WTSN AND THE REPRESENTATION OF CANADIAN WOMEN'S SPORT

RISKY BUSINESS: THE RISE AND FALL OF WTSN AND THE COMMERCIAL

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S SPORT IN CANADA

By

NICOLE NEVERSON, B.A., M.A.

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AUTHOR: Nicole Neverson, B.A. (Carleton University), M.A. (McMaster University)

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand the relationship between political economy, cultural policy, and the strategies employed in attempts to address representational deficits in the media. While broadly examining sport, the primary focus of this study is on WTSN (Women's Television Sports Network), the world's first 24-hour, digital television network exclusively dedicated to broadcasting women's sports. WTSN launched in the fall of 2001 and was curtailed in the fall of 2003. Network executives cited low advertising revenues and audience ratings as reasons for suspending broadcasting operations. I argue that the demise and failure of WTSN (a commercial network) can be explained not only in economic terms but in ideological and gendered terms as well.

Three foci illustrate the sociological implications for entrusting commercial media with the task of addressing representational deficits: 1) An analysis of the major inconsistencies in Canadian broadcast policy with regards to digital television and the promotion of culture that is informed by the opinions of media workers; 2) A content analysis of the programming produced by WTSN that contrasts findings of the representation of women's sports in previous studies; and, 3) A normative discussion of how women's sports can be used to address representational deficits in the media through a consideration of the relationship between public interest issues and those of the feminist project.

Drawing from political economy and feminist theory I demonstrate how the representation of women's sports on WTSN was progressive and in stark contrast to the themes reported on in previous studies that have documented sport media. This analysis also shows how the economic imperative has been previously overlooked as an ideological factor in media representation and has therefore impeded the effective implementation of marginal voices in the Canadian sport media.

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Statement on co-authorship

Chapter Five was co-authored with Philip White. I was the primary author on this chapter and was responsible for data collection, coding, analysis, and the preparation of initial drafts.

Introduction

On Friday August 29, 2003, a media release announced that the Women's Television Sports Network (WTSN)—a private Canadian television station—would cease broadcasting. The Toronto based digital channel launched in the fall of 2001 as the world's first 24-hour sports network exclusively dedicated to women's sport programming. In the media release, CTV (Canadian Television) network president Rick Brace stated that: "A combination of lower-than-expected growth and limited access to advertising revenue led [to the decision to close the network] along with the high cost of running a sports service" (Quoted in Bell Canada Enterprises news release, August 29, 2003).

The Canadian daily newspapers were quick to respond to news of the two year old specialty network's demise. A *Toronto Star* story reported that in addition to the difficulties fulfilling Canadian content requirements, WTSN had been "doomed from the start…" because it "…had no definable audience" (Zelkovich, 2003, p. C13). *The National Post* came to a similar conclusion in a story entitled "Women's sports channel dies from lack of interest;" where it reported that compared to its specialty television broadcasting brother TSN (The Sports Network) that boasted over 8 million subscribers in 2002, WTSN had only 317, 866 along with an annual revenue of just under $694,000 and an operating loss of $2.4 million (Shecter, 2003, p. FP5). Elsewhere, *The Hamilton Spectator* appraised the failure of WTSN and other recent failures in commercial (for-profit) women's sport ventures with the headline: "Women don't watch women's sports" (Radley, 2003, p. A01). Although financial difficulties were part of the equation, for

members of the Canadian press, the implicit reason for WTSN's failure was undeniably related to gender.

Until the late 1990s, media exposure of women's professional sports leagues was negligible. In fact, until the U.S. based ABL (American Basketball League), WUSA (Women's United Soccer Association), and WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) came along professional women's team sport had virtually no access to a mass audience via television. Prior to this time, only women's professional golf (The LPGA – Ladies Professional Golf Association) and tennis (The WTA – Women's Tennis Association) enjoyed the modest television exposure they continue to have today. This coverage, however, tends to feature female athletes competing one-on-one as opposed to in teams. In theory, professional sport leagues like the LPGA and WTA would have offered stable sources of programming for an exclusive women's sports network. In lieu of the success of these leagues, it seemed as if WTSN's 2001 arrival would have provided a single television destination for many, if not all, available women's sporting events and programming. Still, the network failed.

The case of WTSN is not unique in the realm of women's commercial sport. In recent years three other women's sports ventures have shared the same fate as WTSN. The ABL, WUSA, and *Sports Illustrated Women* (An American magazine) all suffered financial collapse between 1996 and 2004 due to the inability to attract audiences and therefore advertisers. To further darken the picture, in 2003 executives of the WNBA, a league with some longevity, voiced concern over its long-term financial viability (see: Da

Costa, 2003). Notwithstanding gender, the most glaring common thread linking the ABL, WUSA, *Sports Illustrated Women*, and WTSN cases is that of poor commercial viability.

Sport media industry experts tend to argue that the climate is still not ideal for the 'for-profit' commercial representation of women's sports—especially on television (see: Koppett, 1981). This contention, of course, is rooted in the economic imperative of the consumer market. In other words, if sporting events or programs do not attract substantial advertising dollars, then it is not realistic to expect commercial television networks to cover them. In the grand scheme of the economic imperative, making a profit is the primary marker of success for television networks and access to television translates into legitimacy for sporting events and leagues.

Although CTV's rationale for terminating WTSN pointed toward low audience numbers and high operating costs, and while explanations put forth by media observers highlighted gender, some attention must also be paid to the effect of the then newly introduced digital television platform. Digital television was officially introduced to the Canadian market in September 2001 as an alternative to traditional analogue cable. The CRTC (Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission) approved the launch of over 200 digital channels in hopes that Canadian consumers would enjoy a more diverse selection of television programming not afforded by the limited analogue system. Another motivation for introducing the digital platform was linked to cultural enhancement. These new digital channels were expected to offer diverse programming unlike anything else that was currently offered on Canadian television. While the launch

of these digital channels was regarded as ambitious, critics forecast that Canadian content restrictions and other broadcast regulations were too stringent for many channels to survive. This, coupled with the relatively low status of digital television in the Canadian consumer market, made the penetration of the technology challenging for many broadcasters.

In addition to these factors, WTSN was launched at a time where the Canadian television sport market was already flooded with established competitors. These included: Rogers Sportsnet, The Score, and as mentioned above, TSN—a then twenty year old network leading the television sports market in Canada and having the same owner as WTSN—(Canadian media conglomerate BCE--Bell Canada Enterprises). To further muddy the waters, WTSN also launched alongside seven other digital networks specializing in sport programming: ESPN Classic Canada (showcasing memorable and popular sporting events from the past), Fox Sports World Canada (specializing in rugby and soccer), Leafs TV (hockey), The NHL Network (hockey), The Racing Network (horse, car, motorcycle racing), Raptors NBA TV (basketball), and Xtreme Sports (alternative, outdoor, and new-age sports).

In sum, WTSN had to overcome problems with low audience numbers (esp. amongst women), high operating costs, low popularity of digital television, and competition from networks that arguably broadcast sports highly familiar to audiences. It was despite these seemingly unpromising odds that the decision to go forward with the launch of WTSN was made.

Statement of Problem and Scope of Study

The case of WTSN merits deeper examination on a number of different levels. On one level, it provides the opportunity to examine how the use of technology capable of advancing cultural imperatives is championed by the government. Here, the discourses, or strategies of problematizing culture can be studied via the values and goals articulated in the policy framework governing digital broadcasters as put forth by the CRTC. As such, WTSN is an ideal site from which to evaluate the attempt of one broadcaster to respond to government calls for more cultural diversity in programming. On another level, WTSN's demise provides a critical site for examining how failure is explained in economic, cultural, and social terms. WTSN's fate raises broader questions about the political economy of television culture in Canada. Specifically, the patterns of ownership associated with major Canadian communications conglomerates tend to translate into economic power enabling certain companies to dominate multiple media sectors. For instance, in 2001, BCE, WTSN and TSN's owner also was a key player in satellite and multiple telephone services (Bell ExpressVu, Bell Canada, and Bell Mobility), internet services (Bell Sympatico), specialty and conventional broadcasting (Comedy Network, Outdoor Life Network, and CTV), and publishing (*The Globe and Mail*). In the same year, the conglomerate earned $18.1 billion in revenue (BCE, 2005). At that time, BCE was clearly a formidable, financially stable, and experienced company looking to take on new interests such as the digital television market. Therefore, BCE's decision to launch

WTSN could arguably be viewed as one that made sense given the conglomerate's resume and track record in business and broadcasting.

In all, the factors discussed above suggest that there are many analytic frames through which WTSN's demise can be interpreted. One final factor that seemed to be downplayed in CTV's press release yet implied in some newspaper reports is that of gender. This final explanatory frame begs closer inspection because gender is implicated in the network's very name and programming content. In other words, WTSN can be considered not only as a business failure, but also a type of failure that was either implicitly, or even explicitly connected to dominant gender codes. In one sense, gender was implicated in WTSN's unique content exclusivity. It was a network that showcased women's sports and, as this study will demonstrate, intended to lure women as its primary audience. As such, the motivations for starting the network are important to examine because WTSN can be viewed as a response to government calls for more diversity in television programming. On the whole, it would appear that gender was the principal selling point of WTSN.

Another area of debate is why BCE did not expand TSN and its existing broadcast schedule to provide greater exposure for women's sports--as opposed to creating a new network. Perhaps BCE anticipated, based on its reputation in broadcasting, that WTSN would be profitable. Here, it is important to explore whether WTSN's programming was indeed a wholly radical departure from that found in representations of pre-existing mainstream television sport or whether the network fell short in putting a truly distinctive

product into the marketplace. In all, the demise of WTSN suggests that failure can be explained in economical, technological, cultural, and gendered terms. Moreover, the factors implicated in the demise of WTSN also set the ground work for exploring the complicated relationship between the intended and actual outcomes of public policy.

The Examination of WTSN: Foci and Research Questions

This dissertation examines the factors leading up to the creation of WTSN, how women's sport was represented on the Canadian digital television network, and the economic, cultural, and gendered frames that provided context for its eventual demise. There will be three exploratory foci:

An examination of the creation, life, and demise of WTSN. A textual analysis of government and network documents will shed light on the policy framework in which digital television was envisioned. In-depth interviews with journalists and media workers in the Canadian private and public media will augment this analysis. These interviews will address the implications of government policy in setting the terrain of television culture in Canada and comment on larger debates in the representation of sport on television;

A content analysis of three Canadian women's intercollegiate basketball broadcasts on WTSN. The intent is to compare the representation of women's sports programming produced for-profit on an exclusive women's sports network with that of previously reported examinations of sports on mainstream networks; and

An examination of how cultural practices like sports are promoted in the public interest or public good. The intent of this chapter is to explore the common links between feminist politics and discourses characteristic of the public interest. An account of third wave feminism accompanies recommendations on how feminist politics and women's sports can be deployed in response to representational deficits in the media.

From these main foci come eleven supplementary questions. They will be addressed in Chapters 4-6 as case studies that position WTSN as their focal point. Chapters 4-6

examine different aspects of the network's tenure through contrasting methodologies. The

primary research questions for these case studies are as follows:

1. How did WTSN come into being?

2. What circumstances surrounded the decision to launch WTSN in a Canadian television sports market already saturated by established players that predominantly broadcast male sport?

