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Women, sport and the media: Key elements at play in the shaping of the practice of women in sports journalism in Israel

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Abstract: The present study aims to illustrate the points of view of various female sports journalists as they relate the unique and defining experiences within their line of work, intending to identify the key elements at play in the shaping of the practice of women in sports journalism and its impact on the coverage of women's sports. 17 Israeli female sports journalists were interviewed concurrently, alongside a select number of male editors of various sports sections. In addition, a survey regarding readers' views on the coverage of women's sports and a content analysis of sport coverage in national newspapers was conducted. The analysis of the study's findings and, particularly, of the female sports journalists' experiences, has even revealed similarities between the place of women in sports media and female presence within combative military units.

Keywords: Israel, female journalists, sports, women's sports, military

1 Introduction

The emergence of female presence in the field of journalism marks one of the most significant shifts Israeli media have experienced in recent years. With that in mind and also, against the backdrop of the phenomenon that is the feminization of the media, one cannot help but take notice of the still rather miniscule number of female journalists, and their late arrival on the *sports journalism* scene.

This study showcases the point of view of various female sports journalists as they relate the unique and defining experiences within their line of work,

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intending to identify the key elements at play in the shaping of the practice of women in sports journalism. Through the understanding of how women experience being in and part of these media, covering actual sporting events, and also by analyzing the manner in which they perceive their own roles – including how they relate to the feminist enterprise with regards to women’s sports –, one might gain a better understanding of the way sports media relate to women’s sports (while focusing on professional and competitive women’s sports).

For the purposes of this study, 17 Israeli female sports journalists were interviewed concurrently, alongside a select number of male editors of various sports sections. In addition, a content analysis of the Israeli press sport sections and a survey regarding public attitudes towards the coverage of women’s sport were conducted. The analysis of the study’s findings and, particularly, of the female sports journalists’ experiences has revealed similarities between the place of women in sports media and female presence within combative military units. It has also suggested parallels between practices shaped by women within sports media and those observed amongst female soldiers in combative roles. One of the most prominent findings within this context was the trivialization of sexual harassment, of which female sports journalists have found themselves on the receiving end, both at their respective news desks and at actual sporting events. With regard to the coverage of women’s sports, the findings exhibit that journalists’ (women more than men) satisfaction with the coverage of women’s sports is higher than the public’s (both men and women). In addition, our content analysis reveals that female journalists who cover sports events do not contribute to the coverage of women’s sports.

2 Women, sport and media

2.1 Identities

According to Hall (1996), the current discussion in literature regarding the construction of gender identities was made possible by a conceptual change which shifted the focus from the intrinsic aspects of personal identity to the social aspects which help to shape it; emphasizing the fluidity of personal identities and their ability to change and adapt within the social institutions of which they are part. Moreover, in the constructing of identity, considerable weight is given to one’s encounter with, and relation to, the “other” (Kuzio, 2001; Lorber, 2000; Pelican et al., 2005; Tzanelli, 2006) as a means of self-definition. The “other’s” contribution to the formulating of one’s own identity is usually made

by means of providing contrast. That said, there are times when this contribution also takes the form of imitation.

The defined and distinctive social structure in fact highlights the struggle over the hierarchy of identities. Hall's main argument (1995), certainly from the perspective of gender distinction, focusses on those in possession of power and their attempt to protect the existing frameworks and hierarchical structures. Gerbner and Gross (1976) as well as Tuchman (1978) cited Symbolic Annihilation as the prevalent technique used to ensure that the 'weaker' groups remain excluded from the centers of power and discourse. Even in the absence of outright manipulative intent, says Fraser (1992), those with power (in this case, men), be it military or media, will be inclined to monopolize public discourse out of a will to maintain their hegemony. With regards to the subject matter at hand, one might therefore posit that limiting the representation of women in public spheres is equal to perpetuating their ever-secondary status and cementing their position of inferiority. The media, being the main mediating, feeding and distributing source of our world views, play a pivotal role in the symbolic lifestyle of different groups and in establishing the boundaries of the consensus.

3 Sport as the stronghold of masculinity

According to Hall (1996; see also Galily and Betzer-Tayar, 2014; Tamir and Galily, 2010; Zach and Adiv, 2016), identities are constructed and changed within various social institutions and fields of discourse, with sport seen as playing a pivotal role in the construction of gender identities. To this day, many critical approaches to sport (e.g., Sorek, 2007) make a point of emphasizing its role as a prominent instrument of oppression at the hands of the powers that be.

Indeed, the so-called incongruity between femininity and athleticism has thoroughly been researched in scholarly literature, seeing as attributes associated with sport, for instance, physical strength, competitiveness, mental resilience, agility, and muscle, all also signifiers of masculinity; so much that the concept of the 'female athlete' can in itself be viewed as an oxymoron (O'Reilly and Cahn, 2007).

