“Our ladies” versus “our dominators”: Gender differences and nationalist discourse in the Polish Olympic coverage

Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
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ABSTRACT

The article presents differences in describing sportspeople during the last four Olympic Games in terms of gender and nationality in Polish newspapers. The fundamental goal of the research was to perform the quantitative and qualitative comparison of press materials from four Olympics (Vancouver 2010, London 2012, Sochi 2014, Rio de Janeiro 2016). The content analysis was used for the quantitative part of the study and critical discourse analysis of two newspapers (the broadsheet and tabloid) in Poland for qualitative part. 712 media articles were analyzed. Our analysis has revealed significant underrepresentation of women and also differences in the description of rival competitors as well as overrepresentation of articles about Polish representatives during the Olympics. Those articles dwelt on the issue of nationality much more often and were more emotionally charged. Also, to a great extent, the performance of non-Polish women athletes was left unconsidered. The authors therefore indicate the validity of combining gender analysis and nationality in the context of the Olympic Games.

KEYWORDS

gender, nationality, sport, Olympic Games, Polish daily newspapers

Introduction

The Olympic Games is an economic, cultural and political phenomenon which attracts the interest of a notable part of the world. It is the world's most important sporting event that reaches the majority of the global population through the media (Billings, 2008, pp. 5-6). Due to the number of following fans, it can be stated that the Games have a substantial impact on shaping opinions about sportspeople. The Olympic Games are also an opportunity for female competitors to present their skills since during the Olympics interest in women's sports is greater than usual (Billings, 2008, pp. 107). Sport continues to be an essential part of culture and a carrier of numerous cultural meanings, such as those related to femininity and masculinity. The growing role of sport and saturation of culture with the information about female and male athletes makes the way of presenting female competitors crucial for perceiving and appreciating femininity in given societies.

The fundamental goal of the research was to examine the Olympic press coverage of some of the largest Polish daily newspapers: *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Fakt* (tabloid) (Związek Kontroli i Dystrybucji Prasy, 2020). The achievements of Polish female contestants, with a smaller representation, are comparable to those of men,

so the manner and frequency of describing their sporting results appear to be interesting. Attitudes to the portrayed sportspeople's nationality will also be examined.

Women and the Olympic Games

More and more females enter every Olympic Games. The 2012 Summer London Olympics were the first time every country was represented by both women and men. Also, women took part in all competitions. It is estimated that in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, female contestants accounted for 45% of all contestants during the Olympics (International Olympic Committee 2016). The Polish numbers in this respect are also noteworthy. Although the representation of Polish female participants during the last four Olympics was always smaller compared to men, it is women who won more medals. The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics were exceptional, because women got 8 out of 11 medals for Poland (Table 1).

Table 1 Participation of Polish athletes and medals won at the Olympic Games examined in the study

	Vancouver 2010		London 2012		Sochi 2014		Rio de Janeiro 2016	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
The number of athletes (%)	21 (45)	26 (55)	90 (43)	118 (57)	24 (41)	35 (59)	101 (42)	139 (58)
The number of medals	4	2	5	5	2	4	8	3

Source: own study.

Theoretical framework

The study employs a critical feminist approach. This assumes that gender as a social construct is relationally linked with other identities and categories. It questions the position of women and their gender status in society as well as the criteria and methods normalizing specific understandings of gender. In this work we draw attention to sports media as one of the significant sites of gender construction and reinforcement of specific gender assumptions. It was assumed that the media play a significant role in the construction of social reality (Hall, 1997). The media reinforce and spread social meanings related to women's sports. Content analysis-based studies show that women's sports are underrepresented and that the image of female athletes in media coverage is gender-dependent. As Fink (2015) claims, the negation of women's participation in sports coupled with the failure to feature their performances in the press, is not a reflection of the actual state of affairs but rather an active effort to exclude female athletes from social reality. From a feminist perspective, one can see that sports deliver many patriarchal norms and values. Sport remains a social institution contributing to the reinforcement of gender hierarchy and is considered one of the most 'masculine' social institutions with team sports as the 'core' of masculinity (Messner, 2007). R. Connell (2011, pp. 52-53) emphasizes that the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and the marginalization of other types of masculinity and emphasized femininity take place through sports. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the practices reinforcing women's subordination. In this way, sports contribute to maintaining the hierarchy between the sexes. A critical approach to sports institutions, employed in global North societies in last decades, allows insight into how these institutions reinforce the traditional understanding of femininity and masculinity.

Gendered sports media coverage

Social researchers have devoted plenty of space to examining gender inequalities in sports media coverage. In particular, the Olympic Games and related television coverage have been thoroughly analyzed (Angelini & Billings, 2010; Angelini, MacArthur & Billings, 2012; Billings, 2008; Billings et al. 2008). In the last decades, plenty of research was conducted on gender-oriented media sport coverage. Most studies, however, concerned English-speaking countries. These revealed that women's sport is underrepresented and sport coverage about women is encumbered with gender-based prejudices (Cooky, Messner & Musto, 2015; Cooky, Messner & Hextrum, 2013).

