AN ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN PRINT MEDIA FROM FEBRUARY 2006 TO JUNE 2006

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work contained in this treatise is my own, and that all primary and secondary sources have been fully acknowledged.

Carlien Jooste
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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to analyse the representation of professional female sport persons in selected South African media. The field of study is located within the ambit of gender and media studies with specific attention to the power of the latter to not only reflect, but actually shape realities and attitudes. Carolyn Byerly and Karen Ross (2004) comment that “the media have the potential not only to reinforce the status quo in power arrangements in society, but also to contribute to new, more egalitarian ones” (2004:24). The core question, then, is to determine whether traditional gender roles are confirmed, or positively shaped, by the way in which the selected media reported on professional women athletes in various sporting codes.

As this is a neglected topic in South Africa, the study relied heavily on the research done by various American and European academics. Academics such as Pamela Creedon (1994) and Susan Birrell and Cheryl Cole (1994), found that female athletes are marginalised and stereotyped by the media. Their research also denotes that female athletes are objectified and judged on their looks and dress code instead of their sporting abilities.

Female athletes are continuously stereotyped according to societal induced feminine traits. These representations alienate women who do not possess feminine qualities as “the other”, namely falling outside the desirability as determined by sponsorship and an assumed male viewing / reading public. The media further focus more on beautiful, glamorous athletes than female athletes that are less feminine, but with no less achievement and ability.

Extensive examples are provided in the treatise of how the selected South African print media misrepresented women in the six month period that was studied. The conclusion is unambiguous: The South African media unfortunately follow the international trend of objectifying women according to male stereotypes. The media that were studied therefore missed an opportunity to shape gender attitudes as they collude with the powerful forces of sponsorship and viewer-ship to reinforce the status quo.
Key Words

Athlete
Feminine
Gender
Masculine
Media
Representation
Sport
Stereotype
CHAPTER 1
THE AIM, ORIENTATION AND DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

1. Introduction and background

“[The] media have the potential not only to reinforce the status quo in power arrangements in society but also to contribute to new, more egalitarian ones” (Byerly and Ross 2004:4).

The influence of the media on society is a topic which has been debated fervently in the past, and this debate is still raging today. “The computerisation of most of the world since the early 1990s further guarantees that mediated images and messages will continue to construct the very fabric of our daily lives, knowledge, and frameworks of reality, and that individuals will be linked across language and cultural borders” (Byerly and Ross 2004:1).

There are two opposing views in this regard. Many people in society take that which is presented by the media for granted. It is often assumed that what is presented is not tainted by personal views, economic interests or societal values. News, as required by ethical codes, should be unbiased and objective. This suggests that the media only reflects that which is perceived, and that no personal views or bias, influence the news reported to the public. This view proposes that “the media is passively mirroring society rather than forming an active and integral part of it” (Bennett 1982: 287). This is unfortunately seldom true. The opposing view is that media decisions are taken by people. It is therefore inevitable that reports are influenced by those specific media employees' own set of beliefs and prejudices; or the commercial/political bias of media owners. It is this “human element” of reporting that “gives them... [the media] a cultural effect which feeds into our world-views and our culture, and helps to shape them” (Glover 1986: 26).

If we then accept that the media not merely reflects, but also shapes societal views and attitudes, the question arises whether this is also applicable to sport reportage. More specifically, whether this affects the representation of
women in sport. This study will seek to answer the above question by analysing the representation and stereotyping of female athletes in selected South African print media.

Sport forms part of the social make-up of South Africa. In this country, little girls are socialised from a very young age that netball, hockey, swimming and tennis are sports that they can participate in; while little boys are socialised that rugby, cricket and soccer are the sports they are suppose to participate in. The division of these sports into “male” and “female” sports, further encourages the stereotypes of women and men in the workplace, at home and in social situations, where women are mostly observed as subordinate or ‘second-rate’ to men. It is here where the media can play a vital role. The media can either support the above stereotypes or help break them down in the 21st century, by moving away from gender representation and stereotyping.

As this study is approached from a socialist feminist perspective, the main focus falls on the stereotypical gender reporting of female athletes by the South African sports media as it is embedded in commercial interests. Socialist feminism, along with radical and liberal feminism, is all categories of feminism. “Unlike radical and liberal feminism, socialist feminism does not focus exclusively on gender to account for women’s position, but attempts to incorporate an analysis of class and economic conditions of women as well. Central concepts are ‘the re-production of labour’ and ‘the economic value of domestic labour’” (Van Zoonen 1996:36).

This type of feminism combines radical and liberal feminism theory to find a mid-way for society and the media to breakdown the pre-conceptions surrounding women. “Much of its… [socialist feminism] research consists of ideological analysis of media texts, using the analytic instrumentation offered by structuralism and semiology. The solutions socialist feminism offers are not so much different from liberal or radical media strategies. Usually a double strategy is advocated: reforming the mainstream media as well as producing separate feminist media” (Van Zoonen 1996:37).
This study aligns itself with the gender focus of radical and liberal feminism, but will in the analyses below also make reference to the alienation that occurs as women are glamourised and commercialised by the media. Although no ideological critique of capitalism as such will be attempted, the "socialist" trend of the study is to conscientise the reader of the crucial link between gender and economic interests in creating stereotypes of professional female sportspersons. This study will also not develop a substantive semiological theory, but will attempt to “de-code” both texts and images (and their combination) to unearth the stereotypical power of images (whether word-images or actual photographs). The study is therefore less interested in philosophical theory-building, than in a critical analysis of the media as chosen for the analyses below.

This study focuses on investigating the representation of female athletes portrayed by selected South African print media. The media selected is a combination of national and regional newspapers and magazines. This allows the study to create a fairly comprehensive picture of the representation of female athletes in South Africa over the research period.

As the years have gone by, the role that women play within society has grown from ‘homemaker and mother’ to professional business women, and in some cases the latter includes professional sport. From the early 1990s professional athletes such as Penny Haynes (swimming) and Elana Meyer (athletics) made inroads for South Africa in the international sporting arena. This study seeks to determine if the ‘new’ role of female athlete is indeed portrayed in the South African media in a positive light or if they are trivialised by stereotypes and references to beauty, clothing and attractiveness that are irrelevant to sporting achievements.

Research in this field has concentrated on the United States of America and various other European countries (see Kuhn 1985; Rowe 1999; Tomlinson 1997; Goldlust 1987). As far as could be established, the media in South Africa has not been analysed with regard to their portrayal of female athletes. With the advent of equal rights for all in South Africa, an analysis of certain
print media seems appropriate as to glean whether equality and positive representation of female athletes have been merged in the media.

2. Research objectives

This study's main objective is to analyse the representation of female athletes in selected South African print media. The research will study newspaper articles and photographs from *The Herald*, *Mail&Guardian* and *Sunday Times* on both South African and international female athletes participating in all sports. Magazine articles, photographs and adverts (related to women in sport) from *SA Sports Illustrated* and *Compleat Golfer* will also be studied along the same guidelines.

Articles, photographs and adverts pertaining to female athletes and the sport they participate in will be collected from the selected media. The collected media will be analysed according to the following criteria which has been gleaned from outcomes of similar studies. The criteria themselves will be discussed in the related literature review in chapter 2 and actually applied in chapter 5. The criteria are as follows:

**Text:**
- Naming female athletes by first name
- Use of derogatory words
- Explicit gender references
- References to fashion, weight, family, beauty and child bearing
- Attributing a victory by a female athlete to external factors
- Construction of “[female athletes] as ‘other’” (Kuhn, 1985:2)
- Reportage of conventional female sports versus ‘unconventional’ female sports

**Photographs and Adverts:**
- Focus points
- Poses
“Active” and “non-active” photographs (Rowe, 1999:142)

Emphasis of photographs and adverts on “beauty, glamour and sexuality” (Davies et al, 1987: 52)

As this study is an analysis of the representation of female athletes by the media, the question is whether the media reflects and reinforces underlying sexist attitudes in society.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Firstly, to discuss representations and stereotypes in general and how they function in the media and society.
2. Secondly, to specifically discuss the representation and stereotypes of female athletes as presented by international printed media.
3. Thirdly, to analyse the selected newspaper media and magazines in terms of the criteria listed above.
4. Fourthly, to draw conclusions based on the antecedent analyses.

3. Importance of the study

As indicated earlier the recognised influence of the media on society has been well documented over the years. With the conscious knowledge of the oppression and stereotyping of women, most of the roles ascribed to women by society have been scrutinised. The roles referred to here are that of housewife, caregiver, mother and even professional. The ‘new role’ of women as professional athletes has also been touched upon. But in South Africa the stereotyping and representation of female athletes by the South African media, have not been analysed before. This study will hopefully make a contribution to media studies in the specific field of gender stereotyping. It will critically analyse the representation of female athletes and unveil the implicit alienation of women. This analysis will also hopefully conscientise sport writers and persons involved in print media to be more sensitive in their reporting of female athletes and the sport they participate in. The importance for the broader society is a contribution to break down artificial gender boundaries, and to foster greater gender equality.
4. Scope and core hypothesis of the research

The study is focused on English newspaper articles and photographs, and magazine articles, photographs and adverts based in the Eastern Cape and nationally. *The Herald* is a weekly newspaper published in the Eastern Cape only, while the *Sunday Times, Mail&Guardian, SA Sports Illustrated* and *Compleat Golfer* is published nationally.

The following hypotheses can be drawn from readings done on the topic:

1. The first hypothesis is that print media reinforces and contributes to the stereotyping of women in sport.
2. The second hypothesis is that the theoretical frameworks and criteria presented by the various readings done on the topic would be applicable to the collected South African media.
3. The third hypothesis is that the analysis of selected South African media will confirm that female athletes are stereotyped and portrayed as ‘the other’ or as objects participating in sport for the viewing pleasure of an assumed male audience.

The delimitations of the study are as follows:

- The study will be limited to selected print media in South Africa
- The study will be limited to professional female athletes only
- The study will not attempt to provide a set of connective measures to the representation by the media of female athletes
- The study will not be biased towards any sport that female athletes participate in.

It follows from the limited time-frame and specific selection of media that research results would not generalise in the direct sense of the word. At most, certain trends will hopefully be determined that might inform our views on the link between sexism and representation of female professional athletes.
5. The definition of terms

For this research it is important to explain the key terms that will be used in the study, as it plays a vital role in the overall scheme of the research.

**Active pose** – An “active pose” refers to a photograph taken while the female athlete is participating in her choice of sport. The athlete is not aware of the camera and does not pose for the photographer.

**Non-active pose** – This refers to an athlete who poses for a photograph. The photograph displays the person in the most flattering of poses. This can be taken in sport clothes, but the athlete is not physically partaking in the sporting activity.

**Professional athlete** – Professional athlete refers to an athlete who gets an income out of playing or participating in a sport, full-time or part-time.

**Representation** – Representation refers to the different signs or meanings attributed to a certain object by individuals or social groups.

**Stereotype** – “Stereotypes are used to indicate those representations, which are misleading or offensive. It is a conventional way of representing someone or something so that our view of them become ‘frozen’ or fixed and may give rise to social prejudices” (Glover 1986:27).

**Sport** – Sport refers to a physical activity which leads to the “development of specific physical … [skills]” and contains “elements of competition and opposition among participants or teams of participants”, which ultimately leads to “achieving particular ends or goals” (Goldlust 1987:1-2).

6. Research design

As this research proposes to analyse and evaluate the representation of national and international female athletes by selected South African print media,
qualitative designs with definite elements of the emancipatory paradigm will be used to analyse the data. Where quantitative designs deal with “surveys and statistical analysis” (Babbie & Mouton 2001:49), in qualitative designs the “emphasis is on grounded theory and other more inductive analytical strategies” (Babbie & Mouton 2001:49). The research paradigm of comparative analysis will further aid the study as the existing international research on this topic will be compared and applied to the data collected.

In chapter 5, some quantitative tables will be presented, but these do not represent this study as empirical in the narrow sense of the word. The underlying paradigm is qualitative, or interpretative, where gender constitutes the hermeneutical key. The link with the emancipatory paradigm is via this study’s attempt to not only describe, but also too foster change to oppressive gender stereotypes.

The data for this study will be collected by scrutinising the before mentioned media thoroughly for articles, photographs and adverts pertaining to female athletes. A critical analysis of the data will be conducted in terms of specific criteria so as to uncover assumed gender stereotypes. This will lead to conclusions, and serve as basis for media recommendations.

The data of this research are of two kinds: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to the assemblage of articles and photographs from the selected print media. Secondary data refers to the published studies and texts and the unpublished dissertations and theses dealing with stereotypes and representation of female athletes in the media.

The data will be collected on the following basis:

**Newspapers** (*The Herald, Mail&Guardain* and *Sunday Times*) will be bought on the days that they are published. The newspapers will be scanned thoroughly for five months (February 2006 to June 2006), and the articles and photographs pertaining to female athletes and female sports will be observed and
“systematically classified to enable analysis of the observations” (Du Plooy 2001: 152).

Magazines (SA Sports Illustrated and Compleat Golfer) will be bought at the beginning of the month in which they are published. The magazines will be scanned thoroughly for five months (February 2006 to June 2006) and all articles, photographs and adverts pertaining to female athletes and female sports will be selected and documented.

Validity and reliability principles will be implemented by accurate referencing of media selected and proper references to other academic work. In this way interjudge reliability will be implemented to “determine how reliable the interpretation of communication content is” (Du Plooy 2001:123). Validity is a “measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure”, for instance, “your IQ would seem a more valid measure of your intelligence than would the number of hours you spend in the library” (Babbie 2004:143). Thus, pertaining to this study, the criteria set out in this chapter is subsequently a more valid measure than just counting the number of articles published on female athletes by South African media. Face validity forms an important part of this measure as, in the case of this study, it indicates that the representation and stereotypes of female athletes by the selected media, is an indication of how society views female athletes. Face validity indicates that it is the “quality of an indicator that makes it seem a reasonable measure of some variable” (Babbie 2004:144). It is for the reader to judge whether the conclusions drawn in and after chapter 5 are indeed valid inferences from the actual media analyses.

7. Chapter layout

Chapter 1
A brief introduction and background on the research topic is given and lays the foundations for the technical issues surrounding the treatise. The chapter discusses the research objectives, research methodology, primary research question and limitations of the research.

Chapter 2
An overview of the literature pertaining to representation and female athletes are discussed. This is especially important because literature pertaining to South African media and the treatise topic is very limited. This chapter serves as the foundation from which the selected media will be analysed.

Chapter 3
Discussion on representation and stereotypes in general, and how it functions within the media.

Chapter 4
This chapter will build on the previous chapter and discuss how female athletes are represented and stereotyped in the international media.

Chapter 5
The chapter discusses the analyses and findings done of the selected newspaper and magazine articles, photographs and adverts.

Chapter 6
This chapter draws conclusions on the research findings and suggest recommendations for future research.

8. Conclusion
The chapter draws attention to the study’s hypothesis that the media plays a leading role in representation of certain groups in society. The research problem and the importance of the study are further discussed in the chapter and create the basis for the study. The research method and selected media is also discussed, along with the crucial criteria against which the media will be analysed.

The next chapter will review the related literature on this topic. As said earlier, to my knowledge there has been no other study on this topic in South Africa. This chapter is crucial, as it outlines international research in this field and by
implication, set forth the criteria against which the South African media will be analysed and judged.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

1. Introduction

The oppression of women and the stereotypes associated with sexism have a great impact on the societal impression of women and the roles they play in society. However, certain roles that women take on, especially in sport, are met with hostility and a lack of acceptance. This leads to the construction of these women as ‘the other’. It is thus important to educate women (and society) to understand how the “structures” work that “construct women as ‘other’” (Kuhn 1985:2).

2. Reviewing the literature

2.1 Introduction

With the growing awareness of the influential role of the media and the oppression of women by societal structures, this literature review will include five areas: (1) historical perspectives, (2) the recognition and cogitation of traditional female roles, (3) sport and women in sport, (4) print media and the representation of female athletes, and (5) television coverage of female athletes. The present review is limited to international media analysis only, as comparative research has not been conducted in South Africa. These findings will however be applied to the representation of female athletes in South African print and television media.

2.2 A few historical perspectives

The stereotyping and stigma surrounding women and their role in society, is a much touched upon subject. Already in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote: “If the abstract rights of men will bear discussion and explanation, those of women, by a parity of reasoning, will not shrink from the same test …Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him of the gift of reason?” (Wollstonecraft 1992:87).
Wollstonecraft questioned the oppressive roles subscribed to women by Western society, and she points out various facets of these roles. Women are “[t]aught from their infancy that beauty is woman’s sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison” (Wollstonecraft 1992:131). This observation can especially be applied to how the media report on female athletes and women in general. The allure of a woman is irreversibly connected to the way she acts, dresses and looks. The 1968 Miss America pageant was protested against by feminists because they believed that it promoted “an impossible image of ideal womanhood, and was complicit in the widespread idea that all women – not only participants in beauty contests – are reducible to a set of bodily attributes” (Kuhn 1985:3).

Wollstonecraft further comments on the character a woman is expected to display. She observes that “all women are to be levelled, by meekness and docility, into a character of yielding softness and gentle compliance” (Wollstonecraft 1992:131). However, only since the “mid and late seventies” (Van Zoonen 1991:31) did “feminist media theory” (Van Zoonen 1991:31) become more pertinent and was the “subject … [of] ‘woman’” (Van Zoonen 1991:31) in the media, analysed and discussed. For instance, in 1963 Betty Friedan’s book “The Feminine Mystique” was an immediate bestseller and gave rise to a revival of the women’s movement which had been dormant since the successful struggle for women’s suffrage” (Van Zoonen 1991:32). Friedan researched “the construction of the American culture ideal of ‘the happy housewife-heroine’ in women’s magazines and advertisements” (Van Zoonen 1991:32).