Whereas in the past, the presence of women in the world of sport was considered abnormal and seen by some as positively perverse (Bernstein, 2002; Bernstein and Kian, 2013; Messner, 2007), one cannot help but notice the advances in the field of women's sport seen in recent years (Tamir, 2016). The representation of women in major sporting events such as the Olympics is

steadily on the rise, marking yet another extension of the growing recognition of their rights and abilities.

In fact, the London Games in 2012 marked the first time in the history of the Olympics that all 204 participating countries sent at least one woman to compete. Another precedent set during the 2012 games was that for the first time, competitions in every field were held equally for both sexes, with boxing being the newest sport now also available for women to compete in (Kian, Bernstein, and McGuire, 2013).

Nevertheless, there still remain several mechanisms at play which continue to marginalize female athletes, even when quantitative reality may suggest equality having already taken root (Galily, Tamir, Meckel, and Eliakim, 2012). For instance, to this day there still remain some ‘women-only’ sports such as rhythmic gymnastics and synchronized swimming, which emphasize and celebrate aesthetics and softness. Additionally, within certain sporting fields, one can identify some gendered adjustments having been made; derived from physical but primarily mental differences attributed to each sex. For example, in artistic gymnastics, women compete on the thin beam, which requires that they possess stability and balance, whereas the men compete on the pommel horse which highlights strength, aggression, and power. Other sports such as tennis became female-friendly, mainly due to some internal characteristics (rules, clothing and structure) which in turn validated the growing presence of women in the field as they posed no viable threat to male hegemony.

Similarly, one might look at the way the games are organized as an expression of the attempt to maintain male dominance in sport. In sporting tournaments, women’s games are constantly perceived to be not as important and as such are held earlier than the men’s competitions, as if they were no more than a warm-up act. This way, a clear hierarchy is cemented between men’s and women’s games.

4 Sport and military

Masculinity is indeed constructed in all social spheres. However, says Sasson-Levy (2002), it takes on a unique form in institutions seen as specially-designated male sites. This is why sport is perceived like the military, as one of the key sites for constructing and defining hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1983; Messner, 2002; Messner and Solomon, 2007; Smith and Beal, 2007). Beyond the numbers (i.e., males vs. females) coming out of these institutions which strongly suggest policies of female exclusion being in effect, Enloe (2000) identifies an emergent, dichotomous distinction of roles between sport and the military.

In this context, one might recognize a degree of similarity between the military, which grooms solely-masculine spheres in certain areas and in various roles, and sport, which for the longest time denied women recourse to so many of its fields. In other words, the gender-regime in both institutions (i.e., sport and the military) is based on gendered power structures which operate formally, perpetuating the marginalization of females. In doing so, they are effectively championing patriarchal ideology whilst cementing masculine identity's kinship with modes of power and strength. It is thus of little to no surprise that sporting and militaristic imagery and discourse are so deeply intertwined and heavily reliant on one another (Maass, D'ettole, and Cadinu, 2008; Rosenthal, 2003). Concepts such as defense and offence, combat, training, fighting strategy, and resolution, are but a few examples of the linguistic affinity between the two worlds.

Exclusion of women from the very core of military and sporting activity is particularly noteworthy, owing to the special place reserved for these institutions in society in general and in Israeli society, in particular. The importance of the military in Israel, says Izraeli (1997), is derived from its tremendous influence on the multitude of issues dominating Israeli society. Sport, too, adds McCree (2011), though on altogether different levels, operates in the service of the national mechanism. Athletes, who are at the helm of representing their country, serve the nation and are spoken of in a similar manner as warfront-bound soldiers (Tamir, 2014). It is therefore of little surprise that these institutions tend to nurture each other within a national context. "Fighting for the flag" and "Enlisting for the national task at hand" are both well-known slogans, familiar to 'warriors' of either institution. Bearing in mind these institutions' national role, particularly within an Israeli context, criticizing their exclusion of females from their own midst becomes all the more valid and essential.

One of the more interesting issues within this context is the reason quoted for the small percentage of women in both 'units'. The question of potential captivity was and still remains the focus of discussion around the issue of women serving in combative units (Cramer, 1994; Gat, 2000). Sports media have largely adopted a similar rhetoric, turning the men's locker room into an iconic symbol, with the fear of such a space being invaded and "violated" by the arrival of women on the scene, used as a reason to account for the scarce number of women in the field. On the other hand, there exists a gender-centric concern that the so-called femininity of female sports journalists would render them more vulnerable and hyper-sensitive whilst within a typically 'crass' male environment.

5 Feminization of the media

The feminization process of media professions stands out as one of the single-most prominent changes to the structure of media organizations in the Western world (Van Zoonen, 1994, 1998a) as well as in Israel (Caspi and Limor, 1999). This phenomenon is most commonly viewed as the product of two parallel processes: The first focusses on the scarcity of male personnel in the media; largely the result of the substantial rise in the presence of emergent media outlets, whilst also addressing the decline in the perceived value of journalism as a trade amongst men, predominantly embodied in wages and status, both of which largely underscore the gender structure of the world of employment. The second process is related to the specific demand for the employment of women in the field; this being the product of several content-related changes in the press, from having had to make more room for ‘visual imagery’ in newspaper publications to accommodating ‘soft’ writing and also directly addressing women as characterized consumers of media (Lachover, 2005).

