

# A Content Analysis of Media Coverage of Collegiate Level Sport-Related Violence and the Construction of Gender: The Cases of Blount, Lambert, and Spikes

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# Purpose

- The current study focused on three separate instances of sport-related violence, in particular brawling and foul play, that received considerable national-media attention and scrutiny in the Fall of 2009
- Content analysis of media coverage to investigate the extent to which socially constructed ideas regarding gender, and more specifically hegemonic masculinity, were presented and reinforced

# Sport-related violence

- Sport-related violence is present throughout all levels of competition, with only the most deplorable instances finding their way into the national media spotlight (Fields, Collins, & Comstock, 2007)
- Oftentimes discounted or ignored by the public when seen as being “*part of the game*” or “*boys being boys*”
- Suggests that interpersonal violence that occurs *on the field* is acceptable, and therefore not a societal concern (Fields et al., 2007).

# Hegemonic Masculinity

- *Configuration of gender practices that strengthen the positional dominance of men and the subordination of women in society (Connell, 2005)*
- Maintenance of dominant ideology through reinforcement and demonstration of aggression, heterosexuality, and assertiveness among male population
- Institutions of sport and mass media work together to strengthen male dominance through the reproduction of stereotypical definitions of gender

# Media and Sport

- Highly valuable and visible cultural institution
- Construction , Dissemination and Maintenance of cultural values and norms
- *Media play a significant role in the transmission of dominant cultural values, especially in the perpetuation of images of gender difference and gender inequality* (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004, p.66)
  - ▣ Of particular import in the representation , coverage and analysis of sport

# Media and Sport

- Dominant themes presented in media coverage of sport
  - Prominent performances
  - Overcoming adversity
  - Personal conflict
  - Personal relationships
  - Physicality
- Coverage of female athletes often focus on non-sport related attributes such as their attractiveness, physical appearance and femininity rather than athletic ability and skill (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Yu, 2009)

# Media and Sport

- Media coverage of sport carry meanings that are reinforce the values and ideology of society
- Also reflect values of the media outlet or personality
  - ▣ Messages and images presented are used to create an identifiable connection with viewer/reader
  - ▣ Often consistent with traditional views of femininity and masculinity of athletes and sport

# Methods

- Content Analysis of three highly publicized occurrences of collegiate sport –related violence
  - ▣ LeGarrette Blount
  - ▣ Elizabeth Lambert
  - ▣ Brandon Spikes
- Three-month span of media coverage from the date of each occurrence
- Included print, internet and television coverage
- Content was analyzed and coded by the researchers

# Methods

## Six Categories (Wensing & Bruce, 2003):

- ▣ Gender Marking
  - ▣ Gender Stereotyping
  - ▣ Establishing Heterosexuality
  - ▣ Infantilizing
  - ▣ Non-sport Related Characteristics
  - ▣ Ambivalence
- 
- ▣ Type, quality and quantity of coverage and messages

# Results

Player	Type of Sport Related Violence	Media Outlet	
		<i>Sports Illustrated and SI.com</i>	ESPN and ESPN.com
LaGarrette Blount (9/4/09 – 12/4/09)	Post-game Brawling	30 – Articles	5 - Articles 10 – Videos
Elizabeth Lambert (11/5/09 – 2/5/10)	In-game Foul Play	2 – Articles	6 – Videos 6 - Articles
Brandon Spikes 10/31/09 –1/31/10)	In-game Foul Play	10 - Articles	4 – Articles 3- Videos

# Results

	<u>Gdr.Mk.</u>	<u>Gdr. St.</u>	<u>Estab. H.</u>	<u>Infant.</u>	<u>Non-sp.</u>	<u>Amb.</u>
<b>L. Blount</b>	<b><u>13</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>69</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>
35 Articles	4	3	1	0	61	0
10 Videos	9	4	0	6	8	0
<b>E. Lambert</b>	<b><u>42</u></b>	<b><u>53</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>
8 Articles	25	22	2	3	3	4
6 Videos	17	31	0	9	0	4
<b>B. Spikes</b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>
14 Articles	1	21	0	2	3	0
3 Videos	1	1	0	1	0	0

# Discussion

- Limited coverage, bordering on exclusion, of women's sport in the popular media
  - ▣ Marginalization of women's sports and athletes
- Media working to maintain and perpetuate cultural norms regarding sport and who "real" athletes are based on quantity and quality of media presentations and discourse
  - ▣ *...attention far more lavish than anything the national championship game will receive a month from now*
  - ▣ *A reminder that some segment of the population still finds comfort in mocking the very idea of women competing with a level of intensity*

# Discussion

- Gender roles , indicative of hegemonic masculinity, reinforced through the type of language used in describing the three cases of sport-related violence
  - *Got caught-up in emotions...Expects his players to act like real men...obviously he did not tonight.*
  - *What is rare is when female athletes are involved in any of this type of behavior...practically unbelievable.*
  - *How uncomfortable many feel at the thought of thousands of women playing as close to the line between physical and dirty as sportsmanship allows*