Given the different socio-political and historical background, it is important to study media coverage outside the English-speaking countries or those with long-term political stability. Poland, as a post-communist country with a short democratic tradition, remains a place where patriarchal values and norms still play an important role and the feminist paradigm is marginalized (Graff, 2014; Grabowska, 2012). Hence, the media coverage of women's sports in Poland may display different characteristics than those described by the US research.

The few studies on sports press content in Eastern and Central Europe indicate women's sport is underrepresented. The *International Sports Press Survey*, in which press releases from 22 countries were studied, including from Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania, showed that 85% of articles dealt with male athletes (Horky & Nieland, 2013). Jakubowska (2015) pointed out that only 9% of the articles were devoted to female athletes. Germany and Denmark achieved the best results (18-19%), whereas Greece and Portugal ranked lowest (with 4% and 2% respectively).

Hungarian research by Gál, Velenczei and Kovács (2010) focused on the 2004 Athens Olympics and showed that fewer articles were written about women's sports even if it was the Hungarian sportswomen that had won more gold medals. It was also confirmed that coverage of women's sport events unrelated to the Games was even more scarce (Gál et al., 2010). However, qualitative research on press articles published during the 2016 Rio Olympics did not support earlier research findings that women in sports are depicted as inferior to men and described primarily for their physical attractiveness. Slepícková (2010), while researching the 2004 Athens Olympics coverage, pointed to the 'small underrepresentation' of female athletes, both in terms of the number of articles and photos and the number of Czech female athletes competing in the Games. A study of Slovenian television broadcasts during the 2008 Games showed sports commentaries were much more often devoted to male athletes. And the commentaries confirmed the stereotypical convictions that men were 'strong' and women 'attractive'. However, positive and negative comments were equally applied to both groups (Ličen & Billings, 2013). Research also shows that Olympic female athletes can count on much more interest than during the remainder of the sports season (Markula, Bruce & Hoven, 2010, pp. 5-8).

The presented analysis of media sport coverage in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe without doubt indicated the need for further systematic studies. The analysis indicates the under-representation of women's sport though it ought to be noted that with the exception of Gál (2016), these concern Olympic Games from previous decades.

Qualitative analysis of media content on women's sport

Many feminist theory-based studies analyzing the sports press have drawn attention to the re-creation of traditional views on masculinity and femininity also through the manner of sporting relations. Therefore A. Bernstein certainly is right when stating not only the amount of media content on women's sport is significant but the means of constructing femininity and masculinity in sports media is also key (Bernstein 2002). Qualitative studies have shown that women's sport is portrayed differently than men's sport. Information on women's sport focuses on their physical appearance and accentuate their roles outside sport (Bishop, 2003; Cooky, Messner & Musto, 2015; Daddario, 1994; Fink & Kensicki, 2002). Attention was also drawn to the

lackadaisical language (Wachs, 2006, pp. 43) used with respect to women's sport and the variance in the description of sporting ability in terms of gender (Vincent, 2004). Information concerning mainly disciplines appropriate for women is presented, and team disciplines drawing fans' greatest attention are still considered typically masculine (Cooky, Messner & Hextrum, 2013; Fink, 2015). How press news is generated has not changed either, which may induce thinking that women's sport is less attractive and less important than men's (Green, Hardin & Homan 2009). Also, the manner in which information about women's sport is generated and journalists' commentaries present women's sport in a boring light (Cooky et al. 2015). In comparison to the portrayals of men's sport made by energetic and engaged journalists, women's sport seems inferior and less important. Sportsmen are perfect candidates for heroes and nowadays also celebrities. Hegemonic masculinity is reinforced with reports of male athletes' unusual physical abilities (prowess, fitness, strength) as well as bravery and mental resilience (Berg, 2002, pp. 152-153). Frequently, information about women's sport is only about the results, while in the case of men's sport extensive narratives are created. Apart from higher interests of men's sport scholars have highlighted that the sports media have perpetuated the narrative of the inferiority of women's sport and have refused to present the proper coverage of it for years. They argued that gender inequitable coverage does not reflect reality and instead creates a false picture of women's sport as irrelevant (Cooky, Messner, Musto 2015, Kane 2013).