5.1 Female journalists and sport media

From its earliest days, the sport media industry has never welcomed female journalists. In the early 1970s, only about 25 women were employed as sports writers in the US (Creedon, 1994). Recently, a demographic survey of North American sports writers employed at newspapers and popular online sites revealed that men comprised 94 % of sports editors, 90 % of assistant sports editors, 89 % of reporters, 90 % of columnists, and 84 % of copy editors/designers (Lapchick, Moss II, Russell, and Scarce, 2011). Meanwhile, women make up only 7–10 % of US television sports journalists (Etling, Young, Faux, and Mitchell, 2011; Sheffer and Schultz, 2007). Moreover, many women in television sports journalism appear to have been hired as sideline reporters, largely owing to their sex appeal (Davis and Krawczyk, 2010).

Studies in numerous countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Spain, The Netherlands, US, etc.) have consistently shown that men author most sport media content regardless of the medium (Biscomp and Griggs, 2012; Kian and Hardin, 2009). In all media, the percentage of female employees generally drops at the higher ranks of sports journalism, particularly amongst editors who determine what sporting fields and which athletes receive coverage (Hardin, 2005; Pfister, 2010). However, the mere act of simply hiring more female journalists or editors is by no means the equivalent of extending coverage of women’s sport.

Recently, Schoch (2013) investigated the specificity of women sports journalists' writing in the context of the Swiss daily press. By analyzing their working practices (observations and interviews) and their output (content analysis), Schoch demonstrated that women sports journalists do not adopt the habitual professional norms of such specialty. Their 'feminine' writing is characterized by an interest in soft news and the 'human' perspective, which is different from the usual treatment of sports news, which is focused on facts and technical analysis, developed by the large majority of their male colleagues. It takes place within structural mechanisms – particularly modes of recruitment, gender division of labor, the acknowledgement of skills and the organizational mechanisms within sports newsrooms – as well as daily interactions in the workplace and women journalists' tastes. Women journalists employ a subversive strategy and play with the stereotypical images of their professional competences. However, the way they exercise their profession contributes to the definition of masculine and feminine journalistic values and practices and to the maintenance of the existing gender order in sports journalism. Moreover, Hardin (2013) looked for change by exploring the gender composition of sports newsrooms and how changes in coverage of women's sports may be integrally linked to an increase of women as sports-news decision makers. Hardin argues that for the coverage of women's sports to increase and be framed in a more positive light, the sports newsroom should move beyond being a last bastion of hegemonic masculinity, and that women, as decision makers, must reach a critical mass to meaningfully impact the culture and values of the sports journalism work environment.

The current study aims to explore the ramifications of this phenomenon and to gain a genuine sense of understanding of the experience that is being a female sports journalist in a predominantly male working environment. Other than expanding our understanding of the phenomenon of female sports journalists, the study aims to learn about their attribution to women's sports coverage.

6 Method

As stated above, the main goal of this study is to showcase the role and place occupied by female sports journalists in Israel and to offer an in-depth look at the experiences that make up their professional lives. For this purpose, a multi-method approach was taken, combining interviews with female journalists and sport section editors, a survey aiming to better understand the public's atti-

tudes toward women's sport and its media coverage, and a content analysis of the Israeli press sport sections.

The main focus of the study are female sports journalists, thus most of the analysis will be based on their interviews; 17 female sports journalists were interviewed between January and May 2013 (at the time, they made up just about the entire population of actively-working female sports journalists in Israel). Ten of the journalists were working then, or are still working, at national daily newspapers. Four others are employed at online sports news outlets, with an additional three working in television sports channels. During the interviews, the female sports journalists were asked about the reasons that prompted them to pursue this line of work; they were asked to describe their work routine at their respective news desks and also to discuss sporting events and how they saw their own future in Israeli sports media. These in-depth interviews with female sports journalists would allow us to call attention to various phenomena, and highlight those informal practices which make up the professional experience of female sports journalists within the masculine sporting sphere. Conducted in tandem with these interviews, seven male sports editors of three major daily newspapers (*Yediot Ahronot*, *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz*), were also interviewed. *Ma'ariv's* sports section editor declined the interview; therefore his deputy was interviewed in his place. In addition, two veteran sports editors, considered bona fide pioneers of sports journalism in Israel, were interviewed, as well as a sports editor at an online website.

In order to expand our understanding of these processes, two additional research methods were employed in this study: a survey and a content analysis. The second part of the study included a survey conducted amongst a sample of both male and female readers of sports sections in Israel ($N = 302$)¹ with the aim of understanding the public's attitudes toward women's sports and its coverage. A parallel survey was also conducted amongst male and female sports journalists ($N = 44$).²

Through an analysis of the results, it was possible to map out the attitudes of female sports journalists, compare them to the readers' positions, on the one hand, and to male sports journalists', on the other. And while this study's focus is on female journalists, it does recognize the importance of also looking into the attitudes of their male counterparts.

