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To cite this article: Juana Salido-Fernandez & Ana Maria Muñoz-Muñoz (2021): Men's and Women's Basketball Coverage in the Spanish Digital Press During the 2016 Rio Olympics, *Journalism Practice*, DOI: [10.1080/17512786.2021.2004199](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.2004199)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.2004199>



Published online: 29 Nov 2021.



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Men's and Women's Basketball Coverage in the Spanish Digital Press During the 2016 Rio Olympics

Juana Salido-Fernandez  and Ana Maria Muñoz-Muñoz 

Women's and Studies Gender Institute, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the differences in the representation of women and men in basketball news in the Spanish digital sports press during 2016 Olympic Games from a gender perspective with the aim of investigating whether media coverage was unequal. The sample comprises 679 news articles published in Marca.com and MundoDeportivo.com from 1 July to 30 September 2016. The study analyzed 15 variables: date, sport, sex of main subject, nationality, number of photographs, authorship, external sources of information, direct and indirect speech, news about medals, main topic, representation of the main subjects, gender marking, and presence of gender stereotypes and their typology in the text and photographs. Results show a clear inequality in the representation of women and men both (i) quantitatively and (ii) qualitatively: (i) female teams were underrepresented in the information and the photographs and (ii) the nature of the content. Finally, it is argued that greater coverage of female athletes by itself is insufficient to achieve equality unless it is accompanied by a qualitative change.

KEYWORDS

Media; women; sport; basketball; Olympic Games; content analysis

Women have been historically excluded from official competition and professional sport (Sanz-Garrido, Berasategi, and Korkostegi 2015) as they were allowed to compete for the first time at the 1900 Paris Olympics Games, with only 22 sportswomen out of 997 athletes; in fact, full equality between men and women in Olympic participation has not been reached (IOC 2019). In view of this, in recent years national and international institutions have promoted female sport participation and encouraged efforts to improve women's visibility in the media. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) expects a participation of 48.8% of female athletes in the coming 2021 Tokyo Olympics (IOC 2018a). In addition, the IOC maintains its commitment to gender equality in the Olympic Charter (2018b) and has recommended that full gender equality in athlete quotas and medal events be ensured for both sexes from the Olympic Games 2024 onwards (IOC 2018a, 7). But the statistical figures of women in elite sport contrast with their media coverage, which is dominated by a manifest under representation and marginalization (Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum 2013).

According to the latest Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP 2015), sports reporting hardly devotes 14% of its content to female athletes. Also, when women's sports are

covered, they are represented in partial, trivialized and sexualized ways (Fink 2015; Godoy-Pressland 2016) prioritizing individual, aesthetic sports (Coche and Tuggle 2017) over team sports, which have been traditionally considered male (Adams and Tuggle 2004). This is the case of basketball, which is considered the second sport with the most media coverage in Spain (Sainz-de-Baranda 2013) and the most practiced by women, with 118,260 female licenses in Spain in the 2018 season (FEB 2018). Despite the public's interest in basketball and the high number of women's teams, until 2010 the coverage of women's basketball in the Spanish press only reached an average of 4.9% of news content compared to 94.4% of the sports content devoted to men (Sainz-de-Baranda 2017). Although no studies of the coverage of Spanish basketball at the Olympics were found, in an analysis of the coverage of the 2018 Women's Basketball World Cup, held in Spain, Blanco-Ruiz and Tirado (2020) noted the invisibility of female athletes on front pages, and that the usually brief reports only presented women as the main protagonists in less than a third of the articles, which mostly chose the male coach as source of the information.

Given the previous findings, the purpose of this paper is to compare the coverage of women's and men's basketball in the Spanish digital sports press during the 2016 Rio Olympics from 1 July to 30 September in order to identify and reveal representations of gender which foster inequality. The specific goals of the study are to organize and classify the articles about male and female athletes, analyze and interpret the message conveyed by the text and the photographs, and check for unequal treatment of the sexes and the presence of stereotypes and gender bias in the information.

Literature Review

Informative discourse plays a key role in shaping public opinion and in constructing personal identities and social reality (Rodrigo-Alsina 2001, 74) to the extent of becoming an instrument of social control which operates by integrating norms, symbols, roles and values which are internalized by audiences (Baum and Potter 2008). In this sense, Goffman (1974, 21) described the existence of frames that act as schemata of interpretation that allow individuals "to locate, perceive, identify and label" what happens within their life space and the world in general. Along these lines, McCombs describes frames as those aspects of reality which are foregrounded in communication, so that through their daily display in the news, editors and news directors influence the readers' perceptions of which are the most important issues (McCombs 2006, 170). According to Goffman (1974), the individual who frames has a greater agency than the individuals framed. Thus, framing in the press has traditionally contributed to perpetuate traditional gender roles and stereotypes in the representations of women made through a male lens which reinforces dominant values and sexist prejudice (Lopez-Diez 2011). The onset of digital media, which has brought about important changes in news consumption, has perpetuated the inequality and stereotypes which characterized traditional media (Muñoz-Muñoz and Salido-Fernández 2018). In the discussion of our results, we take into account the power of the media in the construction of frames of representation of both sexes.