Nationality

The Olympic Games brings nationality issues to the fore. As Bairner claims, 'sport is frequently a vehicle for the expression of national sentiment' (Bairner, 2001, pp. xi)—and the sports media plays a crucial role in maintaining 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991). Billig saw the sports press as an important element in sustaining banal nationalism¹. Sport nationalism is not a one-dimensional phenomenon (Bairner, 2001, pp. 17-20). It is associated with the reaffirmation of differences between "our" community and "theirs". It may therefore arouse antagonisms between countries or refer to patriotic emotions, increase prestige or at least compensate for problems (for example social divisions) within the community. As sports columns deliver daily stories of athletes' success, it becomes possible for the readers to celebrate nationality (Billig, 2008, pp. 219-232). Media coverage contributes to the continuous renewal of members' attachment to a given national community. Sport offers an opportunity for hegemonic representations, where everyone shares the same goal and obviously differs from other nationalities (Brookes, 2002, pp. 86-89). Thus, the successes and failures of the national team of athletes may be perceived as a national condition. As Billings indicates, all sport coverage from large sports events features some forms of national prejudice. The studies of Billings and colleagues show that in the NBC coverage, Americans were not only portrayed differently than non-Americans, but also they were mentioned much more often (Billings 2008, pp. 99-105; Billings et al. 2008). Billings' study showed that during the 2012 London summer Olympics, the NBC showed footage of American sports persons more often (55.8%) than any other, and they also made up 75% of most frequently mentioned sports persons (Billings et al. 2014). Ličen and Billings' and Ličen and Topič's studies have indicated that sports journalists describe sporting events around the 'us vs. them' narrative, and tend to mention fellow competitors more often and render their exploits as more meaningful (Ličen & Billings, 2012; Ličen & Topič, 2008).

As in the case of gender analysis, the issue of nationality and sport in regards to sports media coverage has also been rarely explored outside English-speaking countries². An attempt to join the categories of nationality

¹ It ought to be born in mind that the notions of nation and nationalism are the topic of much discussion in social sciences. The problem of a correct definition of these terms, various paradigms and methodological approaches is presented by A. Smith (1998, pp. 221-228). Similarly, a distinction between ethnic and civil nationalism also defies simple treatment (Bairner, 2001, pp. 1-6, 164-166).

² Besides the perspective of sports media about the relation of sports and nationality in Polish context there are important studies worth mentioning (Kossakowski, Woźniak, Nosal 2019; Lipoński 1996).

and gender in the analysis of large sporting event reporting is significant because as Wensing and Bruce (2003) pointed out, during the Olympic Games, “national identity overrides all other identity markers such as gender”. Therefore, not only the amount of space dedicated to women’s sport may be greater than usual, but it is also likely that national discourse may be more frequently applied in describing female athletes than them being considered in terms of gender. Similar to their male counterparts female athletes are the personification of a country’s opportunity for a positive image during the Olympic Games, and their performances are a factor cementing the community. Markula, Bruce and Hovden (2010) noted that because during the Games there is more reporting of women in sport events in terms of their nationality, foreign sportswomen are not equally often presented in sports articles. No such relationship has been observed when it comes to male athletes. Slepíčková’s studies of the Athens Olympics corroborate this thesis. First, these proved that in the Czech press, 70% of texts and 80% of photos were devoted to Czech male contestants. In addition, if there were any articles covering events outside the Olympic Games, almost none dealt with sportswomen (Slepíčková, 2010). The greater attention paid to female athletes during the Games may also be due to their chances of winning a medal for their nation rather than the appreciation of their sporting skills (Markula et al. 2010, pp. 12).

Methods

The fundamental goal of the research was to perform the quantitative and qualitative comparison of press materials from four Olympics (Vancouver 2010, London 2012, Sochi 2014, Rio de Janeiro 2016). The study sets out to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Is the same amount of space dedicated to women’s sport as men’s in the analyzed material?

RQ2: Did the content of media reporting differ according to the gender of the sportspersons?

RQ3: Did the content of media reporting differ owing to the sportsperson’s nationality?

The content analysis was used for the quantitative part of the study (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. 17). *Gazeta Wyborcza* (GW) was chosen for the analysis as the country’s most authoritative newspaper (two other newspapers which achieve higher daily sales are newspapers: *Fakt Gazeta Codzienna* and *Super Express*). Bearing in mind that the media shape opinions and create norms and values, it seems crucial to select the most influential newspapers. The daily sale of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (GW) is 89,766 copies, which made it third in terms of sale of newspapers in Poland in January 2020 according to the data of the Association of Press Distribution Control (Związek Kontroli Dystrybucji Prasy, 2020). *Gazeta Wyborcza* is considered a liberal paper that promotes social equality and justice (Filas & Paneta, 2009, pp. 142-143). The other paper selected for analysis is *Fakt Gazeta Codzienna*. It is a tabloid with the highest daily newspaper circulation in the country (217,946 copies).

In the study, all sports articles published from the opening day to the day following the closing of the Olympics were analyzed. The column ‘w skrócie’ (in a nutshell) was not analyzed because it presented only results. Also, the analysis did not cover the articles that were not directly related to competing in sports, like the construction of sports stadiums, economic potential of sport, etc. These articles are described as neutral and broadly related to the Olympic Games.