The third part of the study centers on the content of sports sections. For this purpose, a quantitative content analysis of four daily sports sections was

1 The survey examining sport section readers had included 71.9% men and 28.1% women. It was conducted as a part of a telephone survey of a representative sample of the Israeli population.

2 The survey examining sports journalists included 37 men and 7 women.

conducted, spanning a period of over six decades (1948–2010). The analysis examines the coverage of the sports sections of the three leading newspapers in Israel (*Yediot Ahronot*, *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz*) over six decades and a daily sport journal, *Hadshot Hasport* (1954–1985). Our sample included the sports coverage of one week in each year (excluding years in which the Olympic Games took place – as the coverage would not have been representative of the normal coverage of sports).³ The analysis included a total of 2,104 articles, 1243 of which were written by men in comparison to 395 by women and 466 without crediting their author. Interestingly, a large number of those which appeared without crediting their author ($N = 334$) dealt with women's sport. The content analysis examined the gender of the writer as well as the focus of the story (male vs. female sports). In addition, in order to get a better understanding of the way female sport activity is being presented in the coverage, a stereotyping index was used comprising three primary prisms: body (a preoccupation with the body, accentuating bodily parts), sexuality (sexual connotations, certain positions), and family (referencing family members, familial roles). The coding was conducted by three students, who had undergone training. A reliability test based on a sample of ten percent of the messages showed high levels of agreement between the coders (reliability between the coders, for each category, using Cohen's Kappa, did not drop from 87% of agreement). Through content analysis of these sports sections, one could attempt to examine both similarities and differences between female vs. male sports journalists' writing and, thus, gain further insight into the effect women's presence has had and continues to have on sports news desks.

Combining the three above-mentioned research methodologies has allowed us to paint a broad and elaborate portrait of female sports journalists' body of work in Israel's various media.

7 Findings – The sport battlefield

As was the case with the shaping of Israeli female soldiers' gender identity in combative units⁴ (Sasson-Levy, 2003), the findings of this study reveal similar

³ The sample included the coverage appearing during one week in each year – the first week was chosen randomly, followed by a systematic sampling of one week from the next month of the following year.

⁴ As noted by Sasson-Levy (2003), women's military service is the focus of an ongoing controversy because of its implications for the gendered nature of citizenship. While liberal feminists endorse equal service as a venue for equal citizenship, radical feminists see women's service as a reification of martial citizenship and cooperation with a hierarchical and sexist institution

patterns amongst women in sports journalism. Being a minority in the predominantly male news desks, one that has to operate and navigate through masculine spaces and spheres, female sports journalists have adopted practices of identification with those prevalent modes of masculinity which dominate the realm of sports media. This mode of identification primarily takes the following three shapes, which were identified as the main themes of this phenomenon in our analysis: Rejection of classical femininity, internalization of masculine thought patterns, and the trivialization of sexual harassment. Our findings section will be divided into those three themes.

7.1 Rejection of classical femininity

The separation from women and from traditional femininity emerged as a prominent finding amongst female sports journalists. This phenomenon was observed in several different contexts and recurred repeatedly, acting as a key ingredient in defining women's identity on the sports pages as well as their positions on a variety of issues that were addressed throughout the entire scope of this study.

On a fundamental level, one could identify an element of denial amongst female sports journalists regarding their rather scarce numbers and unofficial 'outsider' status at news desks. Most of these female sports journalists were at the time the only women to have worked at their respective news desks; nevertheless, they have unanimously all stated that their femininity has never, at any point, been an issue. To them, their presence was completely natural as they were inclined to believe that their peers, too, treated it as a given. According to them, not once was the issue of being a woman in a predominantly male system ever brought up and, moreover, it was certainly not accompanied by any form of different treatment. Yet the complementary findings of this study suggest that in spite of the female journalists' rose-tinted outlook, in practice the fact that these female sports journalists were women was an issue at all times and did in effect separate them from their news desk peers. That is to say, when analyzing these journalists' testimonials, distinct overtones of being given 'special' treatment as a result of being female do emerge as well as recurring references to their being women.

That said, the female journalists themselves offered no account of ever being treated as 'different'. In many instances, interjections of a sexual manner, made by male peers at the news desk were treated as harmless and humorous. However, there is no doubt that at the heart of such 'harmless' statements lies a highlighting of the inherent fact that these journalists *are* female, and are

therefore ‘aliens’ at the news desk. Interviewee N. gives us the following account of a regular occurrence at a news desk where she had previously worked.

I was always alone in the newspaper as a woman. Nowadays, there may be several others. They would call me the ‘Princess’. I was well taken care of. [Insert name of reporter] used to tell me before he would leave: [N.], take care of all these imbeciles.

Similarly, K., who also works in print media, recounted the attitude towards her at the newspaper’s desk:

I am the only girl at the news desk. It was the same deal at the local paper; always have been “the only girl in the village”. My editor would be telling me that I was the only man at our desk ...