3. What transpired economically at WTSN during the period it was in operation?

4. What is the nature of the relationship between women's sports and the political economy of the sport media in Canada?

5. According to media insiders, journalists, and producers, what were the circumstances leading to the demise of WTSN?

6. How was women's intercollegiate basketball represented on WTSN, a network that exclusively broadcast women's sport on a for-profit/commercial basis in Canada?

7. What were the similarities and differences between WTSN's representation of women's basketball and those reported by previous examinations of mainstream coverage of women's basketball and sports?

8. How has the public interest been conceptualized in the context of Canadian media? How have sports, via the media, gained cultural status and resonance as an issue of public interest?

9. How do the imperatives of feminism, in particular third wave feminism, inform a discussion of cultural diversity and the public interest? How do media texts appropriate feminist politics and codes?

10. How can feminist politics, via women's sports, be used to address issues related to the public interest? How can feminism be used as a tool to address representational deficits in the media?

11. What other strategies would prove beneficial in advancing the cause of women's sport at the same time as addressing representational deficits in the media?

These questions seek to address fundamental issues associated with WTSN as a cultural, economic, and gendered product. What follows is a discussion of the framework employed in this study of WTSN. It begins with a brief discussion of feminism, in particular third wave feminism and the relevant benefits it brings to this analysis. It ends with a critical evaluation of the general debates and issues associated with media ownership via political economy theory, ideology, and the representation of women's sport on television.

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Theoretical Framework and Relevant Literature Review

Chapter 1 – Feminism as an Analytical Tool

In this account of the creation and demise of WTSN, a feminist framework provides useful analytical tools and theoretical guidance. Such a framework shifts attention away from conceiving of WTSN as a mere business venture and redirects it towards issues of gender inequality and difference. At a basic level, my use of the term 'feminism,' and by extension, 'feminist,' is broad in definition. For the sake of the analyses in Chapters 4 through 6, the concept of feminism refers to the movement devoted to identifying and eradicating gender inequities at social, economic, political, and cultural levels. This work also extends to identity markers such as class, ethnicity, race, and sexuality (Steiner, 1992). In general, the feminist project is concerned with affecting social change and bringing about equitable levels of opportunity for women that, for the most part, go unaddressed in the day-to-day functions of many social structures and institutions. In recognizing that gender inequalities permeate daily life, the feminist project also draws our attention to how such inequalities are replicated and reinforced. The media is one area of social life that is a major site where gender is constructed, reinforced, and its meanings are struggled over.

The utility of a feminist framework in this analysis of WTSN also rests in its ability to shed light on issues related to media representation. Gender is implicated in the network's name, "Women's Television Sports Network." Here, the word "Women's" figures prominently in that it both characterizes what the network is and who it was

created for. Gender is also underscored in WTSN's commitment to exclusive women's sport programming, and claims about gender inequity are arguably articulated both implicitly and explicitly in the feminist undertones included in the network's original license application to the CRTC in April 2000, and its mission statement on its website from 2001-2003. Another matter well suited to a gender analysis is in the evaluation of whether WTSN was considered a feminist project because it catered to women's sport and a purported female audience, or if the network is merely an example of a medium targeted to females but not feminist in its intent. This last issue provides the greatest challenge for a feminist analysis because it works on the assumption that media products that exclusively target women are feminist in intention and outcome. Even though WTSN may not have overtly self-identified as a feminist enterprise, Chapter 4 will demonstrate how framing its broadcasting mission in implicitly feminist terms may have played a role in determining its failure. What follows is a discussion of second and third wave feminism, how feminist imperatives are articulated in the context of media targeting female audiences, and some reasonable arguments endorsing WTSN as an enterprise that appropriated many feminist sensibilities. A brief account of feminist praxis rounds out the discussion.

From Second to Third Wave Feminism

In her work on the intersection of sport, gender, politics, and feminism, M.A. Hall (1993), following the work of Nancy Fraser (1992), outlines four reasons why feminist theory is important for feminists and the examination of gender in the social world. First,

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a critical feminist theory provides the tools for mapping the "historical record" of the diverse category of women and their lived experiences. Second, feminist theory offers a guide from which to "understand how, under conditions of inequality, people come together, form collective identities, and constitute themselves as collective social agents" (Hall, 1993, p. 62). Third, feminist theory provides the conceptual instruments to identify the systems of power that reproduce and reinforce women's oppression and explain how this oppression is resisted. Finally, feminist theory, in a variety of ways, proposes paths of relevant social change. These criteria have also characterized a debate within different formulations of feminism. Most notably, this debate has been described as what some would call a "rift" or "rupture" between the second and third wave feminist movements. Scholars have documented how the philosophies and subsequent politics of each movement have been divergent and often times combative (Aronson, 2003; Gillis & Munford, 2004; Springer, 2002; Hogeland, 2001). On one hand, some argue that the rift has been caused by generational differences (Gill & Arthurs, 2006; Schnittker, et al., 2003) and on the other, some have noted that such generational differences mask the real issue--that the "relationship between consciousness and change" (Hogeland, 2001, p. 107) is varied across both second and third wave movements thereby creating scattered representations of difference.

Second wave feminism emerged in the wake of academic and activist work of the late 1960s to 1980s that placed women's issues at the forefront of the struggle for social equality. It has been credited with putting women's issues on the public agenda and going

to great lengths to ensure they remain permanent fixtures in the creation of social policy

(Franklin et al., 1991). Violence against women, women's unpaid labour in the home, the

mass media's exploitation and sexualization of women's bodies, and other institutional

annihilation of women's issues (esp. in politics) were in play and their eradication

advocated for. As Amber E. Kinser (2004, p. 129, original emphasis) writes:

> Second wavers are often applauded for paying homage to and drawing from the
> work of "first wave" women, as well they should be. But they did so for reasons
> far beyond a sense of patriotic duty to honor their foresisters. The second-wave
> attention to *women's* rights, and more importantly, to women's *liberation*,
> emerged seemingly out of nowhere and needed to re-establish itself as neither
> particularly new nor fleeting.

The movement's critical perspective on male privilege and women's oppression has also

been acknowledged as a determining factor in bringing the issue of gender equality out in

the open, so much so that by the end of the 1980s, "ideas of gender equity were woven

into the fabric of women's lives" (Kinser, 2004, p. 130). But as Kinser (2004) and other

scholars (Banet-Weiser, 2004; Springer, 2002; Hill Collins, 2000) have recognized,

second wave feminism did more to mobilize and affect the lives of white, middle to upper

class white women than it did for women on the whole. The flaws of 'one size fits all

feminism' were exposed. The issue of gender equality was aptly recognized as being the

hallmark of women's subordination but overall, second wave feminism failed to

recognize how women subordinated other women, and women with other lived

experiences were oppressed not only in terms of gender but class, race, ethnicity, and

sexuality.

By and large, third wave feminism has developed in opposition and in response to second wave feminism's shortcomings. Third wave perspectives seek to: distance themselves from a perception of second wave feminism's patriarchal "victim hood" (Shugart, et al., 2001); recognize the diversity of women's voices along the lines of race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000); and carve out identities in the same mass media that their second wave predecessors had criticized for doing more to damage and impede the goals of the women's movement (Geissler, 2001; Banet-Weiser, 2004). The movement typically attracts younger women who came of age during the 1990s and beyond who may or may not self-identify as "feminists" but who have clearly benefited from the gains and work of second wave feminism in that they and their peers have matured in an era where gender equality is more of a reality than a desire yet to be fulfilled.[1] To this end, third wave feminism has also been described as a movement, prominently reflected and represented in the mass media, which endeavours to embrace difference as strength rather than liability.

In her examination of popular female animated characters on the U.S. youth network Nickelodeon, Banet-Weiser (2004, p. 121) confirms these sentiments and remarks:

> Third Wave feminism (or sometimes "Girlie feminism") embraces commercial media visibility and enthusiastically celebrates the power that comes with it. In this way, Third Wave feminism situates issues of gender within commercial and popular culture, and insistently positions Third Wave feminist politics as not only fundamentally different from Second Wave feminist politics, but because of the

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[1]   It is important to note here that the picture is not entirely "rosy" for issues of gender equality in the third wave era. In this passage, I intend to explain the historical progress of the women's movement rather than claiming that second wave concerns have been adequately addressed and all its goals achieved.

embrace of the media visibility and the commercial world, as also more representative for a new generation of women.

This description is best suited to a mainstream or popular feminist character. For instance, the manner in which the commercial media is implicated in the affirmation of third wave identities is an obvious source of tension between third and second wave politics. But as Banet-Weiser (2004, p. 122-123) adds elsewhere, this does not mean that third wave feminism remains free of internal 'soul searching' with regards to the implications of playing out identity politics in the media:

> The politics of [third wave] feminism are quite obviously produced in a very different cultural and political context to Second Wave feminists. This, then, is what situates the specific politics of girl power as a politics of contradiction and tension: the dynamics between the ideological claims of this cultural phenomenon—girls are powerful, strong, independent—and the commercial merchandising of these claims demonstrate a profound ambivalence about these feminist politics in general.

This ambivalence characterizes the image of third wave feminism via girl power and girl power culture within the mainstream media. It also, in Banet-Weiser's assessment, implicates Nickelodeon's youth audiences (female and male) in the process of identity negotiation and the commercialization of those interests.

Further evidence of how feminist codes of empowerment have been appropriated in mainstream commercial media and re-packaged come in the form of products marketed to predominantly female adult audiences. For example, in their analysis of advertisements in popular women's fashion magazines Goldman et al. (1991) discuss the relevance of what they term "commodity feminism" in marketing to female audiences. Media profile and visibility are not the only commonalities between commodity feminism and third

wave feminism. The authors describe how fashion magazines are sites where feminist

sensibilities are (re)created and packaged as "attitudes" that women can "wear"

(Goldman, *et al.*, 1991, p. 336). Magazine advertisements pander to mainstream,

normalized codes of gender equality and in the process address issues of personal

empowerment that have become legitimate markers of female democratic citizenship (i.e.

the right to exercise consumer power; the right to be regarded as primary decision makers

in the household; the right to be taken seriously at a political level). Thus:

> Commodity feminism appears, at first glance, to take possession of these domains
> which were previously declared out of bounds to women. Femininity as both a
> material and ideological category was once central to the reproduction of
> capitalist/patriarchal relations. In contrast, the new commodity blends of feminism
> define access to the realm of money, work, and power as legitimate. But
> paradoxically, the female body has become the mediating element between the
> constructed domains of femininity and feminism-the domestic sphere and the
> world of work. Commodity feminism declares that control and ownership over
> one's body/face/self, accomplished through the right acquisitions, can maximize
> one's value at both work and home (Goldman *et al.*, 1991, p. 349).

In the end, the success that commodity feminism experiences in hailing feminist minded

consumers allows it to not only take advantage of newly embodied cultural codes of

gender equality but also the 'common sense' awareness of newly found female

empowerment which it influentially cultivates. Moreover, this packaging of feminist

codes for sale links commodity feminism's practices to those of identity affirmation

characteristic in many third wave feminist contexts. A similar account has been provided

by Clark (1995) in her assessment of fashion magazine advertisements that are encoded

with markers of lesbian or queer identities. In what Clark terms "commodity lesbianism,"

lesbian women represent an even more intensely distilled consumer market in comparison

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to their heterosexual counterparts yet are an attractive market for advertisers as they are cross-listed over a variety of socio-economic, cultural, and leisure categories.