The quantitative part of the study relied on statistical analysis, namely the chi square test of independence. This test measures whether there is a statistically significant difference between the two qualitative groups. Moreover, a z-test for proportions was carried out to check whether the proportion in the population differs significantly from the standard, and a student’s t-test to compare the two averages. Calculations were performed with the SPSS software (ver. 17.0). For all tests carried out, the significance threshold was set at $p \leq .05$.

The method used for qualitative analysis was the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a standard method employed to examine media texts. The method analyses how, with the aid of a variety of cultural

texts, the social reality in which individuals operate, is produced (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 64-65; Wodak, 2011, pp. 24). It considers how power discourses: empowerment or de-favourisation of specific social groups are reproduced. The aims of CDA and the critical feminist approach are therefore convergent (Lazar, 2007). The critical feminist approach indeed accepts the assumption of the construction of specific representations of femininity and masculinity in a given culture and also analyses the practices and patterns of unequal, hierarchical power relations (Lazar, 2007). Applying the interdiscursive approach characteristic of CDA, we may study overlapping discourses, and in this case, nationality and gender in sport with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the analyzed material (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 32-37; Lazar, 2007).

A code sheet, structured around the athletes' gender was developed to code the results of the quantitative analysis. The articles were coded according to their length (number of words was decisive), author's gender and sport discipline. We identified four coding categories relevant to the most frequently described differences in the literature on the reporting of women and men's sport. The first category concerned descriptions of physical appearance and sportspersons sexuality in accordance with the analysis of the tendency presented during previous studies for focusing attention on the female athletes' appearance (Daddario, 1994; Fink & Kensicki, 2002). The next category concerned descriptions of the private life and roles of the athletes outside sport (Bishop, 2003; Cooky et al., 2015). The third category of coding referred to the language of sports reporting. We checked whether sarcastic, infantilizing language was used and whether language prejudices or martial metaphors strengthening a certain narrative occurred in the text (Wachs, 2006). The fourth coding category concerned ways of commenting on athletes' abilities and performance (successes and failures) at the Olympic Games.

Two further categories concerned any content differences related to the sportsperson's nationality. Indeed, as shown by Brooks (2002) and Bairner (2001), sport is one of the institutions where national ties are reinforced and the process of separation from other nations takes place. We paid attention to whether there is an emotional approach to fellow countrymen's performances or whether the language of content on athletes of the same nation differs from the tone used for those of different nations.

Results of quantitative analysis

370 articles in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and 342 in *Fakt* were analyzed (Table 2). 126 and 127 articles respectively were written about women's sport, which accounts for 34.05% and 37.13% of all articles. More articles about women's sport were written during the Winter Olympics in 2010 and 2014. This may be the result of the enormous interest in Justyna Kowalczyk's cross-country skiing performances. Table also shows the fraction significance test results. From the series of four tests carried out for *Gazeta Wyborcza* and four for *Fakt*, it appears that in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, for all the Games subject to the study, the percentage of articles about women's sport in the context of all articles about an individual event is significantly lower than 50% in 2010 ($z=-2.33$, $p<0.01$), 2012 ($z=-6.11$, $p<0.01$), 2014 ($z=-4.2$, $p<0.01$) and in 2016 ($z=-4.66$, $p<0.02$). From the series of tests carried out for *Fakt*, it appears that in the context of the London 2012, Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016 Games, the percentage of articles about women compared to all articles devoted to an individual event is significantly lower than 50% (London ($z=-4.56$, $p<0.01$), Sochi ($z=-3.62$, $p<0.01$), Rio de Janeiro ($z=-4.30$, $p<0.01$)). Only during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, did the percentage of articles on sportswomen fluctuate around 50% of the total.

A student's t-test was also carried out for independent samples to check for statistically significant differences between the average number of articles about women's sports and men's sports respectively. The result of *Gazeta Wyborcza* in Table 3 show that some statistically significant differences exist between the average number of articles about women and that about men ($t(6)=-4.277$, $p<0.05$), with the number about women significantly lower across the population. The student's t-test result for *Fakt* showed that there were no

statistically significant differences between the average number of articles about women and that about men ($t(3.549)=-1.881$, $p>0.05$).

Table 2. Distribution of articles according to athletes' gender in Gazeta Wyborcza and Fakt

Olympic games	Gender	Gazeta Wyborcza (n=370)			Fakt (n=342)		
		Number of articles (%)	z	p	Number of articles (%)	z	p
Vancouver 2010	Women	49 (40)	-2.33	0.009	27 (40)	-1.58	0.0561
	Men	60 (48)			29 (43)		
	Neutral	15 (12)			11 (7)		
London 2012	Women	24 (21)	-6.11	0.000	39 (30)	-4.56	0.000
	Men	70 (62)			69 (53)		
	Neutral	19 (17)			22 (17)		
Sochi 2014	Women	29 (29)	-4.2	0.000	25 (30)	-3.62	0.000
	Men	53 (53)			41 (49)		
	Neutral	18 (18)			17 (21)		
Rio de Janeiro 2016	Women	24 (26)	-4.66	0.000	36 (30)	-4.30	0.000
	Men	61 (65)			76 (64)		
	Neutral	8 (9)			7 (6)		

Note: z = number of standard deviations from the mean

Source: own study.