The field of sports reporting tends to convey multiple sexist stereotypes by supporting patriarchal ideologies which contribute to constructing socially the masculine and the

athletic in opposition to the feminine since early ages, consequently reinforcing male hegemony and sexism in sports (Ravel and Gareau 2016). As a result, women have been excluded or pushed into the background perpetuating female inferiority and favoring, naturalizing and preserving male power (Boyle and Haynes 2009). There is abundant literature that confirms how this inequality has been maintained unchanged over time and across media, for instance in print media (Crolley and Teso 2007; Delorme and Testard 2015), magazine covers (Wasike 2017), television (Cooky, Messner, and Musto 2015) or the new digital media (Burch, Eagleman, and Pedersen 2012; Petca, Bivolaru, and Graf 2013; Ravel and Gareau 2016). In consequence, although female athletes may succeed professionally, inequality and under-representation persists as an invisible presence (Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum 2013).

Thus, the limited dissemination of women's sports provokes a lesser demand of related news and when women's sports events are focused on in a news report, the image of women is adjusted to expectations about their stereotyped femininity. Therefore, they are represented in partial, residual, sexualized, trivialized and infantilized ways as compared to men or with a professional and cultural inferiority (Fink 2015; Godoy-Presland 2016). Such representations weaken the legitimacy of women's sports, naturalize their subordinate role compared to men's sports and nurture stereotyped gender roles (Lopez-Diez 2011).

The Absence of Female Authorized Voices

As so many other decision-making and leadership forums, sports media are men-controlled and consequently are oriented towards men, encouraging mostly a male audience (Billings, Butterworth, and Turman 2017b). According to the International Sport Press Survey, which has analyzed a total of 10,007 articles from 37 newspapers from different countries, "men are the focus of 86% of all sports coverage" and "the explanation may be found in recruitment patterns in sports journalism: only one in 20 sports articles is written by a female journalist" (Schultz-Jorgensen 2005, 3). On television and radio broadcasts male journalists tend to monopolize airtime and generate more commentary on male players (Billings, Butterworth, and Turman 2017b) in spite of the presence of female journalists, who are often objectified when their bodies receive more attention than those of their male colleagues (Cummins, Ortiz, and Rankine 2018). Thus, "women journalists experience a form of double discrimination: their voices are marginalized in journalism in general, and in the more prestigious beats, such as politics and opinion, in particular" (Mitchelstein, Boczkowski, and Andelsman 2019, 12). Female journalists are generally excluded from sports sections because they are perceived to have less knowledge and hence less credibility and authority than male reporters (Etlings and Young 2007; Koenig and Eagly 2014). Even when women are sports commentators, they devote less time to female sports than their male counterparts (Mudrick, Burton, and Lin 2017). By contrast, Kian and Hardin (2009) found that female journalists are more apt to cover women's basketball while men predominantly write about men's basketball. According to these authors, the sex of journalists influences the way male and female athletes are presented. But even though female sports journalists can modify the framing that reinforces gender stereotypes, institutional structures minimize their effect (Kian and Hardin 2009, 185). However, other authors hardly find differences in

the way men and women approach news, to the extent that a higher proportion of female sports writers does not imply a qualitative change in the treatment of information (Gallego 2003). Along these lines, Denham and Cook (2006, 12) found that “female reporters did include a slightly higher number of female sources than male journalists did, but the *overall* use of female sources was minimal compared to male sources”. In consequence, one of the aims of this study is to check whether women’s voices are excluded from the media.

Female and Male Athletes Media Coverage During Major Events

According to De-Moragas, the coverage of the Olympic Games totally follows the guidelines established by the mass media for the treatment of great modern sports events (1992, 18). Admittedly, during the Olympic Games an increase is perceived in the prominence of women related news (Burch, Eagleman, and Pedersen 2012). In this way, Wensing and Bruce (2003, 388–389) argue that “the generally accepted rules for media coverage of female athletes may be challenged under particular circumstances” so that in the Olympic Games the “national identity over-rides all other identity marker such as gender”, a pattern confirmed by Ravel and Gareau (2016). For example, in the coverage of the 2016 Olympics, NBC devoted 58.5% of its primetime to female athletes (Billings, Angelini, and MacArthur 2017a). Eagleman, Burch, and Vooris (2014, 457) also found that in the 2012 London Olympics “very few gender, nationalistic, or sport biases existed in any of the countries’ coverage, lending credence to the notion that the Internet affords media managers with an opportunity to provide more equitable coverage”. However, the imbalance may come from the content rather than the amount of published information; thus, in the case of NBC, despite the great women’s prime time coverage, three and a half hours were dedicated to women’s gymnastics and no minutes to women’s boxing (Billings, Angelini, and MacArthur 2017a). In this regard, several scholars (Coche and Tuggle 2017; Delorme and Testard 2015) still find substantial differences in the ways of representing women and men in such events, both quantitatively and in the content of the coverage (Eagleman 2015). According to the Global Survey of Sports Press (Horky and Nieland 2013, 31–32), in the 9,560 articles with athletes as their focus, “more than 88% of the reporting concerns male sportspersons” and 92% of all articles with a named author were written by men. These studies will provide a term of comparison to verify if such quantitative inequalities are reproduced by the Spanish press at the Rio Olympics and if they extend to the nature of coverage or, as other authors point out, there is a greater equity in the coverage.