The characteristics of feminist politics discussed above are instructive in this account of WTSN as a cultural product that appropriated many third wave feminist ideals. Its very creation and eventual demise also exemplify the complex terrain that feminist politics navigate in an era of increased media awareness and female consumer power. However, when feminist politics are negotiated in the mass media they still face the challenge of addressing fragmented markets that comprise diverse subjectivities. As Goldman et al. (1991, p. 336) remind us:

> In the context of fragmented demographic categories and fragmented consumer markets, feminism takes on a plurality of faces in the mass media, its potentially alternative ideological force thus channeled [sic] through the commodity form in ways that may modify patriarchal hegemony, but bow to capitalist hegemony. Feminist morality, including the tensions it contains, has been turned into yet another raw material in the never-ending drive to expand or renew the commodity-sign values of consumer goods.

As will be discussed throughout this study, WTSN exuded this same type "feminist morality" yet failed to sustain itself in the television marketplace. This factor raises the question of whether, in the process of appropriating many feminist codes and moralities, WTSN's failure can be regarded in simply economic terms or in broader ideological terms as well.

Feminist Imperatives, the Media, and Females

In her 1985 article entitled "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" Rosalind Coward questions whether the mere existence of female characters and female-centred

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plots are enough to declare certain works feminist in nature. Before offering her response

to the question, Coward observes the important role played by political action:

> No one is quite sure about the political validity of the admixture of conventional
> entertainment with a serious political message. Many are suspicious of the
> commercial success of "the novel that changes lives" and are eager to demonstrate
> how these novels are ultimately "not feminist." This has been the fate of Erica
> Jong's *Fear of Flying*. Others question the nature of the popular appeal of these
> novels, when other aspects of feminist political involvement are so readily
> ridiculed in the media through designations like "bra-burners" or "women's
> libbers." Is it that these novels are carrying out subversive politicization, drawing
> women into structures of consciousness-raising without their knowing it? Or is it
> that the accounts of women's experiences they offer in fact correspond more
> closely to popular sentiment than they do to feminist aspirations? These are not
> insignificant questions. They relate to debates over what effective feminist politics
> are; whether ideological practices like literature, theater, or film can be political;
> and finally, whether it is the centrality these novels attribute to women's
> experience which would justify their designation as "feminist" (1985, p. 226).

In Coward's view, "effective feminist politics" are one criterion by which feminist and

non-feminist projects can be distinguished. It is not clear in her words if feminist projects

should be judged on a scale or continuum of efficacy or whether effective feminist

politics is an absolute requirement. While she argues that the aim of given feminist

projects should be the advancement of effective feminist politics, Coward fails to fully

explain what exactly this might mean and if, by definition, such politics would take on the

same form across different types of media.

In addition to defining the parameters of "effective feminist politics," it seems as

though a tension between money-making and non-profit products also exists. For

instance, Coward's statement suggests that genres that are popular among female

audiences may have a difficult time gaining support as legitimate feminist enterprises. In

other words, profit-making is often viewed as incongruous with a feminist politic that

seeks to disconnect itself from the capitalistic practices of a mainstream media that, more

often than not, ideologically exclude women's experiences and reinforce the gender

inequities that oppress them. In setting up the parameters of the debate, Coward identifies

what I would call the politically charged ambivalence that challenges the work of the

feminist project. The ambivalence is exemplified in two questions: 1) Can we consider

film, theatre, (and in my view, television), forms of "effective politics" and therefore

appropriate vehicles for advancing the feminist project if they endeavour to provide

women creative opportunities to be the authors of their own forms of culture?; and 2) Can

we consider popular cultural forms that hail women and speak to their experiences, while

not necessarily advancing their social position or challenging the status quo, as "effective

politics?" Coward's, response to the latter question entails an explanation of reading

politically:

> …all accounts of reality are versions of reality. As feminists we have to be
> constantly alerted to *what* reality is being constructed, and *how* representations are
> achieving this construction. In this respect, reading a novel can be a political
> activity, similar to activities which have always been important to feminist politics
> in general. This involves the contesting of natural attitudes, the challenging of
> agreed definitions—definitions which feminists have long recognized to be an
> integral aspect of the oppression of women in this society (original emphasis:
> 1985, p. 227-228).

While Coward's point is well taken, it still assumes that "contesting natural attitudes"

would produce the same outcomes for all feminists or that all women who identified as

feminists would even see the need to engage cultural products in this manner. Indeed,

challenging "agreed definitions" and other taken-for-granted assumptions is part of the

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feminist project but the complexity and diversity of women as a social group is not accounted for in the exercise described by Coward. In turn, the assumption that reading politically can only be defined as the recognition of women's oppression and the challenging of "agreed definitions," is problematic because women's responses to culture are drawn from a range of diverse socio-political positions. This does not mean that the practice of reading politically is fruitless or useless in the work of the feminist project. What it does illustrate, however, is the relativity of what reading politically could mean for the diverse category of women. It also helps to understand how a similar gender logic, or taken-for-granted belief about how to interpret the behaviours and sensibilities of males and females, shaped the creation and subsequent demise of WTSN.

WTSN and the Appropriation of Feminist Sensibilities

The viewpoints expressed by Coward, while predominantly focused on the novel, also have a great deal of analytical purchase for the examination of sport as the lone genre in WTSN programming. To begin, I return to the title of Coward's piece: "Are women's novels feminist novels?" and ask, Are women's sports networks feminist networks? In order to answer this question one final word from Coward is instructive. In discussing the popularity of "women-centred writing" or writing in which women are the protagonists and primary readers, Coward (1985, p. 230) states that, "[i]t is just not possible to say that women-centred writings have any necessary relationship to feminism." Here, Coward illustrates her point by explaining the Trojan horse quality of many romance novels. In her view, romance novels that are written by women for women readers reinforce sexual,

racial, and class inequities under the guise of fantasy or escape. To claim these works as feminist in character endorses not only gender inequity but legitimates their status as lucrative commodities because they are popularly read. Therefore, in Coward's view, these types of books cannot be considered feminist novels regardless their popularity among a predominantly female readership.

There are a few reasons why Coward's logic in evaluating the feminist merit of women's novels is a reasonable starting point for considering the question of whether women's sports networks are feminist networks. The key to answering the question rests in accounting for whether women's sports networks are necessarily political. First, one must consider Coward's description of reading politically. If it involves taking account of "…*what* reality is being constructed, and *how* representations are achieving this construction," then as a television network, WTSN was political. The network's attention to women's sports was a response to a perceived under-representation of such sports in the world of mainstream television. Mainstream television's predominant attention to men's sports and neglect of women's sports could be regarded as one account, and one version of reality. Here, the sport world is constructed as the predominant domain of males and men's sport. One way that this version of reality is reinforced is by the predominant representation of men's sport on television. Thus, WTSN could be regarded as a critique of this reality being that the network made an attempt to challenge pre-existing constructions of the sport world.

A second feature that supports the feminist merit of WTSN rests in qualities that Coward actually warns against. In her view, women-centred writing does not have a necessary link to feminism since many books and novels reinforce women's oppression through the stories they tell. But WTSN's women's-centred programming actively addressed political issues surrounding the representation of women's sport thereby qualifying the network as feminist on these grounds. My use of women-centred here slightly differs from Coward's. To say that WTSN was a women's-centred network means that it was created for women, with a feminist-appropriated agenda (i.e. challenging the status quo in television sport), and that it exclusively featured events and activities where women were the primary participants. I use "women's-centred network" as a working concept that is partially borrowed from Coward in terms of style but grounded in the work of media scholar Linda Steiner (1992) and her research on women's media as alternative media in substance. For Steiner (1992, p. 123), "women's media" differentiates from mainstream media in form and content:

> …women's media cry out particularly for social change and justice for women. They deal with gender issues buried, ignored, or distorted in mainstream media. Women's media have variously expressed the differing concerns, the visions, the needs of the movement to eliminate gender oppression, and express the changing, still-emerging identities of the women in this movement. Women's media are oppositional, alternative, resistant in both product and process.

"Alternative" is also a suitable descriptor for WTSN being that its programming genre was sport—a genre that has traditionally been a masculine rather than a feminine domain. Therefore, thinking about WTSN as a women-centred network fits well with a feminist logic of how the media can be effectively used to give voice to or advance women's

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issues. What remains to be determined, however, is whether the appropriation of feminist politics and principles, necessarily characterized WTSN as a feminist venture.

Feminist Praxis

In its simplest form, praxis can be understood as the linking of the processes of theory and practice. In her work on feminism and sport, Hall's (1993) discussion of praxis emphasizes the need for theorists and those who champion the cause of women's sport to be less independent in their work and participate in a more collaborative or dialectical fashion. For instance, if the practices of organizing and participating in women's sport were better informed by theory, and vice versa, perhaps the project of politicizing women's sport would be improved. This, according to scholars like Hall (1993), is essential for any attempt at fostering greater public support for issues related to the advancement of women in sport (see also: Rowe & Brown, 1994).

What strikes this reader of Hall's (1993) remarks is the issue of the "political." How does the practice of women's sport become political? Is women's sport, simply due to its marginalized status in the mainstream, inherently political? In short, to say that a practice or activity is political means that it "…involves the contesting of natural attitudes, the challenging of agreed definitions—which feminist have long recognized to be an integral aspect of the oppression of women in this society" (Coward, 1985, p. 228). In grappling with this issue, Hall (1993, p. 62) admits that while feminist attention has been paid to issues of women's subordination and struggle to resist hegemonic structures in the realm of sports, "minimal analysis [has been conducted] about how to make

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women's sport political." In addition to this contention, when we consider mainstream

women's sport and its representation on television, we have to examine whether or not

consuming it (as opposed to participating in it) can be regarded as a political activity.

Regardless of whether we decide that it is or is not, it is important to understand and flesh

out what the explicit implications of such consumption are. Therefore, in attempting to

apply Hall's (1993, 1997) idea of the "political," a few factors warrant consideration.

First, if praxis is defined as "…that space between theory and practice where ideas are

translated into concrete activities," (Hall, 1997, p. 220), then determining a meaningful

political project for advancing the representation of women's sport on television needs to

take instruction from the third-wave and account for a diverse range of female identities

and interests. And second, if the goal is to transform women's sport into political

activities and ventures, then, it is unreasonable to assume that the market logic (economic

imperative) of the sport media complex will support it—no matter if we believe it should

be one of its priorities.

If we accept that the sport media complex does not offer the necessary platform on

which to represent women's television sport commercially, then honouring our

commitment to feminist praxis means reinventing our approach to media exposure and

promotion on a whole. In her examination of feminist public television projects, Steiner

(2005) describes how the scholarly community has tended to view alternative women's

media in terms of "technophobia and technophilia." In other words, academic studies that

have examined women's alternative media tend to highlight: 1) the fact that such projects

rarely materialize outside the realm of marginal television broadcasting or print production, and 2) how such ventures are short-lived and fail in economic terms. For Steiner (2005, p. 314), a more useful approach is to examine: "…whether feminists can use cable television to enter the public sphere, to challenge dominant ideological assumptions, and invite a larger audience to consider political issues, while remaining consistent with feminist ethics and organizing principles." These remarks implicitly regard the feminist project as an on-going one that must shape its priorities according to how women's culture and issues have altered over time. So, if women's television sport is analogous to this issue, in order to avoid the challenges encountered in the commercial media, it is important to recognize that praxis must involve a re-evaluation of the incongruence between wanting to legitimize alternative representations and the desire to do so in the mainstream.