Being a female athlete goes against this perception of the ‘character’ of a woman. When they enter the realm of sport, female athletes enter a realm originally dominated by males. Thus the media is challenged by traditional stereotypes of women and their new role as athlete. Wollstonecraft started to question the general roles ascribed to women by society, and through the years, fellow feminists compartmentalised these general roles and researched the different stereotypes connected to these roles. These are types of “anti-text”, which is “text that could be set against the ideological message of
orthodox literature on the position of women” (Mitchell and Oakley 1976:7). However, John Berger comments that women have been conditioned to stereotyping and representing themselves according to the roles ascribed to them, by society. “The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight” (Berger 1972:47).

It is important to recognise the base structure on which research into the representation of female athletes by the media, can build on. This research will allow for new “anti-text” into a subject that is only being deemed important after the general roles of women have been explained.

2.3 Recognising and cogitating traditional female roles

Liberating the housewife and giving women equal opportunity to education, are all issues that have been discussed in the feminist realm. Through these discussions the way women were once perceived as a docile wife and child bearer has changed. However, many women find it difficult to distance themselves from roles and perceptions that they grew up with. Mitchell and Oakley observe that this happens “because we, like many women, find we cannot easily shake off our unconscious allegiance to the traditional models of behaviour which our culture holds out to us” (Mitchell and Oakley 1976:12). These two theorists are not in favour of destroying the “existing social practices” which led to the unconscious acceptance of subscribed social roles, because they believe that the “rigid insistence on the reversal of current practice may actually be disastrous” (Mitchell and Oakley 1976:12).

This perception can be interpreted in two different ways. If the “existing social practices” are not changed and destroyed, female sport will die a slow death, because the lack of media coverage or sponsorship for events and individual athletes are difficult to attain. This will eventually only lead to less and less girls and women participating in ‘women’s’ sport. While, if these “existing social practices” are left alone, female athletes will only be an athlete in name, not in action. Mitchell and Oakley contradict their earlier statements, by further
suggesting that society should return to the “drawing-board”. They suggest, to change stereotypical roles to which women are subjected, society must “[rewrite] history; [re-interpret] the social world, both past and present, from a perspective that includes women” (Mitchell and Oakley 1976:14). Here they finally address an issue that is particularly important to women’s sport and women in sport. By “re-writing …history [and] re-interpreting the social world” it will no longer be frowned upon if, for example, women play rugby, which is perceived to be a ‘man’s sport’. However, “if a women strives not to fall for the lure of feminine subservience she is labelled ‘masculine’” (Mitchell and Oakley 1976:392), which is why female wrestlers and body builders are stereotyped as ‘the other’ and portrayed by the media as such, while women in ‘feminine sports’ are portrayed as sex-symbols for the visual pleasure of the male admirer.

2.4 Sports and women in sports

Sport has become a commercial profession and, due to its high media profile, sends implicit and explicit messages to the public. “Sport is a contemporary medium for performing many tasks and carrying multiple messages and, as such, is increasingly indistinguishable from the sports media” (Rowe 1999:2). In sports media, it is interesting to note that not only are female athletes marginalised by the media, but also the sport they participate in (Willis 1982; Birrell and Cole 1994). The amount of coverage female sports receive are less than that of male sports, and the quality and quantity of information in articles are also inferior to that of articles on male sports.

However, one must take into consideration that women were never really ‘supposed’ to participate in sport. Even from the time of the Ancient Greeks it was believed that “‘real sport’ is an activity that is ‘by nature’ a manifestation of the biosocial characteristics of the male gender, and should remain so” (Goldlust 1987:133). It is these ‘founding’ ideas that contribute to the way female athletes are represented by the media, and the lack of coverage given to female sports. Paul Willis observes: “Sport is influenced by the state of the
general society, and reflects that society [while] sport, in its turn, influences, and for the most part reinforces that society” (Willis 1982:33).

It is thus logical to conclude that the manner in which sports women are represented by the media, can be attributed to the influence and pre-conceived ideas of society (Birrell and Cole 1994; Goldlust 1987; Willis 1982).

2.5 Reporting on women in sport

Observing reports or commentary of sports event where both women and men are participating, it is clear that the reporting or commentating revolves around the differences between the sexes (Willis 1982). For instance, in a mixed-doubles tennis match, the male partner is constantly highlighted as the powerful, masculine one, who wins the make-or-break points; while the female partner is contributed with keeping the ball in court and creating the opportunity for the male to win the points. This type of differentiating can also be observed in ice-skating. The commentator constantly highlights the power and masculinity of the male, while the female is contributed with being slim and feminine. “One way of emphasising the difference between the sexes is to promote laughter or cynicism when females take to the field, another way is (cf. Bobby Riggs) to set out to prove incontrovertibly that women are inferior through direct challenge” (Willis 1982:35).

This observation is both true and false. Rarely does one hear in commentating or reporting a “cynicism when females take the field”, but rather a focus on femininity (i.e. fashion, physical beauty) and dependence of female athletes on others to support them. However, the “direct challenge” between the sexes is still prominent throughout society. In schools, the girls play the boys ‘for fun’ in sports like netball and tennis. But this practice is also prominent in the professional realm. When Serena Williams and Venus Williams burst onto the tennis scene, they were called “amazons” because of their masculine, ‘athletic’ build. The two sisters took the tennis world by storm, beating almost all the female tennis players on circuit. Their winning streak was not attributed to talent and hard work, but rather because they played like men. The sisters were out to prove themselves, and dared any male player on the ATP tennis
circuit to play against them. Serena Williams' challenge was accepted by a player who was ranked in the two-hundreds, and needless to say, she lost. Another example is that of number one female golfer, Annika Sorenstam who played against male golfers at the 2003 US Open. This decision of hers led to widespread criticism of all female golfers. It also led to numerous male athletes and media, highlighting negative aspects of female golfers, and how inferior they were to men in terms of power and strength.

Thus, it is not only male athletes who enhance the differences between the sexes, but also female athletes. It is evident from research that female athletes are further differentiated by the constant reminder by commentators and reporters that this athlete has a husband and a family (Willis 1982). It rarely happens that a male athlete’s family is focused on more than his ability to perform on the sports field.

It is common knowledge that female athletes and women’s sport receive less media coverage than male athletes and ‘male’ sports (Birrell and Cole 1994; Goldlust 1987; Willis 1982). The media focuses so much on the “male sporting” achievements, and the “speed, strength and power” of the male athlete, that it “[inferiorises] and [trivialises] women’s sporting achievements” (Tomlinson 1997:4). Willis observes: “And yet, the meanest local 5th division, male worker’s team gets more respect, in popular consciousness, than a women’s national team” (Willis, 1982:35). An example of this is the phenomena of ‘football’ (soccer) in Europe. Even though female footballers and teams are growing in stature and popularity, “5th division male teams” (Willis 1982:35) still receive more ‘respect’ and support than a 1st division female team.

Female athletes are also objectified and judged on their looks and dress code, rather than their sporting ability. Willis suggests, however, that it is sometimes the female athletes themselves that bring the “sexy” and “attractive” image to the sport which renders them “a sex object – a body which may excel in sport, but which is primarily an object of pleasure for man” (Willis 1982:35). This observation can be true in some cases, but it would be tough to believe that
female athletes participate in a sport purely for “fashion” and not out of passion for that sport. Female athletes do not dress themselves; sponsors play a huge part in their career, and to keep a sponsor happy, they wear what the sponsor wants them to wear. For the sponsor, the athlete is an object of commercialisation. She was chosen because she could sell the sponsor’s product or image. “The marketability of an athlete depends on tangible factors, such as level of skill and success in the sport. Marketing also depends on many intangible factors” (Verltri and Long 1998:1). The ‘intangible’ factors refer to “individual characteristics, such as image, charisma, physical appearance, and personality” (Schaaf 1995:1).

Image and physical appearance is a huge factor in female sports as this is used to the advantage of the sponsor. “Sportswomen are being increasingly pressured by sponsors and promoters to wear revealing outfits in order to promote their sport. While top tennis players such as Maria Sharapova are happy to comply, others are uncomfortable at being asked to use their sexuality in order to gain recognition” (Kessel 2006:1). In most instances sponsors are also behind modelling shoots, as the female athlete can display other items of their label, for instance bikinis.

The female athlete who does benefit financially from this (along with the sponsor), may lose her credibility as athlete. For instance, at the 2006 US Open, tennis player Maria Sharapova “turned up to play… in a little black dress with ‘evening wear diamante detail’ for the night match” (Kessel 2006:1). Her fashion statement not only detracted from her ability and her victories at the tournament, but also attributed to the lack of respect from her fellow players. This choice of clothing negatively affected her credibility as a serious, professional athlete. “[T]he sponsors design the kit and they want … [athletes] to look a certain way” (Kessel 2006:1). However, the representation of female athletes as “feminine glamour” (Kessel 2006:1) girls are not entirely the sponsors fault. Both the athlete and media have a choice. The athlete still has choices as to what she can wear. She can take a stand against the sponsors, while the media can choose images they project of the athletes. The “choice”
for a young female sportsperson is; however, very limited as she enters a system already structured on strong, gender bias.

It seems to be easier for society to objectify a female athlete, because “to succeed as an athlete can be to fail as a woman, because she has, in certain profound symbolic ways, become a man” (Willis 1982:36). It is also interesting to note that while female athletes are participating in a certain sport, not much photographs are published in the media. When they, however, attend a party or a launch dressed in designer clothing, then pictures are widely published in the media. The media would rather place a picture of a female athlete at a social event than on the sport field. Reports on female athletes and women’s teams mostly focus on “female athletes in an activity to attract men or to emulate men” (Willis 1982:41).

This causes society to rather buy into the representations of attractive women, luring men to observe them or, laughter at women who are just as masculine as the men participating in a certain sport, like for instance wrestling. “Sports for … [and] women’s sport do not, on the whole, enjoy equitable media coverage or financial support” (White 1997:206). Because of the lack of financial support, female athletes do not have a choice but to adhere to the demands of their sponsor. If they do not adhere to it they can lose the sponsorship and the financial support.

2.6 Print media and female athletes

When it comes to print media, the mediums that generally publish sport news and information are newspapers and magazines. The articles are mainly fact based and provide information on recent sporting events and the athlete’s participation in them. However, even “[d]espite the recent rise in the number of females participating in sport, and the perhaps less dramatic rise in the social acceptance and appreciation of women’s sport, there has been little improvement in the quality and amount of coverage of women in the …sports media” (Cronk and Theberge 1986:289). This under representation, especially in the print media, of female athletes and the sport they participate in leads to
the “continued …support for the myth of female passivity and frailty” (Cronk and Theberge 1986:290). “By reducing women’s sexuality to a very few, limiting stereotypes, determined by their own fantasies, the men who control the media attempt to control woman kind” (Davies et al 1987:70).

The media can, by representing female athletes in a more ‘athletic’ light, fight such myths. Cronk and Theberge look specifically at newspapers and how the sports pages marginalise women. They observe that newspaper editors defend their content and reportage by saying that what they print and how they print it is how the public wants it (Cronk and Theberge 1986). This is the old excuse of editors and media owners, but they implicitly base their “passive” view of the media on the assumption that the media only reflects reality, while they use their power to entrench the status quo instead of challenging and changing societal myths. But it is also because certain sports and especially women’s sport, are “non-commercial” (Cronk and Theberge 1982:293). This is unfortunately true. Male sports do receive more sponsorship and thus more coverage. The coverage of events are tied to the higher percentage “resources” in male sports which pays better to have their events covered. This reinforces the powerful link between the media and commercial interests as highlighted by socialist feminism.

Another form of print media is magazines. Michael Salwen and Natalie Wood analysed *Sports Illustrated* (SI) covers in the USA from 1957 – 1989. They indicate that it is because of the belief by “news editors [that] …sports news is of interest to male readers” (Salwen and Wood 1994:1) that reporting on female sports are so discriminating. Their research indicated that in the 1950’s, 85.7% of the SI covers pictured men, while only 14.3% featured women. What was alarming was that in the 1960’s – 1970’s only 4.0% of the covers features women, while in the 1980’s 6.8% of the covers pictured women of which only 5.1% where female athletes. This representation by the media influences the reader. Rarely does a female athlete appear on a magazine cover ‘in-action’. Salwen and Wood found that in the 1980’s only 2.4% of the females featured on the SI cover where ‘in-action’. Photographing of female athletes in ‘non-active poses’ reinforces the stereotypes of femininity, passivity
and glamour instead of representing female athletes as active, sweating athletes. “The portrayal of women as sex objects trivialises, degrades and dehumanises … [women]” (Davies et al 1987:72). These portrayals also demean female sport and lead to poor reporting on female athletes because placing “non-active poses”, distances the female athlete from the sporting enthusiast and makes the athlete ‘the other’. Research shows that the media present women in three basic ways: “glamorous, alluring and available” (Davies et al 1987:72). One observes that these representations reflect negatively on female athletes.

Researchers suggest that in the public media, the female athlete will always be underrepresented because they, and the sport they practice, are “non-commercial” (Cunningham; Sagas; Sartore; Amsden; Schellhase 2004). Cunningham et al, suggest that a difference “between for-profit newspapers and not-for-profit newspapers can be noted, as the one needs to sell to run while the other report on news because it is news” (Cunningham et al 2004). The National Collegiate Athletic Association News (NCAA) is a newsletter “distributed solely for the benefit of its membership”, where analysed by Cunningham and colleagues. The publication does not have “economic, cultural or socio-political forces” that needs to be taken into account, like for-profit newspapers. They analysed 5, 745 paragraphs of text and found that 30% of the content was about women. However, they found that the content was more “factual information related to sport and less likely to be personal information of any kind” (Cunningham et al 2004).

Even though this seems like a step in the right direction, the information did not integrate the female athlete into the article, but rather focused on the sport in general and not on the persons participating in it. Their research indicated that there was a 15.9% increase in reports on female athletes in the last decade. Even though this is a big increase and it seems like, at least in the non-profit media, female athletes receive unbiased reporting, 51% of the “sports played by individuals or teams in the NCAA [during the research year] were women” (Cunningham et al 2004). This indicates that, even in this medium, there is still no equality.
2.7 Television coverage and reporting of women in sport

Even though this study will only analyse print media, it is important to look at television’s representation of female athletes as well. These representations can regularly apply to print media. Duncan et al observes “[t]elevision both shapes and reflects the attitude of our society” (Duncan; Jensen; Messner; Williams 1990:249). Thus, the problem facing female athletes are low percentage of coverage of female sports and commentating by mostly male commentators. Watching a sport game on television, the game is “framed” by commentators and this “framing” weighs heavily on the way a televised sports game and the participants are viewed (Duncan et al 1990). Commentators often “infantilize… [women in sport]” by referring to them as “girls or young ladies”, while male athletes are referred to as gentlemen or “men” (Duncan et al 1990:268). It is also interesting to note that “‘dominants’ are most commonly referred to by their last name” (Duncan et al 1990:268).

If one would sit and watch a tennis match on television, one can observe how the female tennis players are mostly referred to by their first name while the male players are predominantly referred to by their surname. Duncan et al (1990) found that female athletes are addressed by their first names 52% of the times in relation to the 7.8% of the male athletes. Thus, female athletes must not only contend with how they are represented, but also with commentary from a male perspective when it comes to television coverage of female sports.

3. Conclusion

Female athletes defied the patriarchal order when they first started participating in sport. Since then however, female athletes have been represented and stereotyped negatively by the media as glamorous, sexual and inferior. The fact that they are professional athletes is ignored, and they are made more “feminine” to be accepted by society. The lack in reportage on women’s sport infantilises female athletes and portrays female sport as invisible. The related literature in this review proves the lack and stereotypical reporting of female athletes. Duncan et al (1990), Cunningham et al (2004) and Salwen and
Wood's (1994) research prove that female athletes are indeed represented in ways which “inferiorises … [and] trivialises” them.

It is important to understand how representation and stereotyping work within society and the media. Chapter 3 will look more closely at stereotyping and representation of women in general.
CHAPTER 3
CONSTRUCTION AND FUNCTION OF REPRESENTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES.

1. Introduction

An individual conjures up an image or personal meaning, when he or she sees a certain object or hears a certain word. For instance, the word “woman” can mean many different things to different people, but society has ascribed a person who is called a woman certain attributes and characteristics. “Human expressivity is capable of objectification, that is, it manifests itself in products of human activity that are available both to their producers and to other men as elements of a common world” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:49). Some meanings have become part of society, so much so, that people rarely question it. These meanings can be referred to as “a systematic body of concepts” (Penguin Dictionary, Allen 2000) or ideology. It can reflect positively or negatively on groups of society. For instance, “stereotypes of black characters in films as ‘Uncle Toms’, faithful servants, comedians or minstrels, and wild savages conjure up a whole history of slavery, discrimination and colonialism” (Glover 1986:27). Men and women are both subject to certain gender ideologies which they are constantly measured against; if they are found inadequate, they are represented as ‘other’.

The above can also be characterised as the “sociology of knowledge”. Knowledge refers to “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:13). The “sociology of knowledge is concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:16), while it seeks “to analyse the relationship between knowledge and existence”, according to Karl Mannheim (Stark 1960:12). As Karl Marx commented: “[M]an’s consciousness is determined by his social being” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:16-17). It is this combination of influences which leads to the “understanding that no human thought is immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:2). The sociology of knowledge suggests that when “ideas” or behaviour is
expressed by an individual, those ideas or behaviour can be “regarded as
functions of his … [her] [social] existence” (Stark 1960:13). Thus one can link
this to the practice of representation. When women seem emotional or asks
for help from a man, sociology of knowledge dictates that this must be
regarded as “functions” of her “social existence”. This leads to
representations and stereotypes of women being emotional and weak and
dependant on men.

