
in 1912 he defined the Olympic games as “the solemn and periodic exaltation of male
[emphasis added] athleticism, with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for
its setting, and female applause as reward.” (Joyner-Kersee, 1993: 185) It is not
surprising then that there were no Olympic events for women in 1896; but, by 1900
Women and Sports

exhibition events in both golf and tennis were included for women and archery was added in 1904. Despite Coubertin’s very limiting views regarding women’s athletic function, attitudes about women’s abilities were changing. It was common to see women participating in some form of active recreation, cycling being among the most popular, and included activities such as ice skating, tennis, golf, and swimming. Other activities, such as fencing, ice hockey, and basketball were also being played by women in some Canadian colleges and universities. The University of Toronto held paper chases on Saturday mornings: a kind of race where one team would lay a course through woods and fields using torn pieces of paper and the visiting team would run it. (Hall, 2002)

By the late 1890s and early 1900s, the question in the medical community was no longer whether women should engage in physical activity, but rather how much. This debate would surface again and again throughout the twentieth century as women continued to defy the limitations set upon them. The most prevalent view in the medical community in both Canada and the United States was that although physical education for women may be healthy (and therefore beneficial to the female reproductive organs), aggressive competition was not. It was feared that excessive competition might lead to mental over-strain, severe stress, and the loss of acceptable female decorum. It was held that physical education should be left to trained physical educators who focused on Swedish gymnastics and calisthenics. (Costa, 1994) But as the twentieth century progressed, physical education saw a growing number of varsity teams, competitive activities, and a growing number of eager participants.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) also saw a growing number of female participants interested in international competition. Between 1900 and 1928, an
abundance of exhibition events were organized for women at the Olympic games despite Coubertin’s continued efforts to oppose women’s participation. The Olympic Committee for the London Olympics in 1908 admitted women’s exhibition events in skating, gymnastics, and aquatics (diving). In 1912, the Swedish Olympic Committee admitted exhibition swimming. It was not until the 1920s however, that women, or men, would have another chance to compete on the international stage. The First World War not only brought an end to the Olympic Games scheduled for 1916, it also brought an end to women’s complacency about their “exhibition” status.

**Women and sports in the inter-war period (1920-1936)**

Opposition to the belief that women should not participate in international competition was spreading. Women were beginning to acquire recognition in voting, education, and labour issues and were, therefore, becoming increasingly public. The separation between the domestic and public was no longer explicitly divided according to gender lines.

The first organized example of women’s challenge to both the IOC and the established perspectives about women’s competitive abilities came in 1917. Alice Miliat, a French woman, established herself as the counterpart to fellow countryman, Pierre de Coubertin. In 1917, Miliat established the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale (FSFI). Through this organization, Miliat challenged the IOC’s rule that prevented women’s competition in the Olympics. (Hargreaves, 1994) When her demand that women’s competitions be officially included by 1920 was ignored, Miliat began plans for the Women’s Olympic Games that would run every four years, beginning in 1922, and
would provide international competition for athletic women. The IOC responded by demanding that the individual International Sports Federations take control of the women’s athletic activities. (Costa, 1994) The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) agreed to work with the FSFI and, being the governing body of the Olympics, it was an encouraging lure for the women’s Olympic movement. However, when the IAAF in 1921 turned down the proposal for women’s competition at the 1924 Games, the FSFI went ahead and conducted the scheduled Women’s Olympic Games in 1922. The one-day event, which drew over 20,000 spectators, persuaded the IOC and the IAAF to reconsider its position on women’s events and they agreed to include five official events for women at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. (Costa, 1994) The five events: 100 metre run, 200 metre run, high jump, discus, and the 400 metre hurdles, were enough to placate the women’s sports movement into surrendering control to the IAAF.

Despite the growing legitimatization of women’s athletics, debates surrounding biology were still numerous. A key publication, titled ‘Women’s Participation in Athletics’ highlighted the circulating arguments regarding the need to slow the development of women’s athletic participation. (Hargreaves, 1994) Again, the primary reason cited for caution was the potentially harmful effects on the female reproductive system seemingly caused by the biological, physical, and mental limitations of women. An overwhelming divide was emerging among early women’s sports advocates. Although many groups held onto the struggle for women’s participation in competitive sports, other women’s sports activist groups across Europe, the United States and Canada fought against competitive sports such as those found at the Olympic Games.
Organized in 1923, the Women’s Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF), a large American organization which included many state and city physical education centres such as the YM/YWCA, articulated the established medical opinion of the time in its philosophy regarding women’s athletics. It argued that although athletic participation for girls and women was beneficial and healthy, competition was ultimately destructive to them. It organized anti-Olympic campaigns and fought hard against the admittance of women’s athletics in 1928. (Hall, 2002) The philosophical emphasis for women and girls, according to the NAAF, should be on education rather than competition and should embrace the unique qualities of the female sex, including cooperation, team work, and acceptance. This philosophy is well illustrated in the NAAF creed, ‘a team for every girl and every girl on the team.’ (Hall, 2002)

However these attempts to curb female competition failed. Women continued to participate in competitive athletics, and both javelin and the 80 metre hurdles were added to the list of events for women in the 1932 games in Los Angeles and gymnastics were opened to women at the Berlin Games in 1936. The controversial Games held in Berlin, sometimes referred to as the “Nazi Games”, featured 331 female athletes. The Berlin Games also hosted the very first mass broadcast of the Games on twenty-five large screens set up around the city for local audiences.

Women’s athletics were gaining acceptance. Even biological views regarding the potential effects on women’s reproductive systems were beginning to wane, such that it was becoming commonly held that perhaps only married women should be restricted from vigorous exercise.
This was part of a general shift of roles for women in North America and Western Europe as they increasingly moved out of the home and into public life. Voting, education, and labour rights challenged established views of women’s limited mental capacity, as the entrance into international sporting competition challenged their physical limits. The Second World War halted the Olympics until 1948, and this time women would emerge not only as fierce competitors but also as political and national examples of greatness.

**Women and sports in the Cold War Era (1948-1970)**

Generally there were few changes in the advancement of women’s athletics immediately following the Second World War. Most of women’s accomplishments and advances in the competitive arena came during the interwar period, but the heightened desire to prove national and ideological greatness during the Cold War may have contributed to the increased support of women’s athletic abilities. Because Olympic success is regularly seen not in terms of *individual* athletic achievement but in *national* athletic achievement, it was seemingly irrelevant whether the number of medals won came from male or female events. In the United States (and likewise in the Soviet Union), attempts to increase medal counts resulted in the increase in training facilities for men and women athletes. (Costa, 1994) The advancement of women’s athletic achievements was characterized by the efforts to prove national superiority. Even so, the admittance of new events for women was slow and biological theories of women’s physical limitations were just as daunting as ever. What was at issue by 1950 was not the fear of the effects of athletic competition on the female reproductive organs (the
medical evidence for this was becoming buried under the mounting examples of
successful athletic mothers), but whether sports would cause women to become overly
masculine. A growing belief that certain sports were masculine or feminine was working
its way into the mind-set of athletic competition. In *Coming on Strong: Gender and
sexuality in twentieth century women’s sports* (1994: 217), Susan Cahn notes that the IOC
members of the 1950s argued that they could “determine which sports were ‘essentially
feminine’ in order to exclude women from those that were not.” Masculine sports were
largely defined along lines of strength, aggression, competitiveness, or physically
intensive activities while feminine sports were defined according to their emphasis on
skills, grace, or beauty. (Cahn, 1994) It is not surprising, therefore, that football
(American version) and boxing were defined as exclusively masculine events, while
synchronized swimming (sometimes referred to as water ballet) and rhythmic gymnastics
were defined as exclusively feminine events. As late as the 2004 Summer Games in
Athens, these events remained exclusive to their respective sexes. In those sports in
which female and male events existed, feminization of the events often occurred. “In
softball, tennis, basketball, track, gymnastics, and other sports, athletic administrators
devised gender-specific rules to mark women’s activities as different from, and usually
‘less than’, men’s.” (Cahn, 1994: 221) The struggle to include increasing numbers of
events at the Olympic Games was circumvented by IOC efforts to feminize the events.
So powerful was the belief that women’s athletic abilities were inferior to men’s, the IOC
ordered the inclusion of sex tests at the Olympic Games in the 1960s to thwart any
attempts by males posing as females from competing in women’s events. The early tests
involved parading the female athletes naked in front of a panel of medical practitioners

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and gynecologists in order to ensure the athlete was female. Although there had never been any evidence to suggest that men were posing as women in women’s Olympic competitions, these tests were said to be necessary for the protection of females against male intrusion.

So while there were increases in the participation of women in competitive athletics during the 1950s and early 1960s, many of these gains and the shifts in attitude they reflected were over-shadowed by efforts to prove national prowess and the increased efforts to feminize or masculinize sports exclusively. Prior to the 1950s, sport in general was seen as a masculine activity and therefore women’s attempt to enter the world of sport was viewed as a challenge to male sporting dominance. After 1950 however, the feminization of events “re-balanced” male physical superiority by assigning less physical events, shorter races, different rules, etc. to the female events. Many of these feminized events remain today. An example is women’s softball which is played on a smaller field with a larger ball for 7 rather than the 9 innings played by the men. Another example is the women’s 100 metre hurdles, 10 metres shorter than the men’s event. However, the women’s movement of the 1960s and early 1970s was opening the path for future sports feminists who would challenge these conceptions. As legal challenges in other areas of social life were unfolding, it was only a matter of time before girl’s and women’s athletics would be addressed as a legal issue of equality.

**A New Era of Sports Feminism: 1970 – present**

Some of the most rapid and extensive changes for women in sports came as a result of the feminist movement of the 1970s. Although not initially concerned with
issues such as sports and recreation, the legislative changes with which many of these women were concerned prompted others to examine legal discrimination in athletics. These changes occurred differently and at different times across North America and Western Europe.

The leading legislative change was Title IX in the United States. An educational amendment in 1972, Title IX required that all secondary and post-secondary educational institutions in the United States provide equal financial support to male and female athletes, proportional to their needs. (Costa, 1994) Although an important legislative change, Title IX did nothing to protect women from other forms of athletic discrimination. There were no provisions in the legislation requiring a certain number of decision-making positions be available to women. Sports teams could still be segregated on the basis of skills (generally contact versus non-contact) which so far have always resulted in the segregation of girls and boys teams. Because girls and boys teams were usually segregated and fewer girls expressed interest in sports than boys, there were often not enough girls to form teams.

Despite this legislative change in the United States, attitudes about women’s abilities were slow to change. Through the 1970s there was almost no change in the opinion about girl’s and women’s inferior physical ability. In Canada there was no legislation protecting women’s sporting events and, as a consequence, a large number of girls were rendered to the side-lines, despite the growing number of girls becoming interested in athletic competition. Hall (2002: 165) notes that “in the mid-1970s, the long held view that females were handicapped in sport because of their biology and that they
might do irreparable damage to their reproductive system through strenuous activity was
still one of the physical explanations as to why fewer girls than boys chose sport.”

By 1981, a federal policy aimed at improving the conditions for women in sports
was enacted. Sports Canada developed a “Policy on Women’s Sport” which cited
“equality” of opportunity as its primary objective. In keeping with ‘liberal feminist’
trends of the time, “equality” was implicated in the goal to “create an environment in
which no one is forced into a predetermined role or status because of gender.” (Hall,
2002: 171)

In Britain, during the 1970s and early 1980s, there were no legislative or
government policy structures to protect the legal rights of female athletes. The only
course of action available to girls and women was the UK Sex Discrimination Act
(SDA). However, under section 44 of the act organizations could disallow mixed
competitions on the basis of physical disadvantage. Hargreaves (1994) notes this clause
has been used exclusively to ban females from competition on the basis that the female
physique is inferior to the male. Furthermore, it was often used not only against adult
women, but also against pre-pubertal girls where there are no physical differences, except
a slight average advantage in height for girls. In 1978 the Football Association banned
Theresa Bennett from playing with the boys on a local team. The case, “Theresa Bennett
versus the Football Association”, initially settled in favour of Bennett on the grounds that
the FA failed to provide her with recreational facilities, but was later lost on an appeal
argued under section 44 of the SDA. Bennett’s lawyer argued that section 44 was
inapplicable on the grounds that Bennett was pre-pubertal and therefore not at a
disadvantage. However, the judge ruled that “women have many other qualities superior
to those of men, but they have not got the strength and stamina to run, kick, to tackle and so forth.” (ILEA, 1984: 23)

In Canada twelve-year old Justine Blainey tried out, and made, the Toronto Olympics A Peewee hockey team. According to Blainey, she wanted to play on the boys’ club because it provided greater competition, more hours of ice time, better skating hours, and more opportunities to play (i.e. more games and tournaments). However, when the Ontario Hockey League discovered that Blainey was a girl, they refused to issue her a license to play, rendering any game in which Blainey was on the roster forfeit. Subsection 19(2) of the Ontario Human Rights Code became the central issue in the 1984 case because the Code clearly stated that “membership in an athletic organization or participation in an athletic activity [may be] denied solely on the basis of sex without regard to any other factors...” (Robinson, 2002: 195)

This case threw open the doors not only on the legal rights of girls to have equal opportunity to play, but questioned the very fabric of the biological arguments of female physical inferiority. Blainey’s success in the case was contingent on the prosecution’s ability to counter the defense team’s arguments of Blainey’s physical inferiority on the team. The defense centered its arguments around the ‘scientific’ evidence that girls and women could not play as well as boys and that also they would be at extreme risk from the more aggressive, dominant, and individualistic male. Fortunately for Blainey, her lawyers were prepared and, finally, on December 3, 1987, after 3 years of fighting, the verdict that subsection 19(2) was unconstitutional and that girls must be permitted to try out for boys’ teams without discrimination based on sex was declared. (Robinson, 2002)
While it may seem that the Blainey case was a victory for girl's athletics, attitudes have been slow to change. In 2000, Risa Saraga made the boy’s basketball team at Thornhill Public School in Toronto. She tried out for the team because there were too few interested female athletes to form an all-girl’s team. The York Region District School Board president, Phil Horseman, refused to allow Saraga to play on the grounds that it was against their constitution to allow girls on boy’s teams. Given the media attention this announcement made, Horseman retracted his position and the district constitution was changed. (Robinson, 2002)

The International Olympic Committee has been even slower to advocate equality in women’s athletics. Sex testing to ensure sex-appropriateness in women’s competitions continued until 1999 and was only abandoned because of the dilemma it posed. After 1972 the gynecological exams were replaced by genetic tests to ensure the athletes competing in the women’s events were indeed female. In several cases however, genetics revealed sexual abnormalities in the chromosomal composition of some female athletes. Sex testing has never been conducted on male athletes and so sexual abnormalities in males have not been discovered by this method. Typically, the female sex consists of an XX composition and the male sex consists of an XY. Occasionally, an XY chromosome composition results in female development because the gene, found only on the male Y chromosome, responsible for male development is inactive. Such was the case for Spanish hurdler, Maria Patino. In 1985 it was discovered that Patino had an XY chromosome construction, but the male gene was inactive and Patino, as a fetus, developed a female body, external female genitalia, and a vagina. In every other way Patino’s life was completely female. She was disbarred from women’s competition but
was not eligible for men's competition either. The Spanish track officials exposed Patino's situation to the press. (Robinson, 2002) Her 'femininity card' was revoked, ensuring that she would not be allowed to compete in any national, or international, competition.

The IOC has been slow to admit women's events to the Games. Not until 1996 were the number of events for women roughly equal to the number of events for men, although events continue to be added. Pole Vault was added for women in 2000, and one division of free-style wrestling was added in 2004. Boxing, steeple-chase, flat-water canoeing, 1000 metre flat-water kayaking, white-water canoeing, keirin cycling, team pursuit cycling, 1500 metre freestyle swim, Greco-Roman wrestling, and the 50 km race walk are examples of Olympic events still only open to men. Synchronized swimming and rhythmic gymnastics are the only events restricted from men.