To my knowledge, feminist studies and sociological analyses have failed to address the phenomenon of failed attempts at broadcasting or representing women's sport culture in mainstream commercial media. There is a rich tradition in the feminist community of scholars who have addressed the struggles encountered by women journalists, producers, and workers in sport and the greater nexus of news media organizations (see: Creedon, 1994; van Zoonen, 1994, 1998; Ross, 2001; Rush, et al., 2004; Claringbould, et al., 2004). Numerous studies have examined the content of women's media and popular genres that seek out women as their predominant audience (see: Radway, 1984; Coward, 1985; Ang, 1988; Fiske, 1990; Tasker, 1991). In addition,

with regards to sport culture, recent studies have examined the organization and representation of women's professional golf, tennis, and basketball (Crosset, 1995; Kennedy, 2001; McDonald, 2000; Weardon & Creedon, 2002). While exclusive women's sports ventures like WTSN cannot be defined in terms of their longevity, I argue that they are crucial sites where lessons regarding the limitations of feminisms in the commercial world can be learned.

While some media insiders and experts have argued that an exclusive women's sports network was a natural solution to a chronic problem, (the lack of quality and quantity in media representations of women's sport), others have been more circumspect of the idea that enhanced media coverage is the solution to the lack of women's sports represented in mainstream media. Those holding the latter view have argued that a lack of coverage does not necessarily warrant the introduction of an exclusive network because there has yet to be a conclusive link between less coverage of women's sports (than men's sports) and the bold move of establishing an all-women's sports network for an at best, ambiguous audience pool. What remains to be seen is whether a seemingly logical solution (introducing WTSN) could ever be supported by the realities of a competitive consumer market. Hypothetical reasoning may propose the following question: Was the idea of creating an exclusive, commercial, women's sports network as a response to the lack of coverage offered on behalf of existing sports networks, an exercise in feasible market-driven logic, or one motivated by ideological philosophies regarding politically grounded issues of social and gender inequality? These questions assume one of two

things: 1) that WTSN can be loosely considered as a feminist project or 2) that, by and large, WTSN appropriated many feminist philosophies and codes of women's empowerment and entitlement.

As discussed above, struggle is an important aspect of cultural production. Struggle can be waged over, but is not limited to, the production of meaning, prestige, or material resources. If WTSN's creation is conceptualized as: first, a radical response to mainstream sports television offerings; and second, an attempt to nurture/build interest in women's sport, then the subject of feminist praxis is a plausible path of inquiry into the network's identity as a cultural product.

The rationale behind this objective originates from a view of the social world that does not separate the role of the academic from that of citizen. According to Hall (1993, p. 50):

> ...sociology, and by implication the sociology of sport and leisure, must be politically engaged, and [...] there can be no dichotomy between one's role as a citizen and as a scientist. One of the most important insights of feminism is that our theory, politics, and practice are inextricably linked such that those working in academe, whose focus is research and scholarship, must work with those on the front line—be they participants, competitors, teachers, coaches, professional and volunteer leaders, policymakers, or activists—so that together we are doing critical political work.

Political feminist work, then, should pay close attention to feminist-inspired projects like WTSN that fail to succeed economically in the mainstream media. Because endeavours like WTSN are judged by the 'invisible hand' of the market system they are also limited by a discourse that is inherently more concerned with the selling of the product rather than the product itself. Praxis, then, is an appropriate point of departure for teasing out

issues surrounding the plight of exclusive women's sports ventures. Using this approach, feminist work can build on past successes and assess and challenge ongoing issues to do with cultural legitimacy of girls and women in the sport realm.

At this point, it is important to move beyond a discussion of how feminist media are identified and legitimized. While the impetus of women's-centred media projects reveals much about the ideological frame in which content is produced, the financial decision making that is responsible for bringing many projects to fruition must also be examined. In other words, "[a]ny serious feminist analysis of the media industry must devote considerable attention to the organizational milieu in which media products are created" (Watkins & Emerson, 2000, p. 153).

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Chapter Two – Media Issues: Political Economy, Representation, and Sport

A major part of this analysis of WTSN relies on an examination of issues related to commercial media ownership, the economic imperative, and the 'behind the scenes' power relations that subsequently influence representations of sport. Some important questions in this regard are: What role did owner Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE) play in the production of WTSN programming of women's sports?; What were the underlying economic agreements at play when WTSN was created?; and What was WTSN's relationship with BCE's other media holdings? In order to address these issues as they relate to the production of television sport in Canada, a discussion of political economy in the context of modern media is required. Before doing so, there are two important things to clarify. First, the intent of this analysis is not to take issue with the various and nuanced debates in and around the definitions of political economy put forth by political science, economics, and communications scholars. Rather, the intent is to present a broad definition of political economy that will speak to the various aspects related to the power relations and the economic imperative of the commercial media. Second, because the primary thrust of this project is to examine the "story" behind the creation and demise of WTSN, a broad interpretation of political economy will be more advantageous so that questions surrounding the network's affiliation with broadcast brother TSN, and its entry into an already saturated Canadian market with established niche players can be accommodated. This issue is particularly relevant because the majority of Canadian sport broadcasting channels have tangled ownership networks across various cultural and

service industries (e.g., publishing, satellite, radio, and professional sport franchises).

What follows is a discussion of political economy and how power has been theorized in

the context of media production.

Political Economy: Power, Media Conglomerates and Sport

In Canada, the work of Vincent Mosco (1989, 1996) is particularly useful for

forming a working definition of political economy. Conceptually, political economy is

rooted in Marxist thought and pays close attention to:

> … [the] specific set of social relations organized around power or the ability to control other people, processes, and things, even in the face of resistance. This would lead the political economist of communication to look at shifting forms of control along the production, distribution, and consumption circuit (Mosco, 1996, p. 25).

Such a definition of political economy is relevant to this analysis of WTSN because it

calls attention to the transformative capacity of power in cultural production and

consumption, and also highlights the commercial/for-profit imperatives which underlie

marketplace logic. In other words, the messages communicated via the products of the

cultural industry (i.e. television sport) have arguably been created with a specific set of

interests and objectives in mind. For commercial enterprises, the economic imperative

tends to guide the principles and process of production as the accumulation of revenue

constitutes success. Thus, the structures of the consumption circuit described above by

Mosco are part of an on-going dialectical process that hinge upon profit-making

objectives.

The use of political economy theory in this study of WTSN also provides a framework through which to understand the network's financial collapse. For instance, over the last twenty years, many television networks have enjoyed the benefits that horizontally and vertically integrated entities (to be discussed below) have afforded. These benefits, in many ways, have provided firm financial foundations on which to cultivate new products and expand market presence. Conceivably, and to a certain degree, WTSN's creation was based upon *a priori* assumptions about the consumption circuit. Assumptions were possibly made about market desire for women's sports, BCE's dominance in the Canadian television sport market, the ability to sustain interest amongst advertisers and markets, etc. What makes the political economy story of WTSN all the more interesting is that it was not successful in corralling the necessary ingredients to sustain the consumption circuit.

The acquisition and consolidation of power poses a unique set of implications for mass culture and its alternative forms. This is especially true in the mass media where the consolidation of power and economic interests has resulted in the decline of diverse voices and sources of mediated messages. It is for this reason that scholars have stressed the importance of "socioeconomic contexts" in their analyses of media culture (Hamilton, 2006; see also: McPhail & McPhail, 1990; Stevenson, 1995). Changes in media technology are thought to have influential impact on the construction of new and contestation of established knowledge, as well as presenting society with the opportunity to adapt to change (McLuhan, 1995; Innis, 1950). Governments also play a role in setting

the parameters in which new technologies are released and the rules of acquisition that businesses must abide by in order to secure ownership. While the introduction of new technology is often viewed as a positive force for improving the delivery of out-dated formats or expanding the reach of culture, it is also regarded as a new opportunity for old media entities to expand their empires. This trend has been documented by many scholars and poses important questions concerning the legitimacy of alternative media that actually originates from established, mainstream sources with the effect of further concentrating power (Schiller, 1996; Bagdikian, 1992). When governments introduce cultural policies for the implementation of new media, they too play a hand in further advancing the economic interests of media conglomerates because they "equate the public interest in new media with the economic advantage of the telecommunications industry" (Barney & Murray, 2006, p. 1).

In the work of Thomas McPhail and Brenda McPhail (1990), the link between economic and media power has been theorized in three different ways. In the first view, the concentration of media ownership consolidates economic and, therefore, social power for societal elites resulting in cultural industries where the "haves" enjoy greater sway than the "have nots." The second view sees power as being associated with dominant ideology. Here, not only do the symbols, messages, and ideas communicated by the mass media tend to endorse sentiments that are beneficial to the political economic interests of elites, but they too play a role in constructing this phenomenon as "natural." The third approach defines power in the mass media as the capacity for combining alternative and

opposing interests with the effect of creating a false sense of reality while nevertheless reinforcing the status quo. In doing so, the mass media ensure that while oppositional interests have some latitude in having their voices heard and legitimized, their voices never attain the same level of legitimacy as dominant ones (Knight, 2004). Power in this sense ultimately resides with those dominant social groups that retain the means and tools of communication.

These explanations of power also provide a context for examining "the implications ownership patterns have on the form and content of media products or the ways media texts relate to ongoing social conflicts" (Mosco, 1989: 65). Here, power is characterized in terms of having a resistive dimension that involves counteraction; it is explained in two ways. First, resistance here could materialize in a form of an alternative television network (i.e. WTSN) being backed and financed by pre-established and powerful players (i.e. parent company CTV Specialty and conglomerate Bell Globemedia). At first glance, the introduction of a potential competitor (WTSN) into a television sport market dominated by a powerful broadcasting sibling (TSN) and a handful of pre-established players (Rogers Sportsnet and The Score) seems strange and counterproductive. On a deeper level, however, the introduction of WTSN as a digital network by CTV Specialty allowed the company to expand its sport broadcasting dominance beyond the limits of analogue cable and into the world of digital cable. This condition is a good illustration of how alternative cultures take shape from within mainstream cultures and how the alternative can never really be conceptualized outside of

a mainstream context (Fiske, 1987, p. 323). In addition, due to its dedication to all-female sport programming, WTSN counteracted the successful male-centred sport format of broadcasting brother TSN on some level, and as a result of this stark contrast could also be considered alternative in its approach to sport programming on a whole. Second, resistance could also emphasize a less dominant and top-down nature of power and how it can be exercised. This view assumes that resistance is achievable because power is unequally distributed in the social world (Hamilton, 2006) and the mechanisms that are eventually put in place to achieve alternative representations most often originate from the margins where less advantaged groups (i.e. women) contest predominant meanings and images. This conception falls inline with Foucault's perception of power that is "...diffuse" and "ubiquitous and capillary" (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 288). As outlined in the discussion of women's alternative media in Chapter 1, while such media resist mainstream culture in form and content, they can never truly change the terrain of the mainstream media but can successfully "offer a serious critique of dominant media structures and professional and institutional practices" (Steiner, 1992, p.140).