Table 3. The average difference between number of articles on women's and men's sports in Gazeta Wyborcza and Fakt

Daily newspaper	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Gazeta Wyborcza	Women	4	31.5	11.902	5.951
	Men	4	61.0	6.976	3.488
Fakt	Women	4	31.75	6.800	3.400
	Men	4	53.75	22.381	11.190

Source: own study.

As Table 4 shows, sports articles unrelated to the Games during each Olympics significantly outnumbered the articles about women's sports, and also the articles about men's sports during the Vancouver 2010, Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016 Games. Mostly, these were articles concerning the top Polish football league – Ekstraklasa (340 articles). Given that the Polish league is not among the best in Europe, such coverage in press may be surprising during mega sports events. Still, without doubt football is the Polish national discipline and interests in it is significant regardless of the results and level of performance. Further, we should notice that articles about individual Olympics to a large extent described only participation of compatriots. In the case of Gazeta Wyborcza, more articles were written about non-Olympic events than articles about women's sport only during the Vancouver Olympics.

The events described confirm Fakt journalists' strong nationalistic attitudes. During the Olympics in Vancouver, as many as 22 articles (out of the total of 27) were devoted to Kowalczyk, a cross-country skier who won 3 medals, and 18 (out of 29 written) of those about men were devoted to a ski jumper, Małysz. Only 29 out of the 342 articles analyzed did not concern Polish competitors. What draws attention is that only one article about sportswomen concerning events not related to Poles' performance was written during the Olympics in 2010, 2012 and 2014. Also in Gazeta Wyborcza, mainly Poles were described, however articles about the greatest sport stars worldwide also appeared more frequently (99 out of 370 analyzed articles).

Table 4 Articles about non-Poles and sports events not related to the Olympics

Olympic games	Gazeta Wyborcza			Fakt		
	Number of articles about non-Poles (% of all articles)		Number of articles about sports events not related to the Olympics (% of all articles*)	Number of articles about non-Poles (% of all articles)		Number of articles about sports events not related to the Olympics (% of all articles*)
	Women	Men		Women	Men	
Vancouver (2010)	10 (20)	21 (35)	51 (29)	1 (3)	1 (3)	98 (59)
London (2012)	5 (21)	24 (34)	14 (11)	1 (3)	6 (9)	53 (29)
Sochi (2014)	2 (7)	19 (36)	12 (11)	1 (4)	2 (5)	65 (44)
Rio de Janeiro (2016)	5 (21)	13 (21)	15 (14)	5 (14)	12 (16)	88 (32)

Note: *Articles about women, men, neutral and non-Olympic

Source: own study

Results of qualitative analysis

The discourse analysis revealed that athletes' appearance and physique was an essential part of the articles. Athletes were perceived through this perspective in both newspapers in the study. If there is a description of female athletes' physical appearance in the newspapers, it refers to their clothes, smile or make-up. Several articles place emphasis on female athletes', blond hair or slim figure.

"This beautiful Polish foilist is not interested in any other color of medal" (Fakt, 28.07.2012, Przyjechałam po złoto).

At the same time, when physical appearance is described, in several cases female athletes' skills are neutralized. A GW journalist was wondering how a petite and slim female athlete is able to do well in biathlon, and the Olympic female runner-up in sprint canoeing, a competition that requires strength and swiftness, was described as 'strong-delicate'.

"She does not part with her old pink canoe, does not quit her neon nails, she loves the stars tattooed on her neck and back – a strong-delicate woman, Marta Walczykiewicz, Olympic runner-up" (GW, 17.08.2016, Medalowa mieszanka wybuchowa).

Descriptions of male physicality much more often refer to translating their physical conditions into their capabilities in a given discipline. Their athleticism and muscle mass are emphasized.

"The USA team have it all to challenge everyone. Tall, aggressively attacking forwards led by Matthew Anderson, well-known from the Master League, who likes to torture Polish teams. (...) Versatile and athletically-perfect players play a very well-organized volleyball" (GW 17.08. Gazeta Wyborcza 17.08. 2016, Polacy na podbój Ameryki).

There were also descriptions of the physical appearance which had nothing to do with sports. Usually, however, these were long articles that provided complete presentations of a given player, where one could hardly gain the impression that the portrayed person is reduced only to their physicality. A counterexample

may be the portrayal of Vonn, whose beauty, blond hair and a photo session for SI were mentioned in one article.