**Summary**

It is clear from women's sport history that women's participation in organized sport has always been met with restrictions based on the assumption of 'natural' limitations of the female sex. These restrictions have altered throughout the past century as expectations of women's physical inabilities continued to be overestimated. Claims of women's physical (and often mental) limitations in sports have characteristically been based on social expectation and observation, rather than on concrete biological evidence. Social expectations became the impetus for biological claims, institutionalized by the medical community and upheld by policy within the sports organizations. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, many physicians concurred in the
belief in female physical and mental inferiority. Although disguised as ‘scientific’ by the use of educated, medical language, “their positions had much more to do with social attitudes and codes than with genetics and systematic investigation.” (McCrone, 1988: 193) Biological arguments surrounding women’s competitions during the 1920s and 1930s took a more social turn. Women, although capable of moderate athletic activity, were still considered physically inferior to men (and therefore their athletic programs were tailored to the needs of women), but they were now facing a new problem of competition as ultimately destructive to femininity. By the 1950s, this new issue of femininity was compromised by encouraging women to participate in “feminine” competitions, so as not to become overly masculine.

One constant has remained throughout the modern history of organized sport. Based on early biological assumptions that women were physically inferior to men, sports organizations have unquestioningly segregated women from men’s competition. This segregation has ultimately created a different history for women’s athletic organization. As was the case during the 1920s, many women’s sports feminists and activists believe in a different kind of sports culture for women than currently exists for men, by celebrating a more cooperative and more inclusive kind of sporting experience. Current arguments about women’s physical inferiority to men continue to permeate the established sports culture, and segregation of events goes on without question. As was the case in the early years of the development of sport organization, biological assumptions about women’s physical limitations continue to reflect social expectations rather than scientific evidence.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

Biological Determinism

Biodeterminists argue that certain masculine or feminine traits have evolutionary roots and social structures and gender roles are natural and unchangeable. The behaviours of competition, aggression, vigour, etc. are male sex traits, evolutionally defined and hormonally generated, while passivity, sociability, and emotional expressiveness are traits of the female sex. (Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Bleier, 1984) These attitude and behaviour differences have been used to explain why sports are the ‘predominant’ and ‘natural’ domain of men. Marianne Wijngarrd (1997: 5) notes that while feminists localize differences in behaviour between the sexes in social structures and education, biomedical scientists base their arguments in hormonal effects on prenatal brain development.

Possibly the most referenced researchers on prenatal brain development and biologically determined behaviour are John Money and Anke Ehrhardt. Their publication in 1972 on intersex-born children marked the first research conducted of its kind on human subjects. Their study of CAH girls, girls born with masculinized genitals due to abnormal hormone production of the adrenal gland in utero, identified ‘tomboyism’ as the appearance of male behaviour in females. Their research found these ‘tomboys’ to be more active than the control group girls, more likely to choose boy playmates, having a higher energy level, enjoying aggressive play, having a preference for practical clothing over dresses and fewer fantasies of motherhood. (Wijngarrd, 1997; Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Bleier, 1984) Money and Ehrhardt believed that prenatal androgens caused
‘activity’ in humans, affected dress habits, career ambitions, and higher IQs. Because of this, ‘normal’ females did not possess the qualities for vigorous athletic play or competition, nor the ambition for an athletic career. Although they did not focus on athletics specifically, their arguments of ‘normal’ male and female behaviour legitimized institutional arguments about differences between the sexes. Jennifer Hargreaves, notes that “...biological determinism is influential in the general discourse of sports academia.” (1994: 7) Hargreaves (1994) states that the ideology of sexual difference is validated in the sports sciences and that biological explanations provide a scientific explanation for social behaviour.

**Feminist Criticisms of Biodeterminist Research**

Anne Fausto-Sterling-Sterling, Ruth Bleier, and Kenneth Dyer have all challenged both the methodologies of biological determinists and the dichotomous definitions of the male/female sex.

Inconsistencies in genetic tests have suggested that there may be more to sex than meets the naked eye. Dyer (1982: 64)) offered five ways in which sex might be interpreted and, therefore, the problem of studying sex in terms of male and female traits. “Sex distinctions can in fact be made in five different ways: the appearance of the external genitals, the possession or absence of a Y chromosome..., the amount of various hormones which are produced in the body, the sex to which the individual is assigned at birth,...and finally what the individual regards him or herself to be, that is, their gender.”

The biological distinctions of sex in terms of appearance, hormones, and chromosomes pose challenges to determining one’s sex. At times there are conflicts
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between these chromosomal, hormonal and/or physical definitions. Typically the female
cromosome configuration is XX, while the male is XY. When both of these
cromatic configurations function typically, the results are the development of
ormal’ female and male genitals and project that hormone levels in puberty will result
in the physical traits common to women and men, such as breast development or facial
hair. However, often enough these typical developmental patterns differ. Occasionally,
three other possible chromosomal occurrences challenge the notions of male and female
clusivity. (Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Bleier, 1984; Dyer, 1982) Individuals who possess
ly only a single X chromosome, or chromosomally XO, ‘...manifest what is termed Turner’s
Syndrome. They are sterile and obvious, if aberrant, females.” (Dyer, 1982: 63) Similar
to Turner’s Syndrome, some males born with more than one X chromosome
(chromosomally XXY). Known as Klinefelter’s Syndrome, these individuals are born as
artially or fully fertile males, but are sometimes able to pass as females when fully
clothed. (Dyer, 1982: 63)

Although the above chromosomal patterns happen occasionally, more commonly
chromosomal ‘mosaics’ occur; that is, ‘...some of the cells of the body are of normal
female constitution, that is XX, and some are normal male, that is XY, or one of the
above variants.” (Dyer, 1982: 63) Depending on the number of aberrant cells, the
distinction between male and female may be obvious, or very difficult. When it is very
difficult to determine the sex, the doctors and parents of the infant are often compelled to
ake a decision and generally do so by the overall appearance of the genitals. If the
genitals have developed a penis, the size of the penis is often used to determine whether
or not to construct the genitals in a particular fashion. If the penis is much smaller than

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average, the construction will generally be to make female genitals, otherwise, the penis might be enlarged or left and any female genital development removed. (Wijngarrd, 1997: 154)

Dyer points out that the number of adults with inconsistent sex definitions is about ten percent and that the number of chromosome mosaics is unknown. These numbers reflect a large enough percentage of non-traditional definitions of male and female to warrant a firm challenge to the research on ‘normal’ male and female behaviour and physicality as rooted in biology. It has also proved a challenge to “...sports administrators wedded to the notion that there should be absolute distinctions between the sexes.” (Dyer, 1982: 65)

More damaging to biodeterminist research has been the methods used and linkages made by researchers. Fausto-Sterling-Sterling and Bleier have both written extensively on the problems surrounding the methods employed by biological determinists. First is the assumption that behaviours are universal. In other words, the ‘natural’ behaviours of males and females are identical across cultural, social, and geographical divides. Bleier notes this assumption to be the greatest recurring flaw in sociobiological and biological determinist research and comments that these universal behaviours are “…curiously similar to social organizations in the white Western industrial capitalist world.” (Bleier, 1984: 23)

Among the many traits that are said to differ among males and females, including intelligence, emotion, and physicality, aggression research may be the most common. The “male” hormone, testosterone, is commonly cited as the director of aggressive behaviour in humans and animals. Both Bleier and Fausto-Sterling-Sterling have
criticized this research by examining the links made by researchers who have concluded that testosterone is the hormone responsible for aggression. The primary criticism by both authors is the use of rodents (specifically rats and mice) in research leading to the conclusion that testosterone is linked to aggression in humans. The problem with this is two-fold. The first is that similar research in rhesus monkeys (the most genetically-similar primate to humans) and in humans themselves have inadequately shown "...that high levels of "male" hormone cause human aggression." (Fausto-Sterling, 1992: 148) The second problem is the tendency of biological determinists to omit examples which show contradictory findings. For example, the evidence that gerbil and hamster females are equally aggressive as males is commonly overlooked. (Fausto-Sterling, 1992)

Furthermore, as these animals are researched in laboratory settings, external environmental conditions are seldom taken into consideration. Bleier (1984) argues that caged animals in laboratories are different from wild, free-roaming animals.

Fewer criticisms have been published since 1991, although Fausto-Sterling-Sterling published a new book in 2000 titled Sexing the Body. This text readdressed some of her early work, but largely critiqued the biodeterminist research on intellectual sex differences.

**Biomechanics**

Biomechanics, the study of the composition and movement of the human body, has been used by athletes and their coaches to improve performance and training throughout the twentieth century. The work in biomechanics has largely involved the study of males by males and, other than to make comparative notes, has generally
disregarded the question of similarity and difference between men and women. Unlike the field of biodeterminism, there has been little discussion in biomechanics on the physical ‘inferiority’ of women. As Jackie Hudson writes, “One explanation for this indifference is that men consider the inferiority to be obvious...Another explanation for this indifference is that women consider the inferiority to be obvious. For instance, Birke and Vines (1987) suggest that feminists have accepted the biologically deterministic view of women’s inferiority in performance.” (Costa, 1994: 147) It is especially relevant to make a distinction here between the biomechanics of children and that of adults because, as Carol Christensen indicates in her article Basic Exercise Physiology, there are virtually no sex-related differences in physiology between girls and boys before the age of about twelve. (Cohen, 1993; Dyer, 1982) There are, however, general average similarities and differences between fully developed men and women in musculature, skeletal design, body composition, blood circulation, and lungs and breathing.

Men, on average, are physically stronger than women and possess a greater proportion of their body weight in muscle. However, the statistics vary from researcher to researcher on the significance of the differences. Gina Daddario (1998) reported that women have on average 17% less muscle mass than men, while Dyer (1982) reported a difference of only 7%. The greatest difference appears to be in upper body strength, that is the upper torso, arms, shoulders and neck, where on average women possess a meagre 50% of men’s strength, or when matched for size, 80%. (Fausto-Sterling, 1985)

A more equal picture emerges of lower body strength so that the average woman possess about 70% of the lower body strength of a man, but when matched for size,
approximates 93%, and leg strength measured relative to lean body weight shows
women's legs to be slightly stronger than men's. (Fausto-Sterling, 1985)

There are a number of differences between the average male and female in the
design of the skeletal frame. Women's arms and legs are proportionally shorter when
compared to the rest of their bodies than are men's, but women's torsos are typically
proportionally larger. The pelvis tends to be broader in women than in men and women's
shoulders are on average narrower and more rounded. Dyer (1982: 71) asserts that the
proportionally shorter upper arm, combined with narrower shoulders, causes "...throwing,
cycling or rotary movements of the arm as a whole [to be] more difficult for women..."

In terms of height differences, women are, on average, shorter than men;
however, the degree of difference changes depending on the statistic. National averages
of height show varying degrees of difference between the sexes across the globe. In the
United States males average approximately five inches greater height than women
(Daddario, 1998) but globally Asian men only average one inch taller than American and
German women and Dutch women are generally taller than Japanese men. In fact, about
1 in 44 women in the Netherlands reach six feet tall while only one in 769 Japanese men
will reach that height. (Arjan, 2005)

Besides average difference in height there are other obvious differences in body
composition. Men and women carry their centre of gravity differently, with men
averaging their centre of gravity about 56.7% of their height above the ground while
women carry their centre of gravity approximately 56.1% of their height above the
ground. This slight difference may create a disadvantage for women in jumping events.
(Dyer, 1982)
The greatest overall average difference between men and women is in the amount of fatty tissue carried throughout the body. Women have far more fatty tissue than do men, especially in sex-specific areas of the body including hips and breasts. Patty Freedson estimates that between college-age females and males, “...the average total percent of body fat is 27% for the female and 15% for the male...Approximately 12.5% of the female’s sex-specific fat is in the breast tissue.” (Costa, 1994: 164)

Other differences in size also effect differences in blood circulation, heart size, anaerobic power and lung size. Women generally have smaller lungs and hearts than men, although these are proportionally equal to men in reference to size and weight. However, men’s heart rates tend to be slower than women’s and can carry more oxygen during both exercise and rest than can women. Women must pump nine litres of blood for every one litre of oxygen, while a ratio of eight to one is the average for men. (Dyer, 1982)

Anaerobic power is the capacity to give high-intensity activity in short bursts of effort. Sprint events and rotational team sports like basketball and hockey rely heavily on anaerobic power. “Muscle concentrations of enzymes responsible for anaerobic power are equal in men and women...” (Cohen, 1993: 123). However, because women average smaller amounts of muscle mass than men, men reflect superiority in anaerobic power.

The averages listed in the preceding paragraphs are commonly used to support arguments that athletic events should be segregated along sex lines. Gina Daddario (1998: 14), an American sports-feminist, asserts that “...males are both literally and culturally the stronger sex, particularly in upper body strength and muscularity...Therefore, women cannot realistically compete in any kind of comparative
sense against male athletes...” This position of women’s ‘inferior’ athletic ability seems to stand in contrast to research which challenges the ‘natural’ physical superiority of men. While certain physical differences are acknowledged, the importance of these differences on athletic achievement is questionable.

The use of averages often means that differences in physical ability or performance are reflections of women’s average height and weight differences. Because height and weight are major indicators of physical ability, this presents a distorted view of actual potential. Feminist biomechanic author, Jackie Hudson draws an illustration of this distortion in a comparison between the world record holder of the men’s 100 metre run and the record holder of the women’s 100 metre run. “...we see that Carl Lewis, who stands 6’2” tall...and holds the men’s record of 9.92 seconds [later beaten by American Tim Montgomery with 9.78 seconds in 2002] has a relative velocity of 5.36 heights per second...Florence Griffith-Joyner who stands 5’6.5” tall and runs the 100 metre dash in 10.49 seconds, has a relative velocity of 5.64 heights/second.” (Costa, 1993: 147) This statistic suggests that in this particular example, the female record-holding athlete was slightly faster than the male record-holding athlete. Hudson argues that while males are faster in absolute measures, when taken within the context of the individual the physical abilities between men and women are approximately equal. (Costa, 1993) This is particularly true for trained men and women as the differences in their averages are considerably less than the differences in the averages of the general population. (Fausto-Sterling, 1992)

Furthermore, even when differences in height and weight are considered, Dyer (1982) notes there are considerable overlaps in the height and weight of the sexes and
much variation within the sexes. A link has been made between social expectations and physical qualities and the performance of women. The hormone responsible for height and strength development is the aptly named growth hormone found in both growing boys and girls. However, “physical inactivity during the growth years is linked with poor health throughout the lifespan. In addition, physical inactivity during the growth years may compromise the amount of growth.” (Costa, 1993: 154) Girls’ abilities have been, and are often still, considered below the abilities of boys despite all biomechanical evidence suggesting no physical differences between girls and boys before the on-set of puberty. (Costa 1993) This often results in restricted levels of sport for girls, as in the case of hockey where physical contact is restricted although, controversially, allowed in some boys’ hockey organizations. Other social, non-sport-related expectations for girls also restrict physical activity, including clothing. Indeed the “feminine” attire is often constrictive attire. (Costa, 1993)

While there are unquestionable physical differences between the sexes, biomechanic researchers agree that height and weight are the primary contributors to strength and physical ability. These are the ingredients of anaerobic power, lung capacity, and oxygen use. It is recognized in international competitions for events such as boxing, weightlifting, and wrestling that height and weight play an essential role. These sports are divided in accordance with these measures and a gold medal in the lower weight category is not perceived as any less an accomplishment than a gold medal in the higher weight divisions. Both Dyer (1982) and Hudson (1994) have articulated that the abilities of trained women and men appear to be similar when matched for size. However, much of the research on biomechanical sex difference discussed in sport scholarship focuses on
averages where differences are very apparent. The division of competitive sports between men and women presupposes that physical differences between the sexes outweigh the physical differences within the sexes. In other words, this dichotomous division assumes that a 5'2" female athlete would more fairly compete with a 6'2" female athlete than a 5'2" male athlete. But as Dyer (1982: 17) pointed out, based on the evidence to the contrary, "all of this argues for some modest differentiation of competition into classes by height and/or weight in those events or groups of events where there are inbuilt advantages...If this were done, the differentiation by sex might come to be seen as unnecessary."