“[I]n all societies women are distinguished from men because they bear the
children, and the differences in reproductive roles are always the kernel
around which gender roles are culturally constructed, the way these roles are
constituted and the connections which are drawn between reproduction and
other aspects of adult life are extremely variable” (Chapman 1993:9).
Growing up in this world, boys and girls are raised differently. They are taught
different characteristic traits, so they can ‘fit’ into society and into their
ascribed gender roles. “The concept of gender role refers to the allocation of
different categories of activities considered to be useful or necessary for
social production or reproduction. This allocation is made according to sex
because types of work are identified with certain behavioural characteristics or
dispositions (gender) and these behavioural traits or characteristics (gender)
are thought to be caused by primary or secondary sexual characteristics
(sex)” (Howie 1998:369-370). Because of these characteristics, gender bias
occurs in all walks of life.

As this study deals with how the media represent and stereotype women, one
observes from the previous chapter, that men are treated more favourably
than women (when it comes to the amount of coverage received in the
media). However, “gender issues are not only about women. Where men are
typecast as tough and aggressive, they are just as unfairly treated as when
women are typecast as meek and submissive” (Kruger 2004:139). But men
are never represented and stereotyped as without power or not in control of
their own lives, which is what women must constantly deal with. Gender bias
can also stem from this as patriarchal structures favour the male gender,
while the female gender, and news about women, are secondary. With this
gender bias, masculine and feminine traits are used to represent both genders, but also further stereotype them. One must acknowledge however that “[g]ender is what crucially defines us…The human being is a gendered subject” (Kuhn 1985:52).

To be accepted in society, a man must have certain masculine qualities and a woman certain feminine qualities. “[M]asculinity has always been associated with aggression and aggression with dispositions to be active, and this has been used to explain why men ‘succeed’ in the ‘public sphere’ and why women need protecting (by a man from other men) or why distinct gender roles are performed by the two sexes” (Howie 1998:371). Masculinity is based on the dominance of the male sex over the female sex. Being masculine requires of a male to be strong, physically and emotionally, so that he can support the female sex. Femininity however, is about much more than just subservience and being accepted by society. “The body’s traditional centrality to feminine identity can be subdivided into a variety of codes of appearance: ideal bodily shape and size; appropriate forms of make-up and cosmetic care of skin and hair; and the adornment of the body through clothes and accessories. It is not the body, but the codifying of the body into structures of appearance, that culturally shapes and moulds what it means to be ‘feminine’” (Macdonald 1995:194). A woman’s physical traits and “sexuality” plays an important part in her acceptance into society. “A woman’s sexuality then always embodies power: a compulsory heterosexuality and a mature woman is one who can be described as feminine, which means displaying traits or behaviour that support male dominance” (Howie 1998:378).

The ‘power’ given to men through these societal ascribed roles, lends itself to the representation and stereotyping of men and women. These differences and roles are circularly reproduced by society and the media. The circular reproduction alludes to representation and stereotyping which are regurgitated by the media from ideologies in society, which then further “[feeds] into our world-views and our culture, and help to shape them” (Glover 1986:26). The circular movement never ends, as it is people from society
who make up the media, and it is their ideologies that get published in the media.

“[P]hotographs and text regurgitating certain differences between masculine and feminine rely on the discourses already out there and… [draws] on and… [reproduces] them in its own forms of address” (Kuhn 1985:48). These discourses are directly linked to stereotypes. Where representation is a way for people to make sense of their world, by representing groups or individuals in society in a certain way, stereotypes feed negatively on this. Stereotypes are degrading, constant representations of a certain group, which leaves no room for other interpretations as they seem to have fixed characteristics.

2. Defining the concepts

Representations and stereotypes form part of the daily lives of all people. Representations occur every day in numerous spheres of the public and private life of individuals, cultures and races, however most stereotypes (or those that are paid the most attention) are created and reinforced based on gender roles.

As said earlier, an individual or ethnic group attributes different signs or meanings to a certain object. For instance, D. Glover in his book *The Sociology of the Mass Media* refers to an example of people in Thailand. In North-Eastern Thailand people classify insects into two categories: those that they can eat and those that they cannot eat. This is referred to as a representation. These representations are used by society “in order to produce, record and store information” (Glover 1986:26). Not all representations lead to stereotypes or are negative representations; however this all depends from which viewpoint a representation or stereotype is observed. For instance “the ‘harmless fun’ of page three of the *Sun*… [a British tabloid newspaper who displays semi-naked women on page three] can be seen as a symbol of degradation from a feminist perspective, precisely because it conveys a view of women as mere playthings of men that is socially limited and confining” (Glover 1986:27). Representation can be
perceived in a neutral sense, as it is “part of social life” (Glover 1986:27), while stereotyping is an element of society which can be viewed in a negative sense. However, even though both these elements are part of society, it does not “prevent us… [media and society] from being able to choose between different kinds of representations and trying to change them” (Glover 1986:27).

It is indeed the above choice to change representations and thus negative stereotypes of women, which socialist feminism is concerned with. Socialist feminism is basically concerned with the oppression of women in the public and private sphere, and how women can be liberated from stereotypes and representations which deem them powerless and inferior (Ehrenreich 1976).

The term stereotype was defined earlier in chapter 1; however, gender stereotyping which is applicable to this discussion, can be defined as: “the way in which society assigns characteristics and social roles to men and women” (Kruger 2004:139). The term stereotype is used to “indicate those representations, which are misleading or offensive” (Glover 1986:27). It can also be described as the “attribution of a set of fixed characteristics to all members of a particular social group, usually of a negative kind” (Critcher 1998:129). Thus, from a socialist feminist perspective, the concept of representation and stereotyping influences women more, due to the prescribed submissive characteristic of women. From this perspective it is important to realise the influence of capitalism on how women are represented and stereotyped by the media. “[T]here is no way to understand sexism as it acts on our lives without putting it in the historical context of capitalism” (Ehrenreich 1976). Capitalism seeps into every aspect of the social – as well as the public – sphere of everyday life, and as one gleaned from the research in chapter 2, women are used as a commodity to sell goods.

Characteristics that are used to stereotype and represent women and men “range from aggression, violence, and computational skills in men, to emotional instability, linguistic competence, and sociability in women” (Howie
1998:371). However, the problem with these stereotypes and representations is that it does not allow members of society to venture outside its perimeters and still be fully accepted by society. Those that do not ascribe to the unwritten rules of masculinity and femininity are looked down upon and seen as ‘the other’. To fully grasp this concept one needs to look at how representation and stereotypes function, especially with regard to women.

3. Functioning of representations

The representation of women by the media, are rarely anything different than what is expected of ‘feminine women’. For instance, rarely in television adverts do women act outside of the feminine role. Women are either portrayed as mother, girlfriend or temptress. The media that do represent women in roles outside of the feminine realm normally makes a mockery of those groupings of women i.e. female bodybuilders and overweight women. However, the media that do represent the ‘feminine woman’ objectifies that woman and keeps the male gaze in mind. “Representations are productive: photographs, far from merely reproducing a pre-existing world, constitute a highly coded discourse which, among other things, constructs whatever is in the image as object of consumption – consumption by looking, as well as often quite literally by purchase” (Kuhn 1985:19). Even though the media has been including different types of roles that women presently fulfil, there is still the element of subservience in the representation, “[b]ecause whether they’re… [women] elite athletes or share traders, the media still prefers to represent women as sexual commodities” (Tebbel 2000:136).

Representations are more easily spotted in photographs or images, however one must note that text and image cannot be taken out of context as both these elements work together to form the representation. A photograph provides “[a]uthenticity, visibility, looking, voyeurism … [and] pleasure” (Kuhn 1985: 28) for the viewer. Photographs in the media are especially important as they are believed to “tell it like it is” (Kuhn 1985:27), and thus when a woman is repeatedly represented in a certain way, a stereotype is created, which people believe and do not question. Beauty and “glamour” are very
noticeable traits when women are ‘used’ in media representations. “Glamour… [is] a notion applied almost exclusively to women” (Kuhn 1985:12), and is a characteristic which all women who do not want to be outside of the norm must adhere to. “[Women] are seldom shown actually working … [in representations] – and often it is still beauty, glamour and sexuality that are emphasised in women’s magazines and the tabloid press” (Davies et al 1987:52).

These representations however are the stepping stone for stereotypes, which excludes groups of women like athletes, business professionals, ‘ugly ducklings’ and lesbian women, to name a few. These women, because they fall outside of the norm, are negatively portrayed in the media or they are not featured at all. The media plays an important role as “women’s view of themselves and their place in society are to a degree moulded and reinforced by … [representations of women in the media]. It is ideological in the sense that is supports powerful vested interests in society – that of men – and so helps to maintain the subordinate women” (Glover 1986:31).

4. Functioning of stereotypes

Stereotypes and representations are very much alike. Where representations or “categories” is a “necessary way of organizing the world in our minds, creating mental maps for working out how we view the world and negotiating our ways through it in our everyday social relations and inter-actions” (Pickering 2001:2), stereotypes end result are different. “Stereotyping may operate as a way of imposing sense of order on the social world in the same way as categories, but with the crucial difference that stereotyping attempts to deny any flexible thinking with categories” (Pickering 2001:3). Stereotypes are used for the greater patriarchal power as it “denies… [the above] in the interests of the structures of power which it upholds” by resorting to “one-sided representations in the interests of order, security and dominance” (Pickering 2001:3). One would thus say that stereotypes are fixed representations.
Through the use of stereotypes one gets an “uncritical and oversimplified view of the world and society, based on a set of preconceived ideas, distortions, and prejudice” (Retief 2002:193). The media, as informant for society regurgitates these stereotypes, which “leaves no space for individual differences and merit...This contempt for a person’s individuality means that people are dehumanized” (Retief 2002:194). Stereotypes strength lies in the fact that it seems harmless, especially in the media. Stereotyping “attempts to establish an attributed characteristic as natural and given in ways inseparable from the relations of power and domination through which it operates” (Pickering 2001:5). Stereotypes are not only applied to gender and race, but also to various other sub-groups in society, for example overweight persons or homeless people. However, this study will focus on the stereotyping of women in sport.

“The media tends to identify women according to their marriage or family status – as wife, mother, daughter; [and] men according to their career or position in society” (Rabe 2002:159). Women further “appear in the media in a limited of roles: they are housewives, victims or simply decoration” (Kruger 2004:141). Stereotypes can more easily be observed in photographs or adverts, but text also plays a vital role in the fortification of stereotypes (especially with the usage of gender oriented words). For instance in fast food adverts, rarely is it because of the man’s cooking that the family must go out to buy fast food and rarely is it the male child helping the mother in the kitchen. It is almost always the female child helping in the kitchen.

John Berger in his book *Ways of Seeing* identifies categories of poses which “denotes stereotypes of women” (Berger 1972:138). He identifies the “serene mother (madonna), free-wheeling secretary (actress, king’s mistress), perfect hostess (spectator – owner’s wife) … [and the] sex object (Venus, nymph surprised)” (Berger 1972:138). None of these roles, which women portray in the media, gives them power or substance; it repeats the submissive behaviour which is expected of women around the world. Text is also used to denote the above stereotypes, for instance the use of “woman” or “girl” in headings or the attention paid to clothing and family.
Women are further “portrayed as being preoccupied with beauty, fitness, slimness, and sex appeal” (Retief 2002:196). Again none of these ‘characteristics’ are empowering. These representations, which aid stereotypes, are used with men in mind. The model must look glamorous, alluring and available for the male viewer or reader. Women are preoccupied with slimness and fitness to attract men. “The stereotypes we see in society and in the media are a result of what is expected and what sells” (Lester 2005). Thus, seeing that the creators of this media are part of society, one finds that they in essence fail at being critical, objective journalists. “The prevalence of stereotypical symbols and messages in media content implicates the persistent question of what the media’s role in society should be” (Day 2003:411). By not adjusting the messages of groups that have been stereotyped constantly in the past, one finds that the media uses stereotypes which “resort to one-sided representations in the interest of order, security and dominance” (Pickering 2001:3). This suggests that the media does not have a choice as to how they represent certain subjects, and that they only reflect societal meanings. However, the media does have a choice, they can “serve as social engineers, attempting to construct a more egalitarian culture, or … [they can] simply reflect society’s values, thereby reinforcing cultural norms, some of which inevitably entail a stereotypical rendition of reality” (Day 2003:411).

As said earlier, women and the image of women has become a commodity which plays a significant role in the media industry. However, the reinforcement of stereotypes is a ‘man made’ activity, is a portrayal of the individuals in the media industry and those that own the media industry. “[T]he ownership, structure and employment patterns of the media ensure that they operate as a major force for the ruling class, as agents of patriarchal capitalism” (Davies et al 1987:50). Patriarchy is intrinsically linked to the subordinate stereotypes about women. “Men … inherit patriarchal identities, and reproduce these identities in their own lives. The language of patriarchy thus perpetuates the oppression of women” (Tomlinson 1997:135), and because men were the only sex ‘allowed’ to work in the public sphere for
many years, patriarchy is now embedded within the frameworks of the public domain, leading to such stereotypes and representations.

Stereotypes are part of an individual’s everyday life, and go unquestioned on numerous occasions. “A stereotype is reinforced when the image seen in life or in the media doesn’t surprise. When your preconceived idea matches the reality of the media presentation, you’ve got yourself a stereotype – and a powerful one at that” (Lester 2005).

5. Conclusion

It is important to look at, and understand, the “structures” working in the media and society which “construct women as “other”” (Kuhn 1985:2). Stereotypes and representations are the biggest tools used to complete this construction. However, one group of women must adhere to very high standards to fit into the norm of society: they are female athletes. The Norwegian researcher, Liv-Jorunn Kolnes, comments: female athletes “must succeed at presenting an image not only of health, vitality, or physical attractiveness, but of feminine beauty and obedience to traditional female standards of behaviour” (Tebbel 2000:143).

By applying “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Jonker and Lawrie 2005:167) to the media, one views all aspect of the media with “suspicion”. “The surface meaning” of a word or photograph, “is often no more than a façade, a deceptive camouflage of other, hidden meanings” (Jonker and Lawrie 2005:167). However, because “[a]uthors seldom deliberately and consciously create a deceptive surface to hide the ‘real’ purpose of their books; they are usually as much deceived by the surface as their readers are” (Jonker and Lawrie 2005:168). This only illustrates how much stereotypes are part of society and its interpretive framework.

Chapter 4 will build on the general examination of stereotypes and representations, and discuss how female athletes are stereotyped, and represented by the print media. It will further discuss the outcome of the
analysis of the selected print media and compare it to the criteria established in chapter 1.
CHAPTER 4
MANIFESTATION OF REPRESENTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN THE MEDIA.

1. Introduction
The Ancient Greeks have been closely associated with the Olympic Games and various other sports. During this era, sport was however practised, as a leisure activity. “The extensive interest in sporting activities reportedly shared by the leisured citizens of the Greek city-states, as exemplified in the numerous, regularly scheduled sporting festivals celebrated throughout the region, is seen to reflect their belief that sport, undertaken as a freely chosen interest – as distinct from a trade or occupation – represents a legitimate pathway towards the higher cultivation of the self” (Goldlust 1987:3). This “idealist interpretation of sport draws its inspiration from…the writings of Plato and Aristotle” which provides one with a timeline as to the origins of sport in “Classical Greece” and thus in Western society (Goldlust 1987:2). This ancient society believed in various gods and goddesses with various characteristics, which vaguely resembles characteristics of certain groups of society today.

In Greek mythology, Artemis was the goddess of physicality and the wild and was depicted with a bow and arrow, and hunting dogs. This Greek goddess hunted animals on horseback and was generally perceived to be less ‘feminine’ when compared with other goddesses. “Psychologically, Artemis is alienated from patriarchal society because she is willing to take on the roles of avenger and protectress and because her femininity is not defined by a relationship to a lover, child, father or husband” (Creedon 1994:278). The Artemis female in the modern age is still alienated, because she does not seem vulnerable, and cannot only be defined in relation to a lover, child, father or husband. However, the price she has to pay for being independent and not submissive is alienation.

In society today, the “Artemis female” can still be identified, and interestingly, these females are still made to feel alienated. “Artemesian femininity is more
likely to be defined in relation to physicality” (Creedon 1994:280). For instance the term “tomboy” is used to describe certain young girls. This term, “[indicates] that exhibiting physicality or a preference for outdoor play or activity means acting like a boy, which is, by inference, an inappropriate gender role” (Hancock 1989:278). As the female child gets older, the adolescent Artemis is seen as the “athlete, the gymnast, the dancer, the jogger, the tennis player, the swimmer, the skier, the rider, and so on, depending on the resources available to her” (Woolger and Woolger 1989:106). Later in life, this adult Artemis, “because of her physical strength and independence, … continues to find herself alienated from the feminine ideal” (Creedon 1994:279).

The professional female athlete falls into this category of Artemis, and must not only prove herself a woman, but also be feminine so that she can be accepted by society. “Researchers continue to find that strength, muscularity, assertiveness and competitiveness are still largely defined as ‘masculine’ characteristics and that a female exhibiting them represents an unacceptable side of femininity” (Bem 1974:162). If a woman with these ‘masculine’ traits would like to be accepted into society, she, as a “strong, self-sufficient, even muscular Artemis archetype must make offerings to the beauty myth” (Creedon 1994: 280). What this essentially means is that this woman must feminise herself to be accepted. These views on the “Artemis phenomena” can be applied to this study. The media constantly tries to feminise female athletes (as observed in chapter 2), while some female athletes themselves, because of the above alienation of the Artemis woman, tries to be viewed as feminine and not athletic.