A significant body of sociology of sport literature examines the complex factors at play in the relationship between sport, economics, and media ownership (Jhally, 1984; MacNeill, 1996; Bellamy, 1998; Harvey, et al., 2001; Law et al., 2002; Bellamy & Shultz, 2006; Jackson, et al., 2008). Such analyses have emphasized an understanding of sport culture that cannot be taken out of the context of market forces and the general socio-political terrain of given societies. Simply put, much of what is classified as sport,

especially spectator sport, is what is represented in the media as such. By association, for-profit sport cannot commercially succeed without mass media exposure. For example, in their assessment of the major issues studied in the sociology of sport, Robert Washington and David Karen (2001) examined the intersections shared by sport, class, race, gender, the media, and globalization. At the conclusion of their review, the authors call for sociologists to attend to two emerging and linked factors: 1) globalization, and 2) the concentration and centralization of capital. Both themes are implicitly and explicitly articulated through the media. Globalization is an important factor in the current and future state of for-profit media sport in lieu of the international market and trade agreements between professional sporting leagues with regards to television rights and other media contracts, as well as the trans-national flow of athletes as labourers (see: Cantelon, 2006). But the increasing ability of professional sport leagues and events to establish themselves beyond domestic cultural borders ultimately delivers the promise of wealth accumulation for a shrinking number of companies and conglomerates.

Media conglomerates are said to be horizontally integrated when they own companies or operations that share resources and facilities necessary for the production of one type of media product. Conversely, conglomerates that own various stages of media production and communication are regarded as vertically integrated. In theory and practice, conglomerates that are both horizontally and vertically integrated have the ability to dominate various markets and therefore control substantial portions of media culture in general (i.e., a conglomerate that owns sports franchises, merchandising

companies, and the television stations that promote them) (see: Lorimer, 1994, p. 85-86 for further discussion of ownership concentration). The influence of horizontally and vertically integrated entities is traced by Russell Field (2006) in his article examining what he terms the "Toronto Sport Elite." His article documents the rapid transformation of the Canadian city from a five to twenty-five commercial sport team town in the short period between 1995 and 2003. Field notes that Toronto sports franchises had two important common features: 1) each was entangled in a dense web in which they were just another business asset in the scheme of broader ownership structures; and 2) sport franchises were interlocked with mutual advisory board members and stakeholders or "hidden links" who already held powerful positions on advisory boards in other industries (i.e., politics, media, and business). These two features cast serious doubt on the ability of professional sports franchises in Toronto to operate as independent entities that compete with one another and have diffuse powers. Field (2006, p. 51) argues that as a result of power concentration stakeholder elites use their affiliations and interlocked capabilities to consolidate economic interests and control professional sport markets. This trend towards conglomeration has also been evident in the U.S. For instance, Comcast, the country's largest cable and internet services provider, also owns and operates television stations like the Golf Channel, OLN (Outdoor Life Network), and two professional sports teams, the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers and the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers. Canadian player Bell Globemedia can also be characterized as a vertically and horizontally integrated conglomerate since it too owns newspapers, magazines, satellite distribution services,

internet portals, and television networks. As a BCE property, WTSN was not self-contained and self-sufficient—it heavily relied upon an overlapping of resources, or "synergies" with brother network TSN (i.e., production facilities and equipment) for its production of television program content.

Washington and Karen (2001) remind us that while the accumulation of wealth may provide cues about which types of sport prove economically successful and the new technologies employed to distribute them, economic success must also be understood within a historical framework. In doing so, the authors refer to the work of Andrei Markovits and Steven Hellerman (2001) and argue that in order to understand why soccer is not a popular sport in the U.S. scholars must trace and critically examine the political economy of sport and the role of powerful sporting organizations within U.S. culture (i.e., men's football and basketball) that have an established cultural dominance (Washington & Karen, 2001, p. 204-205). One effect of such dominance is that marginal groups and organizations (i.e. amateur sports and women's sports) are not able to establish themselves as legitimate players in the realm of North American sport and the broader global market. In the end, horizontally and vertically integrated conglomerates that own and control various communications technologies and distribution power over a range of cultural products, in consort with sport leagues and organizations, have transformed the terrain in which sport media operates.

Television, of course, is the primary medium through which the audience experiences sport. It is a significant site for the representation of sport because it

"symbolizes and allocates status," and "creates cultural capital" (Steiner, 2005, p. 318). Beyond the extent of delivering audiences to advertisers, television as an instrument of mass media has also shaped the look of sport, so much so that it has great influence over what and when sporting events are broadcast (Duncan & Brummett, 1987, 1989; Sugden, 2002). On one hand, without access to television, new sport leagues and events find it difficult to gain exposure and remain economically viable (Scully, 1995, p. 29). On the other hand, events like Super Bowl secure lucrative television broadcasting contracts which produce economic returns very favourable to the sport media complex. This is further evidenced in the year-round television sport "buffet" where overlapping seasons of football, basketball, baseball, and hockey, for example, are broadcast simultaneously thereby making mainstream (malestream) sports consistently available for viewing (Sargent, et al., 1989). In the words of Miller (1999, p. 124), "…we are seeing a televisualization of sport and a sportification of television," where both factors are so inextricably linked that what we predominantly define as sport is that which is represented on television, and if it is not represented on television, it is relegated to the margins of sport culture—or not even considered as a part of what sport *can* be. In effect, television builds audiences and therefore constructs economic viability as the ultimate form of cultural legitimacy for certain sports and not others.

The term "sport-media complex" has been given to the consumption circuit that frames the relationships of ownership and exchange of capital in modern sport entities. Sut Jhally (1984) describes the sport media complex as an economic and cultural system

of legitimation that consists of mutually dependent groups such as advertisers, marketers, media corporations and producers, audiences. In his examination of the historical development of media sport in North America, Jhally (1984) states that the fundamental factor on which this connection depends is the audience. The audience is considered a commodity—something of value that can be sold in the marketplace for profit to advertisers. If the audience is conceptualized as a commodity, it then has an exchange and use value in the process of media production. In other words:

> [t]he audience has the same characteristics as other commodities in the marketplace and is situated within similar relationships. It certainly has a use-value connected to the process of watching and listening. Advertisers buy the guaranteed attention of the audience. Clearly, these audiences also have specific exchange-values dependent on their demographic makeup (Jhally, 1984, p. 42).

It would be reasonable to assume, based on Jhally's logic, that different commodities (i.e. television programs) would have different degrees of use and exchange values. In the case of WTSN, and the representation of women's sport in the media more generally, use and exchange value are important factors to consider because they would help to separate the network from its competitors, and of course, to some extent, determine its potential financial success.

Elsewhere, Jhally (1987) argues that the relationship between use and exchange value is not necessarily one of equals. This, of course, was evident in WTSN's failure to secure adequate advertising revenue as cited by network executives and most vividly corroborated in financial accounts filed with the CRTC. While WTSN may have created programming and content that had value in terms of addressing the underepresentation of

women's television sports, this value did not manifest itself in terms of attracting a critical audience mass that could be sold to advertisers. In the general scheme of the for-profit television marketplace where large audiences deliver large profits for advertisers, WTSN was at a disadvantage because its low use value could not garner the network a profitable exchange value.

Ideology, Discourse, and Representation

Studies examining media communication have identified ideology as playing a key role in meaning making and establishing ways of knowing the social world (Hall, 1977, 1982; Knight, 1982; Fiske, 1987, 1990; Ang, 1988). While the utility of the concept for explaining power relations and subjectivities in the current era has been debated (see: Eagleton, 1995), there are still features of 'ideology' that provide context for analyzing the media representation of sport and particularly how gender is implicated in the process. Historically, ideology has figured into discussions of social inequality as an explanation of what guides particular ways of thinking about the social world and the acceptance of those relations as "natural and inevitable" (Grossberg, et al., 1998, p. 177). While this has been the case, the limitations of ideology have not gone unchallenged. Critics of the concept have opted to replace 'ideology' with 'discourse' in an effort to account for more diverse accounts of the social world, the work of power, and hence schemas of thinking. In all, both concepts inform this study as they provide the tools for teasing out how power is implicated in media production, representation, and meaning.

In *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, Nicholas Abercrombie et al. (1980) outline five

Marxist approaches to understanding class based systems of social control. Such systems

consist of the following in different configurations: 1) a dominant class that has control of

material and mental means of production; 2) a dominant class that controls systems of

thought and belief; 3) systems of thought and belief that are more powerful than those

opposing them or subordinate to them; 4) systems of belief forming a dominant ideology

eventually gaining enough power to penetrate subordinate class experience and reality;

and 5) ideology that has the ability to permeate the class system ultimately compelling

subordinate classes to participate in and accept their own subordination, all the while

securing control for the dominant class (Abercrombie et al., 1980, p. 1). These

conceptions of ideology appear in works of Marx, Althusser, and Gramsci.

In traditional Marxism, the concept of ideology explained the means by which

social relations were produced, reproduced, and maintained in early capitalism

(Callinicos, 1983). Ideology was regarded as one of the most significant factors in

determining how the minority dominant class maintained power over the majority

subordinate or working class. In the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1976, p. 32)

argued that while ideas and thoughts defined individual consciousness, these ideas and

thoughts were directly linked to the material conditions of production. Consciousness was

linked to and the product of specific social and economic classes. Members of the

dominant class who owned the means of production used their social and economic

power to circulate ideologies ("ruling ideas") amongst the masses that served to

legitimize the notion that relations of dominance were natural thereby masking the true state of affairs (Gledhill, 2003, p. 347-348). Ideology, then, came to describe the "false consciousness" that developed as a result of the subordinate class' acceptance of ruling class ideology.

The works of subsequent Marxist thinkers challenged the perception that the ideology of the ruling class, or dominant ideology best explained how class relations were maintained. These thinkers were critical of the ambiguous link between ideology and class and also questioned how dominant ideology became accepted by the subordinate class. Though not free of problems, both Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci challenged Marx's contention that beliefs and values were the result of economic relations thereby rendering the subordinated classes little more than brainwashed (Williams, 2003; Grossberg, et al., 1998).

Althusser's assessment of ideology is grounded in his examination of what he termed, the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The ISA is described by Althusser (1971) as a system of specialized institutions—religious, educational, legal, the family, and cultural. Althusser's use of ideology focuses on the reproduction of labour power through the ISA and how people are transformed from individuals into subjects, and is therefore considered a departure from Marx's purely economically determined ideology. In Althusserian terms, ideology, operates through combining state power with those of the ISA and is "…not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but rather the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they

live" (Althusser, 1971, p. 165). Put in another way, ideology has a real effect on the lived experiences of individuals. While the state operates as a repressive and coercive power (usually through military presence) in the public domain, the ISA operates primarily as an ideological control in the private domain. Much like Marx, Althusser viewed individuals as subjects unaware of ideological forces interpellated or "conferred" upon them by the ISAs (Williams, 2003, p. 149).

Critics have noted that Althusser's ISAs assume that the work of ideology goes unchallenged as it unproblematically flows from the top-down. For example, Hall (1982; 1985) has argued that the work of the ISAs is far too functionalist in scope as the possibility of any other form of ideology toppling the dominant one is not envisioned. There is no account of how ideas and sensibilities not aligned with the dominant ideology experience the ISAs which makes it seem as if meaning is determined by forces beyond the reach of average citizens. In Hall's (1985, p. 104) words, "ideologies do not operate through single ideas; they operate, in discursive chains, in clusters, in semantic fields, in discursive formations."