Despite the research, in the field of athletics there has been little or no challenge to the existing differentiation by sex. It would seem that the feminist community has not taken particular notice of the challenge posed by Dyer and others regarding the physical abilities of women as they compare to men. The reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps the sports feminist organizations have not been adequately informed of the existing research, although that possibility seems unlikely. Other, more likely, reasons for the lack of challenge are that sport-feminist theorists either are still concerned with so many other issues facing women in athletics that they do not have time for the issue of integration, or that they are opposed to integration. Opposition to integration by sports-feminists is certainly understandable as many of these women have worked hard to foster a space for female athletes. Having been denied, or allowed only limited, access to the male sports structure for so long, many sports-feminists might see integration as a rejection of the hard work spent to give women a place to play. While understandable, the struggle throughout history by athletic women has always been, at least in part, against the
expected outcomes of women’s physical limitations. That women have more opportunities to play or more resources to play does not mean that the test of expected limitations is over.

**Sports-Feminist Theories**

While there are multiple approaches to sports-feminism, two categorically different approaches to the field dominate the literature and research on women and sports. The two dominant approaches, liberal feminism and radical feminism, are both equally concerned with improving the overall status of women and girls in sports, but define this improvement in such different ways that they appear hostile to one another. Crossman (2003: 11) argues that “central to feminist theory is that gender roles are created rather than biologically determined and that irrespective of gender, everyone should have the opportunity to maximize his or her potential”. Hall (2002: 11) asserts that the “emerging feminist paradigm...is concerned primarily with the ‘gendered’ practice of sport.”

**Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism is rooted in Western liberal philosophical positions that extend back to the 17th century and through the legacy of eighteenth and nineteenth century writers and thinkers such as Mary Wolstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor. These liberal positions challenged, among other things, the dichotomous notions of male rationality and female emotionality. (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002) Modern liberal feminist
positions argue for equality of opportunity through legislative reforms, fair resources, etc. 
(Hargreaves, 1994; Hall, 2002; Lenskyj, 2003; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002)

In sports activism and research this approach focuses on removing policy barriers that limit the participation, and consequently the overall potential, of girls and women in athletics. (Lenskyj, 2003) It has called for more women in coaching, officiating, and administrative positions and also for fairer representation in the sport media. (Lenskyj, 2003) The majority of sports activism since the 1960s has taken this approach and it has shown dramatic social success. (Hargreaves 1994) The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) is both openly feminist and government funded. It has, since its foundation in 1981, created an organization dedicated to improving the opportunities for athletic women and girls and has successfully generated awareness of the importance of female participation. It has been successful in lobbying the government, posing legal challenges, and as an advocacy organization. (Hall, 1996)

The liberal feminist position is not without its critics. Many other feminists, primarily radical feminists, have criticized the liberal feminist position for working within established structures. (Lenskyj, 2003; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002) The ‘add women and stir’ argument poses that liberal feminism sees all women as a homogenous group that can be simply added to the male-dominated system without consequences. (Lenskyj, 2003) It fails to challenge the male-dominated models of sport and physical activity which emphasizes winning and competition rather than cooperation and open access to sports for all women. (Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Lenskyj, 2003) Furthermore, liberal feminism tends to ignore other issues such as sexuality, violence,
race and class, which, according to radical feminists, alter the ability of some women to resist discrimination and oppression and consequently act as additional barriers to equal opportunity in sport. (Lenskyj, 2003)

The liberal feminist perspective has not openly challenged the issue of sports segregation. While it is unlikely that liberal feminism would be hostile to arguments of integration, it appears to have become complacent with the idea of equality existing in separate spaces. That is, equality of resources, administration, and participation for women in athletics would satisfy most liberal feminists, unless women within sports began to argue for equality of competition. Because integration is still such an unexplored issue for most women in athletics, liberal feminist organizations that have been involved in integration issues have been so as representatives of the individual. For example, when Blainey fought for the right to compete on the Toronto boy’s hockey team, she was supported by the CAAWS. Other cases of young women fighting for the opportunity to play on boys' teams have been supported by CAAWS, but the issue of integration is not generally explored. It must be not assumed however that because liberal feminism has not adopted the issue, women and girls are uninterested in playing with or against men and boys. If the general social belief is, as the research suggests, that women and girls are at a physical disadvantage, then it is probable that many female athletes assume that they are physically incapable of competing against the males. Differences in social opinion regarding women’s physical abilities may result in a larger number of women becoming interested in competing in sports currently closed to women, such as national, professional hockey, baseball, and football teams like those found in the National Hockey League etc.
Radical Feminism

According to Scraton and Flintoff (2002: 34), radical feminism developed out of the radical politics of the 1960s and 1970s and is "...fundamentally...concerned with [the] underlying structural power relations that are the result of the systematic maintenance of male power through patriarchy." Unlike liberal feminism which works within the established social structures, radical feminism works outside the system by creating generally small, decentralized, consensus-based organizations. Radical sports-feminists are critical of male models of sport because they are systemically designed to ensure male power and privilege. (Lenskyj, 2003)

Radical sports-feminists also address issues of sexuality, homophobia, violence, and racism in sports. (Cahn, 1994; Lenskyj, 2003; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002; Hall, 1996) This perspective encourages a non-competitive, cooperative sport structure based on 'feminine values' that provides space for all girls and women, irrespective of physical ability, race, class, etc. (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002) The radical feminist perspective teeters on the verge of justifying separate spaces for men and women. Because of its tendency to celebrate the unique values and conditions of women, while criticizing the structures of male power and privilege, radical feminism is criticized by liberal feminists for its tendency towards "essentialism and biological reductionism." (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002)

Commonly associated with radical feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism ties patriarchy or male privilege into the economic structure of capitalism. Although not the same as radical feminism, Marxist feminism carries many of the same arguments regarding the reorganization of social structures. Specifically, the Marxist feminist
argues the liberation of women is contingent on the reorganization of the economic system as a whole. A Marxist sports-feminist researcher might be interested in examining the interconnection between capitalistic ideologies and sport ideologies as a method of understanding how male privilege is “justified” in sport.

Radical feminists do not support the idea of sport integration. Because radical sports-feminists object to the current sport structure and are opposed to ideas of competition and elitism in athletics, they naturally oppose arguments concerned with the ‘best’ athletes. The argument that women are physically equal to men in athletics is ultimately irrelevant to the radical feminist because radical feminism celebrates difference rather than sameness.

Regardless of these differences between radical and liberal feminists, both are interested in the representation of women’s athletics. A significant amount of research by both radical and liberal feminists has included an analysis of the media’s representation of women in athletics. In fact, media representation of women’s athletics has become a kind of focal point for sports-feminist theorists. Because the media so frequently covers sports, it is a good and well used source of analysis.

Media Representation and Women in Sports

A tremendous amount of communication-based research has been conducted on the issue of media representation of women in sports. Although the origins of such research are relatively recent, beginning around the mid 1980s, the vast majority of material has been conducted since 1991. The most recent studies tend to focus on replicating the earlier studies for comparison purposes. The attempt to discern the
progress of the media representation from 1991 to present became a fascinating topic since 1996 after the IOC substantially increased the number of events for women that the number of female athletes grew from 2704 in 1992 to 3512 in 1996. (International Olympic Committee, 2004) Further, as 1996 was the Olympic centennial year, it was appealing to study from a sports-feminist perspective since the 1896 Games did not permit female competition. Over the 15 years of media representation research in this field, little has been conducted on Canadian media sources. Much of the research comes from evaluations of British and American media, although the Globe and Mail in Canada has been studied. As the research progressed through the 1990s, the studies became increasingly more complex, focusing on more specific details of misrepresentation of women in athletics.

When all the research findings are compiled and examined thematically, there appears to be four ways the media has biased sports coverage: Over-representation of male events in time or space allocation, male athleticism as the standard, disproportionate representation of female coverage in feminine appropriate and feminine inappropriate events, and the trivialization of women as athletes. Much of the earlier research, and indeed some more current research as well, has focused on the quantitative aspects of media bias in male sporting events. The Olympic Games have been a prime target of interest among media researchers, given the amount of attention they attract. The inherent systemic inequality in the Olympic Games, such as fewer sports for women and/or diminished forms of male events, explains the attention given to media coverage of them. It is therefore not surprising that there was less coverage of women’s events than men’s events for the Olympic Games as there were fewer events to cover. Lee’s
(1991) analysis of the *Globe and Mail* coverage of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympics found that men received twice as much coverage as the women and that women were more likely to be featured in gymnastics and swimming than other events.

Eastman and Billings (1999: 152) compared the 1996 and 1998 Games and found a slightly different picture. There seemed to have been a drastic increase in the overall coverage of women’s events between 1988 and 1996. Eastman et al. (1999) accounted for the proportion of events and found that in 1996, “NBC succeeded in equalizing coverage for men’s and women’s sports in...the total quantity of minutes devoted to sports of each gender [sic] group.” However, in 1998 the quantity of minutes was again unequal and NBC had reverted to the standards of male bias that existed before the 1996 Games. (Eastman et al, 1999) In 2002, Tuggle et al. published another comparison of the 1996 Games, this time with the 2000 Games in Sydney. It was again found that the 1996 Games had made steps toward equalization of the coverage, but had slipped by 2000 so that the time devoted to females had dropped by approximately 2.6%. (Tuggle et al, 2002) Again, NBC was the focus of study. Weiller et al. (2003: 63), in a comparison of 1992 and 1996, found an improvement in the coverage for women with an increase in six of eleven events. An equalizing effort has been made in Olympic coverage since 1996; although, the novelty of women’s athletics, as made notable by the IOC’s increase in the number of events, had likely worn off and may explain the slight drop in coverage time in 1998 and 2000.

Several researchers have focussed on the media representation of women in sports generally and have found a much larger gap in the overall coverage of space and time dedicated to them. A Swedish study of newspapers showed that of approximately 1470
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minutes of sports coverage analysed between 1995 and 1996, men received 86.7% of coverage, and women 11.7% of total coverage. The remainder involved coverage of non-gender specific coverage (i.e. the sport itself). (Koivula, 1999: 594) Likewise, Fink et al. (2002) revealed that *Sports Illustrated* dedicated 86% of sports-related articles to male athletes. The over-representation of male athleticism has changed little since the early 1990s in the years between the Olympics, although total coverage time in minutes has equalized between male and female events at the Olympics.

Another well-researched media bias in sports coverage is the use of gender marking. Gender marking is described as the process of identifying a sport by the sex of the athletes. (Daddario, 1992; Koivula, 1999; Wensing et al, 2003) An example of gender marking is to refer to a sport as women’s shot put, or men’s gymnastics. Researchers have discovered a trend to gender mark the women’s events or athletes, but not the men’s. Therefore, an event might be described as the women’s 100 metre run, but the men’s event is just the 100 metre run. (Daddario, 1992; Koivula, 1999; Wensing et al, 2003) These researchers assert that the use of gender marking illustrates media bias toward males and sets male athleticism as the standard and female athleticism as an anomaly. Koivula’s study (1999) found gender marking to be especially apparent in non-Olympic coverage, where it is still found to be considerably higher among women’s sports than men’s sports. Wensing and Bruce (2003) argue that although gender marking is still evident in the Olympic coverage, nationalism can undermine gender marking. In Sydney, all eyes were on 400 metre runner, Cathy Freeman, who was the gold medal favourite in the event. “To Australians, there was only one 400 metre at the Olympics, and Cathy Freeman was in it.” (Wensing and Bruce, 2003: 391)
Agreed among the media representation researchers is that in early studies the time coverage of men and women disproportionately favoured men, but recent and current studies show relative equality in total time coverage. However, researchers have indicated a trend of covering certain women’s events in favour of others. Matteo (1986) divided sports into three categories: male appropriate, female appropriate, and gender neutral. These divisions were used to describe the level of acceptance by the media for male and female participation in certain events. “Male-appropriate” events included team sports, such as basketball, football, and soccer, and contact or risk events like boxing and wrestling. “Female appropriate” events included individual events, like diving or figure-skating, and aesthetic events like gymnastics, synchronized swimming, etc. Neutral events, such as golf, tennis and volleyball, were those that can be more or less physical depending upon level of play. (Jones et al, 1999) Many researchers have used Matteo’s definitions of female, male, or neutral appropriate sports to analyse media over-representation of women in female-appropriate and men in male-appropriate events.

Lee’s (1991: 206) analysis of the 1984 and 1988 Summer Games, as reported in the Globe and Mail and the New York Times, confirmed that females were over-represented in individual events and especially those sports which emphasized the aesthetic characteristics. Likewise, males were over-represented in coverage for team sports or individual events that “emphasized strength, endurance and risk.” Koivula (1992) also concluded that of the women’s sports coverage in several Swedish newspapers, the majority of articles involved women participating in individual, especially gender neutral, sports.
More recent studies have found similar trends. Tuggle and Owen (1999) and Tuggle et al. (2002: 372) also found that women’s coverage is largely dedicated to individual sports (e.g. swimming, diving, and gymnastics) rather than team sports. Tuggle et al. (2002) also found that “Women who take part in sports that involve either power or hard body contact are particularly unlikely to receive media coverage.”

Many researchers have evaluated the media’s trivialization of women’s athletics, particularly at the Olympic Games. Lee (1992) indicated two ways the media trivialized women’s events during the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympic Games. Lee (1992) found that coverage of women tended to be more ambivalent for women than for men. Although the coverage often emphasized women’s strengths, it also often emphasized women’s weaknesses. Coverage of men’s events also emphasized their strengths, but rarely their weaknesses. Lee (1992) also found that performance achievement characteristically included personality traits, such as cute, vulnerable, or emotional. This trivialization of women’s athletics was found in both the 1984 and 1988 Olympic games and in both the Globe and Mail and the New York Times.

Daddario (1994: 286) indicates the media’s trivialization of female athletes in the 1992 Winter Olympic Games by highlighting the media’s inclusion of superfluous variables of the “athlete’s physical appearance, emotional well-being, adolescent roles, and familial relationships.” Fink and Kensicki (2002) also found that women were especially trivialized in the pages of Sports Illustrated by being depicted as sex symbols rather than as athletes. The under-representation of women in Sports Illustrated engaged in sport, combined with an over-representation of those women in provocative poses led Fink and Kensicki (2002: 317) to conclude that “successful female athletes continue to be
constructed in stereotypical and traditional conceptions of femininity that supercede their athletic ability.”

Role of the Media

The role of the media in televising sports is a significant one because it represents the only way many spectators are able to view an event. (Koivula, 1999) This is especially true with the Olympics, which are held across the world, are expensive to attend, and the events are commonly held simultaneously. Martyn (2003:159) extends this opinion of the mass media to sporting events covered by the media and argues that the mass media have a “...major impact [sic] on the meanings and values assigned to sporting events, while at the same time trivializing or ignoring others.”