In recent years, hostile sexism has given way to a subtler but equally harmful mode of discrimination which is less obvious and rarely denounced but which also hinders social progress and reduces gender equality (Becker and Swim 2012, 3). In this regard, Antunovic and Hardin (2013, 71–72) describe the transition in media coverage of female athletes from a symbolic annihilation of women based on underrepresentation and trivialization to an ambivalence “that allows for greater visibility (...) but simultaneously undermines female athletes’ accomplishments”. This “gender-bland sexism” (Musto, Cooky, and Messner 2017, 573) presents women as wonderful but weak, eventually justifying inequality and male hegemony (Delorme and Testard

2015), and also adopts identifiable rules based on gender marking such as the male as norm and the deviation from the norm, a non-parallel use of language, (Wensing and Bruce 2003; Jones 2012; Ravel and Gareau 2016), emphasis on an adequate femininity, reference to women's emotions, beauty, family life, compulsory heterosexuality, and also by means of the use of sexist images (Petca, Bivolaru, and Graf 2013) or prioritizing the so-called "feminine sports" (Crolley and Teso 2007; Sanz-Garrido, Berasategi, and Korkostegi 2015). Along these lines, "media continue to adopt an approach which maintains sexual difference through devaluing women's sport participation via a number of mechanisms operationalized through visual representation" (Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson 2016, 8). According to Coche and Tuggle (2017, 3) "media prioritize individual aesthetic sports such as gymnastics for women" while "team sports often are categorized as masculine" (Koivula 1999, 600), as is the case of basketball tournaments, with characteristics deemed masculine, notably aggressiveness (Adams and Tuggle 2004).

Thus, Jones, Murrell, and Jackson (1999) studied the print media coverage of the U.S. women's Olympic gold medal winning teams and found that "female athletes in male sports (as basketball) were described by the print media using frequent male-to-female comparisons and comments that had little to do with sports or the athlete's performance". Later, Kian, Mondello, and Vicent (2009), during the 2006 NCAA Division tournaments, found that out of the 249 articles analyzed on news organization websites, 72% were on men's basketball and 28% were about women's basketball. In recent years, Jakubowska and Licen's study shows that "men's tournaments received 3.5 times more coverage than women's events [...] articles about men's championships were also longer" and "the most frequently mentioned member of the women's team was its male coach" (2019, 302).

The present study sought to check whether the representation of sportswomen contains the biased and stereotyped depiction found by the authors cited.

Hypothesis

Based on the previous theoretical assumptions and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

H1: Men's basketball team will receive a significantly greater proportion of coverage than women's team in the Spanish sports press during the Rio Olympics.

H2a: Women's voices in basketball will be disproportionately lower as journalists compared to men's voices in the sport press.

H2b: Women's voices in basketball will be disproportionately lower as external sources of information compared to men's voices in the sport press.

H3a: Men's basketball team will receive higher prior expectations than the women's team during the Rio Olympics.

H3b: Men's basketball team will receive higher recognition of success than the women's team during the Rio Olympics.

H4: Women's basketball news will contain traditional gender roles and stereotypes such as gender marking, non-parallel language and sexualization of women.

Materials and Methods

The data for this study were obtained from the digital editions of the daily newspapers Marca.com and MundoDeportivo.com published from 1 July to 30 September 2016. Their selection is justified because they are the longest-running newspapers and the ones with the highest circulation in Spain (AIMC 2018) and the analysis period has been extended to get a more complete picture of coverage and to find out if women's Olympic news increased only during the Olympic period or whether they spurred interest also before and after the Games. A comparison is proposed of the coverage of both sexes in a team sport traditionally considered male (Coche and Tuggle 2017) and basketball in the Olympic Games offered a unique opportunity since it was the team sport that received the most coverage in the Spanish media (Rangel and Ramirez 2018), due largely to the lower coverage of soccer, for which Spain did not qualify. In addition, there were also great similarities between the sexes, such as the same level of participation and tournaments played, similar trajectories during the championship and success record: the women's team won the silver medal and the men's team the bronze medal. In fact, both are among the top-ranked teams in the world.

From the total number of articles about the sports event, a purposive, consecutive-day sample (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 2008, 102) of $N = 679$ articles about basketball was obtained manually by making a search using the newspapers search engine for the expressions "Juegos Olímpicos", "Juegos Olímpicos Río 2016", "JJ.OO.", and "Río 2016".