In Gramsci's determination, the concept of hegemony provided a better account of how the will of the dominant class was naturalized by a less passive subordinate class in comparison to that of Marx and Althusser's. While ideology explained "sets of ideas and assumptions," for Gramsci (1981, p. 207) it was not blindly accepted by subordinate classes and therefore could not be the reason for the maintenance of ruling class domination. In this case, ideology, and by extension meaning, are struggled over and their

legitimacy contested. While political or military coercion was used as a last resort, dominant classes legitimized their control by earning the consent of the subordinate classes. Ruling groups established supremacy through dominance and intellectual and moral leadership or what Gramsci termed hegemony. Hegemony, then, "is in operation when the dominant class factions not only dominate but direct—lead: when they do not only possess the power to coerce but actively organize so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated classes to their continuing sway" (Hall, 1977, p. 332). This consent gives way to a taken-for-granted view of social relations where the subordinate class comes to understand and accept ruling class domination as natural or what makes "common sense." In comparison to the passive subordinate class described in Althusser's ISAs, Gramsci's hegemony provides some context for understanding subjectivity, agency, and struggle. This has led Hall (2003, p. 48) to surmise that Gramsci's work has done more to develop the concept of ideology than any other Marxist because he did not reduce hegemony "to economic interests or to a simple class model of society." This does not mean that Gramsci's work has remained impervious to criticism. Most notably, while hegemony works to achieve consent via agencies of the superstructure, the ideological agenda still emanates from the dominating class—it therefore has a privileged location as it comprises political leaders or the intellectual and moral elite (Williams, 2003; Barrett, 1994).

Contemporary debates over how dominance and power are articulated in representations of the social world have called for a re-assessment of ideology as a

concept. Some have argued for a more nuanced approach to understanding the struggle over meaning and resistance to power that accounts for the complex and diverse character of modern society (Hall, 1985; Purvis & Hunt, 1993). In particular, evaluating the analytical utility of ideology is especially important in a mass society where dominant beliefs undoubtedly exist, yet the identity or composition of society is not completely "seamless" but fractured (Abercrombie et al. 1980). Early Marxist formulations of ideology have also been criticized for being broad in definition calling their empirical validity and analytical applicability into question. Throughout the literature, critics have commented on how ideology has come to incorporate many different things: 1) the "imagined" reality or what is "false" or "phantom" about social relations (Žižek, 1994; Foucault, 1980); 2) the umbrella term describing 'systems of thought' such as feminism, capitalism, or liberalism that are linked to "social action or politics" (Williams, 2003, p. 146); and 3) a force which mystifies the subordinated as to the true intentions of the dominant and thereby cultivating "class belonging" (Barrett, 1994). There has been a decided shift in thinking about social relations as based on the structural and economically deterministic constraints proposed in early Marxist work, to recognizing how power, ideological and otherwise, works while acknowledging human agency.

The diffuse nature of power is accounted for in Michel Foucault's (1980) notion of discourse. Discourse is a system of representation that provides clues on how the social world is organized and how to go about evaluating what is meaningful in it. In addition, it:

delimits and defines what it is possible to say and to do and not possible to say and do. ... A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. And as a result it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions (Williams, 2003, p. 160).

To this end, Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt (1993, p. 476) propose that discourse also implies "that all social relations are lived and comprehended by their participants in terms of specific linguistic or semiotic vehicles that organize their thinking, understanding and experiencing." Both descriptions also provide good context for understanding how discourses perform ideological work through language. Because they are articulated through language, discourses are made into representations of dominant and contested meanings of "the real."

As stated above, the conceptual utility of discourse rests in its account of a more organic or fluid notion of power and its origin. In other words, dominant and contested meanings "serve the interests of that section of society within which the discourse originates and which works ideologically to naturalize those meanings into common sense" (Fiske, 1987, p. 14). Accordingly, if meaning can be struggled over in the social realm, then, power cannot originate from one definitive source. This position is featured in scholarship that attempts to understand how meanings are negotiated at the level of the audience or viewer (see: Ang, 1988; Radway 1984; Morley, 1992), and more prominently in the work of the feminist studies examining gender relations. As Mary McDonald and Susan Birrell (1999, p. 288) observe:

> Where many theories deal exclusively with the public dimensions of power, some forms of feminism assist in engaging power within a private or domestic sphere. While bringing feminist concerns such as male sexual violence, women's unpaid household labor, and reproductive rights into popular discussions, feminists have anticipated Michael Foucault's concerns with the body as a primary site for struggles over diffuse forms of power/knowledge. For Foucault power is not possessed by a dominant class or the state, nor imposed coercively from above. Instead, power is diffuse, ubiquitous, and capillary, permeating all aspects of social life.

Following Foucault's guide, the feminist interests outlined by McDonald and Birrell, highlight the issue of subordination. While feminists tend to disagree on the how and why male oppression of females transpires, they have nonetheless given names to systems of power through which women's lived experiences are negotiated; these systems include: patriarchy, the sexual division of labour, heterosexism, and imperialism (Franklin, 1991, p. 172-173).

While contemporary analyses of cultural texts and social relations often defer to discourse when identifying the systems of power at play in the struggle over meaning, this analysis of WTSN and the representation of women's sport recognizes the rhetorical value of ideology with regards to explaining the implications of feminist politics and larger "action agendas." As Fiske (1987, p. 14-15) reminds us:

> Any account of a discourse or a discursive practice must include its topic area, its social origin, and its ideological work: we should not, therefore, think about a discourse of economics, or of gender, but of a capitalist (or socialist) discourse of economics, or the patriarchal (or feminist) discourse of gender.

In this analysis, then, the ideological work of discourse is implicated in: 1) the social democratic perspective of culture - the CRTC's decision to introduce digital television in Canada as an effort to protect and promote cultural diversity; 2) the capitalist perspective

of the television sport marketplace - the economic (for-profit) imperative reigns supreme and thereby influences what is legitimized as "sport;" and 3) the feminist perspective of gender in the representation of television sport – WTSN as a response to predominantly male-centred sport coverage. These factors can be considered ideological projects that were accompanied by a variety of discourses speaking to their respective legitimacy. This is especially true for WTSN and the claims it made on the state of gender relations in the representation of television sport. Feminist politics are discourses borne from ideological "systems of domination" which "contain forms of signification that are incorporated into lived experience where the basic mechanism of incorporation is one whereby sectional or specific interests are represented as universal interests" (Purvis & Hunt, 1993, p. 497).

Ideology and discourse work through representation. As such, representation involves more than mere reflection, "it implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labour of *making things mean*" (Hall, 1982, p. 64 original emphasis). Representations, then, make claims about reality thereby becoming the visual or aural conduits of ideological work and discursive practices. As Grossberg, et al. (1998, p. 185 original emphasis) remark, reality:

> …is not real in any obvious and direct sense. It is, rather, the product of human invention—something people create and re-create (produce, maintain, repair, and transform). In this view, no independent reality is ever available to human beings; rather, the things that are taken to be real are real because they are socially constructed, or represented as real. According to this view, *reality has to be made to mean.* …the social construction of reality is always a process inextricably related to the relations of power in a society.

As an institution, television production employs codes, techniques, and routines into the everyday practice of presenting events and producing programming. These codes "…organize the world into categories, telling us what is a significant relationship, [and] what similarities and what differences are meaningful and matter" (Grossberg, et al., 1998, p. 136). These codes are discursive and are therefore influential in defining the frameworks or limits within which reality can be constructed and understood.

According to Fiske (1987, p. 5) television production codes are hierarchal and operate on three levels: Level 1 - reality; Level 2 - representation; and Level 3 - ideology. Each level is interconnected and interdependent. The construction of television texts relies heavily on ideological codes to produce meanings associated with a particular genre (e.g., drama, news, and sport). In the case of sport television, these ideological codes influence discourses in and around sport culture and contribute to the framework in which sport can be recognized.

Sport, Gender, and Representation

The body is central to participation and competition in sport. Gender is inscribed on the body and this inscription is deeply rooted in given historical contexts and culturally dominant conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Bordo, 1989; Butler, 1990, 1994; Connell, 1990; White & Gillett, 1994). As a social construction, gender plays a large role in reproducing and reinforcing meanings attributed to the athletic and non-athletic male and female bodies in sporting practice. When gender has been considered in the context of sport and leisure, scholars have debated the implications of binary gender logic and

how such logic influences our knowledge about the body, physicality, and gender appropriate sporting activities. Debates over "appropriate" sports for male and female participation offered one of the first battle grounds of contestation and perhaps the most ideologically charged arguments rooted in essentialism. The logic of essentialism conflates sex differences (male and female) with the socially constructed characteristics of gender (masculine and feminine), resulting in a problematic assumption that gender differences are a by-product of biological sex differences. Instead of viewing gender characteristics as socio-cultural constructs, they are seen as naturally occurring sensibilities in men and women. The faulty logic created here presumes that because men and women are biologically different, and what it means to be masculine or feminine is based on sex, appropriate sporting practices should be a reflection of these criteria. The binary logic not only has consequences for reinforcing stereotypical assumptions about male and female athletic participation but for how these practices are represented in other forms of culture, namely the media. What follows is a discussion of the binary logic in the context of representing women's sport and a review of the prevailing themes in the representation of women's sport in the media.

Gender and the Binary Logic: Boys to Men…Girls to…?

Historically, whether through organization, participation, or consumption, sport has served as a masculinizing agent (Connell, 1983; 1987; Burton Nelson, 1994; Lenskyj, 1988, Jhally, 1984; Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000). Hegemonic masculinity has been defined as an ideal state of "maleness" autonomy, self-awareness, confidence, and agency

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(A. Hall, 1996; Connell, 1987). The cultural capital of hegemonic masculinity, for the most part, has its highest value in the public sphere where as a social construct it describes not only expected or assumed male behaviour but sets limits for femininity and females as well. Characterizing masculinity in this manner results in two outcomes: 1) as a construct, hegemonic masculinity assesses appropriate masculinities and femininities; and 2) the construct also positions femininity as subordinate to masculinity. Robert Connell (1983) reasons that the "cult of physicality and sport" greatly influences a large part of what it means to be "male" and athletic. Inherently, the "cult" directs its members to embrace a form of physicality that combines force and skill for the attainment of symbolic power. Following this reasoning, force and skill are beneficial in the quest for "maleness" because knowing how to move one's body with competency, while commanding attention and achieving desired outcomes symbolizes the ability to impose one's power on another (Connell, 1983, p.18).

For women in sport, more so than their male counterparts, the body signifies a site of struggle. Donald Sabo and Michael Messner (1993, p. 19) describe this struggle as the paradox of the female body existing in one instance as object-subject outside of the sport realm; and in the other, as subject-object when engaged in sporting activity. In other words, a tension develops between culturally appropriated ways of being a "woman" and "athletic woman" as if the two were naturally exclusive markers. The complexities created within this tension, in most cases, position passivity against agency or slender/weak against muscular/strong. For the purposes of this discussion, it is important

to first understand how this relationship produces socio-cultural meanings associated with the female athlete and how, when documented, the female athlete negotiates meaning within the realm of the athletic. Undeniably, the notion of cultural capital is an important feature of debates surrounding the image, representation and promotion of the female athlete. The higher amount of cultural capital gained by female athletes has a direct impact on the value attributed to the representation of women's sport.