When addressing the subject of women’s scarcity in print sports journalism, the female sports journalists made a point of emphasizing what they perceived as the difference between them and ‘average’, ‘classically-feminine’ women, in that they (the journalists) possess an exceptional interest in sport as well as a deep understanding of the subject. In the course of their interviews, the female sports journalists made it abundantly clear that they were “unlike any typical woman”, fervently shirking off classical femininity where woman could have neither interest nor foothold in the field of sport. During their interviews, the journalists also rejected the traditional comparison between themselves and other women who are active in sports media, albeit in ‘lesser’ roles (e.g., field commentators or sportscasters). The female journalists also made a point of stressing their so-called extraordinary nature, in that, unlike “little girls” whose sole concern is to be featured on television and online, their primary commitment is to sports journalism. The issue of using their sexuality, as those “other women” allegedly do, was also raised in this context. The interviewed sports journalists brand their female sportscaster peers with stereotypically-feminine behavior, which is all about sexuality and style over substance. In that, they also seek to distance if not remove themselves altogether from what may be construed as ‘typically feminine’ behavior.

In keeping with the same spirit, the study revealed a distinct lack of camaraderie amongst female sports journalists. Throughout the entire course of the interviews, many less-than-kind comments were made by the women; mutual jabs and insults were traded and an underlying contempt towards the others’ body of work emerged. Of course, these findings ought not to be taken all-inclusively and could just as easily also occur in other professional groups, however, their presence did echo loudly enough to have warranted being included in the study’s findings. The scarcity of women in sports media and the limited areas of coverage which sports journalism focusses on in the first place

have created a reality in which the majority of female sports journalists are more than likely to know each other, so that in almost every interview, names of fellow female journalists would come up. Interestingly, many comments made about their fellow female sports journalists focused specifically on their femininity and appearance, as if they were the very antithesis of what is required of those working in the field. Comments along the lines of, “she does not have much to offer other than a pretty face”, and “she is there because she’s hot”, were made more than once throughout the course of the interviews.

What these instances indicate is that in slandering their female peers, these female sports journalists all effectively turned to besmirching practices that are predominantly used by men.

Given the small number of female sports journalists, what lies at the heart of this ‘poor sportsmanship’ may very well be in fact an unspoken competition for ‘top dog’ status within their field, which naturally may be accompanied by a degree of rivalry. A prevalent explanation for those very practices amongst female sports journalists has been dubbed ‘Queen Bee’ in feminist literature. Elsesser and Lever’s ‘Queen Bee’ ‘theory’ (2011) posits that women who have scored professional, individual triumphs whilst within male-dominated systems will be less-than-inclined to identify with other females and offer them any kind of assistance. The desire to remain the sole female in an all-male field can be seen as maintaining one’s own gender identity. However, it could just as easily also be interpreted as an act of internalizing dominant masculine identity, with femininity now used as a punching bag in a sphere that will neither admit nor accept it or women for that matter, into its folds.

Their shirking off of classical femininity allows these female sports journalists to be seen as ‘Masculine Women’ in the eyes of many. The predictable correlation between masculinity and sports immediately brands any woman involved in the field as masculine. From there, the leap from masculine to lesbian becomes a short one indeed. Creating a lesbian image for these women thus becomes a means of restoring traditional gender roles and maintaining them uncontested. The fact that these women are at the heart of a predominantly masculine sphere, an environment where one must possess acute perceptive skills and an ability to perform in-depth analyses of sporting activities, is for all intents and purposes a ‘game changer’, which sets the scene for the blurring of traditional gender roles and distinctions. It is therefore presumable that if the integration of women into sports does in fact threaten the gender order, as argued by several scholars (Obel, 1996; Rowe, McKay, and Miller, 2000; Stevenson, 2002), then one might speculate that women becoming an integral part of information and news distribution as well as production environments might also pose a viable threat to the most fundamental of gender perceptions.

Sports media, to a large extent, express a certain set of behavioral expectations; ones that are not too dissimilar to Judith Butler's (2003) observations on gender. Butler viewed the link between sex, gender, and desire as an expression of certain social expectations which are born out of heterosexual hegemony. The traditional expectations that are commonly found in sports media create a link between a) the male gender – one that is manifested in the body and in physical abilities; b) masculinity, expressed via overt displays of sports fandom; c) an ability to understand and analyze various sporting events and, last but not least, d) one's level of passion for sport. Of course, on the flipside are women, who are attributed a lack of understanding and interest in sports, which in turn makes developing an affinity for this field rather difficult for females, let alone finding actual employment within it, save for a few 'exceptional' cases of those who do not abide by traditional gender expectations.

