

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
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- ▣ 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>
L. Blount	<u>13</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>0</u>
35 Articles	4	3	1	0	61	0
10 Videos	9	4	0	6	8	0
E. Lambert	<u>42</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>
8 Articles	25	22	2	3	3	4
6 Videos	17	31	0	9	0	4
B. Spikes	<u>2</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
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*