Content analysis for sport research (Andrew, Pedersen, and MacEvoy 2011) was made using a system of predetermined, reliable, exhaustive and excluding categories with a coding form based on Sainz-de-Baranda (2013) and Sanz-Garrido, Berasategi, and Korkostegi (2015). Categories were adapted to the characteristics of the research following Wimmer and Dominick (2011) guidelines. A content analysis (Krippendorff 1990) was made both quantitatively and qualitatively (Bryman 2016) in order to search out the identifiable rules used by media (Wensing and Bruce 2003; Ravel and Gareau 2016) in the basketball coverage such as gender markings, infantilization, appropriate femininity or focus on non-sport related aspects for woman. The systems were obtained from the following variables:

- Sex of main subject
- Sport
- Nationality
- Authorship
- External sources of information (1 = news agency, 2 = female player/team, 3 = male player/team, 4 = multiple sources, 5 = other)
- Direct and indirect quotations (0 = direct, 1 = indirect)
- Date of publication
- News about winning medals (dichotomous yes/no variable)
- Main topic
- Gender marking (0 = generic feminine, 1 = generic masculine, 2 = neuter (marked))
- Does the information reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes? (0 = reinforce, 1 = challenge, 2 = neutral) and typology of stereotypes (identifiable rules such as infantilization, focus on non-sport aspects, appropriate femininity, Wensing and Bruce 2003)

- Number of photographs and stereotypes in photographs (dichotomous yes/no) determined by criteria such as traditional gender roles as maternity, beauty or family care and non-professional female images (Lopez-Diez 2011); framework of sexualization based on: skin exposure (fully clothed, partially clothed or nude), suggestive poses (Wasike 2017), and appropriate or inappropriate focus of the focal point (where the audience's eyes go) (Cranmer, Brann, and Bowman 2014).
- Representation of athlete (the way in which the main subject is described: hero, success, expectations of success, failure, victim, survivor, and the like, based on open options found in the news, Sainz-de-Baranda 2013).

The code used for the main topic of the news story was female, male, mixed, or not-specified (news without an identified protagonist that report on installations, characteristics or technical data of basketball) and non-athlete (coaches, former players, technical staff or others). If an article devoted its first paragraphs to men's basketball and mentioned women's basketball in the last paragraph, it would be coded as having a male focus (Greer, Hardin, and Homan 2009). Both sexes must be present at least in one of the main parts of the news article, namely, headline, photograph, subtitle or the central body of the text, in order to be considered mixed. The sport, sex of main subject, nationality or main topic focus were determined in the very same way. The coding scheme is based on closed codes except for the representation of the main subject, which combines closed and open codes. Data analysis was undertaken manually and an inductive approach was taken on news stories that did not fit into existing categories.

A Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to determine intercoder reliability. Two coders coded 14.73% of the sample independently from each other. Reliability was determined for nine variables: authorship ($K = 1.00$), direct and indirect quotations ($K = 1.00$), external sources of information ($K = 0.96$), news about winning medals ($K = 0.96$), main topic ($K = 0.88$), representation of athlete ($K = 0.79$), gender marking (0.95) and presence of gender stereotypes in the text ($K = 0.82$) and images ($K = 0.80$). All variables reported kappa coefficients above .75. In line with Wimmer and Dominick (2011), a coefficient above .75 indicates both coders followed the established coding protocol correctly (Burch, Eagleman, and Pedersen 2012, 8).

IBM SPSS v.24 was used for the coding, classification and analysis, which were made by the authors. This research uses a nonparametric test. Descriptive statistical analyses were made with crossed and contingency, frequency and percentages, and inferential tables, as well as bivariate analysis by means of Pearson's chi squared test for statistical hypotheses, which allows to measure statistical variation between the expected and the observed distribution of information units (with a significance level $p < 0.05$) (Wimmer and Dominick 2011). The tables and figures show the most representative data (female, male and mixed) due to the scarce presence of the rest (not specified and non-athlete).

According to Eagleman, Burch, and Vooris (2014, 463) "the use of participation numbers as an independent standard is the most accurate way to assess gender equity in media coverage because this standard reflects the proportionality of coverage in relation to the number of participating athletes of specific genders". Therefore, participation figures for the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics were utilized as the independent

standard for to determine the existence of an imbalance in the amount of coverage of male and female teams and athletes.

Results

Women's Under-representation in Information and Photographs

The relationship between the sport reported in the article and the gender of the athlete ($\chi^2 = 73.66$ $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$) shows significant differences between reporting about women's basketball (20.1% of the total No of articles) and men's (76.4%) (see [Figure 1](#)). From the total sample of articles (No = 679), 519 were written about the men's team, 136 about the women's team and 18 "mixed" about both teams.

As [Table 1](#) shows, the independent standard was based on the total number of female (=144) and male (=144) athletes (Eagleman, Burch, and Vooris 2014, 463). Results revealed that although athletes participation and number of events (1) (Delorme and Testard 2015) were exactly the same in basketball tournament (50% each sex), male athletes received a significantly greater amount in the overall coverage. If the total participation by sex in the Games is observed, there are also significant differences between the expected and observed theoretical distribution.