These arguments regarding the media’s overall significance to our social values have prompted much work on women and sports throughout the 1990s; however, little of this work has taken the Canadian media into consideration. In Olympic coverage, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has won the broadcasting rights to exclusive coverage until 2008. At the 1998 Winter Games in Nagano the “CBC’s average audience each minute ranged from 850 000 daytime viewers to 1.8 million prime-time viewers.” (Martyn, 2003: 157) With roughly 30 million people living in Canada, approximately 1 in 15 people were tuned into the CBC each minute of prime-time coverage. But unlike other television broadcasters elsewhere (which have been studied extensively by other researchers), the CBC bears a unique responsibility to its viewers. As Canada’s national broadcaster, the CBC offers a mandate “to contribute to Canadians’ shared national consciousness by celebrating this country’s cultural and regional diversity and
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achievement in every field." (CBC, 1998: 40) It also has a responsibility to "...reflect the
circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men, women, and children, including equal
rights..." (CRTC, 1991) This unique responsibility to its viewers and its overwhelming
audience during Olympic prime-time underscores the importance of evaluating the
CBC's Olympic coverage.

Research Perspective of the Thesis

This thesis addresses issues specific only to women and girls participating or
interested in participating in competitive athletics. The thesis, therefore, reflects only one
kind of athletics, but one which currently dominates sports culture in Canada. The thesis
challenges the dichotomous belief in male and female sports abilities, and the divisions
currently set by sports organizations. While the idea of integrating males and females in
competitive athletics appears to call for the creation of a new sports structure, it merely
calls for a modification of the existing one. This does not mean that other forms of sport
organization should not exist, but rather other forms of sports structure and sports
organization serve different purposes that are beyond the scope of this thesis. The radical
feminist perspective of a cooperative, non-competitive and inclusive sports structure that
is available to all women and girls regardless of age, physical skill, etc., is clearly outside
the perspective of this thesis. Given that this thesis is an analysis of the Olympics, which
is a celebration of competition and athletic excellence, it does not address issues specific
to athletes or active people who do not engage in the highest levels of athletic
competition. However, this thesis does assert that women have a right not to be defined
by their sex, any more than it would be acceptable to be defined by colour, ethnicity, or
religion. Athletes should be defined by their athletic merits only. Because the thesis
addresses women as a single body (those who are top athletes) and calls for the integration of men and women in sport, it takes an explicitly liberal feminist perspective.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The remainder of the thesis will be divided into three chapters: methods, data analysis, and summary and conclusions. The methods chapter will outline the process of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis and its usage in the present study. It will describe the sample, coding procedures and data collection, and address intra and intercoder reliability and validity.

The data analysis chapter will examine a series of questions and assess the results based on these questions. Both the quantitative research and the qualitative research will be examined for comparisons of the physical descriptions in event, studio, interview, and feature coverage.

The summary chapter will summarize the research findings and relate the findings to the literature and research previously conducted on media representation of women in sports and on biomechanical theories of women's athletic abilities. Limitations of the research and suggestions for further research will be addressed in this section.
Chapter 4: Methods

The present study is designed to examine the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games. By conducting a quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the study will focus on the media’s representation of physical differences between men and women in the 2004 Summer Olympic Games. Most previous research has taken either a quantitative or qualitative approach. It is hoped that by doing both types of analysis, a richer picture of the data will emerge. Content analysis is an effective tool for evaluating the media’s presentation and priorities, but cannot be used to generalize the audience’s interpretation or reception of the information.

Content Analysis

Wimmer and Dominick (1997: 112), basing their definition of a content analysis on that of F.N. Kerlinger (1986), describe it as “...a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purposes of measuring variables.” This definition restricts content analysis to quantitative analysis only. Quantitative content analysis is useful to researchers for its ability to illustrate media trends or occurrences, but its ability to illustrate reasons for those trends is limited.

Many forms of media analysis incorporate qualitative methods in their research. Qualitative research is an inductive, interpretive method of inquiry (Rubin et al; 2000) that allows the researcher to analyze information through observation. Qualitative analysis is limited by subjectivity. Because it is open to interpretation, qualitative analysis alone may create problems of validity in the research.

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Using the definition given by Wimmer and Dominick (1997) for quantitative measurements, and using the previous research on media representation as a model for the qualitative analysis, this study employs both methods of analysis.

Sample

The sample consists of videotaped recordings of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s prime time Olympic coverage for the dates August 13, 2004 through August 29, 2004. Over the 17 days of coverage, 16 days involved competition. Prime time was selected for analysis because it represents the time when the greatest number of viewers is watching. (Eastman and Billing; 1999) Given Canada’s large size and numerous time zones, the definition of prime-time is flexible. For the purposes of this study, prime time coverage is described as the period between the end of Canada Now (ending at 6:00 p.m EST) and the beginning of The National (beginning at 11:00 p.m EST). These times differed slightly on weekends when the supper-time news is only 30 minutes long rather than an hour. Because Athens is seven hours ahead of Canada’s EST, day 16 was not shown during prime time and is therefore not included in the analysis. Also excluded from the analysis are the opening and closing ceremonies, segments not involving athletes (such as features about life in Greece), segments about previous Olympic Games and former athletes, and commercials. A total of 75 hours of prime time Olympic coverage was recorded and 39:27:31 of coverage remained after the exclusion of commercials and unanalysed features and segments.
Table 4.1 shows the amount of time of analysed segments, divided by sex. Only the in-studio coverage was undivided as the subject matter was not specific to sex and always featured the commentator, Brian Williams. A comparative analysis of the time dedicated to men and women allows the researcher to assess not only the media’s comparative values regarding men’s and women’s athletics (given that greater coverage reflects greater media value), but also proportion in the quantitative analysis. In this example, all the broadcast segments dedicated a greater proportion of coverage to men (in both event and feature time) than to women. This proportional difference will be assessed in the quantitative analysis.

**Coding and Operational Definitions**

The quantitative aspects of the research have been designed to evaluate the number of positive and negative descriptors of the physical and performance traits of the athletes by the commentators. The coverage was divided into broadcast segments, both in-field (event) and feature. A broadcast segment of an in-field event refers to the visual/audio location of a particular venue. Any change in venue indicates a new broadcast segment. A broadcast segment of a feature is defined in one of two ways. The
in-studio commentary and interviews were defined by the appearance of prime-time announcer, Brian Williams. The other two features, "The Olympians" and "Olympic Connection", were defined by their titles. The visual cue of the title of the feature indicated the start of that broadcast segment. The feature broadcast segments also ended with a visual re-statement of the feature title.

In-field event coverage was timed and recorded as a male or female event. The timing of the in-field coverage was sub-divided among event teasers, event action, and event trailers. (see Appendix B) In-studio commentary, interviews, "The Olympic Connection", and "The Olympians" were also timed. (see Table 4.1)

Each of the in-field events was categorized into a type of event (track, field, combat, judged, skill, and team). These categories were determined according to the primary characteristics of the event. Track events are race events and include sprints, middle-distances, endurance races, relays and hurdles. Field events are those in which athletes compete against each other for greatest height, weight, points, distances, etc. These events require both physical skill, technique and body manipulation. Combat events are those based on fighting forms, either martial arts or western-traditional, and include boxing, judo, wrestling, etc. Judged events are those where a certain degree of subjective judging meets with strength skills and artistic form. These events include gymnastics, diving, and synchronized swimming. Skill events are those that require lower levels of physical activity (than other Olympic events) and test particular skills or techniques. Events such as archery, shooting, sailing, and equestrian are among these. Team sports are those where two or more opponents compete in a points-based game. These sports include tennis, baseball/softball, basketball, water polo, etc.
The above category divisions are loosely based on earlier research which categorized events as 'feminine appropriate', 'masculine appropriate', and neutral. Track and skill would have been considered neutral; team, field, and combat would have been considered 'masculine appropriate'; and the judged would have been considered 'feminine appropriate'.

The focus of the quantitative analysis was on the commentator's descriptions of males and females in their respective sports. The physical and performance descriptors were analysed, both generally and specifically, to assess any difference in the coverage of the men's and women's events. The physical descriptions of age, height and weight were assessed; as well, the performance descriptions of strength, energy, fitness, aggression, flexibility, technical skills, and competitiveness were analysed and coded. The general analysis emphasized the performance descriptors only and assessed each broadcast segment for its overall tone. A semantic differential was used to isolate the underlying dimensions of each in-field segment. The performance descriptors were defined on a scale from one to five, one indicating a positive tone, two indicating a somewhat positive tone, three indicating a neutral tone, four indicating a somewhat negative tone, and five indicating a negative tone. For example, if commentators were generally positive about the strength performance(s) of the men's weightlifting, then the broadcast segment for men's weightlifting would be coded a one for strength. If, however, the broadcast segment was somewhat negative about the strength of the men in the competition, the broadcast segment was coded as a four (somewhat negative). Strength performance descriptors were coded on a scale from strong to weak. Indicators of strength were considered positive, while references to weakness were considered negative. Energy
performance descriptors were coded on a scale from energetic to fatigue with the former coded as positive and the latter as negative. Fitness descriptors ranged from adjectives such as athleticism (positive) to 'out of shape' (negative), while aggression descriptors ranged from aggressive (positive) to intimidated (negative). Flexibility descriptors included agility as positive and rigidity as negative. Technical descriptors were coded as positive for adjectives such as skilled and negative for adjectives such as flawed. Competition descriptors were positive when competitiveness was expressed, and coded as negative when a lack of competitiveness was expressed. An example of an expression about a lack of competitiveness includes statements such as, “She’s just not into this competition”.

A specific tally of the overall number of physical and performance descriptors was also taken. Each broadcast segment analysed the use of specific adjectives by the commentators to describe the physical and performance abilities of the athletes. These were compared across the male and female events and focussed on the number of instances of positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, and negative descriptors used by the commentators to describe the athletes. Positive descriptors were those that connoted a distinct advantage for the athlete physically or performance wise, while negative descriptors were those that connoted a distinct disadvantage for the athlete. For example, ‘shows great energy’ would be coded as a positive energy descriptor, while ‘the geriatric 23 year old’ would be coded as a negative age descriptor. (see Appendix B)

Coding was recorded on a standardized coding sheet (see Appendix A) for both the overall tone (semantic differential) of the broadcast segment, and again for the tally of
specific physical and performance descriptors. Only one coder was needed to code the quantitative data however a second coder was trained to repeat a selection of the coverage to ensure research reliability.

The qualitative research was conducted more generally. The in-field commentary, in-studio commentary, interviews, “Olympic Connection”, and “The Olympians” were all analysed qualitatively. Each broadcast segment was assessed holistically, with specific comparisons in physicality documented. The qualitative research was used to determine how the commentators treated women’s athletics as inferior, equal, or superior to men’s athletics. Because quantitative analysis limits research to correlations in variables, the qualitative research is necessary to determine why correlations occur. In other words, a correlation between women’s athletics and negative physical descriptors is one possible research outcome, but the reason for this correlation is not apparent. Specific phrases in the qualitative research might help the researcher understand why a correlation exists.

Coding was conducted by watching the events and features and transcriptions were recorded. No additional coders were used in this aspect of research.

Intra-coder and Inter-coder Reliability

For content analysis research to be objective, its measures and procedures must be reliable. “Reliability is present when repeated measurement of the same material results in similar decisions or conclusions.” (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997: 126)

Intra-coder reliability tests are designed to ensure that a single coder repeats his or her own research with accuracy. Intra-coder reliability tests are most useful in small
studies where multiple coders are unnecessary and/or when a small degree of subjectivity is involved. As this study is relatively small and the evaluation of positive and negative descriptors could be influenced by a host of variables, including the mood of the coder at the time of analysis, intra-coder reliability was tested to ensure that the data was treated the same each day of the coding process. To ensure intra-coder reliability, coding for August 21 was repeated several days after the principal coding took place.

Inter-coder reliability tests are designed to ensure agreement between two or more coders. This type of reliability test is important in all quantitative research studies, regardless of size. To ensure inter-coder reliability, a second coder was trained to analyse the in-field events for both the semantic differential and the specific tally. The second coder was randomly assigned six in-field events to study, one for each of the event categories. Because Olympic events vary and commentators focus on different aspects, it was necessary to look at each of the six categories to ensure reliability in all the coding of various performance and physical descriptors. However, because none of the skills events was shown, coding could not be conducted. The second coder analysed the men’s and women’s 100 metre run (track), men’s and women’s weightlifting (field), men’s and women’s wrestling (combat), men’s and women’s 10 metre platform dive (judged), and men’s and women’s beach volleyball (team).

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), inter-coder reliability can be calculated in different ways. This study uses Holsti’s (1969) reliability formula to assess both intra-coder and inter-coder reliability:

\[
\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}
\]
A reliability value of 0.80 or higher is considered standard. In both the intra-coder and inter-coder measurements for the tallies and the semantic differentials, the results are within the acceptable levels of agreement. This shows that the data collected and reported here can be considered reliable across time and coders.

Validity

In addition to reliability a content analysis must also be valid. Validity refers to the extent to which the research measures what it sets out to measure. Validity can, to some degree, be subjective as one analyst of the research might believe the research to be more valid than others would. (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997)

*Face validity* relies on the assumption that categories for measurement have been properly defined. Assuming that the operational definitions make sense, face validity is achieved when the instruments used to collect the data are clear. For example, a study used to assess acts of violence in the media, must define violence (as there may be many definitions) before face validity can be achieved. Face validity is the validity measure most commonly used in content analysis. (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997) This study ensures face validity by using standard operational definitions throughout the study. (see

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Appendix B) Validity of the operational definitions and instruments of measurement were ensured by presenting the definitions and instruments of measurement to other qualified researchers prior to analysis. Agreement was reached regarding the definitions of strength, aggression, competitiveness, etc. necessary to the study, thereby ensuring face validity.
Chapter 5: Data Analysis

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the CBC coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. The emphasis will be on those results which illustrate differences in the commentary on the men’s and women’s events. This chapter is divided according to the findings of the semantic differential, the specific tallies in the event categories and the features. A summary section follows the discussion and consolidates the findings. The features analysis sections examine the features and interviews for differences in the general presentation of male and female athletes. The semantic differential analysis section assesses the results of the findings for the entire prime-time coverage. Each of the event coverage sections, as divided by event category, addresses four issues related to the thesis research question. They are as follows:

1. Differences in amount of time dedicated within the event category between men’s and women’s events is assessed. The total amount of time spent on each event category, by the CBC during the prime-time hours, will be discussed, as the amount of time spent reflects the level of priority and significance of the events given by the broadcaster. Differences between the amount of time spent on certain categories for men’s and women’s events addresses earlier research regarding ‘feminine appropriate’ or ‘masculine appropriate’ events. Also considered are the proportions of event teasers, event action, and event trailers with the time totals for each of the event categories. As greater proportions of event teasers and trailers reflect the CBC’s presentation of significant events, the events considered most important by the broadcaster can be evaluated.
2. The number of positive and negative physical and performance descriptors is assessed. The purpose of this analysis is to assess any difference in the type and nature of descriptions used by the commentators for male and female athletes in the event coverage. The extent to which positive or negative descriptors are used to describe the performance or physical traits of the athletes, indicates the commentators’ general view of male and female athletic skill.

3. The sex of the commentator is assessed. Differences in commentaries delivered by male and female commentators are considered.

4. Each of the event categories is examined for direct comparisons, made by the commentators, between male and female athletes or events. As direct comparisons between men and women reveal commentators’ specific views regarding the physical differences or similarities between men and women, this aspect of the analysis is the most important aspect for addressing the research question.