In the analyzed material, sportspeople were characterized by their parental roles and private life. Norwegian cross-country skier Bjørgen's relationship, with her husband was described, as was swimmer Hosszú's, whose husband was also her coach, just like the parenthood of Miller or Phelps or Polish representatives Bonk or Majewski. It was emphasized that contestants were supported by their families. In the case of sportswomen, it was stressed several times that they would be able to take care of their private lives after the contests.

"Bronze-medal winners in rowing will take care of their family life" (Fakt, Czas na ślub i dziecko, 6.08.2012).

Female contestants' wedding ceremonies after the last Games were described and as was their life as mothers. Such a summary of their participation in the Olympic Games gives the impression that sport was less important for them. These descriptions may also be perceived as the media narrative is "craming" female contestants into conventional femininity. The articles would also notice their relationship with the parents. Especially during the 2012 Summer Olympics, Radwańska's relationship with her father, ex-coach, was emphasized. In this context, also Woźniacka's relationship of with her dad was described. Such portrayals make the contestants seem not completely independent adults.

In the case of male contestants, their partners were frequently mentioned and their appearance described (Miller's wife, was a "long-legged blonde"), or the story of their meeting presented (in the case of Stoch, Polish ski jumper). The status of a "lady-killer", "skirt-chaser" and partygoer was also stressed (in the case of Innerhofer, Lochte, Phelps). Undoubtedly, this is the way to sustain the conviction of heterosexuality of male contestants and their attractiveness to the opposite sex.

The language used to portray female and male contestants was generally different. A common practice, especially in Fakt, was calling contestants by their first names, which does not add either authority or recognition. Sentences such as: "Maja knows where she's going to attack", "Marysia, does it once again" create the impression that the articles do not portray grown-ups, but juniors. It is also difficult to find dignity and respect for their efforts in such words. What is important, this tactic was used mainly with reference to Polish female contestants. The articles about foreign contestants used their last names. No doubt that such a description is connected with a more-distanced attitude. Poles, on the other hand, were treated as 'closer' or more 'ours', which could result in more intimacy and familiarity. In the articles, female contestants were also referred to as "girls". In contrast, male contestants were described with the word symbolizing strength and unusual skills. Both, in GW and in Fakt they were portrayed as "gods", "geniuses", "strongmen" or even "dragons". In GW, on rare occasions they also wrote about great female champions with recognition, e.g. calling Kowalczyk a "tsaritsa", and Williams a "strongwoman". Martial metaphors would occur much more often in texts describing men's sports. Considering that martial metaphors refer to the conceptions connected with power, strength and aggression, their use also reveals gender divisions in sport. We should remember, however, that Poland was represented in team sports only in men's volleyball at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics and in handball in 2016, and it is team sports where martial metaphors are used most often. Nevertheless, when describing the struggle on the field, mostly in GW we could find the information about "bombarding", "preparations for the war", "musketeers" or "commando platoons".

Both, in the material analyzed in GW and in Fakt, no differences have been observed in highlighting the strength, resilience and determination in male and female contestants. Important is that women's sports were described mainly when the contestants won medals or broke records (Kowalczyk, Włodarczyk, Williams, Bailes). Therefore, the articles were about great female champions, unquestionable leaders in their own

disciplines. Presenting them as "indestructible", "determined" or "resistant to pain and fatigue" is hardly surprising. Their power and strength were emphasized. Notably, however, these descriptions were neutralized with stressing the coaches roles in preparing contestants for competitions. Plenty of space in GW was devoted to J. Kowalczyk's coach and his methods of working with the skier which resulted in 5 Olympic medals. A similar situation was with female canoers, who won two medals at the Rio Olympics, and with Nadia Bilova, biathletes' coach, who the media called a "miracle-worker". The articles stressed the role of the coach who can "lead" the contestants to the competition. Insofar as the role of the coach in their athletes' achievements is undeniable, it is noticeable that their contribution to successes in men's sports is not highlighted in this way. This gives the message that male contestants are more self-reliant and independent compared to females, who achieved success mainly thanks to their coaches. Although numerous articles put emphasis on the "power" of female contestants, at the same time on several occasions they were compared to male contestants. In GW, Neuner was called „female Bjørndalen”, Kowalczyk was compared to the Polish boxer Marian Kasprzyk, and Biles to Phelps. Such comparisons make women's sports seem a worse version of the male original.

The gender of Polish athletes' was also reflected in the justification of their' failures. In the case of women, their emotionality was stressed in the first place. On frequent occasions, mental weakness was claimed to be the reason for Polish biathletes' poorer than expected results. Both at the Vancouver and Sochi games, expectations were high of the Polish female biathletes winning medals for Poland. The unsatisfactory results were justified with inability to tame emotions and stay calm.

“Weronika missed once and dropped to the 18th place. Then, she missed once again. She lacked cold blood, just like Hojnusz. She also missed the target twice” (Fakt. Biatlonistkom zabrakło zimnej krwi, 12.02.2014).