As regards the "main topic" developed in the news stories, it is observed that female news stories mostly refer to the team (82.4%) and to a lesser extent to individual players (14%), while in male news the difference is reduced (69.6% about the team and 24.5% about individual players). The same tendency is observed in the media coverage of international basketball, with 27.9% of the pieces about men's teams and 14.7% about women's teams.

There is also a disparity in the statistical data on the total "number of photographs" as can be expected from the smaller number of articles about women's basketball. Altogether, 119 photographs of the female team were found, under 20%, and 458 of the male team, a proportion near 77%.

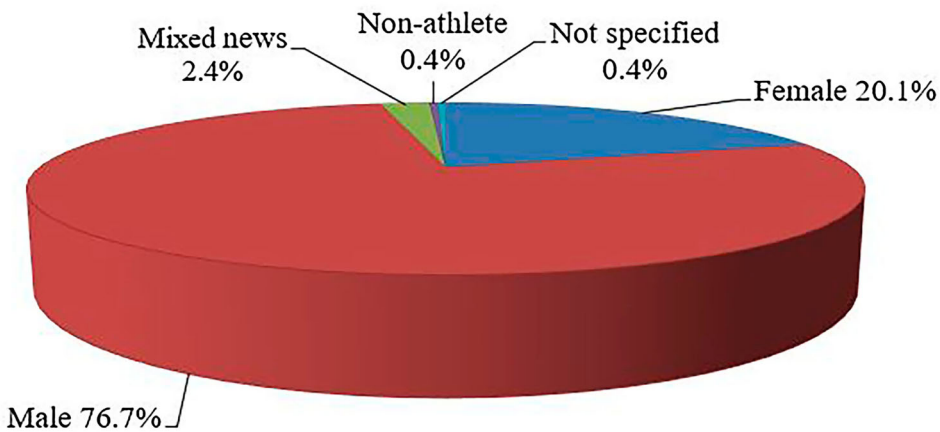


Figure 1. News distribution by sex of main actor.

Table 1. Distribution of news according to sex and participation.

	Women		Men		Total	
	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
Basketball participation	144	50,00	144	50,00	288	100
Total coverage (news)	136	20,8	519	79,2	655	100
(Δ)*	(-191)	-29,2%	(+191)	+29,2%		

* Δ Theoretical expected distribution.

Absence of Women in Authorship Positions or as External Sources of Information

A connection is observed between the sex of the writer of the news story and the main subject in the information ($\chi^2 = 16.44$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.05$). As shown in Table 2, women are the authors of only 2.2% of the articles about the women's team, 0.8% of the pieces about the men's team and 5.6% of the "mixed" articles while men are responsible for 47% of the articles about the women's team, 36.6% of the articles about the men's team, and 22.2% of the "mixed" articles. The imbalance is even greater if the articles written by the editorial staff are added, since the majority of the staff are men, as is the case of Marca.com with 25 men and 2 women. The articles written by news agencies also pay more attention to men's basketball.

The previous findings are supported by the analysis of "direct or indirect speech", which show that in articles about female players the information written by the journalist is combined with quotes from the main subjects in 39.7% of the pieces while direct quotation is included in 53.3% of the news stories about male players. Indirect or paraphrased quotations –but not the exact words of the main subjects– were used in 58.1% of the articles about female players and 45.3% in those about male players. Furthermore, it has been found that female stories are shorter than male stories by almost a third of the total, a smaller space could explain this decrease of quotes.

If the external sources of information are considered in combination with the sex of the main subject in the news story, it can be noticed that in the pieces about the female team there are statements or comments from women (athletes, politicians or fans) in 36.8% and in 26.5% from men (coach, politicians or players from male team). In the articles about the male team, the external sources increased to 67% for men and almost disappeared at 0.6% for women. In "mixed" news stories the use of male external sources (44.4%) surpassed overwhelmingly the reference to women as source of information (5.6%). All in all, the data reveal inequality since women were the external source in only 8% of the total number of articles while men were the source in 58.5%.

Table 2. Authorship of news.

Authorship	Women's team news		Men's team news		Mixed news	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male journalist	64	47.1	190	36.6	4	22.2
Female journalist	3	2.2	4	0.8	1	5.6
Editorial staff	17	12.5	76	14.6	5	27.8
News agency	18	13.2	117	22.5	3	16.7
Other	34	25.0	132	25.5	5	27.7
Total	136	100	519	100	18	100

$\chi^2 = 0.05$

Different Expectations of Success of Male and Female Athletes

Significant differences were obtained in the correlation between the date of publication of the news article and the sex of the athlete ($\chi^2 = 27.44$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that a vast majority of the articles about female players (86%) were published during the Games (from August 5 to 21). In the month before the opening (from July 1 to August 4) only 7.4% of the news (10 articles) were devoted to the female team against 25.4% (132 articles) about the male team, as shown in Figure 2. If the data before and after the 2016 Rio Olympics are combined, the coverage of the female players was 14% while that of the male players was above 33%.