Accordingly, those female sports journalists who dare break this trinity of sex-gender-desire are met with a less-than-forthcoming reception. Many of the female sports journalists testified of their own accord to having personal difficulties, especially in forming romantic relationships, as the result of working in sports media. "To tell you the truth", M. told us, "it's no coincidence that most female sports journalists are not in relationships. Notice how all of them struggle to find partners. There's something about our line of work which men find very off-putting". L. also recounted how "Men say to me, 'I hate these women who think that if they talk about football, they'll be popular'". Most journalists who had brought up this subject found a link between their presence in sporting events and particularly in male locker rooms, and the aversion men tend to feel once finding out what they do for a living. There have even been some cases where female journalists recalled relationships that ended as a result of rumors spread about them and their alleged 'extracurricular' activities with male athletes. In other instances, the female journalists speculated that their line of work is off-putting to men by default, and that those do not feel comfortable, consequently, to enter into relationships with them. Within this context, others also brought up the 'lesbian' image attributed to women in sports media as being yet another hindrance to striking up a heterosexual relationship.

7.2 Internalization of masculine thought patterns

An additional category addressed by this study was the emulation of masculine thought and behavioral patterns.

The female sports journalists were all inclined to adopt a more 'masculine' way of writing. As suggested by this survey's findings, this mode of emulation

stood out the most in the topics chosen for coverage, whether in the content analyses or in the different way female athletes were traditionally approached in male sports publications. Moreover, the study identified how the position of the vast majority of female journalists with regards to women's sport has come to express an internalization and growing affinity with the masculine editorial position on the subject. Moreover, surveying their stances has indicated that female sports journalists have come to take on an even more extremist approach than that of their male peers with regards to women's sport. Effectively, these female journalists have emerged as the group that is most vehemently opposed to the coverage of women's sport.

For the purpose of mapping out both male and female sports journalists' writing, all articles dealing with women's sport were examined. On the heels of arguments that had been raised in both previous and contemporary studies (Bernstein, 2002; Bernstein and Kian, 2013), regarding non-sports-related writing about women in the sports sections, this current study sought to examine the distribution of articles according to their attribution to sports. The analysis has revealed how there is apparently no difference between male and female reporters as far as the ratio between sports- versus non-sports-related articles is concerned. Table 1 below shows how both male and female reporters devoted about a quarter of their female-centric articles in their respective sports sections to other subjects and areas not directly related to sport:

Table 1: Distribution of the number of articles (see brackets for distribution in percentages) about women, by gender of author and subject matter of article.

Reporter's gender	Article Topic		
	Sports-related	Non-sports-related	Sum total
Male	342 (75.50)	111 (24.50)	453 (53.93) (100 %)
Female	39 (73.60)	14 (26.40)	53 (6.31) (100 %)
Unknown	269 (80.60)	65 (19.40)	334 (39.76) (100 %)
Total	650 (77.40)	190 (22.60)	840 (100)

We can still witness changes over time – over the years the number of news stories dealing with female sports has dramatically increased as has the representation of female athletes on both a professional and personal level. However, the topic still receives little coverage in comparison to male sports. The findings are presented in Table 2. This time perspective can shed some light on the issue of the extent to which the environment has adapted to female sports and female sports journalists. It appears that, although limited, there is improvement, with women sports receiving more attention than some years ago.

Table 2: The amount of stories dealing with women in the sport section by decades.

Years	The number of stories dealing with sports	The number of stories not dealing with sports	Total
1954–1964	52	8	60
1965–1975	137	30	167
1976–1986	136	34	170
1987–1997	149	60	209
1998–2006	176	58	234
Total	650	190	840

Table 3: Means and standard deviations of satisfaction levels with coverage of women's sport in newspapers.

Gender	Group				
	Readers		Journalists		t
	Mean (1–5)	S. Deviation	Mean (1–5)	S. Deviation	
Men	3.04 (N = 217)	1.36	3.81 (N = 37)	1.39	-3.243**
Women	2.79 (N = 85)	1.14	4.15 (N = 7)	0.99	-2.819**

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

The question of satisfaction levels with regards to the coverage of women's sport as it is done nowadays in the sports sections was examined separately in both journalist and reader samples through the prism of gender division, using the T-Test for independent samples. Male and female sports journalists were asked to express their degree of satisfaction with the issue of poor, underwhelming coverage of women within the sports pages. Concurrently, male and female sports section readers were presented with the same question. Table 3 illustrates that it was in fact the group of female journalists that showed the highest degree of satisfaction with the scarce coverage of women's sport in its designated sections. Positioned at the other end of the spectrum are those female readers whose reserve towards current coverage of women's sport rang loudest. Significant differences were also noted when comparing male journalists and readers. If so, it appears that the audience in general and women in particular, unlike journalists, are not satisfied with the ways in which women's sports are being covered. While female journalist may have adapted to the expectations of the profession, the wide audience expects more.

Table 4: Means and standard deviations of the desire to see more comprehensive coverage of women's sport in newspapers.