A variety of perceptions of the participation in and consumption of sports articulate ambiguous discourses of just what women's sport is and can be. One question that speaks to this ambiguity is: If sport socializes young boys into men, then what does it do for young girls? Early studies addressing this question examined the following themes: the demystification of female frailty; feminine versus athletic role conflict; and gender equity in athletic pursuits and funding (for example, Title IX in the U.S.[2]) (see: Felshin, 1974; Young, 1980; Lenskyj, 1986; Watson, 1987; Messner, 1988). Many studies of the experiences of competitive female athletes theorized that they might be conflicted between their abilities to retain "appropriate" femininity while aggressively playing sport. Just as hegemonic masculinity can be read as code for masculine heterosexuality, Lenskyj (1986, p. 95) argues that femininity and heterosexuality are also symbolically linked and as a result, socially constructed as being one in the same—but "incongruous with sporting excellence." In other words, female participation in "aggressive" sport calls

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[2]   Title IX is an American law which legislated equal opportunity for participation for both male and female athletes participating in sport programs that are federally funded. This legislation, enacted in 1972, is argued to be the most significant and pivotal socio-political factor in the advancement of women's sporting and leisure activities in elementary, high school, and university level in the United States.

femininity into question. The rationale, though flawed, that early researchers employed to conclude female athletes experienced conflict between athleticism and femininity was based on the view that sport makes the female body more male-like and might socialize a female into masculine attitudes and behaviours (Lantz & Schroeder, 1999).

The plausibility of the idea of "conflict" experienced by female athletes was short-lived in the absence of supporting empirical evidence. Maria Allison and Beverly Butler (1984, p. 163) emphasized the theoretical shortcomings of this perspective by pointing to its foundations in stereotypical social constructions of female athletes. To date, little empirical evidence exists that has tested the assumption, and since these *lived* experiences of female athletes have not been accounted for the idea of "conflict" is reified at best. Early research also employed binary logics almost exclusively in their analyses. Gender logic divided the social world into binaries: male versus female, heterosexual versus homosexual, or masculinity as dominant and femininity as subordinate. Such logic restricted gendered identities to only two possibilities—masculine or feminine. More recently, a number of feminist scholars have critiqued the limitations of binary logic (see for example, Butler, 1990, p. 25). Scholars like Judith Butler (1990) argue that binary logic offers little purchase for the theorizing of gender because little room is left for movement between two extreme positions (male or female) and the potential for one position to alter its status is limited to the opposite side of the binary system. Instead, scholars such as Connell (1985, p. 261) suggest, understanding how socially constructed gender identities influence perceptions of what female athletes are "doing" or *can* do is

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best accomplished through exploring gender as an open system and as "a network of insights and arguments about connections." Viewing gender in this way allows us to imagine how the stereotypes and "conventional wisdom" regarding the gender order are played-out in the realm of sports.

Gender and "gender appropriate" sports

Women's sport has long challenged and resisted dominant "taken-for-granted" notions of the sport world. One consequence of this has been that certain sports have been considered exclusive male preserves due to the fact that men typically play them and are expected to demonstrate certain kinds of aggression and command of physicality (i.e., North American football, and ice hockey). Thus, certain sports were viewed as being exclusively congruous with dominant constructions of what it meant to be "male." Other "fem-sports" (i.e., figure skating, tennis, and gymnastics) have tended to be constructed as more socially accepted forms of athletic participation for women. Over time, and through social negotiation, there have been tensions when defining what the acceptable possibilities of women's sport can be. The grounds on which these tensions are founded have relied on essentialist views of physicality and the body. They have also employed traditional notions of masculinity as the norm from which other forms of physicality are evaluated. Cynthia Hasbrook and Othello Harris (1999, p. 303) remind us that "[p]hysical skill, strength, size, gesture, and posture provide us with gendered identities [or scripts] and communicate our gender to others." Because displays of physical skill, strength, and dominance have been culturally legitimized as constituting acceptable male behaviour,

and therefore reinforcing hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987), such forms of physicality have been used to set the limits of feminine sporting activity (McDermott, 2000).

"Fem-sports" are considered those where female participants conform to stereotypical "appropriate" physicality. As Margaret Duncan and Cynthia Hasbrook (1988, p. 4) state:

> It appears that society and one of its most influential institutions, the mass media, discourage female participation in team sports by labelling it unfeminine and by ignoring women's team sporting events. The same phenomenon occurs when women participate in particular individual sports, those considered to be more appropriate for males than females because of the "unfeminine" demands made on strength and endurance or because of the risk involved.

Other scholars have confirmed this rationale in recognizing that "fem-sports" such as ice-skating, tennis, swimming, figure skating, ice-dancing, aerobics, and gymnastics, are afforded more media coverage than rugby, basketball, boxing, or hockey due to their confirmation of stereotypical feminine qualities (Daddario, 1997; Eastman and Billings, 2000). The representations of "fem-sports" and "non-feminine" sports, of course, are subject to ongoing tensions and shifts.

In this analysis, women's basketball will be regarded as a "non-feminine" sport. Certain "non-feminine" sports like basketball, rugby, and ice hockey have been labelled as such because they involve physical contact or high risk of injury. In these sports, notions of femininity (not questioned when women participate in "feminine" sports) are called into question. Nonetheless, women's sports like basketball and hockey are often considered mere imitations of the male game (Banet-Weiser, 1999). In some of these

sports female athletes sometimes play with modified rules and while they may compete at a high level, they are commonly trivialized compared to the male alternative. Conversely, some feminists might argue that "fem-sports" such as figure skating, ice dancing, tennis, and gymnastics are positive examples of female sport achievement because women fulfill primary roles as participants and spectators. In other words, one could argue that such representations do not ignore, marginalize, or sexualize female athletes because a cultural space has been created to include them thereby legitimating these sports—albeit in a highly gendered fashion.

Research on women participating in non-traditional female sports such as wrestling, rugby, windsurfing, and hockey has built on the notion of contested terrain and tension between socially constructed gendered ways of being (McDermott, 1996; Sisjord, 1997; Theberge, 2000; Broad, 2001). Nancy Theberge (1997) suggests that in addition to demystifying female frailty, female athletes (especially those who participate in traditional male sports), actively transgress definitions of gender that in turn force long-standing ideologies about gender (specifically femininity) to shift or at least become unsettled. In her assessment of women's professional ice hockey in Canada, Theberge (2000) concluded that because the women's game was so closely related and essentially reliant on the men's game as a model, a tension existed amongst players, promoters, and fans as to what the "look" of the women's game should be. As participants of women's ice hockey attempted to create a unique and separate version of the game, they were confronted with the problems of not being taken as seriously as male hockey players.

Theberge (2000, p.133) explains that as long as women's hockey is played in a cultural climate where the men's game is more culturally and socially valued, then even "[a]s [female] players become bigger, stronger, and more skilled, and the practice of the game more intense and physical, the question, 'How should women play hockey?' [will take] on added ideological importance." This observation reflects similar findings reported in the literature on other leisure and sporting activities dominated by men.

In their examination of British windsurfing subculture, Belinda Wheaton and Alan Tomlinson (1998) observed how identity and gender were negotiated amongst women athletes participating in a predominantly male preserve. As in Theberge's ice-hockey study, many female windsurfers considered their participation as ground breaking and personally empowering. Many of the respondents felt that while some stereotyped femininity existed in the sport (e.g., female partners spectating from the sidelines watching males participate, a.k.a. "windsurfing widows") "real women" windsurfed. Achieving muscle mass and definition through participation was also perceived by participants as empowering because such accomplishments were usually associated with male physical development and success in sport. The authors explain this phenomenon through discussing Bourdieu's work on how physicality, skill, and attainment of athletic goals foster gains in social/cultural capital. Wheaton and Tomlinson (1998, p. 260) comment that: "the conversion of skill to confidence can usefully be thought of as what Bourdieu terms the conversion of physical capital to social capital, and in this windsurfing sphere, also to sub-cultural capital, or status." This logic demonstrates how

alternative meanings attributed to female athletic success in sport can develop. Novel identities or ways of being a "woman" can rearticulate understandings of what sport participation may offer females. This, in turn, has strong implications for potential cultural (especially media) representations of women's sport.

Media Representation of Women's Sport: General Themes

As previously reviewed, television and sport have long shared a strong, interdependent relationship that has been commercially successful and culturally powerful. Because of this mutual interest and television's ability to reach mass audiences, sell products, create excitement, and appeal to emotions, sociologists have long considered representation in mediated sport to be an important research topic. Thus, television can be studied as both a technology and a "sense-making" communication interface (Hartley, 1992). In the latter sense, representation is at the heart of television's ability to construct frames of reference from which to make sense of the social world. The manner in which accounts of "reality" are represented in sport programming featuring male and female athletes, for instance, can provide valuable insight into prevailing cultural notions regarding gender. This is particularly important because sport is a highly gendered domain where ideologies grounded in sexual difference and relations between men and women are reinforced (Lenskyj, 1986; Donnelly, 1987; Messner, 1988; Gillett & White, 1992; White & Gillett, 1994; A. Hall, 1996; Theberge, 2000). Studies have identified three primary ways in which female athletes and women's sports have been represented in the media and in particular television. First, textual analyses have

examined how female athletes are either neglected or trivialized in media coverage. Second, content and discourse analyses have documented how female athletes are consistently stereotyped and sexualized in media representations. Thirdly, studies have highlighted ways in which female athletes and women's sports are represented in contradictory and ambivalent ways in media coverage—a strategy which some scholars regard as the most recent form of effectively commercializing women's sport. What follows is a detailed discussion of these three major themes.

Trivialization and Neglect

In *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada's Press*, Richard Gruneau and Robert Hackett (2000) critically examine how daily journalistic routines of Canadian newsrooms, in combination with institutional practices of individual media organizations, systematically exclude/include certain sources and voices when reporting the news. Such practices result in certain events and topics being ignored by mainstream media rendering them unavailable for general public scrutiny. This type of neglect and exclusion in the representation of news stories also makes sense of the relationship between women's sports and the media. As the discussion below will reveal, numerous scholars have documented how female athletes and women's sport have been ignored and neglected in mainstream media coverage.

When comparing televised coverage of men's and women's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball, Michael Messner et al. (1996) examined how television sport producers built audiences for men's basketball but not women's.

According to the authors, this was achieved by broadcasting more men's regular and post-season games than women's, and covering men's games on nightly news broadcasts while virtually ignoring women's games. The authors argued that such practices allow television audiences the opportunity to become more familiar with men's basketball than women's, therefore rendering the men's game more important and historically significant.

Similar investigations have identified how female athletes are often infantilized in television sport commentary. Commentators often referred to female athletes as "girls" or addressed them by their first names while males were usually afforded titles of "young men," or "men" (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Bruce, 1998; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Messner, Carlisle Duncan & Jensen, 1993). "Gender marking" has also been identified as a practice employed by the media when representing women's sport. For example, Messner et al. (1996, p. 432) reported that announcers and on-screen graphics gender-marked a women's NCAA basketball game by referring to it as "the *women's* national championship game," (emphasis added) while a men's NCAA game was simply referred to as "the national championship game." These studies suggest that the trivialization and habitual neglect of women's sports reinforce ideological constructions of masculine superiority by framing male sport as the norm and women's as "other."

Infantilizing language has been identified as a battle ground for many feminist scholars because of the commonly held, taken-for-granted assumption that its use is not fatal in the pursuit of gender equality. Feminist researcher Sherryl Kleinman (2002, p.

300) describes why falling into the trap of deeming infantilizing language "generic" or

harmless is problematic in the following personal anecdote:

> When I was an undergraduate in the early to mid 1970s, we wanted to be women.
> Who would take us seriously at college or at work is we were "girls?" A "girl" is
> youthful and thus more attractive to men than a "woman." Since [my students]
> like the term so much, I suggest that we rename Women's Studies "Girls'
> Studies." And since the Women's Center on campus provides services for them,
> why not call it "The Girls' Center." They laugh. "Girls" sounds ridiculous, they
> say. The students begin to see that "girl"—as a label for twenty-one-year-olds—is
> infantilizing, not flattering.