Pamela Creedon and Lee Becker did a study in 1985 to find out why society prefers watching male sport rather than female sport. Three reasons could be perceived from the responses: firstly “people… [society] do not like the unknown”; secondly “female sports are perceived as inferior”; and lastly “some sports are viewed as inappropriate for women” (Creedon 1994:13). Women who venture outside of the traditional or norm is observed as the ‘unknown’ or other. Women who further participate in activities gleaned not
appropriate for them (e.g. bodybuilding) are also the ‘unknown’ to society. However, this concept of ‘unknown’ is assessed against patriarchal structures as to what female athletes should do, and in what they should participate in.

“[S]ex-appropriate rankings, based on male-defined femininity, provide the patriarchal culture with power over females and their sexuality” (Creedon 1994:281). From the above reasons, it is obvious that female athletes are measured against the perceived roles that women must fulfil, and her standing in society. This study is concerned with these perceived characteristics of women and how women who venture outside of these characteristics (female athletes) are represented by the media in South Africa. From research done internationally (mainly the United States) female athletes are constantly represented and stereotyped in feminine ways, along with representations of inferiority.

The responses above may also be applied to the reporting on, and representation of, female athletes in the media. One would assume that female athletes in the 21st century have been accepted by society, and that their athleticism is an element that is admired by all women. However, Mary Kane and Susan Greendorfer observes that “although the presence of women athletes in the media appears to represent fundamental social change – that sportswomen have gained widespread social acceptance – in reality, these ‘feminized’ images represent a modernized attempt to reinforce traditional stereotypical images of femininity and female sexuality” (Kane and Greendorfer 1994:28). Furthermore, “female athleticism is constructed by the media as a ‘bastardized’, perhaps even counterfeit version of the ‘real’ (men’s) sport” (Kane and Greendorfer 1994:30-31). This negative reporting and mindset towards female athletes in the media can be contributed to the influence of the perceptions of general society on sport. This influence is reflected by sport participation and gendered sports (Birrell and Cole 1994:33). As observed in chapter 3, female athletes must be viewed as feminine and “sexual” before being fully accepted by society and the media.

“[T]here is copious evidence to suggest that many women are disturbed by the fact that the media – the most powerful arbiter of societal values –
continues to promote us… [women] as nothing more than sexual commodities” (Tebbel 2000: xii).

Along with the sexual connotation, the media further stereotypes female athletes by reporting on and discussing fashion and the fashion trends brought about by athletes. This especially occurs in tennis, golf and figure skating where participants are regularly in the news for the fashion trend they are setting. Especially in the West, female sport and fashion have become amalgamated since the 1919’s. American Vogue commented that “[h]alf the fun of sports – or is it really all the fun? – lies in wearing just the smartest type of sports clothes” (Lee-Potter 1984:7); while British Vogue commented that “[s]port has more to do than anything else with the evolution of the modern mode” (Lee-Potter 1984:20). Not only are female athletes regularly scrutinized from a fashion viewpoint, but they are often found lacking, as they do not fulfil the traditional female role.

In an article by women’s magazine *Femina*, women who participate in sport deemed as masculine were investigated. The female athlete is described in such a way that she does not fall outside the standards set by society. The female athlete participates in race kart driving, which is deemed a male sport. The athlete, Clare Vale is described as “over 40, a mother and the financial director of a used-truck company” (Coetzer 2005:135). Even though this woman is a director and one of very view females participating in this sport, being a mother is still deemed most important. The article is written in such a way that is reinforces the notion that she is still fulfilling the traditional role ascribed to women.

The Sport Institute of South Africa conducted research in 1997 on “The participation of women in sport in South Africa”. This research deals with the amount of women “participating in different sports in South Africa” (SISA 1997:1) and how participation differs from students and single, to married women. It further analysed “women’s needs, attitudes and perception to various qualitative issues relating to sport participation and the role of women in sport coaching, refereeing and administration” (SISA 1997:1). It found that
the most “popular sports …[for women in South Africa] are Netball, Aerobics, Tennis, Road Running, Swimming, Gymnasium Training and Squash” (SISA 1997:4). The research also included information on how South African women, who participate in sport, perceive the coverage given to female athletes by the media. From the female athletes interviewed (professional and social participants), the study found that “78% believe … major newspapers …are not giving enough time to sports dominated by women” (SISA 1997:6); while “79% of the women interviewed… felt that there were not enough coverage of female sports in newspapers” (SISA 1997:67). However, “[a] clear majority… [80%] of women felt that there is not enough coverage of women dominated sport on television” (SISA 1997:67). As the above is perceived notions of women, it cannot be observed as a study of how South African media represent female athletes. However, the volume of reporting on female athletes, from a feminist point of view, is a direct consequence of how a patriarchal society views women who possess the qualities of Artemis. The amount of reporting in the media on female athletes, further represents female athletes as inferior to the male athlete participating in professional sport.

2. Female sport

In 1896 the Olympic Games accommodated female athletes by introducing certain “gender-appropriate” sports which “emphasized aesthetic form, grace, precision, and style” (Vincent et al 2003:21). The first gender-appropriate sport, tennis, was introduced in 1900 followed by swimming (1912), diving (1912) and gymnastics (1928) (Vincent et al 2003:22). These sports included aspects of femininity that society used to judge all women by. “[P]opular sports such as soccer and football were considered inappropriate for girls … [in the] 1900-20’s”, and not much has changed in the 21st century (Goldlust 1987:36). It is no longer openly viewed as inappropriate sport for women, however this sport is still deemed “gender-inappropriate” (Vincent et al 2003:22). “[M]odern sport did not merely ‘evolve’, …its structure, social meaning and style of organisation were definitely shaped by influential groups in society in accordance with their group interests and their particular
ideological and moral precepts" (Goldlust 1987:10). “[A] ‘naturalised’ worldview… [was] effectively propagated … [by the] dominant bourgeois class” (Goldlust 1987:10), which was accepted by society. This world view attributes men with power, while women are subservient and inferior to men. Thus female athletes must not only contend with society’s prescribed roles but also pre-existed ideas surrounding sport.

One of the “major barrier’s to women’s sporting participation, and one which is often overlooked, is the ‘stranglehold which men have over sports (its image, its management and participation)” (Tomlinson 1997:3). It is thus interesting to note that the ideal which women - and even more so female athletes - must strive to reach before they are accepted, is defined from the point of view of men and what they find acceptable. The female athlete is placed “on the cutting edge of some of the most perplexing problems of gender-related biology and the feminine ideal, often resulting in the female athlete becoming ambivalent about her own image: Can a women be strong, aggressive, competitive, and still be considered feminine?” (Birrell et al 1994:71). A female athlete who has muscles and seems aggressive on the playing field, is not accepted, but one who has pigtails and wears make-up while participating in sport, is easily accepted. A good example is the dual between Chris Everett and Martina Navratilova. While Everett was a really good tennis player, Navratilova regularly beat her. But the public did not initially accept Navratilova, because she was masculine, had short hair and wore no make-up while playing tennis. Everett on the other hand was the ideal feminine tennis player with pigtails, make-up and pretty little dresses that made her look even more feminine.

“[E]ven when sportswomen are depicted in the media, they are consistently trivialized and marginalized through the type of coverage they receive” (Kane and Greendorfer 1994:36). No matter how popular the female athlete is, she is still an athlete, which is in itself not an accepted role for a woman. Thus female athletes need to find other ways to be accepted by society, and the media, whilst they are participating in sport. “It takes more than an ability to perform on the field or in the arena. As well as putting long hours into training
and competing, sportswomen now require stylists, cosmetics, diets and fashion know-how” (Tebbel 2000:135) for them to be really successful and accepted by the media and society. Male athletes are not measured against these societal values, and ‘looks’ certainly do not matter that much in male sports, while “[l]ooks, far from being irrelevant, are a big part of women’s sport” (Tebbel 2000:134). For women, if they enter sport as a profession, they stand before a choice. They need to choose between “being a successful girl … [or] being a successful athlete” (Creedon 1994:292). Some female athletes choose to be both i.e. being an athlete whose image is influenced by her off-court image of style icon, mother or wife. An example of this is Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova. Because of her physical beauty she earned more money from fashion endorsements than she ever did playing tennis. Kournikova did not become popular at tennis tournaments for her ability as a tennis player, but she attracted a huge male following because of her sexual prowess.

The media attributes to this dual image of female athletes, but also to the negative undertone in being a female athlete. “[B]y portraying female athletes as feminized and sexualized others, the media trivialize and therefore undermine their athletic achievements. This type of media portrayal results in construction of female athleticism as less important than male athleticism” (Creedon 1994:31). Sexuality is almost entirely associated with female athletes. Female athletes are much more prominent off-court in fashion spreads, wearing clothing that would make them more acceptable to the male gaze and more sexualised. “Women were allowed into sport for ‘commercial’ reasons, and their bodies were the main attraction” (Messner 1994: 69). This is still evident today, despite the growth in awareness of gender stereotypes. “The preoccupation with appearance in women’s sports is what drives the prominent coverage of the so-called glamour sports. Women’s gymnastics and women’s figure-skating both consistently receive the highest ratings of any Olympic sport” (Tebbel 2000:147). Even though the Olympics attract female athletes from different sports, the sports that are perceived as ‘gender-appropriate’ receive more coverage than those that are perceived as ‘gender-inappropriate’.
Gender appropriate sports are still more popular under female athletes. As times have changed, so has “[w]omen’s role in society and sport... and it is now more socially acceptable for women to be forceful, powerful, and aggressive in competitive sport” (Vincent et al 2003:27). This does by no means imply that female athletes, especially those participating in a ‘male’ sport like rugby, wrestling and football, are accepted on equal footing. It certainly does not imply that the media will give them as much, if at all, the same amount and type of coverage received by female athletes participating in gender-appropriate sports. Not to mention the stereotypes created and sustained by the media’s coverage of female athletes, especially those “outside the norm”.

3. Stereotyping and creation of negative connotations surrounding female athletes

The roles women fulfil in society have been scrutinised by feminists on a regular basis during the last few years. Sport is the ideal ‘battle’ ground between the sexes, and the differences between the sexes, and the different roles they are perceived to be playing in society, are highlighted on a regular basis by the media and society. “The fundamental anxiety seems to be that men and women have to be continuously differentiated; male preserves continuously guaranteed. One way of emphasising this is to promote laughter or cynicism when females take to the field, another way is (cf. Bobby Riggs) to set out to prove incontrovertibly that women are inferior through direct challenge” (Willis 1994:35). One historical example of men trying to proof ‘incontrovertibly that women are inferior’ is the battle of the sexes match between tennis players Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King. Riggs, by then in his forties, challenged King, then one of the top female tennis players to a tennis match. King beat Riggs in two sets. However, the “male archetype” (Creedon 1994:282) took revenge as the media started questioning her sexuality. In the end her win was infantilised by her admission that she did indeed have a lesbian affair with her secretary.
Another way women are highlighted as the ‘outsider’ in this field is the way she is “defined essentially by sex rather than athletics” (Willis 1994:35). Because of this sexual connotation to female athletes, female athletes are “rendered a sex object – a body which may excel in sport, but which is primarily an object of pleasure for man” (Willis 1994:36). Most images and ideas surrounding female athletes are based on the sex object, male gaze principle, and most female athletes are aware of it. “Ironically, even in those sports like ice skating and gymnastics, in which girls and young women excel and are publicly acclaimed, sex-role differences are further classified. Success is to do with fitting the youthful, lithe, nubile, stereotypically ‘perfect’ popular image of femininity” (Willis 1994:36). Female athletes are thus influenced by these stereotypes and socialised to adhere to them.

For instance, French tennis player Amelie Mauresmo came onto the tennis scene as a ‘masculine’ female tennis player in shorts and with a tattoo. She did not fit into the ideal feminine female athlete role, even though she played good tennis. The public, as well as her fellow tennis players, did not accept this ‘Amazon’ and even asked for a test to make sure she is a woman. She kept on participating in tournaments and did not give much attention to her looks. However, two years after she burst onto the scene, she swapped her shorts for a skirt and whenever she was on television loosened her hair, and looked more feminine. Amelie Mauresmo is now one of the most loved tennis players around, since she changed her appearance to fit the more feminine ideal. Female athletes change their appearance to fit the norm by exchanging “strength … [for] beauty, muscularity … [for] thinness, and hardness … [for] curvaceousness” (Hartmann-Tews and Petry 1997:42). Female athletes can try to be both i.e. athlete and model (on and off court), however one of the two will suffer in the end. “For girls (they’re always ‘girls’ in sporting parlance), trying to be both Amazon and beauty queen is hard work” (Tebbel 2000:135).

Being portrayed as a sex object has positive spin-offs for female athletes. One will find many athletes who in actual fact sustain the stereotypes, and create further typecasts that other female athletes must adhere to. “Many sportswomen have discovered that if they’re prepared to strike a pose and
become media pin-ups they’ll get more attention and even sponsorship than if they become world champions” (Tebbel 2000:134). For instance, the tennis player Maria Sharapova and ice-skater Sasha Cohen are more popular in the sporting arena because of their modelling and ‘sporting’ photographs than their actual sporting achievements. Female athletes are continuously judged, and it seems like they must recognise that as they “attempt to throw their weight around in the sporting arena – as volleyball or tennis players, gymnasts or shot-putters – they soon … [recognise] that when it comes to media coverage and public attention, they have to follow the rule: look sexy and don’t sweat” (Tebbel 2000:133). As said earlier, female athletes also attract attention if they dress appropriately and not only look feminine but also sexy. For instance Serena Williams’ body suite and boots made headlines at the 2005 US Open, while in 1999 “Brandi Chastain unwittingly became a world media star – not for being a member of the history-making US women’s soccer team, but because she doffed her shirt when her team defeated China in the world titles” (Tebbel 2000:137).

As this study investigates how the print media represents and stereotypes female athletes, it is important to delve further into how the media goes about representing female athletes. It is vital to acknowledge that it is not only journalists that give into the patriarchal view of women, but also those who own media outlets and advertise in them. “[M]edia control determines media content” which leads to a “concentration of control … [which] both [narrows] and [degrades] the content” (Johnson 1998:148). Advertisers and editors would much more prefer a female athlete represented in the societal role of mother, daughter, wife or as sexual pleasure for men. If this is not the case, then “they… [newspapers, magazines] risk losing the support of their advertisers” (Tebbel 2000:143). These demands, and the choices made as to what and how female athletes are published, do not have a sinister motive, but it is rather a commercial choice. “[O]ften they… [the choices made] reflect simple adherence to narrow economic interests with little regard to larger social effects” (Johnson 1998:148). Another reason given by the media, and its owners, as to the content of newspapers or magazines is that they give the public what they ask for. If they do not, then the people will choose other
media to get their information from. However, this is a debate that is still ongoing as the above argument ignores the investigative, critical purpose of the media.

These representations and stereotypes are unfair towards female athletes, whereas “[s]portsmen have a distinct advantage over their female counterparts – they are allowed to be presented in the media as powerful and well muscled. When sportswomen ask for the same courtesy, they discover that in order to counteract the long-held notion that female sports are a breeding ground for big, hairy, butch lesbians, they must project ‘an acceptably feminine, heterosexual image’” (Tebbel 2000:142). One can thus ascribe the lack of support by society and the media for women participating in sport such as wrestling, bodybuilding, rugby, soccer and football to this. Women in general are viewed as ‘to weak’ to participate in such unfeminine sports.

A study done on newspaper articles published in the United States on women in sport from the 19 July 1996 to the 5 August 1996 showed that from the 157 newspaper articles published, a 100 was on gender appropriate sports especially gymnastics and swimming while 57 was on gender inappropriate sports (Vincent et al 2003:22). This “severe underrepresentation often creates the impression that females are nonexistent in the sporting world” (Creedon 1994:34). Under representing women participating in ‘gender-inappropriate’ sports leaves room for further degrading stereotypes, and construction of the ‘other’.

However, even in articles published on female athletes which “emphasize how successful and talented these women are, another theme emerged: that they were plagued by such character flaws as emotional dependency, anxiety and depression, sexual identity conflicts and role conflicts. The overriding message in these articles was quite clear: female athletes should be recognised and remembered for their stereotypical gender role, not their athletic role” (Kane 1989: 60). In South Africa, the situation is not much different. In an interview with Alison Burchell, the general manager of
Disability Sport South Africa she commented that “[f]rankly, South African sportswomen are more likely to get coverage in the media if they wear something sexy. Media people tell me that men’s sport is what sells newspapers and magazines, and sportswomen should try wearing something sexy if they want to be featured more” (Coetzer 2005: 132). For instance the only South African female rugby player, who gets any attention from the media, is the captain of the team, who is also a model. When female athletes in general are covered by the international media “predominantly … [a] male media – they are described either in terms of their physical desirability to men (‘pert’ and “pretty”) or in their domestic roles as wives and mothers” (Messner 1994:74). Thus “what happens is that women are written out, their achievements credited to their looks/lover(s)/manager/[coach]” (Davies et al 1987:116). Female athletes’ successes are not only attributed to the above entities, but they are criticised more than their male counterparts. “[J]ournalists and critics, very easily, criticises female athletes for: [being] overweight, too old or … [for dressing] wrongly” (Davies et al 1987:110). This again reinforces the feminine ideal and what would be more pleasing to the male gaze.

4. Stereotyping via photographs

In print media, photographs or images are always accompanied by text, which creates a completed picture to the viewer of the media. Societies “perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon … [their] own way of seeing” (Berger 1972:10), which is influenced by a belief system stemming from societal roles.

The way female athletes are represented in the media cannot be dependent on photographs only because “[t]he meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it” (Berger 1972:29). The text and image work together to form a unified representation of its subject. John Berger notes that “[w]omen are depicted in a quite different way from men – not because the feminine is different from the
masculine – but because the ‘ideal’ spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him” (Berger 1972:64).