Gender	Group		Journalists		t
	Readers				
	Mean (1–5)	S. Deviation	Mean (1–5)	S. Deviation	
Men	3.35 (N = 217)	1.55	2.86 (N = 37)	1.40	-2.022*
Women	3.94 (N = 85)	1.57	2.46 (N = 7)	1.12	-2.663*

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

The deeper, underlying meaning of the emerging data is that the position of female sports journalists is in fact the farthest from that of the female readers'. That is to say, female sports journalists, to a great extent, have adopted the positions of male sports journalists, taking them to an even further extreme, as part of internalizing those dominant masculine codes which prevail in sports news desks.

Additionally, both male and female readers of sports sections as well as male sports journalists were all asked about their desire to see more comprehensive coverage of women's sport. This question, too, was examined through the prism of gender division in both reporter and reader samples, respectively and separately, using the T-Test for independent samples. The findings, as shown in Table 4, indicate differences:

Data from Table 4 also suggest the existence of a gap between female sports journalists and female readers of the sports sections, whereas in contrast a relative kinship between the positions of male and female sports journalists emerges. The latter, unlike the majority of female readers of sports sections, disavowed women's sport and presented a point of view that was even more extreme than that of the male journalists'.

The findings of the study's content analysis are revealing; first of all, as aforesaid, over 70 % of the articles which appear without crediting their author deal with women's sports. While examining the coverage of women's sports according to the gender of the writer, the findings indicate that while 36 % of the stories published by male sports journalists deal with women's sport ($N = 453$), only 13 % of female sports journalists' stories deal with women's sport ($N = 53$). This shows that female sports journalists do not contribute to the coverage of women's sports.

For the purposes of this study, a stereotyping index had also been devised, the aim of which was to examine the coverage of routine male and female

sporting activities through three primary prisms: body (a preoccupation with the body, accentuating bodily parts), sexuality (sexual connotations, certain positions), and family (referencing family members, familial roles). All articles reviewed in the course of this study were examined in the context of how each one related to the three abovementioned stereotyping categories. Once the categories had been merged, the results identified the following identical trends which emerged, regardless of the gender of the article's author: Both male and female sports journalists showed a tendency to treat women in sport in a virtually identical, stereotypical manner (presenting more body parts, dealing more with sexuality and with their family role). Male sports journalists' coverage of women was 60% more stereotypical than the coverage given to men's sport. Meanwhile, the female journalist's coverage of women's sport was 'only' 50% more stereotypical in comparison.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that during the interviews conducted, several times when asked about women's sport in Israel, the female sports journalists responded derogatively, whether with a dismissive gesture or a mild scoff.

T., who had worked at two daily newspapers, having held a senior editorial position in one of them, related her impressions in the following way:

I never felt committed to women's sports. After getting the position, [...] called me. She turned up and jumped me, along with three other girls from "the gang" and started harping on about all the content I had to "push" and what a "true calling" I should consider this to be. On my part, I tried explaining to them how I had no intention of writing about or covering women's sport as not only did I have no interest in it, but that our readership also found it dull and unappealing. I was not in it for putting up flags and burning bras. By essence, what I do is living proof that women can in fact get wherever they want. It's not easy but it sure as hell is doable ... I'm not about to change the way I feel. I made it to where I am today on the merit of just that, so why change now?

K., another female sports journalist who has spent several years in online sports media, has made it abundantly clear that she has no interest whatsoever in promoting women's sport as the subject holds absolutely no appeal to her readers.

Personally, as a woman, I did not feel a sense of commitment to the field. I look at women's sport through the editorial lens of what the public may or may not find interesting, and suffice it to say, women's sport is *not* it.

Looking at all avenues of research, a clear picture emerges in which Israeli female sports journalists not only have zero interest in lobbying for women's sport, but that they are as good as opposed to the very idea of its promotion.

7.3 The trivialization of sexual harassment

Another expression of the affinities between the place of women in the military and in sport can be found in the trivialization of sexual harassment. Similarly to how female soldiers, holding traditionally male roles, approach incidents of sexual harassment, several critics have observed how female sports journalists, too, tend to put up with the suggestive innuendoes and sexual teasing (Butler and Schmidtke, 2010; Sasson-Levy, 2003).

In fact, these instances of harassment are perceived as being part and parcel of one's work routine, so much so that all the female sports journalists who at one point during their career found themselves subject to some form or another of sexual harassment, whether it be verbal or otherwise, did not even treat the incident as such.

All questions addressed to the female sports journalists concerning sexual harassment were immediately met with a resoundingly dismissive answer. However, when the question was made more specific, all female journalists who deal with football coverage began to recall instances, some shockingly blunt, where they had been sexually harassed. For instance, female journalists who had been harassed considered it as being a legitimate part of the professional induction process or framed the incident as being no more than the isolated male athlete's or certain sports fan's folly. Even those female sports journalists who cover areas other than football and have received similarly discriminatory treatment never framed it as such.

Y., a female journalist with one of Israel's most popular web outlets, described her preliminary experiences on the football pitches:

I think it was my first time on the pitch and I still hadn't yet figured out what's what. I went into [football team name]'s locker room after they'd finished training. Everyone had already finished showering, or was just coming out of the showers when one of them shouted at me: "Oi! Do you also fuck? Because if not, then there's nothing here for us to talk about." Most of the guys laughed. It happens. Nowadays, I feel much more at ease and they've also learnt to treat me professionally. They know I'm there to work but they still won't miss an opportunity to throw the occasional comment at me.