Before the start of the Polish female speed skaters, journalists also expressed their concern if they would manage the pressure and keep calm. The issue of handling emotionality was the basic factor when presenting the chances and performances of Polish athletes. If failures occurred, men were not spared either. They were treated harshly, but their failures were considered due to a lack of talent or willingness to work.

The excerpts of the media report quoted here indicate it is Fakt which specializes in overtly nationalistic discourse. Especially in Fakt, an extremely emotional attitude to the Polish performances could be observed. The authors identified with the Polish contestants, and failures as well as successes were taken personally. After the Winter Olympics, rankings of contestants who "brought us shame" were created. The contestants were treated as if they represented the condition of the whole country. That is why they were sharply criticized for unsuccessful performances and called "losers", "scatterbrains", "amateurs" or „butterfingers".

"This is the first day of this event and instead of celebrating medals we are ashamed of the attitude of the Polish team” (Fakt, Chcemy wreszcie medali, 3.08.2016).

"PLN 10 million were spent on three associations whose sportsmen embarrassed us at the Vancouver Olympics” (Fakt, Miliony wyrzucone w błoto 26.02.2010).

The differences between Polish and foreign representatives were also stressed. Conflicts and vague situations during the performances were described in black and white. Norwegian cross-country skiers, who used drugs for asthma (and were permitted to do so), were unequivocally accused of doping, and Polish J. Kowalczyk was praised for fair play and having a more difficult job (which is reflected in the title: „She loses because she plays fair”, Fakt, 23.02.2010). Also in the cycling race, the judges were accused of bias against the Polish

representative, suggesting that they were targeted directly against our country ("The judges deprived us of a medal"). Kowalczyk's efforts to beat her Norwegian opponents were described as a "Polish-Norwegian war". A similar expression was used with reference to the battle between the Polish and Russian volleyball players. In GW, these events were reported with a balanced tone. An interview with a sports medicine physician was released about asthma among sportspeople and the decision of a track cycling judge was reported. Fakt coverage often implied it was not only about sportsmen's performance but Poland's world image. Contestants' nationality was also frequently emphasized: "our champion", "our skiing queen", "our ladies", "our players were beaten by the goalkeeper". The results of Polish contestants were also reported with reference to the status and mood of the whole Polish nation: "we had an excellent start at these Olympics", "we have gold", "we need to get on our feet". The contestants were addressed directly: "Beat the Yankees". This was the only article that used stereotypical and negatively-characterized vocabulary describing a different nation. Despite the fact that it was the only article, the words used in the heading express a lack of respect for the American volleyball players and enormous emotional importance of this event for the Polish nation. The results of non-Poles did not arouse emotions, being reported in a balanced and distanced manner. Also, the achievements in individual sports were more often presented as personal achievements of specific contestants rather than as a national issue. An example can be the achievements of ski jumpers which were not presented as the success of the whole country. The exception was descriptions of Kowalczyk's efforts in cross-country skiing. Her triumph was perceived as a nation victory over Norwegian skiers.

Discussion

The results of media coverage content analysis are to a significant extent consistent with previous studies from Central Europe (Horky & Nieland, 2013; Gál et al., 2010). Significant underrepresentation of news concerning women's sports is noticeable in the quantitative part. Although some studies demonstrated a proportional number of articles about women's sport, in the case of Poland, statistical analyses showed that apart from the Vancouver Olympics, there was a statistically significant underrepresentation of articles devoted to women's sports (King, 2007; Capranica et al., 2005). Only the student's t-test for Fakt did not show any statistical differences between the average number of articles about women's and men's sports. However, as far as Jakubowska's (2015) text was concerned, it ought to be noted that though the amount of reporting was greater than when no great sports events were taking place, significant statistical differences were still noted. Therefore, sport is still perceived as a masculine undertaking and the Olympic Games do not change the situation very much, as perhaps proven by the large number of sport articles not connected with the Olympic Games, especially in Fakt. The fact that the number of articles about league football during the Olympics examined exceeded the number of articles about Poles' performance during the Olympics may be the indicator that the content is profiled for male readers since in Poland football is still considered as a male past time. Also the study of the Hungarian tabloid during the Games showed that more articles had been written about football than about the events at the Games (Gál, 2016). Therefore, women' sport can be visible in the examined Polish press only when female athletes are pretty likely to win medals. If female athletes find it difficult to make themselves visible in the media during the Olympic Games, their situation throughout the whole year may be even more dramatic. The reporting in Fakt is thought-provoking, where even during the Rio Games at which the Polish female athletes gained eight medals and the men only three, information on women's sport was exceeded by articles on men's sport and sports events unconnected to the Olympic Games. Some further research would be needed to find out if this is also the case in other countries. Contrary to the research mentioned (Billings, 2008, pp. 112-118), more articles were written in the Polish press about women's sport during the winter than summer games. These results can be justified with the interest raised by Kowalczyk and lack of any comparable interest among the contestants competing at the Summer Olympics.