Not only are there less expectations of success (based on winning matches and medals) for sportswomen but also when they achieve success, it is considered less significant than that of sportsmen, as seen in the news about “winning medals”. The article counts on the silver medal won by the women’s team reached 32.6% of the total number of articles against 58.7% of articles about the men’s bronze. This indicates that women may achieve more but the coverage of their success is lower. In this respect, an analysis of the data of each team separately is revealing. The 15 articles about the women’s medal represent 11% of the total number of news articles specifically on the female players while the 27 articles about the men’s medal represent only 5.2% of the news about the men’s team. This means men don’t need to win to appear in the media more than women.

The language used to “represent the main subject” in the news story reveals the “expectations of success” for both sexes: 3.7% female and 8.3% male, and the “surprise” at the results obtained by the female team (2.9%), which is higher than that caused by the male team (1.25%). Data were also obtained about sporting qualities (being described as successful, heroes or survivors), which were attributed to female players in 30.9% of the instances against 43.1% in the case of male players although the men’s team lost more

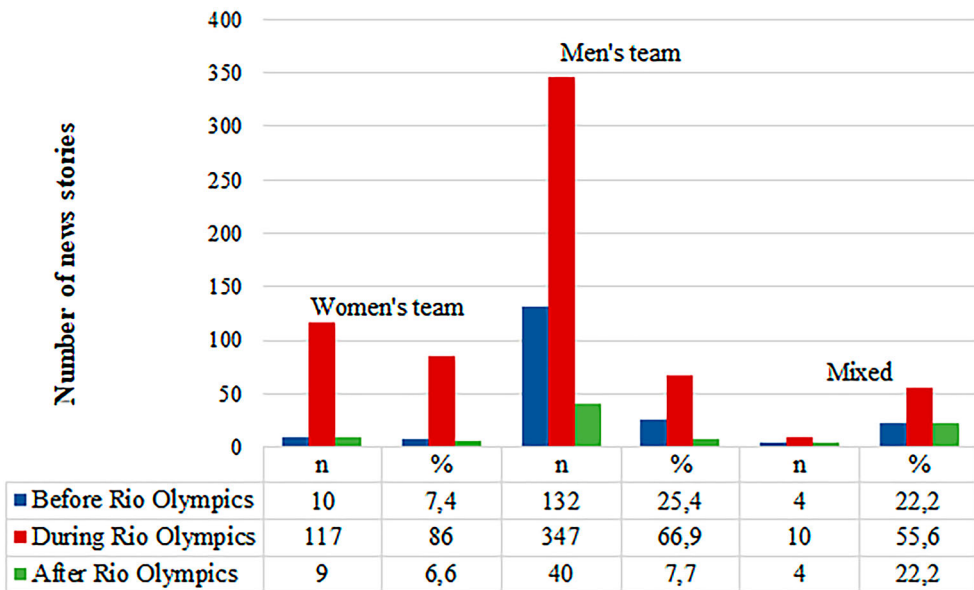


Figure 2. Number of news items about each team before, during and after the 2016 Olympic Games.

matches and their overall results were not as good as the women's. Moreover, the description of the main subject in the news story was more elaborate and varied for male players, including typical team characteristics, and therefore masculine (Koivula 1999), such as "team spirit", "friendship", "courage", "suspect" or "dangerous", with sport-as-war metaphors associated to sportsmen as "warrior" or "destruction" (Sopena, Ginesta, and Pozo 2008, 22).

Gender Bias and Stereotypes in Basketball News

Values for "unmarked male", "unmarked female", "neutral" or "marked" were defined, specifying whether the term referred to men's or women's basketball. We found that the unqualified or "unmarked" term generally refers to the male sport while the "marked" term usually designates the female sport (Ravel and Gareau 2016).

Our data ($\chi^2 = 362.05$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$) confirm a significant disparity in the sport designation for both sexes in Spain too. If the data are broken down, as shown in Table 3, when the information refers to female players, the term "women's basketball" ("baloncesto femenino") is used 77.2% of the times the sport is mentioned, as compared to only 12.1% instances of the term "men's basketball" ("baloncesto masculino"). The generic use of "basketball" to refer to "men's basketball" is the norm (87.7%), (Jones 2012). Furthermore, in articles devoted to the description of the game, the headings include "basketball", "history" and "women's basketball" as if it were a subtype of the sport with variations from the male practice.

A search was made to determine whether the information "reinforces or challenges gender stereotypes" and which "gender stereotypes" were used. Findings show that 82.3% of the total number of articles includes some kind of gender bias or stereotype while only 2.1% challenges gendered reporting by promoting women's sport or giving women a leading role. In 11.8% of the articles the information was neutral.

A more detailed analysis of all the articles with gender stereotypes (see Table 4) reveals that 83.7% of them include the use of the generic masculine discussed above against 2.5% of articles which use a generic feminine to designate the sport. Additionally, there is a smaller number of other examples of stereotyping in 13.7% of the articles, which indicates a tendency to reduce the reference to traditional roles and female sexualization in the sports press covering this event.