When it comes to the representation of female athletes via photographs, much more is at stake for the athlete than just her image. By representing sport women in a glamourised way, the photograph/image distances the woman from what she really is: an athlete, which leads to the image “assimilating and containing this quality of ‘otherness’” (Berger 1972:18). Other images captured by photographs of female athletes normally run along the lines of the following: “a female athlete posing with a male athlete where he has a dominant stance and she a submissive one; photographs of male athletes surrounded by female admirers; photographs of female athletes crying with elation or embraced by husbands or boyfriends; in situations and poses that have no apparent connection with sport; in domestic contexts, pregnant or with children; and photographs of female athletes highlighting hairdos, make-up, and clothing” (Rowe 1999:120). An example of the latter is a photograph which “appeared on the covers of Sports Illustrated (USA) and Time [magazine]” (Creedon 1994:33) of athlete Florence Griffith Joyner. Joyner had “rapier-like intrinsically painted fingernails” (Creedon 1994:33) which was highlighted in both the above covers.

Female athletes are either photographed in active or in non-active poses; however non-active poses are much more popular than active poses. The emphasis of photographs where female athletes are featured in a non-active pose falls on that which makes a woman different i.e. the “genitals, breasts and buttocks” (Kuhn 1985:37). It is also these parts which “pin-up and soft-core photography” focuses on especially in sporting magazines where the target market is male. Sport photography does not only have power in capturing the ‘drama’, but “also by connecting the imaged body to wider social issues and identities” (Rowe 1999:121). The body in sport photography is thus “always invested with a wider representational role as sexualized, gendered … [or] racialized” (Rowe 1999:121).
5. Stereotyping in advertisements

A female athlete who is featured in advertisements is used for two reasons: firstly because of her popularity, and secondly because of her looks. This further creates the parallel between sport and femininity and very often the athlete will endorse goods which are linked to women and her role as a woman. For instance in the early 1980’s (in the United States) “[w]omen’s squash was sponsored …by food, sportswear and tights manufacturers; gymnastics (mostly a girls’ activity) by, among others, manufacturers of milk, soft drinks and sanitary towels (Sport Council 1981)” (Tomlinson 1997:141). These days, not much has changed as female athletes still endorse food, which will not only help her keep her figure but also keep her family healthy. However jewellery and clothing have become even more popular entities for female athletes. Very often, with examples like Venus and Serena Williams, these athletes will go into fashion designing and help her clothing sponsor design her on-court clothes. In these fashion and endorsement advertisements, the female athlete is yet again “[reduced] to … [a] simple sexual function” (Byerly et al 2004:51). The advertisements succeed in the above by doing the following: “the female anatomy is displayed in provocative body movements, enticing facial expressions, tantalizing glances, finger movements, self-caressing, emphasis on the lips, as well as extensive use of lingual and para-lingual movements” (Byerly et al 2004:51). This not only removes the female athlete even further from the realm of sport but also ensures that the male gaze notices her.

As said earlier the media only reflects that which “has value and prestige in this culture”. However, in using female athletes in advertisements they are given status as commodities. Advertisers rarely use female athletes who are not attractive to the public (i.e. male gaze). Her image as a sexual, glamorous woman is used to sell not only the media, but also the goods she is promoting. Sport women’s value in society is determined not by their achievements, but by the needs and values of a male-dominated society and commercialised media.
6. Conclusion

The above discussion on the stereotypes and representations of female athletes highlights the unfair and negative stereotypes and representations which these women face while practicing something they are passionate about. These negative representations will not easily be interrupted, as they grow from, and are embedded in powerful societal structures. It is a multi-faceted struggle, of which female sports persons are only one example. “What we… [women] must fight for, however, is a time when terms such as ‘women producer’ or ‘girl drummer’ will sound archaic, when ‘Women in…’ articles will no longer be necessary, and women won’t be novel, special or exceptional at all. They’ll just be there” (Davies et al 1987:118).

Chapter 5 will now analyse the selected South African print media according to the guidelines laid out in chapter 1 and create a picture of what image South Africans are given of female athletes. An assumption of this study – namely that international trends are replicated here – will therefore be tested.
CHAPTER 5
ANALYSES OF SELECTED PRINT MEDIA.

1. Introduction

Sport, as a profession for women, was once unheard of. However, much has changed over the years. Female athletes are now ‘allowed’ to participate, professionally and socially, in almost every type of sport. Internationally, media coverage has also increased. In South Africa it seems that media coverage for both local and international female athletes have improved. Unfortunately, no other research on this topic could be found in South Africa. Thus one cannot compare the figures to establish empirically whether media coverage has indeed increased in South Africa in comparison to other international trends.

Although, “sportswomen have gained widespread social acceptance” (Kane and Greendorfer 1994:28) stereotypical representation of female athletes still play a major role in the way female athletes and female sport are viewed by society. Photographs and text reinforce each other and form a coherent whole. It forms a picture of female athletes and this picture only conveys the facts and gives coverage, but also “reinforces traditional stereotypical images of femininity and female sexuality” (Kane and Greendorfer 1994:28) and creates the persona of ‘other’.

To gain a more thorough insight into how female athletes are represented by the South African media, both newspaper- and magazine- media are selected.

The newspapers selected are The Herald, Mail&Guardian and the Sunday Times. The Herald is published daily and is based in Port Elizabeth, while the Mail&Guardian is published on a Friday and the Sunday Times on a Sunday. These last two newspapers are both national publications. The newspapers where chosen as one would garner how a daily views female athletes (The Herald), a weekly who leans towards investigative journalism (Mail&Guardian) and a Sunday paper who reports on a weeks local and international news (the Sunday Times).
The magazines selected are the *Compleat Golfer* and *SA Sports Illustrated*. These two magazines were chosen because of the sport they feature and because of the different target groups they have. The *Compleat Golfer* targets golfing enthusiasts (including women) and features golfing tips and news of local and international players, while *SA Sports Illustrated* features general sport and targets the male sport enthusiast. This will enable one to glean how female athletes are represented to a mostly male target group and readership.

Both the collected newspaper media, and magazine media, will be analysed in a different context. Where the newspaper media publishes news for people of various races, gender, culture and profession; magazines cater for specific target markets and thus their ‘news’ and feature articles are geared towards that specific target market. The analysis in this chapter of the selected South African media will not only give us a sense of how South African media view female athletes, but may point to how the broader news are reinforced. It is crucial for the reader to actually link the following analyses to the actual examples as indexed in the appendices.

2. Newspaper analysis

2.1 Introduction

From the period, February 2006 to June 2006, articles and photographs were collected from three different South African newspapers i.e. *The Herald*, *Mail&Guardian* and the *Sunday Times*. The media gathered were divided into three categories: articles (text only), photographs (with a caption) and articles accompanied by photographs. A cursory analysis of this media, demonstrated that in total 185 articles, photographs and articles with photographs were published by the above three newspapers. *The Herald* had the most media published with a total of a 157; however, it is important to keep in mind that this newspaper is published five times a week. The *Mail&Guardian* and *Sunday Times* are only published on a Friday and Sunday respectively. The *Sunday Times* published twenty-five articles and
photographs in total on female athletes while, the *Mail&Guardian* published only three articles with photographs.

Of the 157 media published in *The Herald*, fifty-two of the articles and articles with photographs reported on both genders; while two of the three *Mail&Guardian*’s items reported on both sexes, and twelve of the *Sunday Times* twenty-five items reported on both sexes.

### 2.2 Sports reported on

In 1997, the Sport Institute of South Africa found that “[t]he most popular sports …[under women, in South Africa] are Netball, Aerobics, Tennis, Road Running, Swimming, Gymnasium Training and Squash. These sports account for over 70% of all female participants” (SISA 1997:5). From the information in the earlier chapters, one gleaned that sports like tennis, gymnastics and figure skating are all traditional, accepted gender appropriate sports for women, while golf, swimming, road running, hockey, bowls and squash have become accepted sports for women. Thus, the popular South African sports, stereotypical sports and accepted sports all forms part of “conventional” sports for this study. Sports that fall into the category of “unconventional” are: rugby, water polo, athletics, cycling, soccer, triathlon, biathlon, weightlifting, skiing, boxing, bodybuilding and kick-boxing.

From the newspaper articles, photographs and articles with photographs the following table has been constructed of the women sports reported on by the newspaper items selected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Amount of coverage</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Unconventional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>The Herald</td>
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<td>The Herald</td>
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Thus, The Herald published 132 articles, photographs and articles with photographs on female athletes participating in conventional, accepted female sports, the Mail&Guardian three items, and the Sunday Times fourteen items. The Mail&Guardian did not publish any items on female athletes participating in unconventional sport, while the Sunday Times published eight items and The Herald twenty-four items.

By ignoring and under-representing female athletes that participate, not only in conventional but also unconventional sport, can lead to the suppression of this group of individuals. “By their… [the media’s] symbolic annihilation of the female athlete, the media tell us that sportswomen have little, if any, value in this society, particularly in relationship to male athletes” (Kane and Greendorfer 1994:34).
In South Africa’s sport crazed society, one would expect that support for female athletes by not only the media, but also the public, would equal that of the male athletes. The above figures seem to disagree with this assumption. For example only six items were published on the Springbok women’s rugby team in the five month period, however recent data demonstrated that “[w]omen’s rugby is one of the fastest growing sports in South Africa, with 4000 players currently registered” (Coetzer 2005:136).

2.3 Analysis of items

The articles, photographs and articles with photographs will be analysed according to the following criteria gleaned from the previous international research on this topic:

Text:
2.3.1 Naming female athletes by their first name
2.3.2 Derogatory words used
2.3.3 Gender references and the “other”
2.3.4 References to fashion, weight, family, beauty and children
2.3.5 Conventional versus unconventional female sport and how success is attributed to external factors

Even though the above criteria dictate how the newspaper items will be compartmentalised, it is necessary not to take the image out of context and distance it from the text that accompanies it. The text and photo forms a whole and relays the representation of the female athlete (Kahn 1985:7). This will give one an indication of how the media represent female athletes, and if traditional stereotypes of female athletes are reinforced.

2.3.1 Naming female athletes by their first name

Previous research illustrated that television commentators use the first name of female athletes consistently more than that of male athletes (Duncan et al 1990:268). The use of the first name of an athlete signals not only familiarity, but also inferiority, in relation to the commentator. This stems from the
patriarchal structure of society were men are perceived to be the head of the patriarchal order, and women the second string. Duncan et al found that “‘dominants’ are most commonly referred to by their last name” (Duncan et al 1990:268), which confirms the inferiority of female athletes when first names are used by the media.

The analyses of the newspaper items usage of first names of female athletes were not dominant, but still present. A total of seventeen items were published using the first name (without the surname) of the female athlete in either the heading or body of the item. Sixteen items came from The Herald and one from the Sunday Times. The news items were then analysed according to the above classification i.e. heading and body.

2.3.1.1 Heading

In the items, female athlete first names were used eleven times in the headline. For instance “Justine, the queen of clay”¹ and “Anriette faces tough fight to hang onto her crown”².

The usage of the first names could be justified in two of the articles i.e. “Venus notches up second success in eight months”³ and “Serena sidelined by injury”⁴ refers to the William’s sisters who are both professional tennis players. To avoid confusion and because of their popularity, readers would know who the articles referred to by only stating their names.

The items further highlighted three more sub-groups. Firstly, those female athletes participating in traditional ‘male’ sports were highlighted as anything but athletes. Four articles with non-active photographs of the athletes were published. “All in a day’s work for Iron Mum Tracey”⁵ reported on Ironman contestant Tracey Brink; “Alvi’s got her eye on lifting a Russian title”⁶ is on

bodybuilder Alvi Batley; “Natasha puts her best foot forward at world champs” reports on kick-boxer Natasha Lemley and lastly “Don’t mess with referee Eska - she could kick you straight into touch” is on rugby referee Eska Swart. All four women are made inferior by using their first names in the heading, and made more acceptable by the posed, non-active, smiling photograph accompanying the article. They are further stereotyped and feminised by referring to Brink as a “local mom”, Batley as “a diabetic who needs five insulin shots a day”, Lemley as “not your average housewife” and Swart as a “personal assistant”. These stereotypical descriptions make these women more acceptable to society. They do practice an unconventional sport, but first and foremost they are what society would want women to be. By portraying these women as above, their status as female athletes are ignored, and the mother, worker, diabetic and housewife roles are highlighted and focused on.

If one looks more closely at the article on kick-boxer, Natasha Lemley (Appendix 1) her role as mother, wife and daughter takes precedence over her being a kick-boxer, who has won gold and bronze medals at the world kick-boxing championships. Even though the photograph of her kicking accompanies the text, she is not actively practicing the sport. Her smiling face further distances her from the sport, and it is rather portrayed as a hobby which she is good at. The article minimally focuses on her achievement, how she practised, and why she got into the sport. The essence of the article revolves around her personal life. A description used to describe Lemley creates an image and reinforces the stereotype: “[w]hen she’s not with her husband Jimmy and their four-year old son Laurence, or in their pub Jagers, she is practising those special kicks”. This account sketches a picture of the ‘true’ essence of a woman (stereotypically) who is an athlete, but foremost a wife, mother and contributor to the family business and, if there is time, an athlete. Further into the article this is again observed, as the journalist states: “[a]lthough excited and nervous about the Greece championships, Lemley’s mind was more focused on a matter close to her heart – her mother Lauretta,

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who had been diagnosed with cervical cancer five months previously...”. This emotion and compassion further makes sure that the female athlete, who is involved in an unconventional sport, is made more ‘feminine’, and accepted by society.

The second sub-group is references to ‘royalty’, and specifically female athletes who excelled at a specific sport. Four articles with photographs were published with reference to tennis player Justine Henin-Hardenne and cyclist Anriette Schoeman being the “queen of clay”\(^9\) and “princess of South African cycling”\(^10\) respectively. Being called the ‘queen of clay’, appears on the surface to be a compliment, however queen can be used in a derogatory manner. It refers to the “wife or widow of a king” or “[a] playing card bearing the figure of a queen, ranking above the jack and below the king” (Pickett 2004). Thus being referred to as the ‘queen of clay’, along with using her first name, this female athlete is created as inferior to the male tennis player who also won the Roland Garros tennis tournament and was crowned the ‘king of clay’.

Princess on the other hand refers to “a daughter of a monarch” (Pickett 2004). In the article “Anriette faces tough fight to hang onto her crown” (Appendix 2), the most successful South African cyclist is referred to as the ‘princess of South African cycling’, again taking away from her excellent record as a cyclist and demeaning her to good, but not equal to the male cyclist. The photograph is an active shot of Schoeman participating in this unconventional sport. The question in the caption “[w]ill she do it again?” questions her capabilities even though she has succeeded in winning the race numerous times.

The last sub-group reports on a battle between the sexes. In the article “Michelle, Trevor will miss US Open”\(^11\) the contents centres around female golfer, Michelle Wie and her bid to get accepted into men’s golfing

tournaments. The article is accompanied by a photograph twice the size of the article (Appendix 3) and the caption makes the message clear, she “fell short”. The article states that the “Hawaiian had kept her hopes alive by carding a two-under-par 68 on the easier South Course”, thus insinuating that she is just not good enough, and was only close to making the cut because she was playing the “easier” course. This golfer is challenging the traditional power structure of golf. With articles like this, the media questions her and her golf, because she wants to play with the men and challenge them on their own turf.

2.3.1.2 Body

Five articles, all from The Herald, used the first name of female athletes in the body of the article. Interestingly in four of the five articles (with photographs) male players were also mentioned, but not referred to by their first name. Only one of the five photographs were of an active female athlete, that of tennis player Venus Williams.

Looking at the article “Commonwealth Games athletes enter PE event”\(^{12}\) (Appendix 4), one notices that 400 m hurdler, Janet Wienand, is referred to as ‘Janet’ further down in the article; while male 400 m hurdler, Ockert Cilliers, is referred to by his surname, ‘Cilliers’, further in the article.

The above distinction highlights Duncan et al’s findings of US television commentators, in which they found that female athletes are addressed by their first names, 52% of the times in relation to the 7.8% of the male athletes (Duncan et al 1990:268).

One recognises that the usage of the female athlete’s first name indeed makes her seem inferior, along with her sport. This is made very clear in instances where male and female athletes are reported on in the same article.

2.3.2 Derogatory words used

Derogatory words can lead to various implications. In this instance, derogatory words allude to words, descriptions or phrases which “[takes] away a desirable aspect or feature” (*Penguin Dictionary*, Allen 2000) of the female athlete, as an athlete. Secondly, it can refer to words that “deviate or go astray from” (*Penguin Dictionary*, Allen 2000) reporting on the athletes capabilities and lastly words, descriptions or phrases which “express a negative opinion of” (*Penguin Dictionary*, Allen 2000) the personality, talent and profession of the female athlete.

Of the total amount of items analysed, nine articles, and fourteen articles with photographs showed instances of the above. Four categories could be gleaned from the analysis:

2.3.2.1 References to male siblings/family that participate in sport

2.3.2.2 Playing down a win

2.3.2.3 Creating doubt that the female athlete is talented – leading to ironic, negative reporting

2.3.2.4 References to sexuality, usage of terms of endearment that takes away from the desirable aspect of being one of the best female athletes and winning major tournaments/competitions.

2.3.2.1 References to male siblings/family participating in sport

All four items play the sexes off against one another. In two articles “30 seconds with Jean-Marie Neethling”\(^{13}\) and “Ryk roars as Jean-Marie streaks to SA record”\(^{14}\) it is made clear in both articles that Jean-Marie Neethling is “the sister of Olympic gold medallist Ryk Neethling” (Appendix 5). What is suppose to be an article about the new and upcoming swimmer, ends up being a comparison between brother and sister and how the brother has treated his sister as a swimmer and a sibling. The article detracts from the

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\(^{13}\) *Sunday Times*, 5/3/2006 p27.  
female athlete’s own achievement of being selected for the Commonwealth Games.