Semantic Differential

The semantic differential analysis yielded some interesting results for most of the performance descriptors used by commentators for the men’s and women’s events. The competition and flexibility descriptors were excluded from analysis because there were too few broadcast segments that addressed these descriptors for the findings to be significant, and therefore, valid. The descriptors of competition and flexibility were generally found in the judged and combat events of which there were many fewer broadcast segments than in other event categories. The remaining descriptors of strength, energy, fitness, aggression, and technique/skill were found often in all event categories.
The means, as indicated in the above table, illustrate that male athletes consistently received more positive descriptions than female athletes throughout the Olympic prime-time coverage. The technical and energy descriptors yielded the greatest degree of difference in the commentary between the male and female events. The total number of descriptors (N) throughout the prime-time coverage also reveals that men were more frequently described in the commentary according to their physical performance traits than were women, and especially so in descriptions of energy and aggression. Because the combat events most commonly used descriptions of aggression and because women were underrepresented in the number of combat events (only one combat event for women aired), the difference in the number of descriptions is not surprising. However, the fewer energy descriptors for women is surprising and revealing. Regardless of the event category, energy descriptors were consistently used by commentators throughout the Olympic coverage. Therefore, while proportion of coverage might explain the difference in the amount of descriptors for aggression, it cannot explain the difference in the amount of descriptors for energy. It can therefore be
assumed that commentators favour male energy over female energy in all Olympic events.

Not only does the semantic differential reveal a greater number of descriptions and a tendency toward positive performance descriptions of male events, it also indicates a greater degree of variation between positive and negative performance descriptors for female events. Standard deviations illustrate the spread of scores around the mean. A greater standard deviation produces a greater the degree of variation. For example, the larger standard deviation found for female events in all the descriptor categories illustrates a greater number of occurrences where female events received a neutral, somewhat negative, or negative comment (See Table 5.1). The standard deviation for each of the descriptor categories revealed that in every descriptor category there was a considerable difference in the variation of results for male and female events. The term ‘ambivalence’ was first used by Duncan and Hasbrook in 1988 to describe the media’s use of mixed messages. (Fink and Kensicki, 2002) The considerable differences in the standard deviation between the male and female events illustrate the tendency for commentators to be more ambivalent in the performance descriptors of female events. This ambivalence is found throughout the in-field commentary and is analysed again within the specific tallies and the qualitative analysis.

Event Coverage: Combat

Very little time was spent during prime-time covering events in the combat or team categories. Because boxing was covered on several nights, men received considerably more time than women in combat event coverage. Only the women’s wrestling events were covered, although it is possible that they were only covered
because Canadian athlete, Tanya Verbeek, won the silver medal in the event. Only the women’s gold medal wrestling match was shown and all other combat events for women, including taekwondo, judo and fencing were absent. Women’s wrestling could have received more significant coverage because it was open to women for the first time in the 2004 Summer Games. However, as Table 5.2 illustrates, women received only 13:54 of combat coverage, as compared to men who received 1:37:28 of combat coverage. The majority of combat coverage received by men involved boxing, a sport that still excludes women from competition at the Olympic level. In fact, the men’s wrestling competition featured only preliminary matches as the final matches were scheduled to be held on the final day of competition. Because the prime-time coverage consisted of only the closing ceremonies on the final day, the men’s wrestling final matches were not shown in prime-time and therefore not analysed. This is significant because men received almost as much wrestling coverage as the women, despite the difference in significance of the matches. This supports the earlier research which suggested that the media tends to under-represent women in male ‘appropriate’ sports and over-represent men in male ‘appropriate’ sports.

Table 5.2 Event Time by Event Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Combat</th>
<th>Judged</th>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male Event Teasers</strong></td>
<td>2:30:46</td>
<td>0:07:35</td>
<td>0:13:15</td>
<td>0:21:26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:00:53</td>
<td>3:13:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male Event Trailers</strong></td>
<td>2:17:56</td>
<td>0:11:58</td>
<td>0:06:29</td>
<td>0:23:25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:04:53</td>
<td>3:04:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>7:21:56</td>
<td>1:45:12</td>
<td>1:37:28</td>
<td>4:41:22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:35:05</td>
<td>16:01:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Event Teasers</strong></td>
<td>1:27:48</td>
<td>0:04:53</td>
<td>0:01:00</td>
<td>0:29:37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:00:38</td>
<td>2:04:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Event Action</strong></td>
<td>2:21:32</td>
<td>0:38:47</td>
<td>0:09:12</td>
<td>3:37:32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1:36:11</td>
<td>8:23:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Event Trailers</strong></td>
<td>1:52:35</td>
<td>0:02:28</td>
<td>0:03:42</td>
<td>0:23:49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:09:06</td>
<td>2:31:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5:41:55</td>
<td>0:46:08</td>
<td>0:13:54</td>
<td>4:30:58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1:45:55</td>
<td>12:58:50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Given the small amount of time dedicated to women in the combat coverage, little information could be determined regarding differences in commentary between the men's and women's events. Of the physical and performance descriptors that were used in the men's competitions, statements of aggression were the most common.

Table 5.3 illustrates that in the men's combat event coverage there was an average of one positive statement every 3:21, an average of one somewhat positive statement every 8:51, one neutral statement every 8:51, one somewhat negative statement every 48:44, and no negative physical or performance descriptors. Comments within the men's boxing, like “both of these athletes are in tremendous condition” and “this is pure warrior boxing...”, illustrate the praise given in combat events for athletes who were fit and aggressive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>1 per Nth hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0:03:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0:01:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat Positive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0:08:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0:13:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0:08:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:00:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat Negative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0:48:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0:13:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:00:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0:00:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentators were exclusively male in the combat coverage, except for a single female commentator who introduced the women's gold medal wrestling match. Possibly because of the lack of women's event coverage, there were no examples of comparisons made by the commentators between male and female athletes.
Event Coverage: Team

As with combat events, the CBC spent very little time during the prime-time covering team events. Women received more time than men in team coverage (see Table 5.2). The bulk of this difference occurred when Canada's women's water polo team surprised the United States in a come-from-behind victory in the last quarter of the match. The surprise victory of Canada warranted a replay of the game during the prime-time coverage, thereby increasing the amount of time dedicated to women's team events.

Table 5.4 Physical and Performance Tallies: Team Event Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>1 per Nth hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0:03:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Positive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0:07:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0:11:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Negative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0:08:46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0:17:32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specific comments regarding men's physical and performance abilities were very positive on the whole. In fact, men received a positive comment every 3:53 minutes on average. Women, however, received a positive comment every 5:02 minutes on average. This degree of difference is not particularly significant as there was considerably more time dedicated to women's team coverage than men's. Likewise, the total number of negative statements was small, with men receiving only two negative comments and women receiving only five. Women did receive a considerable number of neutral age descriptors when commentators were surprised by the height of the Russian women volleyball players. General statements, such as "the spike by the six-foot, eight woman," were frequent during the women's indoor volleyball coverage. Commentators
were typically male in the team event coverage although there were a few female commentators who commented on the events. There were no examples of commentators comparing the men’s and women’s competitions in the team coverage.

**Event Coverage: Track Events**

Track events comprised the vast majority of prime-time coverage during the Games in Athens. Men received 7 hours 21 minutes and 56 seconds, while women received 5 hours 41 minutes and 55 seconds. This represents a considerable difference in the overall track coverage between the two sexes. The men’s 100 metre run played a substantial role in the inflated men’s coverage, as the men’s event was given 72% more time than the women’s event. This, combined with the amount of time spent discussing the men’s 100 metre run during the “Olympic Connection, no doubt contributed to the impression on day 15 that the men’s 100 metre was the “Premiere event of the Games”. The men’s 100 metre run received 1:12:28 worth of coverage, although only 2:51 of event action were shown. The remaining 1:09:37 made up the event teasers and the event trailers in which athletes were featured milling about the track waiting to race, or having just finished. The women were shown in the event action for nearly the same amount of time, with 2:15 of event action coverage, but were only featured in the event teasers and trailers 26:17. Clearly, if proportion of time spent reflects the media’s value, the men’s 100 metre run was considered by the CBC as the more important event. Indeed, aside from the men’s 200 metre freestyle swim, it was *the* important event.
The men's 200 metre freestyle swim also received considerably more coverage time than the women's 200 metre freestyle swim. Although marginal compared to the 100 metre run in terms of time, it still represented one of the most highlighted events. In terms of the amount of time needed to cover the event action, the amount of time spent on event teasers for the men's event was rather inflated. The time spent during the event teasers was taken up by the commentators reviewing each of the athletes as they were introduced at the event, providing details for the audience such as, "Michael Phelps. Only nineteen. Six-foot-four". Played lacrosse as a child." This was true for many of the men's swimming events. The men were featured in the event teasers during swimming events for more time than any other type of event. They were also featured significantly more frequently than the women in event teaser coverage. (See Table 5.6) Frequently the women's swimming races were shown part way into the race or just as the race began. Often very little time was spent showcasing the women swimmers during the swimming heats, although some time was spent showcasing the women during the swimming finals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>% of Time</th>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>% of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Event Teasers</td>
<td>0:40:23</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Event Action</td>
<td>0:24:06</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Event Teasers</td>
<td>0:18:16</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0:38:27</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6 Comparison of Event Teasers and Event Action in Swimming Races

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The tremendously higher proportion of event teasers to event action for the men’s swimming competitions illustrates the CBC’s bias in favour of the men’s swimming events. The CBC’s introductions to male swimmers Michael Phelps and Ian Thorpe exemplify the greater attention paid to the men’s swimming competitions over the women’s swimming competitions. Lengthy introductions of the athletes included event teaser segments, such as “Thorpedo versus Phelps in the pool”. These attraction comments were absent from the women’s competitions.

Track events also included the foot races, bicycle races, rowing races, and canoe/kayak races. The differences in the commentary between men’s and women’s events were considerably different in the track categories than in the combat and team events. While the commentary in the combat and team events emphasized aggression and energy, track commentary generally included all the performance descriptors, except flexibility which was not seen as especially important in races.

Commentators were almost exclusively men in the track event coverage. Only in the rowing competitions was there a female commentator, former Olympic champion, Marny McBean. Rowing commentary was frequently positive for both men and women, but this might reflect more the overall success of the Canadian rowing team than opinions regarding physical ability.

The coverage during the women’s track events was somewhat ambivalent. Frequently a positive statement was qualified by a negative or somewhat negative statement. For example, “She’s the strongest swimmer, but has the weakest start.” This kind of ambivalence occurred very rarely in the men’s events. Often a negative
comment would be qualified by a positive one. “He’s not as big, or muscular, as the other guys but boy is he quick!” This ambivalence in the commentary is made evident by the number of positive and negative comments, as tallied throughout the track coverage. Women received almost as many positive descriptors, proportionally, throughout the track coverage as men, but considerably more negative and somewhat negative comments. As Table 5.7 shows, an average of one positive statement per 3:30 of coverage was heard during the men’s track coverage, while one positive statement per 3:57 was heard during the women’s track coverage. These values are very similar. However, men received only one negative statement every 36:49, as compared to women who received a negative comment every 9:56.

Table 5.7 Physical and Performance Tallies: Track Event Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1 per Nth hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0:03:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0:03:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat Positive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0:11:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0:15:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0:07:07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0:05:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat Negative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0:31:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0:15:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0:36:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0:09:56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentators often gave the age, height and weight of the athletes, particularly during the event teasers when athletes were being displayed prior to their events. Generally, these statements are neutral, such as, “The 21 year old from Norway.” Commonly, athletes, both male and female, were described as “veterans” or “rookies” depending upon the number of Olympic competitions the athlete has competed in. References to an athlete as ‘experienced’ was coded as somewhat positive, the
implication being that the Olympic veteran was at an advantage in some way. Occasionally, however, an athlete was referred to as an ‘aged’ veteran. These references were coded as somewhat negative because the ‘aged’ implied old. Both men and women were occasionally described as ‘aged’, but only the female athletes received negative comments regarding their youth. Comments such as “Babies in this event” were reserved for two twenty-year old female athletes competing in the women’s 100 metre run. There was one negative or somewhat negative age comment for every 21:22 and although this may not seem like many negative age comments, men received a negative or somewhat negative age comment nearly half as often (once every 36:49). The negative comments were more extreme for the women also. Descriptions of female athletes ranged from “Babies...” to “The grandmother has done it...” Comments on the female athletes’ ages also extended into their past, presumably as a reminder of their youth. “Amanda Beard...8 years ago, as a little 14 year old...Now she’s mature, she does modelling.” Childhood or infancy was an age measure only appropriate to female athletes. No males were referred to as babies and young males usually received positive qualifiers. A male athlete, perceived as young for his sport, received the positive qualifying statement, “He’s showing a lot of experience for a 21 year old.”

The height and weight descriptors tended to be more positive than negative for both men and women. Women received almost as many neutral indicators as they did positive ones, but otherwise height and weight were not criticized often in the track events. Neutral height and weight indicators were those that merely gave the physical dimensions of the athlete. “She’s six-foot-two and weighs 187 pounds” is an example of the type of commentary common in track events. Both men and women received a large
number of comments regarding their height or weight (such as big, tall, etc.) that were
demed positive or somewhat positive because they implied a certain advantage in the
sport. In other event categories, short and thin might be considered positive. For
example, in gymnastics (the judged event category) “a short, but sturdily built”
description was considered positive, because it was framed as an athletic advantage for
the sport. When Lori-Anne Muenzer, the Canadian gold medal cyclist, was referred to as
“one of the biggest riders, very powerful”, the statement was coded as a positive
height/weight descriptor and also as a positive strength descriptor.

Strength descriptors were most frequently used by the commentators throughout
the track events. On the whole, commentary was considerably more positive than
negative to both men and women. A positive or somewhat positive strength description
was used an average of once every 8:20 during the men’s events. In the women’s events
a positive or somewhat positive strength description was said once every 8:46. There
were, however, more negative and somewhat negative statements regarding strength for
the female athletes than the male athletes, although these were few in comparison to the
positive and somewhat positive statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.8 Strength Tallies: Track Event Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Positive Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Positive Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Negative Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Negative Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, female athletes were subject to ambivalence from the commentators regarding strength descriptions. In the women's 100 metre run commentators noted that "she looked quite strong, but she didn't look good on the start" or of the women's 10 000 metre run, "she has the strength, but she may not have the speed." Furthermore, power and strength were not always presented as positive qualities of female athletes. While a male athlete's strength was considered a distinct athletic advantage, female athletes were cautioned about their power. For example, a male athlete was lauded for the use of his power in the 400 metre hurdles, "he just really used his power...powers away across the finish line...," while female 100 metre runner, Nesterenko, was cautioned to "contain that power she's got...and [not] cramp up under the pressure."

Descriptions of an athlete's aggressive nature were also very common in the track event commentary. All the statements directed at male athletes' aggressiveness were presented as positive or somewhat positive. Described as "poised to attack", the male athlete's aggressive descriptors were used to add excitement to the commentary and to illustrate the athlete's desire to give all of his energy, focus, and training into the event. This was true of the women's events also, although the occasional negative aggressive statement appeared within the commentary. Female Russian cyclist, Lorelle [last name absent from the prime-time commentary], was described as "so intimidated," and the women's Road Race athletes were criticized for not being "ready to commit to an attack." Interestingly, however, the commentary noted thirty seconds later that Canadian Lynn Bessette was making a "text book attack." This was seen as a "...great effort by the Canadians."
The most striking difference in the commentary between the men’s and women’s events lies in the descriptors of energy. Commentators were rather critical of women’s energy levels, giving a greater number of negative and somewhat negative comments than they did positive or somewhat positive comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.9 Energy Tallies: Track Event Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 per Nth hours</td>
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<td>0:20:00</td>
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<td>0:42:44</td>
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<tr>
<td>0:55:14</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:53:58</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:21:56</td>
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<td>1:53:58</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:27:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:53:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:27:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:31:05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most extreme example comes from the commentary on the women’s 100 metre run. Commentators were unkind to Belarussian runner, Nesterenko. She was repeatedly accused of getting “caught up in the bravado of the semis” and cautioned against “spend[ing] too much energy too soon.” Commentators noted that she had “already spent too much energy” and expressed concern that she “[looked] a bit tense; a bit drained.” The runner had won all the heats leading up to the race finals and ran them in world-class times. The commentary could have been complimentary to Nesterenko’s superior performance, but was instead cautionary and often unflattering.