K., another female sports journalist who works in one of the local daily papers' sports supplements, has been a regular fixture on football pitches for over a decade now. During the interview, she recounted habitual behaviors which frequently recur whenever there is female presence on the football pitch.

There have always been rumors that I'd been out with or have gone to bed with so and so. I used to take it to heart. Not anymore though ... I wouldn't say that there are particular instances of special harassment. Yes, the fans will throw the odd interjection along the lines of "what the hell does this slag know anyway?" And if I happened to give good

feedback to a specific footballer, then immediately they'll go: "What a slut. She has to have shagged him ...". As for the athletes themselves [...] they would ask me, "So, what are you up to later today?", make comments about the way I look and so on, but I know how to put them in their place. You've got to have maturity and a level of experience and not carry on like those young girls whose hearts flutter over any old footballer, and who mix their personal lives with their careers.

The prevalence of male dominance in both the military and in sports often makes it difficult to recognize these instances of sexual harassment. However, unlike in the military, what makes identifying sexual harassment in sport particularly challenging is the almost-compulsory physical contact between athletes, coaches, and referees in a variety of sporting fields (Fejgin and Hanegby, 2001). This may be the reason why awareness and, consequently, preemptive education for the prevention of sexual harassment in Israeli sport is lagging well behind in comparison to the Israeli military.

8 Conclusions

The literature which touches upon the ties between organizational elements and gender aspects distinguishes between organizational, professional and gendered identities (Van Zoonen, 1998b). While organizational identity reflects mutual consensuses shared by the members of the organization with regards to its essence and uniqueness (Whetten and Godfrey, 1998), including the sum of its beliefs, values and emotions, all of which are dynamically formed and constructed in various contexts (De Bruin, 2000), professional identity offers a far broader framework. It is perceived as a comprehensive and practically ideological set of values, woven meta-organizationally across a multitude of organizations, and banded together under one professional roof. Therefore, one's professional media identity contains rules and practices laid out across the media's many organizations and outlets. Professional identity effectively dictates the standardization of journalistic writing, which in turn also has an impact on news content.

The findings of this study illustrate the dominance of professional identity within sports journalism in relation to both organizational and gender identities. The separation from traditional femininity, along with the assuming of a professional identity that is based on masculine codes for judging reality, was typical of female sports journalists on several levels. The resemblance between male and female writing in sports sections, the aversion towards women's sport, and also the disdain towards their female peers within the field, all came together to highlight the blurring of one's gender identity. The gaps between

men and women's positions within the organization, as opposed to their counterparts outside of it, reflect the erosion of one's gender identity in relation to their professional one. The fact that ultimately the media's end-product expresses no gender differences only serves to further cement sports journalism as an overlying conceptual framework which in effect is based on predominantly masculine perceptions and values.

On par with the positive opinions female readers of sports sections were found to hold on the subject of women's sport, one would expect female sports journalists to be at the helm of activities which strive to promote women's sport and bring about change to its modes of coverage to-date. Against the backdrop of the feminization of sports media, an expectation of this sort carries an even heavier weight. This study has also pointed out that within sports journalism, one cannot find a discernibly 'female footprint', if you will, inside the coverage of sporting events that is done at the hands of female sports journalists. Women in sports news desks have adopted practices of identification with dominant masculinity, thus making it highly unlikely that they, themselves, will go on to become the harbingers of change. Look no further than the identical number of sports-related and non-sports-related news, whether authored by male or female journalists.

The rapid increase in women's participation in the sport realm in Israel over the last decades illustrates the change in the status of women in the sports territory itself and in many other social areas, but in parallel, also exposes rigid thought patterns in regard to women's and men's involvement in that domain (Galily, Kaufman, and Tamir, 2015). If so, it is not surprising that while examining the coverage over time, we found that women's sports received more attention in the sport sections as time passes. It seems that slowly but steadily the topic is attracting more media attention, suggesting that the media environment is adapting to the trend in which women are more involved in professional and competitive sports.

One can thus conclude that contrary to the prevalent impression that having more women in sports media, particularly ones in senior, editorial positions might be the impetus for bringing about change, this study, if anything, has revealed that a steadily-growing female presence within sports media does not necessarily hail a change of any sorts at all.

In a broader perspective, and as suggested in recent papers regarding the sport-gender nexus in Israel (Galily and Betzer-Tayar, 2014; Tamir and Galily, 2010; Zach and Adiv, 2016), the journey toward change and gender equity in sports in general and that of sports media as well is best started at a young age. This can occur through education and socialization that deconstruct existing

contextual socio-historical structures, beliefs, and values about feminine and masculine discourses, and emphasize the value of equity in general (Betzer-Tayar, Zach, and Galily, 2015, 2016).

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