The other two articles that follow the same style as the above headlines read: “‘She-Bee Stinging’ Ali floats into Africa” (Appendix 6) and “Ali’s girl may float into SA instead of Nigeria” (Appendix 7). The two headlines allude to boxer Mohammed Ali’s famous line ‘float like a butterfly, sting like a bee’, because the articles report on his daughter who is a professional boxer. For this study it is essential that we look at both these articles more closely.

First the article “She-Bee Stingin Ali floats into Africa” not only distances the female athlete from her profession as a boxer, but concentrates on her beauty and who her father is. The non-active photograph shows a smiling, posed Ali with the photo-caption: “Even prettier than her dad: The queen of the ring, Leila Ali, has shown that she is a knockout in more ways than one”. This description and photograph of Ali feminises her and makes her profession seem amusing. The caption further ignores the fact that she is a very good boxer and concentrates on her physical beauty and compares her looks with her father’s features. The opening sentence further corroborates the above representation and stereotype by professing: “She’s pretty and she can box”. It places the attributes of femininity before her role as a professional boxer, and alludes that her looks are more important than what she does in the ring.

The second article, “Ali’s girl may float into SA instead of Nigeria”, focuses on the father/daughter differences, which is in actual fact the whole notion of masculine versus feminine. One way in which this article succeeds in doing the above is by insinuating that daughter will never be as good as the father. The article reports that: “[t]he women’s world middleweight champion and daughter of “The Greatest” has been scared off by political instability in the region… [of Nigeria]”. The irony of this is noticeable. While Ali’s father was “The Greatest”, she will never be as great, because she is a women and a little unrest can scare her off. Her father would never have cancelled a boxing

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match because of “political unrest”. The article further focuses on her wish to “emulate” her father, but the above suggests that this would stay a dream. It ignores her unbeaten record of 22-0, along with her voice. Ali is totally silenced in the article, as her manager speaks for her throughout the article. “[S]peech, or its silencing, is linked symbiotically to institutional structures of power and authority” (Macdonald 1995:43).

2.3.2.2 Playing down a win

The newspaper items further shed light on articles in which female athlete’s victories were played down. In the articles a sense of surprise is created that the female athletes won, or it insinuates that the victory was a second rate win.

For instance, one article commented that the South African women’s hockey team was “convincing champions”\(^{17}\) as they defeated Scotland 4-0 in a tournament final. The use of this phrase does relay that this team won quite convincingly. It also implies that these women had to prove themselves as athletes before being accepted, and receiving some acknowledgement. An article on a women’s rugby match between South African and Scotland, was described as a “step in the right direction”\(^{18}\) when the South African’s women’s team won the match 43 -12. In South Africa, if the men’s side would’ve won by such a margin, it would’ve been front page news with various photographs and descriptions of how great the South African team was. This victory was made off as a “fine victory” (Appendix 8) with no photographs showing off some of the “several fine tries” scored by the South Africans.

In another article, accompanied by a photograph of a victorious female athlete, Australian hurdler Jana Pittman’s victory was described in the following way: “Australia’s Jana Pittman overcame her ‘drama Jana’ reputation and a hamstring injury to defend her 400 m hurdles title in 53.82s”\(^{19}\). Her victory is not elaborated on; instead the reader infers from the

\(^{17}\) The Herald, 20/2/2006 p22.  
\(^{19}\) The Herald, 24/4/2006 back page.
paragraph that she is a drama queen who miraculously won the race. Pittman’s perceived ‘drama queen’ attitude stems from numerous athletic meetings where she did not finish a race, were injured or got into arguments with other athletes. She became so unpopular with the Australian public that “she pulled out of … [the] Queen’s baton relay allegedly for fear of being booed” (Mackay 2006). However, this negative attitude towards this champion hurdler can be attributed to the media and the way they constantly report on her, but also to the athlete herself. She rarely uses her voice to defend herself or explain her actions, which gives the media the opportunity to read into her statements what they like and represent her in this ‘drama queen’ role. This description plays on the stereotype of women being ‘drama queens’ or very emotional at times. It also highlights the fact that women must be conscious at all times of the way their actions can be negatively interpreted.

Three of the six items which fell into this category, illustrated how perceived ‘sexy’ athletes and ‘unattractive’ athletes are stereotyped similarly for being female, but represented differently because of their status. Maria Sharapova’s win at the French Open centred on her looks as she is described by the media as one of the beauties of sport. “Russian pin-up fights back with heavily bandaged ankle to reach second round”\(^{20}\) encompasses surprise at her winning and showing some fighting spirit, and the fact that she could be a pin-up model instead of an athlete. In two other articles of the French Open, the respective wins of Justine Henin-Hardenne and Svetlana Kuznetsova’s (who is perceived less attractive than Sharapova) are not only down-graded, but they themselves are scrutinised and not the match. Henin-Hardenne is described as “slithe[ring] into the…third round”\(^{21}\), while Kuznetsova is described as a “stocky Russian…[scurrying] doggedly around the court”\(^{22}\).

These athletes are not only judged for playing sport, but the very descriptions of how they play are influenced by their physical attributes. And the latter is obviously determined by the view of the “male voyeur”.

2.3.2.3 Creating doubt

Creating doubt for the reader is achieved in the items where both male and female athletes are reported on, or where a female athlete enters the realm of the male athlete. “Patronizing or trivializing female athletes is sometimes not enough to marginalize them ideologically: Top-notch female athletes have often been subjected to overt hostility intended to cast doubts upon their true sex. To say ‘she plays like a man’ is a double-edged sword – it is, on the surface, a compliment to an individual woman’s skills, but it also suggests that since she is so good, she must not be a true woman after all” (Birrell et al 1994:74). The newspaper items that fall into this category (seven in total), do not ‘patronize’ or ‘trivialize’ the female athletes because they are as talented as the male athletes. These articles highlight the defeats of the female athletes, and in essence, stereotype them as not good enough to be an athlete, not to mention to play on par with male athletes.

Interestingly four of the seven articles deal with golfer Michelle Wie, who is adamant to play on the PGA tour (men’s golf tour). In the article, “Wie set to take on the men again”\textsuperscript{23}, she is described as a “Hawaiin schoolgirl” who was “invited by the tournament sponsors” to play in the tournament. This implicates that her invitation was not due to her golfing skills, but because she might provide youthful entertainment. The final paragraph casts doubt on her ability as a professional golfer in its entirety. “She has also missed the cut in two of her first three tournaments since turning professional last October, both playing alongside the men. She was disqualified in the other.” It implicates that she is not a good enough golfer to even qualify on the men’s tour, but also that she might not be good enough on the women’s tour either.

\textsuperscript{23} The Herald, 2/2/2006 p18.
However, Wie did make the cut in a tournament in South Korea, playing against men. But in the article “Wie must focus initially on women’s tour win”\textsuperscript{24} (Appendix 9), victory was attributed to “the field” not being as strong. In essence, the article cast doubt on Wie’s capabilities because she hasn’t won a women’s tournament yet. It is made more substantial by Michael Cambell, a previous winner of the PGA US Open, when he states: “She hits it as long as the guys. But she needs to prove to herself – more so than to anybody else – that she can win on the women’s tour before she can come out and actually make a cut on the US Tour or the European Tour”. Cambell parallels her to commercial goods, and as a commodity, when he states that she was only invited to the Swiss tournament, because her sponsor is a sponsor of the tournament and because it would be more “viable for them to send over Michelle Wie commercially”. This very subtly condemns and stereotypes women.

One article with a photograph which was published by the \textit{Sunday Times}, not only creates doubt about female athletes, but unconsciously represents female sport as unimportant. Interestingly the article was published with photographs of an active male athlete and one of a female gymnast. The photograph is symbolic of the contents of the article as the female athlete’s head is not visible in the photograph which is of a female athlete ‘displaying ultimate female grace’ (Appendix 10).

The article, “Young guns help to deliver the goods”\textsuperscript{25}, reports on an equal amount of male and female participants, but sums up the article by saying: “It’s the sportsmen whom fans love to cheer on in competition”, totally ignoring the sportswomen participating in the games (unless the “sportsmen” is an example of gender exclusive language).

2.3.2.4 References to the feminine

“Another way…to draw attention to unarguable physical differences” between male and female athletes is to report within the realm of stereotypical feminine

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Herald}, 18/5/2006 p21.
roles of women (Willis 1994:35). “Even in the case of a successful athlete you see at a glance that she is different from men, defined essentially by sex rather than athletics, and perhaps a freak for being able to have a baby and be successful in sport” (Willis 1994:35). To further highlight these differences, words attributed to describing women are used in describing matches. For instance “dazzling” performance and “mesmirising”26 the crowd. Another tennis match was described as “mouth-watering”27 while a triathlon athlete was described as the “darling of the race”28.

The use of these derogatory words, especially in the realm of sport, plays on the sexual and feminine. These athletes are represented by these words to be less powerful as an athlete, and more acceptable as a woman.

In one article on page 3 of The Herald29, tennis star Maria Sharapova was displayed, not for her tennis capabilities but because of her “fine form”. She was pictured in highly fashionable cocktail attire (Appendix 11). However words like “hot favourite” and fans wanting to see Sharapova’s “pulsating heart” as she practised, were all used to describe her. It alludes to her sexuality and how “infatuated” the bookmakers and betting men are with Sharapova’s physical beauty rather than her capabilities as an athlete.

2.3.3 Gender references and “the other”

By constantly distinguishing female athletes as ‘women’, the media creates the persona of ‘other’. Thus these two criteria cannot be isolated from one another. By persistently using the term ‘women’, the media renders female athletes different and outside of the norm. Rarely do articles, focusing on male sports, like rugby, refer to the athlete or team as for example, male Springbok team or male Protea cricket team. Davies et al observes that: “What we… [feminists, women and society] must fight for … is a time when terms such as ‘women producer’ or ‘girl drummer’ will sound archaic, when

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‘women in…’ articles will no longer be necessary, and women won’t be novel, special or exceptional at all. They’ll just be there” (Davies et al 1987:118).

Analysis of the newspaper items (articles and articles with photographs) showed that the use of gender is predominant in the items, but that the items can be categorised into four different areas. The usage of a table illustrates this more clearly:

<table>
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<th>No mention of gender:</th>
<th>Male and female athletes reported on – only female gender mentioned</th>
<th>Female athletes reported on – gender mentioned</th>
<th>Male and female athletes reported on – both genders mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Hingis makes breakthrough with Italian Open triumph”\(^{30}\) (Appendix 12) is a good example of an article where only the results of a female tennis match is reported on, but her gender is still highlighted. Even though the whole article reports on the Italian Open in Rome, the term “women” is not used in the name of the tournament, but the media saw fit to use it in the article i.e. “the Italian Open women’s tennis” tournament. By the usage of “her” and “she” one can gather that it is female athletes playing, however, gender should not matter when reporting the facts of a sports event. This phenomenon seems to not only be a problem for female athletes but also male athletes. Nevertheless if one observes the above table, even though the report centres on female sport, in 40 articles the term “woman” was still used even though the articles were about females.

Further representation and stereotyping occurs when emotions, other than jubilation over a victory, are also added to reports on female athletes. “The myths of women’s discourse parallel closely to the diversify myths of femininity as simultaneously other–centred, gentle and kind, but also prone to jealousy and pettiness” (MacDonald 1995:61). Stereotyping can further occur by including emotions such as “[being] emotional, intuitive and imaginative” in a report. In the items observed five articles and nine articles with photographs included the emotions of the female athletes (other than jubilation). Five of

the articles included emotional outbursts. For instance in the article “Henin clouts Clijsters, Vaidisova in tears”\textsuperscript{31}, tennis player Vaidisova was described as leaving a match she lost “in tears”. The way the article concentrates on her not being strong enough to handle a loss, further stereotypes these athletes as emotional women as well as ‘other’. Two articles refer to ‘pettiness’ between players. In, “Battle of Belgians as Henin-Hardenne and Clijsters clash”\textsuperscript{32}, the rivalry between these two players is sarcastically referred to as the players being “politely cordial to each other in the shark-pool of women’s tennis”. This then plays on ‘pettiness’ between female athletes. Three articles refer to ‘jealousy’ which is also stereotypically linked to femininity of women. A match between Dinara Safina and Maria Sharapova is referred to as a “catfight”\textsuperscript{33}, and Sharapova gave a “miffed” explanation for why she lost. Four other articles further create an innate link between female athletes and femininity. These articles describe, stereotypically, ‘girlish’ emotions linked to femininity. In the article “Slam in her sights”\textsuperscript{34}, tennis player Nadia Petrova is described as laughing “a lot these days” and she “giggles, too”. This description of Petrova does not seem at all serious but rather playful and entertaining. It further stereotypes Petrova as a giggling woman, not really that interesting in sport.

2.3.4 References to fashion, weight, family, beauty and children

By including references to fashion, weight, family, beauty and children in items on female athletes, athletes are feminised and society are reminded that even though the women participate in activities that are not traditionally activities for women, they are still women. The following table shows which of the references were overtly used in newspaper items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Articles and photographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{31} The Herald, 9/6/2006 p24.  
\textsuperscript{32} The Herald, 8/6/2006 p20.  
\textsuperscript{33} The Herald, 5/6/2006 p23.  
\textsuperscript{34} Mail&Guardian, 26 May – 1 June 2006 p52.
Four of the eight articles referencing family, parallel the female athlete to a more well-known, male family member participating professionally in sport. However, in an article “Hockeyroos take their revenge” the Reuters article reports that: “Newbury had to settle for silver as he fell short in his bid to complete a family double by emulating wife Chantelle’s gold in the 10 m synchronised platform”. The female athlete is not only ignored as an athlete but also represented as inferior to her husband, even though she performed better than her husband. By writing off her achievement and making sure she is observed as “his wife”, the fact that she won gold does not matter and the male remains the patriarch in power.

Another representation that was noticed was the reference to parents in the case of female athletes who are still in school. Hilliard comments that “commentary alluding to female athletes’ youthful or adolescent status also trivialized their athletic accomplishments by suggesting that these players should not be taken seriously until they grow up” (Hilliard 1985:253). By referring to the athlete’s parents, the same effect as above is achieved. Golfer Michelle Wie referred to earlier, is constantly stereotyped as a “teenager” or “schoolgirl”. Her attempts to beat and play alongside male golfers are represented as entertaining and it is assumed that she should indeed not be taken seriously. In three of the eight articles referencing family, it was made clear that Wie is still an adolescent who relies heavily on her parents and who does not have a say of her own.

Further analysis of the newspaper items showed that broken relationships are also used to define the female athlete. For instance, “[s]econd seed Clijsters, of Belgium, was joined at the exit door by her former fiancé Australian Leyton

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Hewitt. It is “her former fiancé” and seems unnecessary to represent the female athlete in this light. Nothing more is mentioned on the way Clijsters played, however more information is given on why Hewitt lost.

One article forcefully proves that female athletes are indeed reported on differently. “Vaidisova new beauty on the block” (Appendix 13), reports lyrically on tennis player, Nicole Vaidisova. She is stereotyped according to her beauty, sexuality and glamour. The article describes her as “[b]londe, beautiful and talented”, while her tennis skills are attributed to her former coach “Nick Bolletieri”. She is further objectified by the representation that she is a commodity that came from a “production line” with her “glamorous looks” in tact. The article minimally focuses on her achievements. She is not reported on because of her win but rather because of her looks which makes her win more acceptable.

The articles with photographs demonstrated approximately the same amount of articles on beauty, weight and family as the text only items. One article on family stood out in particular.

“My wife, the champion weightlifter” (Appendix 14) distances the athlete from sport and stereotypically represents her as a wife, caring towards children and “pretty”. Interestingly her “voice” is silenced as her husband tells of the triumph in obtaining a bronze model in the “Women’s 75kg weightlifting final” at the Commonwealth Games. This female participating in an unconventional sport is feminised to take the spotlight away from the sport she participates in. However, were international media would represent the athlete as an Amazon, and stereotype her as ‘other’; the South African media stereotypes her as feminine wife.

Three further articles refer to fashion. “Unlike some of their more glamorous rivals on tour, Henin-Hardenne and Kuznetsova dress for work on the court,

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the Belgian with her baseball cap, t-shirt and sensible pale pink skirt and Kuznetsova in a standard red and white tennis dress and headband. This description detracts from the sport itself, and one wonders at the necessity of these descriptions.

Even female athletes, who have won numerous accolades, are stereotyped according to a feminine trait. Russian marathon runner, Elena Nurgalieva’s ability is questioned as the journalist muses that her “roly poly looks suggest she is nothing like the running machine she obviously is”. Winning the South African Comrades Marathon is a massive achievement, however, Nurgalieva’s win is once again placed second to her physical appearance, and that she seems to ‘fat’ to participate.

2.3.5 Conventional versus unconventional female sport and how success is attributed to external factors

The analysis also illustrated that some female athlete’s victories are attributed to external factors i.e. weather, coaches or family (mostly male members).

In two of the three articles in which coaches are attributed with the victory of the female athlete, it is the female athlete herself that implicates this. For instance, tennis player Nadia Petrova attributed her new winning ways to her new coach. “Tomas has changed my approach to winning. Sometimes in the past I have been satisfied with a few good wins, but now I want titles”. This takes away from her achievements as she herself attributes it not to her own talent, but in essence to her coach. Golfer Michelle Wie’s win is also ‘downplayed’ and her talents seriously questioned. It seems that because she is determined to take on male players, it is open season for journalists to bring into question her capabilities. “Wie’s putter keeps her in contention to make the cut”, her putter (not her putting) and “mild, early morning conditions” attributed and orchestrated her victory.