“Nesterenko...she looks to be under a lot of tension...you can get caught up using too much neuro-energy through the heats.” Nesterenko did win the women’s gold medal and clearly had not expended too much of her energy throughout the heats.

Other, less negative but clearly ‘left-handed compliments’ were notable in the commentary on the women’s swimming events. It was reported at the end of the
women's 100 metre freestyle swim that Australian swimmer Jodi Henry, "[didn't] even look tired, like she [hadn't] expended herself." Although not explicitly negative, the expectation that she should look exhausted was a unique comment on the women's races. Men who ended races looking calm and collected were reported as having looked "effortless across the last 60 [metres]" or as having "just eased across the finish line".

The qualitative analysis of the track events revealed that there were several examples of female athletes or the women's competitions being compared to male athletes or the men's competitions. References to the men's events were common in the women's events. "Just like in the men's 100 metre..." Occasionally, female athletes were directly compared to male athletes, for example, in the women's triathlon race. "She's pulling a Simon Whitfield [laughs], picking people off in the last kilometre." As the women's triathlon event took place the day before the men's triathlon, the reference must have been to the men's triathlon race in Sydney (2000) when Canadian Whitfield won the men's gold. In the case of the women's road race, the reference to the men's road race was included as part of the women's strategy. Commentators in the event teaser outlined that the women's strategy was to "work together, learn from the men's race, be aware of what's happening at all times." This statement was supported by pre-event interviews, where the Canadian women discussed what it would take to win the race. The women interviewed noted that they needed to work together and to be aware of what was happening, but the comment about learning from the men's race seems to have been added by the commentators.

References to the men's races were also used to illustrate the 'inferior' physical status of women compared to men in the track events. Comments like "Incredible time
for a women” imply a substandard time generally. The subtext, of course, was that it was not so incredible for men. Similar comments include direct comparisons to men’s achievements. “What a finishing lap; 62 seconds. Not quite as fast as the 53 seconds we saw from the men, but what a kick.” Curiously, the only example of commentary in the men’s events of a reference to women’s events came during the men’s 5000 metre run. The race, which was moving slower than usual, frustrated the commentators, who noted that the race was so slow that it was, in fact, “slower than the woman’s 5000 metre...very, very slow indeed. Someone will have to do something.” Obviously when men’s times were compared as slower than women’s was something of an insult for the male athletes. References to women in the men’s events were therefore used negatively, while references to men in the women’s events were intended to compliment the female. For women to perform at a standard that approximated the men was noteworthy. A female triathlete, who was cycling well out front of the pack, was noted that in her training, “she does bike racing with the men and they have a hard time dropping her. She’s a very courageous woman.” How or why the athlete was courageous was unclear, although given the context of the comment, it appears that her courage stemmed from training with men.

References in the women’s events commentary also included statements intended to illustrate the differences in physical performance and technique between men and women. In the women’s 100 metre hurdles, commentators praised Felician for her “excellent technique...”, but also commented on her “bent leg position...[and that] the women can do that because the hurdles are shorter than the men’s.” Presumably, however, the justification for shorter hurdles is the supposed difference in average height.
between men and women. It should therefore follow that the women would have as much difficulty clearing their hurdles as the men in clearing theirs. Occasionally, commentators would exaggerate differences between the men’s and women’s events. Such was the case in the 400 metre hurdles where commentators noted during the women’s event that “these women will use a 15 stride approach. Unlike the men who use a 13 stride approach.” Interestingly, the same commentators, the following day, noted in the men’s events that the men use “…anywhere between 13 and 15 strides depending on [their] fitness.” The majority of the men in that event were noted for “…switch[ing] to 14 strides” throughout the race. If the number of strides used by the men was dependant upon fitness, it would likely follow that it was dependant upon fitness for women also. However, the number of strides used in the women’s hurdles was not counted throughout the event.

What is evident from the qualitative analysis is that it was very rare for men to be compared to women in the track events, while it was common for women to be compared to men. The comparisons suggest that commentators assume a male athletic standard with women as physically inferior. In the track events no examples were found that suggested that commentators assumed a female athletic standard, or that women were athletically equal to men.

Event Coverage: Field

Men received considerably more time in the field events than did women, although proportionally, there was little difference in the amount of time dedicated to
event teasers and trailers. (See Table 5.2) Men received 1:45:12 of coverage, while women received only 46:08 of coverage.

Compared to the amount of time spent on track events, the CBC spent very little time on field events. One reason is that there are fewer field events held at the Summer Olympics to cover and, secondly, Canada did not send many field athletes. Coverage was reserved for short segments of the men’s and women’s finals in field events like shot put and long jump. Only weightlifting received tremendous attention in the field coverage, and primarily the men’s weightlifting. Women’s weightlifting received half the coverage of men’s weightlifting, despite a Canadian female weightlifter competing. No Canadian men were sent to the men’s weightlifting competition. Weightlifting coverage could have been equal as there were as many women’s competitions as there were men’s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Teasers</th>
<th>Event Action</th>
<th>Event Trailers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0:01:13</td>
<td>0:40:40</td>
<td>0:00:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0:00:21</td>
<td>0:16:39</td>
<td>0:00:43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10 illustrates the discrepancy in the amount of time dedicated to covering men and women in the weightlifting competitions. The bulk of the difference was in the event action, where men received approximately 24 minutes more coverage than women.

The physical descriptors of age, height and weight revealed some negative comments directed at the female athletes. Men were also subject to some negativity in these areas, although less so, as the findings revealed more somewhat negative comments, rather than negative ones. Age descriptions of female field athletes were either neutral or negative. The negative comments were all found within the women’s weightlifting competition where a 23 year-old athlete was consistently referred to as old.
“Next up, the 23 year old, so she’s the veteran, the aged veteran, the senior citizen...” She was called the “old lady” and referred to as “geriatric”. Compare this to the male weightlifter, only a year younger than the “old lady”, who was described in the men’s commentary as “just 22 years old and already at the Olympic Games.” Several comments implying a male athlete’s inexperience were coded as somewhat negative. References such as “he’s only 23 years old, but performing well” were coded as somewhat negative. The men’s stature (height and weight) descriptors were the most varied in the field competition. This was in part because of the men’s weightlifting events, where both the heavyweight (+105 kg) competitors and the smallest competitors (56 kg) were covered. “Not bad for a man of his stature...only a little over 6 feet tall” was coded as somewhat negative because the commentator implied the athlete was short and at some disadvantage in the event. However, in the +105 kg men’s weightlifting competition, the commentator exclaimed “Look at that belly! That’s mass. And remember the greater the mass, the more they can lift.” This was coded as positive as the commentator revealed the advantage of the athlete’s large size. There were very few comments about the female athlete’s height or weight, and of those that were made none was coded as either positive or somewhat positive. In the women’s shot put a female athlete was noted for her excellent throw, although the comment was negatively qualified by it being good “for a woman of her height”.

The men’s and women’s weightlifting competitions revealed a number of comments regarding strength. Overall, there were very few negative comments made about the female athletes’ strength, and none was made about the male athletes’ strength. The majority of strength comments involved the commentators’ expressions of awe at the
Women and Sports

athletes' abilities to demonstrate their “awesome feat[s] of strength”. Commentaries on the technique of the men and women were also highly positive, with only one negative comment coded regarding technique for the women, and only two somewhat negative comments coded for the men. Overall, the commentary for both men and women was very positive, with the exception of the age descriptors used to describe a female weightlifter as “old” in her competition.

Only the men’s white-water canoe/kayak competition was reported on by a female commentator. Male commentators presented all the other field event competitions.

The qualitative analysis also revealed that there were very few comparisons made between the women’s competition and the men’s. Only two examples were found in the field coverage. A female javelin thrower was applauded by the commentators for her “great speed on the runway...”. The commentators then revealed that the javelin thrown by the woman weighed “...600 grams. That’s 200 grams less than the men’s javelin.” 200 grams is equivalent to 0.44 pounds. The weight difference might have been only an interesting bit of trivia, but the effect was that it undermined the praise about the woman’s “great speed on the runway”. Further, as there were no examples in the men’s commentary, the intention to devalue the women’s javelin skills might be seen as intentional.

The second example of comparisons between the sexes was found in the women’s pole vault competition. The gold medallist in the women’s pole vault competition overwhelmingly beat the standing world record in the event. Commentators noted that “it has been over 40 years that men have been vaulting over 5 metres, but these women are..."
capable of it now.” Clearly this statement trivialized the accomplishment of the female athletes by illustrating that they were still well behind the world record for the men.

What the commentators failed to acknowledge was that the pole vault competition has only been an Olympic event for women since 2000, and as an international sport women had only been training since the early 1990s. Further, compared to the men’s results, it took women only two Olympics to achieve what it took men twelve Olympics to achieve.

Event Coverage: Judged

The judged event category was second next to track in the amount of time spent covering the events. Unlike track, which has many events that can be covered in a short time, the judged events were few but the broadcast segments lasted an average of about thirty minutes each. Men and women received nearly equal coverage, with men receiving just slightly more. Men received 4:41:22 of coverage compared with women who received 4:30:58 of coverage. (See Table 5.2) As Table 5.2 also shows, the amount of time spent on the event teasers and trailers was relatively even between the men’s and women’s events.

Table 5.11 Physical and Performance Tallies: Judged Event Coverage

<table>
<thead>
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The judged events were the only events which were primarily commented by female commentators. These commentators were all former athletes in the sports they covered, and, except for synchronized swimming competitions, they co-commentated with a male commentator.

Some specific criticisms directed towards women in the judged events are found in the coverage of the women’s gymnastics. Throughout the entire coverage a negative or somewhat negative comment was directed at a female athlete once every 4:52, this in comparison to the men who received only one negative or somewhat negative comment every 9:42. Female athletes were therefore criticized nearly twice as often as males.

One of the most significant differences in the commentary between men and women was the references to age. The negative age comments on female athletes ranged between infantile and old again in the judged events, as they did to some extent in the track events. In gymnastics Gail Mackie was described as “Canada’s Olympic infant”, while Svetlana Khorkina was continuously referred to as old. “Now at 25 years of age, she returns to take on much younger rivals...Some say it might be too late.” Throughout the event, commentators remarked about her age. “Here is her much older team-mate [Khorkina]...she appears to be a little tired.” While Khorkina was criticized for being 25 years of age, which is “unheard of for female gymnasts”, many of the men, who were much older or of the same age, were described neutrally. “Now 31 years old, Jordan Jovtchev” and “the 25 year old from Latvia”.

Height and weight descriptors were rather varied. The men were most likely to receive positive height and weight descriptors, such as “He has the perfect body type, perfect height, perfect weight...,” but the occasional reference to “short legs, but
powerful” was coded as somewhat negative. The women received mostly negative comments regarding their stature, including Khorkina who at 5’5” was considered “very tall for a gymnast” and therefore “had to invent some of her own skills”. The 5’5” male gymnast was described as “short, but sturdily built”. These comments may not only reflect the opinions of the commentators, but also the clear biases built into the sports themselves. Only the way the commentators chose to present the height and weight was reflected in the coding of positive to negative. Australian diver, Loudy Torky, frequently received negative comments regarding her height as commentators repeatedly pointed out that she was “the shortest in the competition” and “she’s only 4’10”, 99 pounds, but, man, can she twist and spin.”

Strength descriptors were the most common descriptions used by the commentators of the judged-event athletes. Men received almost double the number of descriptions of strength than did women, the bulk of the descriptions being positive. This is unsurprising, however, as the men’s gymnastics are more so tests of strength than the women’s gymnastics. Because of the rings event, which is designed to test men’s strength, it is a small wonder that so many comments were made. However, there is still some discrepancy regarding the number of strength comments, because men received considerably more positive strength comments from diving than did women, and the diving events do not differ in their strength requirements. Men received a strength comment once every 4:01 of judged event coverage, while women obtained strength comments once every 6:27. Statements such as “He is so strong and so fast” were common in the men’s diving commentary. Occasionally men were criticized for “overpowering the entry” or for too much adrenalin. “Here the adrenalin got to him.” For
the women’s events, criticisms of strength were prevalent in the commentary, but there were many fewer examples of the positive strength statements than the men received. “All week I’ve seen them not have enough power...” and “Too much power, too much strength on the take off” were common statements made about the female divers. Only in the women’s diving competitions were both ‘not enough strength’ and ‘too much strength’ problems for the divers.

The majority of positive strength comments for the women’s events came from gymnastics and synchronized swimming events. “Canada is showing off their power on this event...” and “She is so powerful, definitely a vault specialist” were frequent comments in the women’s gymnastics. The Canadian synchronized swim team was praised by the commentators for “Their strength, their power, their athleticism”. Strength descriptions, aside from the diving commentary, were the most positive of descriptions used by the commentators in the women’s judged events.

Energy descriptions were also largely positive. Statements like “explosive off the vault” were frequently used by the commentators to describe both the men and the women. The synchronized swimming commentary was very positive about the energy of the Canadian duet and team. “I like the speed and energy of this event. It adds to the risk” and “I like the energy” were used to describe the energy levels of the Canadian synchronized swimmers. Energy descriptors were the only area of physical and performance description in the diving commentaries which were as positive to the women as to the men. Both were lauded for their speed on certain dives and for using their energy to “twist and spin”. The bulk of negative comments regarding women’s energy were from the women’s individual gymnastics event. The commentators’ negativity to
Khorkina’s age was exemplified by the constant references to her tired and fatigued expressions. “[Khorkina] appears to be a little tired” and “[Floor] is the most difficult for endurance...

Khorkina has been conserving her energy as much as possible throughout this event.”

Other than this event, energy descriptors were relatively equal between the men’s and women’s coverage.

The most extreme difference in commentary came from the judged event coverage descriptions of both flexibility and technical skill. Women were far more likely to receive comments regarding flexibility than were men, while men received more comments regarding their technique. Women received twice as many flexibility comments, with all but two coded as positive. Of the comments received by men for their flexibility, nearly all were positive. “Watch Helm’s flexibility after the twist! Beautiful!” There were close to three times the number of technique descriptors for the men’s coverage as for the women’s. The vast majority of technical descriptors for men were positive. “In terms of technique, he’s one of the best in the world”, but for women, technical descriptors were almost as likely to be negative as positive. The women’s gymnastics and synchronized swimming commentaries were generally positive about the athlete’s technique. Occasionally the commentators would remark on a mistake in form or a “sloppy execution”, but the majority of comments in gymnastics with respect to technique illustrated the athlete’s “disciplined landing position”. The commentary in the women’s diving competitions was more frequently negative to women’s technique or skill. The divers were frequently criticized for “form break[s]” or for being “a little bent at the hips”
The qualitative analysis revealed few specific comparisons between men and women in the competitions; however, given the emphasis on positive strength and technique descriptors in the men’s diving competitions and the emphasis on flexibility and negative technique descriptors in the women’s diving competitions, a general feeling of watching two different events was created by the commentary. However, women and men complete the same dives, although the men often perform dives with slightly higher degrees of difficulty. One example of a direct comparison between the men’s and women’s competition focused on the difference between the degrees of difficulty. Emile Heymans, who entered Athens as the top ranked female diver, performed a dive with a high degree of difficulty extremely well during competition. The commentator exclaimed that she thought it was “the best three and a half reverse [she’d] ever seen a woman perform!...This is a very difficult dive. Back when I was diving, only the men and only the medallists performed this dive. She makes it look easy!” This example clearly articulates the commentator’s expectation of a difference between the men’s and women’s skill levels. This diving event provided an interesting example of the expectation of women’s athletic skills, as compared to men’s, and differences in the training of male and female athletes. Diving in the men’s 10 metre platform competition was a fourteen year old Malaysian boy. In the semi-finals of the competition, the boy was only put out of the competition by one ranking place. He was sitting at thirteenth position and only the top twelve moved on to the finals. This is important because it shows that the boy was performing the same level of dives as the older men in the competition, and therefore, higher degrees of difficulty than the experienced women in the women’s competition. Despite being considerably smaller than many of the women,
he was able to perform the same dives as the men. This suggests that he had been trained to perform the higher degree of difficulty dives. At only fourteen years of age, this young diver must have begun his training before puberty. But as all biomechanic research on pre-pubertal athletic abilities suggest, boys and girls should both be able to perform the same level of diving skill and fitness. The implications surrounding this young male diver are enormous as they suggest that it is the expectation of physical performance, not actual physical performance, that influences how young male and female divers are trained in the diving competitions.