The category "other" (3.4%) comprises various gender stereotypes such as sexist language and photographs which highlight the beauty and sexuality of the subjects, always referred to women, whether fans, athletes ("The queen of hot selfies seeks revenge against Spain") or cheerleaders. No allusion to the cheerleaders of the

Table 3. Presence of gender marking in the news stories.

News		Generic feminine	Generic masculine	Neutral	Total
Women's basketball	No.	23	8	105	136
	%	16.9	5.9	77.2	100
Men's basketball	No.	1	455	63	519
	%	0.2	87.7	12.1	100
Total	No.	24	463	168	655
	%	3.7	70.7	25.6	100

$\chi^2 = 0.001$

Table 4. Gender bias and stereotypes in the news stories.

Stereotypes	No.	%
Generic masculine	441	83.7
Generic feminine	13	2.5
Absence of women	11	2.1
Women in secondary role (in mixed news)	8	1.5
Sexualized feminine photographs	7	1.3
Sport-as-war metaphors in male related news	6	1.1
Male importance in female related news	6	1.1
Traditional female roles	5	0.9
Traditional male roles	5	0.9
Condescending style	3	0.6
Non-sport/ non-professional related aspects of women	3	0.6
Sexist language	1	0.2
Other	18	3.4
Total	527	100

women's team was found. This category also includes familiar, infantilizing and non-parallel language to refer to both sexes, for example "That's what the silver girls are like" against "The men who will be at Rio" or reference to non-sport aspects as "Elena Delle Donne: the MVP [Most valuable professional] in women's basketball comes out of the closet". Other categories in stereotyping are "absence of women" in general information articles (2.1%), and traditional female and male roles (1.8%), for instance "Profiles of the 12 goddesses of Spanish women's basketball" and "The bronze heroes, one by one", or sport-as-war metaphors used exclusively for men (1.1%): "Spain v. France: war behind the scenes" or "To the barricades!"

In addition, photographs were found to show "gender stereotypes" in 12.6% of the articles about sportswomen when the pictures presented non-professional of women, with the athletes in traditional roles such as caregiving, housekeeping, or sexualized images of lightly dressed women. Sexist photographs were also found in news about sportsmen (4.6%) although these showed sexualized images of women exclusively.

Discussion

The previous analysis of the news stories about the women's and men's basketball teams in the Spanish digital daily newspapers Marca.com and MundoDeportivo.com, confirms the existence of an unequal treatment in the representation of women and men in the four hypothesis formulated. This is in line with findings from previous studies on print media (Delorme and Testard 2015; Wasike 2017), television (Cooky, Messner, and Musto 2015) and digital media (Burch, Eagleman, and Pedersen 2012; Ravel and Gareau 2016).

During the 2016 Olympics, Marca.com and MundoDeportivo.com underrepresented the female basketball players in the total number of articles published (20% against 76% about male basketball players) (Eagleman 2015) when tested against an independent standard of participation (Eagleman, Burch, and Vooris 2014), and conveyed a weak role of women in individual sporting leadership. This obstructs the emergence of influential players who become stars for the audience and limits the interest of fans in the individual careers of sportswomen away from the national team. In addition, a clear disparity was found between female and male players in the number and content of their photographs (Delorme and Testard 2015), which reinforce traditional gender

stereotypes (Petca, Bivolaru, and Graf 2013) by showing non-professional or sexualized images of women (12.6% of women's news stories). Such depiction undermines and trivializes women's leadership in professional sport.

Women's voices are almost missing both as journalists (between 0.8% and 2% of the total staff) (Billings, Butterworth, and Turman 2017b; Cummins, Ortiz, and Rankine 2018) and as external sources of information (8%) (Mudrick, Burton, and Lin 2017; Denham and Cook 2006) compared to a strong male authorship (between 36% and 47% of journalists, and 58% of external sources). According to Coche and Tuggle (2017, 5) "male sports professionals (athletes, coaches, officials, etc.) are used more often as sources that their female counterpart are". Such imbalance demonstrates the exclusion of women from sport and their lack of authority and credibility in the production of sports content (Etlings and Young 2007; Koenig and Eagly 2014), which is still largely a male occupation (Coche and Tuggle 2017, 5; Mitchelstein, Boczkowski, and Andelsman 2019). In such media the voice of women, whether journalists, players or policy-makers, is rarely heard and relegated to the margins by the male-dominated boards, which control coverage and decide who speaks, about what and to whom (Billings, Butterworth, and Turman 2017b).

Relatedly, there is also one-sidedness in the expression of expectations of success for the teams as seen in the coverage of male players before the Games (25.4%) compared to that of female players (7.4%). And the acknowledgement of success is equally biased. The silver medal won by the women's team was presented as less newsworthy than the men's bronze judged by the total number of articles published on the medals (32.6% about the women's silver and 58.7% about the men's bronze). This is confirmed qualitatively by the use of expressions denoting less expectations and appreciation of success (Greer, Hardin, and Homan 2009) and greater surprise when success is achieved by women.