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42 Sunday Times, 18/6/2006 p27.
43 Mail&Guardian, 26 May – 1 June 2006 p52.
Three other items revealed that family members, especially a male figure i.e. father, brother or husband, is regularly attributed with the success of a female athlete. Especially in the case of unconventional sports, the emphasis is more regularly placed on the help of a patriarchal power in the development and emotional assistance of the female athlete.

Female athletes participating in conventional and unconventional sports are stereotyped and represented in a narrow fashion. It is clear that women participating in unconventional sport are much likelier to be stereotyped and represented according to family, i.e. Leila Ali (boxing) and Natasha Lemley (kick-boxing). While women participating in conventional sport, i.e. tennis and road running, are more likely to be stereotyped and represented in relation to weight and fashion.

2.4 Analysis of photographs

None of the newspapers selected, carried adverts with female athletes, however, photographs without articles did appear. These photographs were accompanied by a caption, which gave the bare facts on a sporting loss or victory for a female athlete.

The following table illustrates which sports received the most coverage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>The Herald</th>
<th>Sunday Times</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Unconventional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Skating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water-polo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triathlon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weightlifting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mail&Guardian was left out of the table as it did not publish any photographs on female athletes.

“There is a good deal of accumulated empirical research on sports photography that has found that it is heavily gender biased in that we see sportsmen much more than sports women, and that they are often shown doing different things in a manner that confers greater prestige on male than on female athletes” (Rowe 1999:123 -124). If one would look at the above table, one can observe the total number of photographs in The Herald is forty-four, while the Sunday Times (over a five month period) only published ten photographs of female athletes.

“The most important object in sport photography is sport’s prime instrument – the human body” (Rowe 1999:120). In the analyses of the newspaper photographs, twenty-two photos were of the full body of a female athlete. The analyses further revealed that there are an equal number of photographs on conventional and unconventional sport. These photographs will further be analysed according to the following criteria:

Photographs:
2.4.1 Focus points and poses
2.4.2 Active versus Non-active photographs
2.4.3 Emphasis on sexuality, beauty and glamour

2.4.1 Focus points and poses
“The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight” (Berger 1972:47). By focusing on certain aspects, the female athlete is stereotyped as ‘inferior’ and it “[distracts] attention from the pristine sporting moment and stressing other characteristics of the female photographic sports subject, such as their parental role, how they look after their hair or manage to perform in sport at the highest level while staying ‘feminine’ and ‘sexy’” (Rowe 1999:125).
The objectification of the female athlete further occurs by focusing solely on the facial expression of the athlete. Eleven articles focus closely on the smiling face of a female athlete. This makes the athlete more acceptable, especially where the athlete participates in an unconventional sport i.e. rugby.

As the athlete, in an active position, cannot show her subservience, photographs along with a photo caption creates the image. Four articles focused on the eyes of an athlete. This focuses on the part of the face that can be stared at, and can look back at the reader. The athlete is still 'a sight' even though she is actively participating in the sport.

Ten of the articles are posed; however, they are linked to focus points. One photograph is of Martina Hingis with a tennis trophy that she won and three others are 'portrait' photographs of squash and hockey players with their gear on. These photographs do not seem to have an underlying message. “News photography and social realist photography are boldest in their claim to tell it like it is” (Berger 1972:27). However, as the analysis will show, most of the other photographs do indeed stereotype the female athletes.

2.4.2 Active versus Non-active photographs

John Berger observes that “men act and women appear” (Berger 1972:47), and research discussed in previous chapters found that female athletes are photographed more in non-active positions than active positions. The selected South African media demonstrated that thirty photographs, published in *The Herald* and *Sunday Times*, are of female athletes actively participating in a sport, while twenty-four were of non-active female athletes.

This allows female athletes to be viewed outside of the stereotypical feminine photographs. The athlete is active and energetically participating in a sport. This no longer infantilise her, and the fact that female athletes are pictured sweating and wearing practical sporting attire, leaves no place for the glamorous “living dolls” (Kuhn 1985:13) stereotype.

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2.4.3 Emphasis on sexuality, beauty and glamour

“Women are depicted in a quite different way from men – not because the feminine is different from the masculine – but because the ‘ideal’ spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him” (Berger 1972:64). Photographs of female athletes displaying their beauty and sexuality, inherently stereotype the female athlete as different from the masculine. “[U]ntil recently in sport, there has been a reluctance to objectify sexually the male body; this was left to the female sports body, which has tended to be regarded as only tangentially sporting” (Rowe 1999:131).

In the analysis of the newspaper photographs, two photographs stereotyped female athletes according to beauty and sexuality while three others stereotyped the athlete according to glamour. “A good deal of the groomed beauty of the women of the glamour portraits comes from the fact that they are ‘made-up’, in the immediate sense that cosmetics have been applied to their bodies in order to enhance their existing qualities” (Kuhn 1985:13 –14). These glamour photographs are of a tennis star (Maria Sharapova)\textsuperscript{46}, a figure skater (Irina Slutzkaya)\textsuperscript{47} and a rhythmic gymnast (Odette Richards)\textsuperscript{48}. Only Sharapova is not actively participating in a sport, but she is pictured as ‘made-up’ in a cocktail dress, long flowing blonde hair and make-up. Both Slutzkaya (Appendix 15) and Odendaal (Appendix 16) are participating in conventional sports which are represented as glamorous. They are both ‘made-up’ for their performances, as this is what the sport requires of the athletes. However, this ‘made-up’ images, “at the same time as it holds out idealised images, in particular of women, it also promotes the ideal women as being put together, composed of surfaces and defined by appearances” (Kuhn 1985:13 – 14).

The accompanying photo caption further stereotypes the above two sports as the ideal feminine sport, as Odendaal is described as “grace personified”, and Slutzkaya heralded for her “balancing act” on the ice. Sharapova on the other hand is yet again removed from her profession as she is represented as a

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Sunday Times}, 25/6/2006 p2.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Sunday Times}, 25/2/2006 p2.
“modern-day Marilyn” (Appendix 17), indirectly referencing to her blond hair, body and sexuality.

The stereotypical cliché of blond and beautiful are interestingly noticed in the colour photographs of The Herald and Sunday Times. Fourteen colour photographs where of blonde female athletes. In the two photographs were both beauty and sexuality was displayed, both the athletes are blonde. Again Maria Sharapova is pictured ‘made-up’, outside of her profession (Appendix 18). She is stereotyped by the picture as feminine foremost, and her success as a professional athlete is second hand.

The other photograph is of South African water-polo player Jacqui Grobler (Appendix 19), however, this photograph is totally sexualised with Grobler pouting for the surveyor and acknowledging that she is being viewed as a sexual object. This image is not published because of the sport she participates in, but rather because of her looks and for the male audience.

3. Magazine analysis

3.1 Introduction

From the period, February 2006 to June 2006, articles and photographs were collected from two South African magazines i.e. Compleat Golfer and the SA Sports Illustrated. The media gathered were divided into three categories: feature articles with photographs, text paragraphs with photographs and photographs. An analysis of this media demonstrated that in total 113 items on women sport were published by the above magazines. SA Sports Illustrated had the most media published with a total of eighty-nine items (with photographs) and photographs. The Compleat Golfer published only twenty-four items on female athletes participating in golf.

The media did not however publish a balanced number of active and non-active photographs of female athletes. The SA Sports Illustrated published thirty non-active photographs and only seven photographs in which female athletes are actively participating in sport. Compleat Golfer on the other hand
published an equal number (twelve) of active and non-active photographs (both accompanying and not accompanying articles).

“Frequently, reporting of women’s sport takes its fundamental bearings, not on sport, but on humour, or the unusual. The tone is easy to recognise, it’s a version of the irony, the humour, the superiority, of the sophisticated towards the cranks” (Birrell et al 1994:35). Where this was rarely true in the analysis of the newspaper articles, the above is very often observed in the magazine items.

Humour is combined with the unusual and sexual, in especially, photographs. For instance in the SA Sports Illustrated of May 2006, a four page spread was dedicated to the “Lingerie ball”, a tongue in cheek play on the Super Bowl. The Super Bowl is the ultimate display of masculinity in the USA; however, the Lingerie Ball is women playing football, in lingerie. The spread in the SA Sports Illustrated is labelled ‘eye candy’. The photographs (Appendix 20) not only create humour, but the women are moving objects for the male surveyor. The team names demean the women further as they were labelled the “New York Euphoria, Dallas Desire and Chicago Bliss”. This representation not only ensures that women football players, who engage in the sport for professional reasons, are stereotyped as other, but also that the male professionals will always be far superior and credible than women playing football.

3.2 Sports reported on

The categories applicable in the analysis of newspaper items will also be valid in the analysis of the magazine items. The analysis illustrated that in total, more items on unconventional than conventional sports were published. From the magazine items, the following table has been constructed of the sports reported on by the magazines collected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Amount of coverage</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Unconventional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water-polo</td>
<td>SA Sports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Illustrated</td>
<td>Feature articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road running</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky diving</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triathlon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Skating</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car racing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>Compleat Golfer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the above sport reported on was represented by non-active athletes in mostly a glamorous pose. The SA *Sports Illustrated* published only one feature article on female athletes while the *Compleat Golfer* published three. The magazine items will still be analysed according to the criterion laid out at the beginning of the chapter. The criteria will be applied to the following categories:

3.3.1 Cover page
3.3.2 Feature articles
3.3.3 Short paragraph articles
3.3.4 Photographs
3.3.5 Adverts

3.3 Analysis of the items
3.3.1 Cover page
Of the ten covers accumulated from both the magazines, only one cover pictured a female athlete. However, she was not actively participating in her sport and she was posing in a bikini for the cover. This can be termed “pin-up photography”, which, in the case of female athletes, sexualises them and distances them from their profession. They are only viewed as sexual objects. In this cover page, Maria Sharapova (Appendix 20) is staring back at the reader with her breasts and face the focal point of the photograph. “Pinup…photography’s interest in the female body is confined to a small repertoire of parts – those which mark the woman as feminine, not-male, different” (Kuhn 1985:38). Sharapova is feminised by the photograph, and the June issue of SA *Sports Illustrated* promises that inside the reader will see Sharapova “as you’ve never seen her before”. Her ability as a tennis player is paralleled to her body, and her sexuality is chosen over her success as an athlete. “The conventions of pinup photography work to construct the body, usually the female body, as a spectacle: and the female body is a spectacle because parts of it – the parts that say ‘this is a woman’ – are pleasurable to look at” (Kuhn 1985:38). This cover invites the male surveyor to look at Sharapova, and buy the magazine because he will enjoy even more pleasure seeing her inside the magazine.

By representing her in this sexual manner and focusing on her femininity she is stereotyped as a “sex object” (Berger 1972:138) that happens to play a professional sport.

3.3.2 Feature articles

Feature articles are prominent in magazines, as it is a descriptive article rather than a fact-giving article. In the ten magazines gathered, only four feature articles forced on female athletes. Of the four articles, three focused on the athlete, her success, but also her physical attributes.

An interesting comparison between two feature articles in the *Compleat Golfer* could be distinguished. Both the articles “Simon does it again”49 and “A taste

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of Swede success” focuses on female golfers and tournaments that they have excelled in. However, the use of “girls” is predominantly used throughout the articles. This term reflects negatively on the golfers, and represents them as inferior, even though the articles are both balanced in giving constructive reporting on the female golfers.

In “Simon does it again”, five active photos are published along with the article. These active photographs take away from the negative connotation, and rather highlight the age of the “teen queens” and “young girls” taking the South African golfing world by storm. Gender was used fourteen times during the article.

“A taste of Swede success” does focus on the world golfing championships, but more so on how the “glamour girl glitz” has made the sport more entertaining to watch. This article refers to gender eight times, and four times to the golfer by her first name. Again, a balance of photographs was used with the article and eight photographs actively captured the golfers while five were non-active photographs. This article indeed focuses on the feminine role, as Paula Marti is described as “carrying a bit of extra weight” due to the fact that she “was pregnant”. In an article like this it reflects on all the athletes participating, stereotyping them all as mothers, possible mothers and mothers-to-be. Glamour is also emphasised a lot, as the field was described as: “the players were both talented and glamorous, a combination that’s not easily found on the men’s circuit”. This portrayal plays down the female golfers as glamorous, but not good enough, or talented enough to match male golfers. The combination of glamour and talent is entertaining, but it is implied that this sport, as a profession, should be left to the men on the golfing circuit.

Another article, “Calendar girls” reports on how female golfers “sex up the image of women’s golf”. This article is categorised under “golf glamour” and one cannot help but to parallel it against the male golfers in the magazine. There is no reference to male golfers and their sex appeal; however the

50 Compleat Golfer, March 2006 p60 – 63.
female golfers are constantly stereotyped as sexual beings and not real professional athletes. The article focuses on golfer Natalie Gulbis. Rather than focusing on her golfing ability, she is objectified because she has created a calendar in which she is photographed in her bathing-suite. She is turned into a ‘sight’ by the following derogatory description: “Watching Natalie Gulbis strutting her formidable assets down the fairways at the Women’s World Cup, the reason behind her ‘cover girl’ status was plain to see – not that they were much of a secret”. She is not only objectified but also sarcastically described. “[S]ome feminists are quick to blame the woman herself for leering press coverage, and to imply that she somehow ‘asked for it’ by exploiting her sexuality” (Davies et al 1987:111). Gulbis observes in the article that she did bring out a calendar with photographs of her playing golf but “it didn’t garner much attention”. Thus the article implicates, that to get more attention, she brought out her current calendar in which she poses in her bathing-suite.

Throughout the article Gulbis is made inferior, implying that it is her body and not her golfing abilities that brought her fame. Her first name is used twice in the article and her gender seven times. The article is sexualised and seems to agree with the feminists that it is Gulbis’ own fault that she is objectified and made a ‘sight’; however the stereotype is applied to all female athletes. With the article four non-active photographs, two semi-nudes and one nude (in shadow) is published which further objectifies the athlete.

The SA Sports Illustrated published only one article on a female sportsperson in the five month period of observation. “India’s most wanted”\textsuperscript{52} is a feature article on tennis player, Sonia Mirza. The article is accompanied by three active photos, five non-active photos and four displaying “adolescent attitude” and emotional outbursts. She is represented according to her religion. In the article she is represented as entertaining and something of an anomaly. But throughout the article, questions are asked that cause doubts as to whether she is a good athlete: “Can Sonia cope with such expectations?” or “Just how good can Sonia become?”

\textsuperscript{52} SA Sports Illustrated, May 2006 p156 – 158; 161 – 162.
Puppet theory is applied in the article. “What this puppet theory does is to portray women who may be talented, strong-willed, intelligent and ambitious as passive” (Davies et al 1987:115). She is further silenced throughout the article, her voice only being heard at the end of the article. Her father speaks for her; however, this can also be a reflection of the Muslim religion. It focuses a lot on her religion and the trouble she’s had with balancing being a professional athlete and practising the Muslim faith. This leads to the conclusion that women, especially Muslim women, should rather not play sport. Not only because the clothes she would have to wear, is a “sin”, but because her popularity can put her in positions in which she cannot protect herself. For instance Mirza is protected by bodyguards because extremist groups have threatened her because of the clothes she wears on- and off-court.

Along with her religion, the article further feminises her by referring to gender seven times. She is further described as having “puppy fat” which she needs to loose for her to become more “athletic”. Finally fashion and glamour are referred to twice and once respectively in the article. Her fashion choice is what got her in trouble with the extremist groups as she “took to wearing tight, attention-grabbing t-shirts” off-court. But for the game of tennis, Mirza brought yet again “glamour”. “With her diamond nose stud and multiple ear-piercing, Mirza brought glamour to the game”. It is not her tennis game or even her liberating influence on “deprived” genders in India that gets attention but rather her fashion and accessories statement. Because she is ‘something surprising’, she is a new commodity i.e. “her face was selling Indian gold, Indian tea and Indian petrol to the nation”.

The article discusses all attributes associated with femininity and stereotypes, and criticises Mirza for not adhering to some of them. Her defiance, which has gotten her into trouble with extremist groups in India, is represented as her own fault, because women should not really partake in sport. She is further stereotyped as ‘other’, not only because of her gender, but also because of her faith.
3.3.3 Short paragraph articles

These articles focus on one event or are condensed to a small space attributed to the female athlete. In total there were twenty-one short paragraph articles, all with photographs of female athletes. The articles can be analysed according to the following guidelines:

3.3.3.1 not feminine enough
3.3.3.2 male influence on the athlete’s life
3.3.3.3 fashion and love
3.3.3.4 jealousy and fighting
3.3.3.5 talent

3.3.3.1 Not feminine enough

The female athlete’s non-feminine qualities are highlighted in a light, humoristic tone. In contrast to previous research, the athletes are not feminised, but rather represented as female athletes who do not take their sport seriously. This is done by highlighting ‘un-feminine’ behaviour like smoking, and drinking beer before sport activities. One tongue-in-cheek article by the SA *Sports Illustrated*\(^\text{53}\) called “Sport’s extreme makeovers”, tennis players Amelie Mauresmo and Tim Henman are ‘given’ one another’s hairstyles. Mauresmo, who’s brawny built has led to her being described as an ‘Amazon’ and even masculine, further perpetuates this stereotype of muscular women being masculine. She is described by the article as “mannish” and looking “more masculine” with the male player’s hair do.

3.3.3.2 Male influence on the athlete’s life

In three of the four articles where the above phenomena occur, the athlete’s talent and good results are attributed to male figures in their lives who guided them to success. The articles are a regular feature in SA *Sports Illustrated*, and are biographical sketches of South African female athletes. In two of the three articles, the media referred to a famous male athlete in the family of the

\(^{53}\) SA *Sports Illustrated*, June 2006 p114.
female athlete. This seems to make them more acceptable as professional athletes.