"The Olympians" Features

Quantitatively, men received slightly more coverage in "The Olympians" features. Males received a total of 44:12 of "The Olympians" coverage, while females received a total of 38:13 covered (see Table 4.1). These features were sponsored by the Royal Bank of Canada and were generally between 2 and 3 minutes long. Most frequently, the athlete featured was a Canadian expected to do well in an event. Occasionally an athlete from another country was featured, but often only in events where no Canadian was participating. These segments were designed to feature an athlete and highlight training or some personal aspects of his or her life. Generally the features were similar for male and female athletes. Both men and women were frequently illustrated engaged in their sports, either in competition or in training. However, there were also more examples of female athletes being featured in "personal" aspects than were males. Only in the women’s features was there an emphasis on such things as preferences in pets, fashion consciousness, food preferences, and weaknesses
for shopping for pink bathing suits. While the physical and performance descriptions of both men and women were positive in these features, the male athletes always spoke for themselves. For example, David Ford, a Canadian white-water kayak athlete, in “Music of the River,” describes the stresses of competition and highlights the importance of overcoming obstacles during training. He “discovered the power of the water” and through his experience and training he learned to use the power of the water in competition. Mark Boswell, a Canadian high-jumper, described the importance of faith in training and noted that “faith drives [his] body, mind, and soul”. However, in the features illustrating female athletes, other people commonly spoke on their behalf. Coaches, mothers, fathers, husbands, and friends often discussed the successes and training process of the featured female athlete. In “Focus” Emile Heymans, was described by her father as being a highly focussed athlete, and attributes her success as an athlete to this quality. In “It’s all ball today” Cindy Eadie’s (softball) mother talked about Eadie as the all-round athlete. Eadie, also a goalie who intended to play for Canada’s women’s ice-hockey team, hoped to be a double Olympian.

In “The Olympians” features, both male and female athletes were positively portrayed. The purpose of these features was to highlight the athlete and to promote the up-coming event. To be negative towards an athlete would be counter to its purpose. However, males and females were treated differently nonetheless. Females were more likely than males to be portrayed as people who also happen to be athletes. Males were more commonly portrayed as athletes first and foremost. The female athletes’ personal tastes might be the focus of a segment, while the male athletes’ personal tastes might be an extra comment within the segment. We might learn, for example, that Michael Phelps
(American swimming champion) liked his car, but we learn this in a discussion of how he spent all the endorsement money he earned from being so successful. We learned that Emile Heymans liked burgers and ice-cream in a segment titled “My favourite things” because the entire segment highlighted Heymans’ personal tastes. That she is the number one ranked female diver at the Olympic Games was not mentioned.

**Interviews and “Olympic Connection”**

There was a greater difference in the amount of time spent on interviews and “Olympic Connection” of male athletes and sports personalities than on female athletes and sports personalities. “Olympic Connection” was a Bell Canada sponsored interview with a leading sports professional, usually Canadian and usually a former athlete. Held once each night, each “Olympic Connection” aired between six to eight minutes on average. The interviews were conducted in-studio by the prime-time announcer, Brian Williams and varied in the amount of time spent on each interview. There was only one exception to this. A replay of an interview between Ron McLean and Perdita Felician was broadcast on August 24, 2004. The interviews were most often conducted with athletes expected to medal, athletes who had medalled, former well-known athletes, or key individuals in the international sports community (such as International Olympic Committee members).

As Table 4.1 shows, men received 23 minutes and 35 seconds more in interview coverage than did women. The difference in “Olympic Connection” coverage was shocking. Of the fifteen nights of prime-time coverage, only one night featured a female interviewee for the “Olympic Connection” feature. This resulted in men receiving 92
minutes and 45 seconds more “Olympic Connection” coverage than women. The bulk of “Olympic Connection” interviews took place with former Olympian Mark Tewksbury, or former Olympian, Donovan Bailey. These two athletes appeared eight of the fifteen nights, however, Mark Tewksbury was also frequently interviewed on evenings where he did not appear on the “Olympic Connection” features. Other “Olympic Connection” evenings interviewed people such as Russ Anber (the commentator for the men’s boxing), Richard Pound (an IOC anti-doping official), and Mitch Geller (the Canadian diving coach). The vast majority of “Olympic Connection” interviews involved discussions of the “dismal” performance by the Canadian swim team and the “significance” of the men’s 100 metre run.

There were differences in the choice of athletes and personalities who were selected for in-studio interviews with Brian Williams. A variety of male athletes and personalities were interviewed. Many of the men interviewed were coaches or members of organizations. Events which otherwise were unlikely to receive significant attention during the prime-time hours, such as baseball, offered several interviews to players and coaches. However, interviews of females seemed contingent on expected athletic success, unexpected athletic failure, or medals. All females interviewed during the prime-time coverage fell into one of these three categories. Interviews with females early into the Olympic games, such as days two and three, were of athletes expected to perform well at their respective sports. When on day two of the competition Sherrain McKay, a Canadian fencer (featured the day before in “The Olympians” feature), was unexpectedly defeated early into the competition, she received an interview with Brian Williams. The same night Kyle Shewfelt, a male artistic-gymnastics hopeful, was interviewed, and Mark
Tewksbury was interviewed to discuss Canada’s poor performance in swimming that day. Perdita Felician, the Canadian gold-medal hopeful for the women’s 100 metre hurdles, was interviewed on day 6 to discuss her amazing successes as an athlete, and then a replay of an earlier interview with Ron McLean was shown on day 11 to discuss why she fell at the first hurdle in the gold medal race. The seven women who medalled were given interviews on the day of their performances.

Men, too, were granted interviews for being medal hopefuls or medal winners, but there was only one interview conducted to discuss the unexpected defeat of a male athlete. When Canada’s men’s rowing eights team, expected to vie for gold, came in 5th place, the entire team was given an interview. But men were granted interviews for any number of reasons which may or may not have been a result of athletic success or unexpected failure. On day four Stubby Clapp, a Windsor, Ontario native, was interviewed to discuss game strategy in the men’s baseball competition. On day five Barney Williams was interviewed to talk about rowing and the experience of having his wife also competing in Athens. His wife, Buffy Williams, was on the women’s rowing team for Canada, although she was not included in the interview. Other examples of the men’s interviews reveal a number of reasons for the interviews, ranging from athletic success to human interest. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s selection of interviews seems to point to a statement of value for men’s athleticism not apparent in the women’s. Clearly male athletes are over-all interesting. Regardless of their achievements, or lack thereof, males are interesting subjects to interview. Females, and in particular female athletes, must be made interesting. They are either interesting
through their successes and therefore reflect positively on Canada at the Olympics, or their failures which shock audiences.

As indicated above, “Olympic Connection” interviews were conducted almost exclusively with male experts. This is perhaps why an emphasis was on the male athletes and the men’s events during these interviews. Two competitions were clearly earmarked as the most significant events of the 2004 Olympic Games. The men’s 200 metre freestyle swim and the men’s 100 metre run. Both of these events, besides receiving tremendous in-field coverage, were given extensive coverage during the “Olympic Connection” feature. On August 16, 2004 (day 4 of the Games) Mark Tewksbury described the men’s 200 metre freestyle swim as “the kind of race they’ll be talking about for 20 years”. On August 21 (day 9) Tewksbury described the “swimmer of the meet” as Michael Phelps. In the discussions with Tewksbury, he rarely discussed the performances of the women’s competitions, although on August 16, 2004 (day 4) he criticised Natalie Coughlin for slowing down in the last 2 metres of the women’s 100 metre backstroke. Donovan Bailey was interviewed to discuss the men’s 100 metre run and did so almost exclusively. After Perdita Felician fell in the women’s hurdles, Bailey did discuss the fall and expressed that her competitive spirit was not the reason she fell (as a telestrator breakdown indicated earlier), but simply an error in technique that could happen to anyone. He explained that such a fall happens often in hurdles and that there was “absolutely no chance the pressure got to her.” Other than this unexpected event, women’s athletics were completely ignored during the “Olympic Connection” interviews with Bailey. Three other nights of “Olympic Connection” featured Bailey and in each of them the men’s 100 metre race was the focus of discussion. Primarily the discussion
involved Bailey’s perspective on what it takes to be the “fastest man in the world”. That these two events, the men’s 200 metre freestyle and the men’s 100 metre run, were given so much attention makes a poll conducted on August 27, 2004 (day 15) very interesting. Audiences and athletes were asked to vote on the “Premiere Event of these Games” and were given the men’s 100 metre run, the women’s individual all-round gymnastics, the men’s 1500 metre run, and the men’s 200 metre freestyle swim from which to choose. The overwhelming split between the men’s 200 metre freestyle swim and the men’s 100 metre run was not surprising considering the amount of media attention both of these events received. It is unclear why the men’s 1500 metre run and the women’s all-round gymnastics were selected as other options, considering that neither event received significant attention. Both events received in-field coverage, but neither was highlighted as particularly more significant.

The overall tone of the interviews and “Olympic Connection” interviews often presented female athletes in a negative manner. Although male athletes also received criticism, they generally received criticism in a group rather than individually. For example, the Canadian swimming team received tremendous negative attention, but no single athlete was isolated as not performing to standard and the criticism extended to both the male and female swimmers on Team Canada. Further, the discussion of Canada’s poor performance in the pool centred on coaching and administrative problems rather than on the athletes. The athletes were, on the whole, praised for their achievements in gaining personal bests at the Games. Donovan Bailey criticized the entire field of male 100 metre competitors as not having “enough star power in this Olympics”. There were no examples found of a single male athlete being criticized for
lack of achievement. There were a number of male athletes highlighted for their successes, including American swimmer, Michael Phelps, and Canadian diver, Alexander Despartie.

Several women were individually addressed and presented in a negative light. Gail Devers, Marion Jones, Perdita Felician, and Emile Heymans are some examples of females athletes who were criticized during interviews for various reasons. In an interview with Canadian track coach, Andy McInnis, Gail Dever, an American track athlete, was criticized for competing in the women’s 100 metre run. Dever, who appeared to have a small injury, was criticized for running the race rather than conserving her energy for the women’s 100 metre hurdles. A discussion of the recent crackdown on doping in sports inspired Brian Williams (interviewer) to question McInnis: “Has any event been more effected by the American crackdown on drugs than the women’s [emphasis added] 100?” McInnis responded: “What about the men’s 100?...Let’s be more proactive.”

In another interview on August 23, 2004 (day 11), Richard Pound, an IOC member, discussed the use of doping at the Olympic Games. Brian Williams addressed the question of Marion Jones, whose current boyfriend and former husband had both tested positive for doping and were disqualified from participating in Athens. Jones, who, according to Pound, never tested positive, was competing in Athens. Pound acknowledged that Jones’ association with these individuals put her under suspicion. The names of neither her husband nor her current boyfriend were revealed during the interview.
The interviews about Perdita Felician varied between positive and negative. Bailey defended Felician in the “Olympic Connection”, but other interviewees criticized Felician for being overly-aggressive, overly-competitive, and unable to handle the pressure. In a telestrator breakdown of Felician’s fall on August 24, 2004 (day 12) her error was “caused by her overly aggressive nature and [she came] out too aggressively...Under the pressure of the start of an Olympic final...” Michael Smith, a Canadian track coach, argued that although pressure was not the reason for the fall, she had been overly aggressive from the beginning.

An excellent example of the over-statement of the positive description of the individual male athlete as compared to the over-statement of the negative description of the individual female athlete is present in an interview with Mitch Geller, the Canadian diving coach, on August 25, 2004 (day 13). Canada is noted for its excellent diving program. For the Games in Athens both Emile Heymans and Alexander Despartie were ranked first in the world for the women’s and men’s 10 metre individual platform dive. During the interview Williams asked Geller why Heymans’ failed to medal in her competition. Geller explained that Heymans “couldn’t hold under the pressure.” Williams also asked why “Despartie is so good?” Geller replied, “Despartie has that competitive edge.” Interestingly, both Despartie and Heymans performed equally well during the Games in Athens. In the events that they expected to medal (the 10 metre platform), neither was successful. Despartie managed to take a silver medal in the men’s 3 metre springboard competition, but nearly took bronze (or no medal at all) after a serious mistake in his third dive. Heymans took a bronze medal in the synchronized
diving with Blythe Hartley on day 3, becoming the first Canadians to win a medal in Athens.

The interviews and Olympic Connection features intensely favoured male sporting achievement throughout the prime-time coverage. Both the amount of time spent on men as compared to women and the quality of that time reflects an expressly positive overstatement of male athletics and a negative overstatement of female athletics.

Because many sports are still coached exclusively by men, even in women’s competitions, expertise about female athletic success or failure is most often supported in the features by men’s opinions. The use of female athletic expertise, whether to address female or male athletics, is absent from the feature coverage.

**Summary of the Results**

The results revealed that with respect to time, the CBC dedicated more time to male athletes and segments about men’s events than they did for female athletes and segments about women’s events. This is especially true in the feature coverage wherein female athletes were highly underrepresented. A very large percentage of “Olympic Connection” or expert opinions concerned the men’s 100 metre run and the men’s 200 metre freestyle swim. The CBC highlighted these two events with the greatest proportion of event teaser coverage and the most discussion in the studio. Comparatively, the women’s coverage in these two events was negligible. Only one day in fifteen offered a female expert to speak in an interview during the “Olympic Connection” feature.

“The Olympians” coverage was generally even, with men receiving slightly more coverage time. Both men and women were portrayed engaging in their athletic pursuits,
but women’s personal traits were given slightly more attention. Family matters and personal favourites were largely absent from the men’s features.

Men again received more coverage in the interviews than did women. Only Canadian, female Olympic athletes were interviewed, while several male interviewees included former athletes, IOC members, professional athletes, and sports organizers. Interviews with female Olympians were held to discuss either an expected medal, an unexpected loss, or a previously received medal. Males interviewed were interviewed for a variety of reasons, often just as general human-interest stories.

During the event coverage, men received more coverage time in all event categories except team events. The team event category was inflated for women by an unexpected turn-around win for the Canadians against the Americans in a women’s water polo match. The five point lead held by the Americans until the final quarter was overtaken and the Canadians made a spectacular recovery of six points in one quarter to win the match. This astounding accomplishment warranted replays in the prime-time coverage that edged the coverage time for women ahead of the men. Otherwise, even the judged category, which holds more events for women and is considered ‘female appropriate’, offered more coverage to male athletes. The track and judged categories were given the majority of coverage time during prime-time, while field, combat, and team received comparably little coverage. The skill event category received no event action coverage and could not, therefore, be coded for differences in the commentary.

Although the time differences between men and women are higher for men in all categories except team, the significance of the time differences are greatest in the masculine “appropriate” sports. Both field and combat events held significantly greater
time differences than did judged or track, considered female "appropriate" and neutral respectively. The results of the team time differences were anomalous in the male/female "appropriate" expectation.