Gender bias and stereotyping are generally reinforced in the news stories (82% of the articles) and only challenged marginally (2%). Both dailies use gender marking, which affects the representation of the two teams. Men's basketball is presented as normative and universal (87% of articles on the male team) while women's basketball is portrayed mainly as a deviation (77.2%) from the male norm, diminishing the legitimacy and professional recognition of sportswomen (Ravel and Gareau 2016).

On the other hand, the present study has found evidence of a more ambivalent treatment of women in sports coverage (Antunovic and Hardin 2013). Together with the gender marking, our sample showed a decrease in the presence of biases and stereotypes of the type found by Musto, Cooky, and Messner (2017), which may be motivated by the nationalist nature of the event. When national teams compete, the country's media tend to treat female players as national athletes and symbols rather than women (Wensing and Bruce 2003). Even so, both media maintain gender stereotypes (13.7%) by giving priority to men in mixed news, using non-parallel language to describe the way women play, presenting women in traditional genre roles, adopting a condescending style (Fink 2015), making use of sport-as-war metaphors to describe men's style of play, and even sexist language and photographs enhancing female beauty and sexuality (Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson 2016; Wasike 2017). In their study of the visual representation of athletes at the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics, Petca, Bivolaru, and Graf (2013, 119) found that female athletes were depicted as emotional, fragile and beautiful beings confirming traditional feminine stereotypes that emphasize the need for assistance and

encouragement. Such representations only contribute to devaluing, trivializing and sexualizing women's sport.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is confirmed that the dailies *Marca.com* and *MundoDeportivo.com* represented female basketball players unequally as compared to their male counterparts in the coverage of the 2016 Olympic Games. There are considerable quantitative disparities in the amount of published information and photographs, and a qualitative disproportion in the nature of coverage (Burch, Eagleman, and Pedersen 2012; Eagleman 2015).

There is an underrepresentation of women in both the text and the photographs due, in part, to the existence of ingrained ideological assumptions in these media which are reproduced for audiences (Gallego 2003). This finding contradicts the major advances in equal coverage during the Games found by other authors in other countries (Musto, Cooky, and Messner 2017). Qualitative differences include an absence of authorized women's voices either from journalists or players in the male sports debate (Mitchelstein, Boczkowski, and Andelsman 2019), the expression of lower expectations of success for women athletes, a lesser relevance of female sport and a biased and sometimes trivialized, stereotyped and sexualized content in news stories about sportswomen (Godoy-Pressland 2016; Cranmer, Brann, and Bowman 2014). Notable examples are gender marking (Crolley and Teso 2007; Ravel and Gareau 2016) and also, although to a lesser extent, stereotyping in the use of language such as non-parallel language or "use of terms which reduce the status of female athletes" (Jones 2012, 230), references to physical beauty, femininity or the private life of women (Sanz-Garrido, Berasategi, and Korkostegi 2015), while a male hegemony persists (Ravel and Gareau 2016; Billings, Halone, and Denham 2009). This is observed in the information reported but applies to the sports reporting profession in general, given the scarce number of female sports journalists and their lower credibility (Koenig and Eagly 2014).

Gendered media representations and policies create barriers to professional development and to the recognition of women's achievement in the sport industry. And these circumstances necessarily affect the aspirations of younger generations (Lopez-Diez 2011). The results of the present study confirm such inequalities and at best provide limited evidence of an ambivalent treatment of women in sports coverage which may suggest a change toward less gendered representations in sports media coverage in Spain.

The main limitation of this study is derived from its narrow focus on Spanish sports press in a given period and context. Although our results cannot be generalized, they make an important contribution to the field by providing data and analysis on women's Olympic coverage to consider other media and countries where different trends are observed. In addition, journalistic routines are often unpredictable and depend not only on sports journalists.

In order to reduce the inequalities described, Fink (2015) urges researchers and organizations to become involved in the promotion of female athletes and women's sports. Guidelines for good practice and reports on gender balanced representation would be useful to educate journalists and senior editors in gender equality issues. Likewise, alternative media may offer new ways of representing different female gender identities

(Levy and Sarmiento 2018). A balanced coverage would improve equality between women and men by putting an end to graphic and textual sexism, and by increasing the visibility of women's sports.

Future research should include semi-structured interviews to media professionals to obtain evidence from their daily practice and routines, reveal their reasons for choosing athletes, and determine whether the interests of audiences are similar to those of sports editors regarding gender coverage. In addition, sample sizes should be extended to other Olympic team sports, competitions or compared to a non-Olympic year. Future research could also analyze the coverage of traditional women's sports played by men, such as rhythmic gymnastics, to study the representation of masculinity. For instance, it would be appropriate to check whether such coverage is qualitatively different or still demonstrates the ambivalence described by Antunovic and Hardin (2013) and confirmed by this study.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID

Juana Salido-Fernandez  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9107-300X>

Ana Maria Muñoz-Muñoz  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4575-698X>

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