The gained results indicate that analysis of sports content genderization during the Games ought to be combined with matters concerning the athletes' nationality. The nationality of athletes made up the decisive factor on what is reported in the Polish press and which disciplines were the most popular. Therefore, the study confirms previous analysis of the link between nationalism and sport in media content (Billings et al., 2014; Billings, 2008, pp. 99-105; Billings et al., 2008). A substantial majority of the articles were about Poles' performance. This is not justified by the successes achieved by sportsmen because they won fewer medals. Undoubtedly in the case of Fakt one of the crucial criteria for coverage is the nationality of contestants, and the Olympic Games were worth attention only in the case of Poles' outstanding results or scandals involved them (e.g. Polish weightlifters disqualified for doping in Rio de Janeiro). The disciplines described were to a significant extent the result of participation of Polish contestants. The study findings as to the number of articles on non-Polish female athletes confirmed the previous research (Markula et al., 2010, pp. 9-10). The competition of female athletes from outside of Poland hardly reached the pages of the studied newspapers. This is particularly evident in the tabloid daily Fakt, where only one article was devoted to non-Polish female athletes during the Games in 2010, 2012 and 2014. That also leads to the conclusion that there is no reason to report on women's sports, apart from the coverage on competing compatriots. Taking account of the percentage of medals won during the Olympics by the Polish athletes, describing mainly compatriots is puzzling (respectively 2010: 4%, 2012: 9%, 2014: 5%, 2016: 8%). It should be stressed, however, that in the case of GW more articles were about stars of the world sports and the most important Olympic events were reported more often, irrespective of Poles' participation.

The results of the discourse analysis also confirm that the media coverage during the Olympics is nationalistic rather than internationalist. The reports about Poles were much more emotional, there was a high level of identification with the athletes and their results were referred to the country's situation and image. The representation of Polish sports persons and their achievements in the studied newspapers therefore contributed to the reinforcement of nationalistic attitudes in the manner previously described at least by Bairner (2001).

The employment of the critical feminist approach allowed attention to be drawn to the differing descriptions of sporting achievements and sportspersons. The texts in both newspapers contained some stereotypical beliefs about femininity and masculinity. A particularly important discourse seems to be the one that neutralizes women's accomplishments by emphasizing their physical appearance, some more important life goals other than practicing sport or reliance on loved ones and coaches. Given that the articles on women's sports are less published, it can be stated that the newspapers contribute to the maintenance of the stereotyped and androcentric discourse on athletes during the Games included in the study.

Men's portrayals also followed the existing trend. Plenty of space was devoted to the presentation of their excellence in sport and athleticism. Their heterosexuality and sexual activity were emphasized (Berg, 2002, pp. 140-141). Also, in terms of vocabulary, the martial metaphors used carried the message that men's sport is a serious issue. The studied Polish media presented male and female athletes in a traditional manner and reinforced stereotypical images of femininity and masculinity among readers.

Conclusions

The research results indicate the validity of combining analysis of gender and nationality in the context of the Olympic Games. Indeed, not only have the two largest Polish newspapers not presented a comparable coverage of women's and men's sports during the Olympic Games in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016 but they also mainly wrote about Polish female athletes while ignoring their non-Polish counterparts. Despite the fact that female athletes are paid more attention during the Olympics than in the remaining parts of the season, still the press interest is not adequate compared to the number of female representatives at the Olympics. The presented results suggest that the two most widely read dailies in Poland included in the study still follow the practice of excluding women, especially if we compare the number of articles about women's sports with that

about men's sports also regarding non-Olympic sports events. The more frequent reporting of national events rather than Polish female athletes gaining medals or the successes of the most world-famous sportswomen indicates that women's sport in general still goes unnoticed or is considered unworthy of attention (Cooky et al. 2015; Kinnick, 1998). The situation is particularly negative if we look at the Rio Olympics, when women did not receive equal coverage despite winning more medals than men. Even significant successes did not lead to changing the decisions concerning the release of articles. The study confirmed the normative practices of perceiving femininity and accenting gender differences in women and men's sports reporting. These practices reinforce the perception of women in sport as different and unequal to the world of men. Women's sport in the Polish press during the Olympic Games refers to both gender categories (treated as less significant than men's sport) and also to the category of the nation (content describing only Polish female athletes). Therefore, the results indicate the need to study not only the amount of space devoted to women and men's sport but also the amount of content on the reporter's nation and foreign sportspersons. Comparison of content from the Olympic Games and information of sports events beyond the Games is also important as this allows for a wider perspective on women's sports and facilitates the drawing of conclusions on the eventual progress towards a more egalitarian approach to sports in the media.

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