“The Fifer…five nightmare tennis dads” further highlights how female athletes are represented as ‘daddy’s girls’ and inferior to the male patriarch. The article reports on fathers who have humiliated their tennis playing daughters by their out-of-control tempers and hunger for money and fame. For the athlete’s own self-preservation, a split from their respective fathers were necessary, however, the article focuses on the fact that three of the players that did this, did not achieve further success in the tennis world.

3.3.3.3 Fashion and love

More than any of the other categories, this category (especially fashion) is mostly mentioned in the articles (five in total).

Under the heading “Sport style”, tennis player Justine Henin-Hardenne’s ‘style’ is analysed. Her first name is used throughout the article, but she is also sexualised. She is made an object for the male voyeur by focusing, along with her fashion choices on court, on her body. “Its …[her skirt] short 14-inch length gives Justine’s legs ease of mobility but also keeps her male fans interested until chair-umpire calls match point”. This creates the perception that male fans are more interested in her body than in her sporting ability. The sport itself is secondary to the primary role of a subjectified sexual object.

However, innuendo is also used to sexualise an athlete. The play on words in the February issue of Compleat Golfer asks the question: “Wanna get into Christie Kerr’s jeans?” The player donated her jeans for charity, but this is only established later in the item. This phrase is used to grab the attention of an obvious male audience, and achieve at infantilising the female player.

54 SA Sports Illustrated, April 2006.
55 SA Sports Illustrated, March 2006 p100.
56 Compleat Golfer, February 2006 p18.
The number one female golfer, Annika Sorenstam, is feminised, by an article on her new romance. However, as this is a phenomenon that occurs in the male sport world as well, one cannot really criticise the magazines for reporting on this. But the article seems to make her romance more important than her sport, as the focus remains on the ‘man in her life’ and ignores any results she might have had on the LPGA (women’s tour) awards ceremony.

3.3.3.4 Jealousy and fighting

The February and March issue of the SA Sports Illustrated both reported on “catfights” between athletes. As observed earlier: “The myths of women’s discourse parallel closely to the diversify myths of femininity as simultaneously other –centred, gentle and kind, but also prone to jealousy and pettiness” (MacDonald 1995:61). The articles, three in total, centre around petty, jealousy fuelled fights between tennis stars. Along with detailed reports of the fights, the athletes are constantly feminised by referring to them as “beautiful” and also the topics that were fought about i.e. “boyfriends, fashion, education… [and] race”. The fights are entertaining reports and further represent female athletes as emotional, jealous and ‘catty’, when put in the stressful, pressured environment of professional sport.

3.3.3.5 Talent

Compleat Golfer57 interestingly compiled a Top 10 list of golfers, in 2015. Of the ten golfers, two were female, and they are reported on in the same manner as the male golfers i.e. first names used and giving honest opinion on the players’ prospects and talent. This type of reporting (Appendix 22) does not differentiate between the sexes and no one is represented as inferior. This is an example of unbiased, gender inclusive reporting for which the media should strive.

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3.3.4 Adverts

The products endorsed by female athletes have a dual outcome. Firstly, to sell the product to other women, but they must still be attractive, and glamorous to attract attention. “The spectator-buyer is meant to envy herself as she will become if she buys the product. She is meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others” (Berger 1972:134). The athletes used are all popular, but most importantly, they are all beautiful and portrayed by the media as glamorous.

Three of the four adverts are not sexual, but rather focuses on beauty, glamour and the popularity of the athlete to sell the product. However, two of the adverts focus on the face of the athlete and zone in on the facial area while the background is faded out. “Advertisements for... [products pertaining to women] typically zoom in on the facial close-up, but then partially obscure its features by means of tight-framing, or the graininess or soft-focus of the image. Fantasy, not revelation, is the aim” (Macdonald 1995:107).

“The contrast between the image and the text renews interest in the riddle of femininity” (Macdonald 1995:109). In the first advert, Maria Sharapova advertises TagHeuer watches for women (Appendix 23). The text contrasts with the image, as “What are you made of” contrasts with her demure, but still challenging look i.e. “fragility against strength” (Macdonald 1995:109). The second advert pictures Michelle Wie posing as if she just hit a golf ball (Appendix 24). This advert is very much the same as the first one as Wie advertises Omega watches. This photograph is in contrast with the text: “Michelle Wie. My choice”. It again contrasts “fragility with strength”. The third advert also contrasts the above, but with this, surfer Sacha Moller is also stereotyped as a ‘housewife’. Moller is ‘selling’ washing machines, and is surrounded by household items (Appendix 25).

60 SA Sports Illustrated, February 2006.
The last advert not only plays on the sexuality of the athlete but also her femininity. Triathlete Dominique Donner\textsuperscript{61} (Appendix 26) is non-actively poised on top of three refrigerators, ready to run a race. However, the emphasis is placed on her body, especially her legs. “The special sexual emphasis given to women’s legs” (Berger 1972:138) feminises and sexualises the athlete. It is further emphasised by the text of the advert i.e. “sleek and sexy”.

3.3.5 Photographs

“[T]he body in sports photography is always invested with a wider representational role as sexualised, gendered” (Rowe 1999:121). The photographs collected indeed display the above. The photographs could be divided into three categories:

3.3.5.1 Active photographs
3.3.5.2 Glamour photographs
3.3.5.3 Photographs accentuating sexuality

3.3.5.1 Active photographs

Fourteen photographs that fall into this category were published. Derogatory words like “babes”\textsuperscript{62}, and derogatory phrases, were used to describe the athletes in the photographs. These photographs were not published because of the athleticism of the female athlete, but rather for her sex appeal and for the ‘male gaze’.

Fashion further attributes to the sexualisation of the athlete. For instance, Maria Sharapova is pictured as actively serving in a tennis match, however her body is displayed (Appendix 27) and the caption reads: “It’s all ova: Maria Sharapova steams up the Aussie Open in a deliciously inappropriate blue skirt/nightie number that completely distracted us from her semi-final defeat to

\textsuperscript{61}SA Sports Illustrated, March 2006.
\textsuperscript{62}SA Sports Illustrated, March 2006 p94.
Justine Henin-Hardenne, who was wearing a cold, grey t-shirt\textsuperscript{63}. The ‘us’ referred to in the caption is the male readership and compilers of the magazine. Even though Henin-Hardenne won, she is not pictured because she does not give the male readers the same satisfaction as Sharapova. She is sexualised and objectified in the photograph, and not even the score of the game is given.

3.3.5.2 Glamour photographs

Six glamour photographs were published in the period under investigation, with shots focusing on the legs, clothing and silhouette of the athletes. Sarcastic and humorous photo captions accompanied the photographs, further infantilising the athletes.

For instance, a photograph of golfer Marta Prieto, were taken of her behind, focusing on her legs and ‘girly’ socks (socks with flowers on). The caption reads: “Photo tip No 372: if you’re using a 300mm lens and the subject is less than 5 mm away – you may end up with the perfect shot!”\textsuperscript{64} This caption insinuates that her backside was indeed ‘the perfect shot’. A shot of her actually playing golf is deemed not important.

Glamour, as said earlier, is defined by the concept of ‘made-up’ entities. By representing female athletes as consistently glamorous, a norm is created. Any other female athlete who is not labelled ‘glamorous’ are created ‘other’, and that which makes her other is focused on. This creates an even bigger divide between athleticism and women. For instance, “International Beauties on the field”\textsuperscript{65} devalues the female athlete and glamorises the athlete, not because of her sport, but because of her body and clothing choices. The made-up look constitutes the female as not being good enough without the make-up, dress and physical beauty (Appendix 28).

\textsuperscript{63}SA Sports Illustrated, March 2006 p31.
\textsuperscript{64}Compleat Golfer, March 2006 p70.
\textsuperscript{65}SA Sports Illustrated, June 2006 p152 – 154; 157.
3.3.5.3 Photographs accentuating sexuality

Fourteen photographs that sexualised the female athlete were published. A photo session of five full page photographs, focused on Maria Sharapova. It described her photo session as: “Any tennis fan can tell you that Maria Sharapova is a winner on grass, clay and hard courts, but her best surface may be sand”\(^{66}\). This blatantly suggests that she is best suited as a model posing on beaches, as she does in this edition, rather than playing tennis. Looking at one of the photograph’s (Appendix 29), one observes that she knows she is an object on display for the male voyeur. “The woman in the picture, and so perhaps women in general is constructed as interesting because of her body, or certain parts of it…The formal arrangement of the body, the way it is displayed, solicits the spectator’s gaze” (Kuhn 1985:38). This is indeed true in this photograph as, her “breasts are accentuated by the placement of … [her] arms and elbows” (Kuhn 1985:38).

The other photographs form part of the SA *Sports Illustrated* (June 2006) competition, “SA Beauties of Sport”. Ten female athletes were chosen from different sporting disciplines. They are photographed in posed, non-active shots with accessories that would tie them to their sport i.e. swimming goggles, rugby ball, parashoot, etc. Hidden at the bottom of each A4 photograph is a small picture of the athlete participating in the sport and a short biographical sketch on her. However, that is not really important as readers must vote for the sexiest athlete. The photographs focus on the athletes buttocks, breasts and legs and the made-up faces of the athletes invites the voyeur to look at her.

Two photographs construct the female athletes as truly sexual objects. “[T]he head … [of the athlete] is tilted so that her glance is slightly angled rather than face-on. The indirect look signifies …invitation or teasing” (Kuhn 1985:41 – 42). Interestingly, one of the women objectified is the SA Rugby women’s caption (Appendix 30). As it is deemed inappropriate for women to play rugby

\(^{66}\) SA *Sports Illustrated*, June 2006 p126.
- especially in South Africa - the captain is objectified as to infantilise her achievement as a rugby player.

4. Conclusion

“Media discourses are not detached from ways of talking and thinking that exist elsewhere in society, but selectively promote some while neglecting others” (Macdonald 1995:47). One observes from the above analyses that in the case of South African media, this is indeed true. Where female athletes were actively represented in participating in all types of sport, by the selected newspaper items, the magazine media were less accommodating. The magazine items reinforced stereotypes and represented female athletes primarily as sexual objects and not as professional athletes.

In the concluding chapter I will summarise the outcome of the study and compare it to the hypotheses drawn in the first chapter.
CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. Introduction

This study sought to determine how South African media represent and stereotype female athletes. As basis and background, the study assumed the preconceived influence of the media on society as well as the noticeable differences in representation of women in relation to men by the media. The study also theorised that the noticeable inequalities between media representation of male and female athletes, is a direct consequence of the infantilising of women by a patriarchal society.

Stereotyping is created to tip the scales of balance in the favour of the masculine power. Women are continuously represented as inferior to men in all spheres, except the female domestic domain. Society creates two spheres in which women can be identified in: firstly, that of domestic ‘goddess’ and secondly, the Artemis female. The Artemis female is repeatedly represented and stereotyped in relation to the domestic ‘goddess’. However, if this does not succeed to feminise the female, the Artemis female is produced as ‘other’ than normal.

These stereotypes not only influence women but also sport, as it creates a divide between “sport” and “femininity”, and female athletes must in essence decide to embrace, or reject, the feminised roles created by society and the media for women. Female athletes are identified as an Artemis female, which instantly creates it ‘other’, as this woman is not only physical but also independent. It was found that female athletes are indeed represented unequally, by the lack in news about them, and the type of news and photographs published.

2. Newspaper media
In this study, the newspaper media analysed were balanced in a sense that both articles and photographs imaged female athletes as ‘active’, as well as emphasising the stereotypical roles of mother, daughter, wife or beauty queen. Overall the newspaper media represented female athletes as “other” throughout all the articles, and photographs, that they published by constantly genderising in the articles as well as photographs. This was especially evident in cases where only female athletes were referenced in the articles and gender was still used throughout the article. However, female athletes participating in ‘gender-inappropriate’ (conventional) or unconventional female sports were ‘symbolically annihilated’ throughout the newspaper media, as very few articles and photographs were published on women in these sports.

An analysis of the text from these articles showed that derogatory words are used throughout the articles to contribute to the representation and stereotype of women as feminised beings not suppose to participate in sport. This is further enhanced by representation of female athletes being emotional, defined by her family, husband or coach which reiterates the traditional stereotypes of women being inferior to men.

The newspaper photographs on the other hand did include glamorised images of female athletes; however there was a more balanced representation of female athletes actively involved in sports, as well as not actively involved, but still in the sphere of sports. For instance, an athlete with a trophy or walking while involved in an activity on a court. Unfortunately female athletes were ‘banned’ to the inside of the newspaper as very few articles and photographs were published on the front page, as well as the back page, of the newspaper media. This in itself creates a representation and stereotype of female athletes not being good enough or important enough to appear on these pages.

Compared to the research of the media in the United States and other European countries, South African media represents and stereotypes female athletes similarly. The media prefers to stereotype female athletes as feminine, emotional and glamorous. Especially in unconventional, physical sports like kick-boxing, weight lifting and triathlon, female athletes are
represented as mothers, wives and daughters foremost to being an athlete. This trivialises the athlete’s ability as well as her profession by representing it as less important or as a hobby, while the athlete is stereotyped in her traditional feminine role.

3. Magazine media

The magazine media on the other hand revealed some very degrading images and representation of female athletes. One can attribute this to the target-market of the magazine media analysed. However, both the magazines analysed, professed that they target all enthusiasts of sport. The study found that the *Compleat Golfer’s* content did target all enthusiasts of sport by including advice that both sexes could apply to their game. However, the SA *Sports Illustrated* only targeted the male reader, as the female athletes reported on were obviously only featured for their physical beauty, and for the pleasure of the magazine’s male readership. The type of coverage of female athletes in these magazine media objectifies the female athlete and totally removes her from the sporting sphere, by representing her according to her physical beauty and how much pleasure she can provide to the male gaze.

The few feature articles which were published on female athletes, they are stereotyped throughout the articles according to feminine qualities i.e. fashion, beauty, emotions, family and weight. They are further presented in an inferior manner by usage of their first names, creating familiarity and inferiority to the male spectator. But what was alarming in the magazine media, is the ratio of photographs to text concerning female athletes. The amount of photographs is far more than the text, representing female athletes only as objects to look at.

Interestingly, more references were made of female athletes in unconventional, gender-inappropriate sports. However, this media did not attempt to give these female athletes a balanced coverage, but rather sexualise and feminise them so as to make them more acceptable and yet ‘other’ for participating in such sports. It raises a dichotomy of being simultaneously “acceptable” and “distant”.
Female athletes are symbolically removed from sport by the number of non-active, sexually charged photographs in this media. They are stereotyped as objects throughout the media, and were given this opportunity only because of how they look and the amount of pleasure they can provide for the male gaze. Only one magazine cover in the research period contained a female athlete i.e. June edition of SA *Sports Illustrated*. However, it made only cursory reference to her being an athlete and further concentrated on her body and alluring features. The media actually went as far as to condemn the athlete for being an athlete and not a model, which they seem to think, is her calling.

This type of media disrespects female athletes, and makes a mockery of them by highlighting stereotypical emotions such as jealousy and pettiness when it comes to competition.

Female athletes that were used in adverts interestingly advertised house-hold goods as well as watches. The fact that they did not advertise sporting goods, further construct sport as inferior to the traditional, stereotypical role of homemaker. Again the female athlete was used in the advertisements partly because they are seen as upcoming talent, but mainly because of their looks. Women sportspeople, therefore, participate and reinforce stereotypes exactly because of commercial gain.

4. Recommendations

Stereotypes and representations both have a positive and negative outcome for female athletes. By stereotyping and representing female athletes in traditional, feminised roles, they receive more recognition and monetary compensation. However, this leads to female athletes receiving recognition for the wrong reasons, and it sets a precedence for all female athletes. The negative outcome of stereotypes is that it not only infantilises women, but degrades the professional status of female athletes. This leads to all women participating in sports as professionals, being seen as not serious athletes, but
rather social athletes, participating for the sake of an assumed male spectator or potential buyer of commercial products.

“[D]egrading stereotypes are unfair and offensive to certain segments of society; they must be rejected as harmful to the self-image of those groups. But beyond the specific harm to the targeted group, such stereotypes breed prejudice and discrimination within society at large” (Day 2003:418 – 419). This is indeed true of female athletes and serves as a constant reminder that they will be alienated if they do not conform to feminine stereotypes. The sadness of this situation is that female athletes enter a commercialised publication realm heavily stacked against them making conscious decisions. Alienation turns into the lure of truthful existence. The danger of the situation lies further in the last part of Day’s quotation: in a society riddled with violence against women, the sporting arena breeds and strengthens gender discrimination and bias. What could and should be liberation, in fact, reinforces a female captivity.

The media should pay more attention to how they distinguish between the sexes, especially in the sports arena. It should not be necessary for female athletes to use their body to get sponsorship, but rather their talent should be highlighted by the media, and they should receive sponsorship and recognition through this. “Media practitioners, in other words, should strive for overall balance in attempting to portray the range of lifestyles within a particular group, not just those that are the most prejudicial to the group” (Day 2003:419).

5. Conclusion

This study sought to proof that female athletes are indeed negatively stereotyped and represented by the South African media. The media focuses on the athletes as feminine objects, rather than professional athletes. The media and society at large collude to create female athletes as “other”, as alienated objects, participating in sport to fulfill the expectations of a patriarchal, capitalist society.
### Tables

#### Table 1: Newspapers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Number of articles</th>
<th>Number of articles with photographs</th>
<th>Articles including both sexes (photo or text)</th>
<th>Number of photographs (colour and no-colour)</th>
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