The semantic differential analysis revealed that throughout the Olympic prime-time coverage, commentators were more likely to provide performance descriptions of male athletes. These descriptions were also more likely to be positive about males than females and commentators were more ambivalent to female athletes.

The semantic differential findings were supported by the tally and qualitative analysis where some significant differences in the commentary on the men's and women's events were found. Women received considerably more negative comments than did men. The commentary most negative to women was found in the women's 100 metre run, the diving events, and the women's individual all-round gymnastics final.

Only women were referred to as "geriatric" and "babies". Men did not receive this kind of extreme range of negative age descriptors and were generally less criticized for their age than women. There tended to be more strength descriptors used by the commentators to describe the male athletes than the female athletes, although the majority of strength descriptors were positive for both men and women. Technique and energy descriptors offered the greatest overall difference between men and women, as these descriptions tended to be positive to men and negative to women. This was particularly true in the judged events. Very few descriptors of fitness, aggression (except in the combat events) and competition were found in the prime-time event commentary.

Many examples of commentators qualifying positive physical and performance descriptors were found within the commentary on women's events. Ambivalent
statements occurred most often in the track events. Statements like, “She powered it home, but didn’t have a very good start” were common in the track events. Men also received some ambivalent statements, but unlike female athletes who received negative qualifiers, negative comments were qualified with positive qualifiers. These included statements like, “He’s not the fastest man in this competition, but he’s a technician”

There were many comparisons between the men and women in the women’s coverage, although only one such comparison was found in the men’s coverage. Commentators compared women to the men’s competitions or to specific male athletes for several reasons. Many of the comparisons were intended to flatter the female athlete(s). Commentators who compared certain female athletes to male athletes did so to illustrate how strong, fast, or fit they were. The comparisons were assumed to speak for themselves. In other words, ‘she’s so good, she’s almost as a good as a man’. Other kinds of comparisons trivialized the accomplishment of the women’s event or of the female athlete. A positive comment would point out that the race was very quick, but was then qualified by it not being as fast as the men’s. Or, as in the case of the pole vault competition, the commentators would illustrate how the newly broken women’s world record is now on par with the men’s world record of over 40 years ago. The clear, although disguised with pleasantries, intention was to illustrate that women were still substandard to the male athletes or to illustrate the necessity of the segregation between the male and female athletes. Other comparisons made by the commentators between the men’s and women’s events came in the form of bits of trivia. Statements about the lighter weights of the women’s javelin or the shorter women’s hurdles or the difference in the number of strides between the longer hurdle races are examples of ‘trivia’
comparisons. These statements were exclusive to the women’s coverage and did not appear in the men’s coverage. These comments served no apparent purpose other than to highlight the “physical inferiority” of the female athlete and the accommodation of the event to the female’s unique physical condition.

Overall, the CBC’s Olympic prime-time coverage favoured the male athlete, which supports the findings from other researchers on the American media. Male athletes were given more event coverage time and significantly more feature time coverage than the female athletes.

The commentary in the women’s events was often ‘left-handed’ for physical and performance descriptions of the female athlete. Several explicitly negative comments about the female athletes’ age, height and weight, energy levels, and technical skills, indicate that commentators offer a different standard of commentary for the men’s and women’s events. This is true of both male and female commentators. The commentator’s sex was not reflected by a significant difference in the presentation of male and female athletes. Through the evaluation of the qualitative analysis, it is clear that the different standard of commentary is related to the commentators’ belief in the different physical abilities of men and women. Different physical abilities of men and women are assumed by commentators across all the event categories.
Chapter 6: Summary

This chapter will address the overall research question: to what extent does the CBC represent the medical view of an unnecessary physical separation between men and women, or the popular view of a natural separation between men and women? References to existing biomechanical and feminist research will be included in the discussion and connections between the earlier media representation research and this study will be drawn. This chapter will also examine some of the limitations of the study, offer some suggestions for further research in the field and provide some concluding remarks.

The Research Question Addressed

The tremendous imbalance in the amount of time spent engaged in interviews with male athletes, officials, and sports-related people, illustrates a CBC bias that favours male athleticism. This quality of the CBC’s Olympic coverage supports research findings on coverage of the Olympics on American networks and it affirms that Canadian media are also subject to the same undervaluing of women’s athletics as researchers of the media of other nations have already illustrated.

What was unique to this research was that the analysis of the CBC features and commentary revealed that men and women are treated as athletically different in Olympic coverage. The selection of events and consequently the amount of time dedicated to certain events reflect the biodeterminist assumptions about the ‘qualities’ of male and female. Events that reflect the characteristics considered ‘feminine appropriate’ and ‘masculine appropriate’ also reflect the kinds of descriptors used to address the athletes.
For example, combat events, which would be considered by other researchers to be expressly ‘masculine’, are also events in which the commentators are most likely to describe the athletes as aggressive and competitive.

Commentators, regardless of their sex, are considerably more favourable to male athletic skill. Physical and performance descriptors are generally positive towards male athletes and male athletic events, while the female athletes and female events are treated more ambivalently. The qualified statements of praise for the physical performance of women exemplify the commentator’s hesitance to unconditionally celebrate women’s athletic achievement. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis illustrated that commentators clearly view the male athlete as the standard. By frequently comparing the female athlete to particular male athletes, or by references to their inability to perform as well as men, the commentators support popular beliefs about the segregation of the sexes in athletics. The “justification” of segregation is expressed indirectly through the commentator’s re-articulation of the physical assumptions between men and women. Statements intended to illustrate the differences between men and women, such as in the example of the pole vault competition where commentators noted the women’s world record as on par with the men’s of over 40 years ago, are made without an indication of why differences exist between the sexes. The commentators did not pose any challenge to the differences between male and female events, but rather expressed those differences as though they were necessary to accommodate the ‘physical limitations’ of the female athlete. For example, in the javelin event the commentators noted the lighter weight thrown by women, but did not point out that there is no particular justification for such a difference. Given that the javelin of both women and men is extremely light (only 600 and 800
grams respectively) even arguments that women are not as strong as men cannot explain the lesser weight of the javelin. Furthermore, since women are already segregated from men, the shorter distances expected as a consequence of a heavier javelin should not matter as women are only competing against each other. Either the commentators intentionally point out these differences to fabricate a justification for segregation, or segregation has become so natural that even the most obvious forms of athletic physical discrimination appear normal and necessary. The latter is the more probable reason for commentators’ establishment of the male athlete as the physical standard. The presumption that comparing a female athlete to a male athlete is complimentary stems from a belief that the male athlete is superior. It is also perhaps the reason that commentators are ambivalent to the female athlete.

The Olympics are a celebration of both nationalism and athletic excellence which collectively affect the CBC’s broadcasting choices; the emphasis is given to Canadians or successful athletes. It is not surprising that in an international sporting event intended to showcase and celebrate athletic superiority, the media coverage honours above all others those who show the greatest athletic skill. Certainly this is why medal counts are held at the end of each Olympic night and why the Canadians who perform well are rewarded with extra media attention. The media’s valuing of athletes is contingent upon the media’s perception of their athletic performance. The belief in the physical superiority of the male athlete might explain the ambivalence towards the female athlete. As long as women are segregated from men’s competition and likewise considered less physically capable than men, the struggle for equal media representation is likely to continue. Because the assumption that the segregation of male and female events is justified by the
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'physical limitations' of the female athlete, male events will continue to be valued by the media above female events.

Limitations of the Research:

The research was limited for several reasons. The first limitation was the length of the study and the size of the sample. This study only focussed on prime-time coverage and therefore does not necessarily speak to the entire CBC coverage of the Summer Olympic Games. While this limitation is justifiable because the majority of viewers watch during the evening, and coverage is therefore tailored by the broadcaster accordingly, a follow-up study that includes the entire coverage might reveal different results. This is especially the case in the team and combat events, which were barely covered during the prime-time hours. The second limitation is related to the first. In the case of the interviews which showed a large discrepancy in coverage time between men and women, it is difficult to discern whether this was a choice made by CBC producers, or whether this reflected the difference in time zones where the selection of interviewees was limited by those willing to do interviews in the middle of the night. A third limitation is that this research cannot be generalized across the Canadian media. Different media sources relay information in different formats and, as there was only one television broadcaster, comparisons to other Canadian broadcasters were not possible.

Suggestions For Further Research

There are many possible directions research of this type could take in the future. The research could be followed up by making a comparison of the CBC coverage with
another type of Canadian media source, such as the Globe and Mail which, similarly to the CBC, prides itself on being a national media source. A comparison between CBC and NBC coverage could also provide some illuminating results regarding the similarities or differences in the representation of women's athletics between Canada and the United States. A longitudinal study, either reaching back to past Olympics or continuing forward from this research, could be conducted to determine if attitudes regarding women's physical and performance descriptors have changed over time. A longitudinal study could also be conducted on other Summer Olympic Games or on the upcoming Winter Olympic Games. A comparison could be drawn between the commentary in the Summer Olympic events and the Winter Olympic events.

Perhaps the greatest potential for further research lies in the Winter Games of 2010. A recent announcement reported that the CBC has lost its bid to CTV for the coverage of the Vancouver Olympics. This is extremely interesting to Canadian media analysts for two reasons. The first is that Canada's national broadcaster will not be present at the first Canadian-hosted Games since 1988, and second, as CTV is a commercial broadcaster, its obligations are not first to its Canadian viewers, but rather to advertisers. This could have an effect on the representation of women in the Olympic Games as there is no mandate, unlike the CBC, to represent the interests of women.

Conclusions:

Women's athletic participation has always been met with conflict. Athletics being considered the domain of men, women needed to prove their athletic abilities before changes occurred in social opinion. The assumption of physical, emotional,
social, mental and behavioural differences have always been argued as justification for separate spaces, separate legal rights, etc. Women have been subject to athletic discouragement by members of the established medical community, but also sports-feminists. During the 1920s, the NAAF argued against women's participation in competitive athletics because they held that competitive athletics were essentially harmful to women. Furthermore, they advocated for a more cooperative and inclusive brand of athletics that was 'just for fun'. These early ideas are still held by many feminist scholars today.

It has become commonplace, even among feminist scholars, to think about certain qualities in athletics as particularly male or female. The idea that the Olympics reflect male athletic qualities is expressed in feminist literature that rejects "male forms" of athletic competition and supports "female forms" of athletic activity which are more inclusive, cooperative, and non-hierarchal in design. The assumption that competitive athletics reflect male qualities and cooperative athletics reflect female qualities resembles earlier biological determinist arguments. Are women different than men? If so, how? How does this affect their ability to compete athletically? Integration of athletics rejects the 'add women and stir' philosophy. It is not simply about adding women to men's sports. Integration of athletics is concerned with the creation of non-sex-specific athletics, allowing the best person to play regardless of their sex.

New attitudes about women's actual physical abilities are needed. Segregation in athletics is sexual discrimination and within any other social arena would not be tolerated. It is in the creation of new attitudes about women's actual physical abilities, rather than their expected physical abilities, that the media can play a role. Given the
large audiences that view sports through television broadcasts, or receive sports-related
news through newspapers and radio, the media plays an important role in the
development of new attitudes about women's athletic abilities. By delivering a more
equal presentation of the athletic qualities of male and female athletes, social attitudes
may begin to change.


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Appendix A: Standardized Coding Sheet

Standardized Coding Sheet for the CBC Prime Time Coverage of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens

A. Commentator: Male Female

B. Date of Event: ____________________________________________________

C. Event Sex: Men’s Women’s

D. Event Name: ____________________________________________________


F. Amount of air-time dedicated to event action ______:______:_____
   h m s

G. Amount of air-time dedicated to event teasers ______:______:_____
   h m s

H. Amount of air-time dedicated to event trailers ______:______:_____
   h m s

I. Physical/Performance Descriptors

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<td>Height/Weight (Positive/Negative)</td>
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<td>Strength (Strong/Weak)</td>
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<td>Energy (Explosive/Fatigued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitness (Athleticism/Out of Shape)</td>
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<td>Aggression (Aggressive/Intimidated)</td>
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<td>Flexibility (Agile/Rigid)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technique (Technician/Sloppy Execution)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive (Competitor/Not Competitive)</td>
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Appendix B: Glossary of Categories and Terms

**Event Categories**

Track: (Swimming, cycling, and running) Sprints, Middle-distance, Long-distance, relays, hurdles, rowing, canoe/kayak flat water, triathlon

Field: long jump, triple jump, high jump, pole vault, shot put, discus, javelin, hammer throw, heptathlon/decathlon, canoe/kayak slalom (white water), weightlifting

Judged: gymnastics, diving, trampoline

Skill: archery, shooting, sailing, equestrian

Combat: boxing, judo, fencing, taekwondo, wrestling

Team: baseball/softball, basketball, football(soccer), handball, field hockey, volleyball, beach volleyball

**Physical and Performance Descriptors**

Age - A positive age descriptor is one that qualifies an athlete’s age in a way that connotes an advantage in the event. For example: “The experienced 21 year old from Budapest...”

- A neutral age descriptor is one without a qualifier to connote either an advantage or disadvantage in the event. Example: “24 years of age from Japan”

- A negative age descriptor is one that qualifies an athlete’s age in a way that connotes a disadvantage in the event. For example: “she’s geriatric compared to them...the 23 year old”

Height/Weight Descriptors - A positive descriptor is one that qualifies an athlete’s height or weight in a way that connotes an advantage in the event. For example: (in volleyball) “She’s 6’8”; she’s unstoppable.”

- A neutral descriptor is one that without a qualifier to connote either an advantage or disadvantage in the event. Example: “Weighs about 187 pounds...”

- A negative descriptor is one that qualifies an athlete’s height or weight in a way that connotes a disadvantage in the event. Example: “extremely short for a hurdler”

Strong/Weak: Very Strong is coded as extremely positive while Very Weak is coded as extremely negative. Synonyms such as powerful, tough, muscles (as a verb) are also coded as strength descriptors.

Energy/Exhaustion: Great energy is coded as extremely positive while looks exhausted is coded as extremely negative. Synonyms such as endurance, explosive, fatigue, tired are also coded as energy descriptors.
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Athleticism/ ‘Out of Shape’: *In great shape* is coded as extremely positive while *Out of form this year* is coded as extremely negative. Synonyms such as active (*actively pursues*) are also coded as athleticism descriptors.

Aggressive/Intimidated: *An aggressive attack* is coded as extremely positive while *not very aggressive* is coded as negative. Synonyms such as dominate, controls, and attacks are also coded as aggression descriptors.

Flexible/Inflexible: *Flawless flexibility* is coded as extremely positive while *Rigid on the landing* is coded as extremely negative.

Technique/Poor Technique: *Executes great technique* is coded as extremely positive while *a little loose* in her form is coded as negative. Synonyms such as skill and tactical are also coded as technique descriptors.

Competitive/Not Competitive: *A great competitor* is coded as extremely positive while *little competitive training* is coded as negative. Synonyms such as battle, fight, and struggle are coded as competition descriptors.

**In-field Broadcast Descriptions**

Event action: refers to the time the athlete is engaged in the sport. A starting pistol firing is one example of the start of the event action.

Event teaser: refers to the period prior to the event action. Although the in-field commentary has begun, the athletes have not begun competing in their events. Introductions of the athletes, commentary set-ups, etc. are examples of event teasers.

Event trailer: refers to the period following the event. Example: an in-field interview with the athlete.
Vita Auctoris

Sarah Hie was born in 1978 to Clifford and Kathleen (Beattie) Hie. She graduated with an Honours Degree in Communication Studies from the University of Windsor in 2001 and will graduate with a Master of Arts in Communication Studies and Social Justice in 2005. She is starting a Teaching English as a Second Language course in September 2005 and intends to pursue a career as an educator. Further academic writing and course work are also intended.