In sum, infantilizing and sexist language function as ideological expressions of male

privilege and female subordination.

Stereotyping and Sexualizing

The literature also outlines how female athletes are often stereotyped and

sexualized in media representations (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Duncan, 1990;

Daddario, 1997; Brooks, 2001; Crossett, 1995). These studies document how media

representations tend to focus on stereotypical signifiers of femininity (i.e., motherhood,

nurturance, beauty, marriage, emotion, and gracefulness) instead of characteristics of

athletic accomplishments. Also, such representations construct women's sport as an arena

where being able to negotiate traditional signifiers of femininity outweigh athletic

achievement in terms of importance. In his ethnography of women's professional golf,

Todd Crossett (1995) found that the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association)

actively promoted the tour via marketing strategies that focused on players who

conformed to stereotypical forms of femininity. Crossett (1995, p. 121) referred to this

phenomenon as the "image problem" and identified it as a tension between the socially accepted femininity favoured by LPGA tour officials and the tour players who resisted traditional and stereotypical styles of dress or who were known to be lesbians.

Media representations also tend to sexualize female athletes while downplaying their athletic agency (MacNeill, 1988; Duncan, 1990; Bruce, 1998). First, female athletes are often objectified in visual representations. In their assessment of varieties of televised sports, Duncan & Hasbrook (1988, p. 19) found that the narratives describing male and female surfing were similar but visual representations more often than not, "...fragmented and objectified women by presenting them in a highly sexualized way, focusing on certain body parts and depicting women in mostly passive poses." Second, female athletes who display "emphasized femininity" (Connell, 1987) or the type of femininity that conforms to stereotypical notions of what "woman" means are usually afforded greater attention than those who do not. These athletes have also been termed "apologetics" (Felshin, 1976) because they compensate for their non-stereotypical behaviour by emphasizing feminine characteristics. The third way the media sexualizes the female athlete is by discrediting the achievements of those who do not conform to conventional notions of femininity (Lenskyj, 1986, 1994; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Crossett, 1995). For instance, Kane & Lenskyj (1998) found that lesbian golf players were constructed as "problematic" for the LGPA if they did not conform to conventional signifiers of femininity and "good" for the LPGA if they did. Thus, players were sexualized when both their femininity and sexuality were called into question.

Contradiction and Ambivalence

In recent research, scholars have examined how female athletes are frequently represented in contradictory and ambivalent ways (Banet-Weiser, 1999; Kennedy, 2001; Christopherson, et al., 2002). In their examination of print media coverage of the 1999 Women's World Cup Soccer Championship, Neal Christopherson et al., (2002) reported that the event was represented as one that promoted gender equality through traditional and stereotypical features of femininity. For example, members of the U.S. team were hailed as pioneers in the pursuit of gender equality and legitimacy for women's sport because:

> [t]he fact that they were muscular, athletic, tough, gritty, and female was thought to be a major reason why young girls looked up to them, or why they were able to promote gender equality in the United States. It seemed as if women could be tough at the same time they were distinctly female role models, as long as they were both (Christopherson et al., 2002, p. 180-181).

This finding corresponds to a recent trend that has been mapped in other media representation studies. While women's sports are gaining ground on men's in terms of media attention, it has been argued that while this development has influenced a construction of sport as a site of empowerment for women, "...the very existence of the contradictions [within mediated messages] serves to perpetuate a representation of femininity that is digestible to an audience that, ironically, fears too much ambiguity..." (Christopherson, et al., 2002, p. 184-185).

Other studies have provided similar evidence of how female athletes are ambivalently represented in international sporting events. Eileen Kennedy (2001)

observed that in BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) television coverage of the 1996 Women's Wimbeldon Tennis Championships, Steffi Graf and opponent Arantxa Sanchez Vicario were constructed as dramatic opposites. Their representations were analogous to those featured in soap opera narratives. Such narratives are highly gendered and often contain themes of: good versus evil, strong versus weak, redemption versus downfall, naïveté versus maturity, personal catastrophe, and duelling adversaries (Kennedy, 2000; see also: Daddario, 1997). Kennedy identified how visual imagery and verbal commentary constructed Graf as the feminine (unquestionably heterosexual), modest, graceful, popular player greatly admired by fans and Sanchez Vicario as the awkward tomboy, who was rough, hot-blooded, and a threat to Graf's successful pursuit of the prestigious tennis title. This narrative practice communicated that one form of femininity (Graf's) was appropriate and widely accepted while the other (Sanchez Vicario's) was problematic and disruptive of stereotypical constructions or the natural gendered order of things.

In summarizing her findings, Kennedy (2000) argued that until televised sport employs alternative representations, the construction of opposing (princess vs. tomboy) "femininities" in women's sport will, in all likelihood, continue because athleticism will always be in conflict with traditional femininity. In terms of media representation of female athletes, this sort of ambivalent imagery appears to be one of the most prevalent. The associated tensions, complexities, and politics are elements of pre-existing forces and *a priori* assumptions embedded in the processes involved in the production of sport media

representations. Undoubtedly, sport programming that trivializes, sexualizes, and represents sportswomen in contradictory manners pose deeper ideological debates and dilemmas.

Sport Reality as Ideological Struggle and Resistance

Like many studies of American televised sport, Canadian studies of TSN and CTV have identified how commercial television sport: 1) is marketed towards male sensibilities and interests; and 2) concentrates on an audience that is predominantly male and interested in mostly male sport (Sparks, 1992; MacNeill, 1996). These two factors play an influential role in the production of sport texts where the primary participants, spectators, and consumers are projected as predominantly male—which produces a sport culture climate where male sport is more often than not constructed as the legitimate and realistic norm.

Scholars have long argued that the sport world is a site where dominant ideologies are reinforced, resisted, and contested (Lenskyj, 1986; Donnelly, 1988; Gruneau, 1988; Messner, 1988; Jarvie & Maguire, 1994; Hall, 1996; Pronger, 1999). Consequently, any analysis of women's representation in mediated sport culture must involve detailed attention to gendering processes embedded in texts. While media representations of the past 10-15 years have steadily raised the profile of women's sport, feminist analyses have maintained that these representations are not without complications and contradictions. As discussed above, when women's sporting events are given media exposure it is the "fem-sports" that are afforded more exposure than "non-fem" sports. This pattern is likely

to persist because attempts to promote and represent alternatives can only be made from within the pre-existing structures of meaning associated with sport culture.

Transgressing these established boundaries of sport culture is not easy for potential agents of change because in order to challenge the existing order women's sport must cultivate and nurture new meanings. The struggle for women's sport in the media, then, is also a struggle over meaning. On one hand, as Hall (1985, p. 112) argues: "[…] ideological struggle actually consists of attempting to win some new set of meanings for an existing term or category, or dis-articulating it from its place in a signifying structure." Destabilizing existing meanings is difficult because it can only be accomplished by working from within pre-existing boundaries of mediated sport culture. This may, in part, explain the demise of so many women's sport ventures. However, alternative sites of female athletic achievement such as WTSN are examples of how women can offer resistance and "counter-power" (Miller, 2001) in the face of dominant and well-established notions of what sport constitutes. These alternative forms are also examples of how representations challenging male superiority cannot automatically—just because they exist—be strong enough to create new and mainstream supported ideas around women's sport.

Connell's research on men and masculinity, of course, has identified how the social construction of gender is reinforced in sporting activities. Based on interview data, Connell (1990) identified how hegemonic masculinity was implicated in the lives of male athletes. Interviewee responses linked masculinity to competitiveness, physical prowess,

aggression, heroic achievement, the marginalization of women, and disdain of homosexuality. But perhaps Connell's most telling conclusion focused on how hegemonic masculinity can be challenged:

> To say that a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole. To be culturally exalted, the pattern of masculinity must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes (Connell, 1990, p. 94).

If traditional signifiers of masculinity are to be challenged, it is necessary for alternative or non-traditional notions of masculinity to be legitimated as part of what it means to be a man. Exemplars that resist or counter-act hegemonic masculinity, in Connell's view, would challenge dominant constructions of maleness. I would also add, in using Connell as a guide, that in order for traditional signifiers of femininity to be challenged, alternative or non-traditional notions of femininity also need to be legitimated as part of what it can mean to be a woman. In other words, transgressing traditional notions of gender involves resistive action by *both* women and men. There has been some evidence of this in a handful of studies. For example, K.L. Broad (2001) examined gender identities amongst female rugby players; Mari-Kristin Sisjord (1997) studied male and female wrestler experiences with physicality; and Leslie Miller and Otto Penz (1991) discussed female body-builders' attitudes about their bodies and body-building as a culturally defined male realm.

The evidence of WTSN's broadcasting of counter-ideological representations of sport suggests that the boundaries of sport reality might be slowly shifting—although this

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shift is not linear or without retrogression given the ongoing sexualization of both female

and male athletes. As Miller (2001) has observed, women athletes have contested the

ideological boundaries of gender in two ways: 1) through their participation in sport—

achieving in areas traditionally reserved for males; and 2) attracting the attention of

investors wishing to find new demographics to market their products to. According to

Miller (2001, p. 11), however:

> [t]hese challenges and inconsistencies in the sight of heightened commodification
> make sports exciting at an analytic and political level. Clearly, sports continue to
> be a space of heteronormative, masculinist, and white power, but they are
> undergoing immense change, with sex at the centre. […] Now, slowly in many
> cases but rapidly in others, the process of body commodification through niche
> targeting has identified men's bodies as objects of desire and gay men and straight
> women as consumers, while there are signs of targeting lesbian desire.

In this emerging market, driven by what Miller calls *sportsex*, difference is celebrated.

The process, he warns, of the intensive commodification of both the athletic male and

female body should proceed with caution because this ideological struggle often results in

empowering resistance(s) while reinforcing the politics of difference—thus rendering the

hegemonic order of gender and sexuality intact. Evidence of this tension has been

observed in studies of other forms of consumer culture (Goldman, et al., 1991) and sport

marketing (Cole & Hribar, 1995; McDonald, 2002; Wearden & Creedon, 2002). In all,

the common thread that ties "sportsex," consumer culture, and sport marketing together is

that of cultural legitimacy. Yet, if the successful commodification of male and female

bodies challenges the hegemonic order on one hand, and reinforces it on the other, then it

is difficult to determine exactly what has become culturally legitimized.

Because the launch of WTSN was an attempt to represent women's sports on a commercial scale, it is also a good site for examining the social construction of gender and difference. As a television network, WTSN can be thought of as a distinct product that endeavoured to separate itself from mainstream television sport—hence, signifying itself as "other" or "alternative." What remains to be seen is whether television networks like WTSN (and other exclusive women's sports ventures) can truly be accepted as legitimate within the sport world. While the exclusivity of WTSN clearly identified and set it apart from other television networks in Canadian broadcasting, one could argue that its demise provides evidence that it failed at gaining cultural legitimacy.

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Chapter Three – Methodological Considerations

There have been a handful of stories both criticizing and eulogizing the life spans of women's sports ventures like the WNBA, WUSA, and *Women's Sports Illustrated* in newspaper reports (see: Radley, 2003; Da Costa, 2003). To my knowledge, however, there have been no documented academic studies of exclusive women's sports ventures like WTSN. The most immediate challenge that I faced in this regard was trying to devise an appropriate plan of action that would capture the most accurate picture of the network while having little guidance from existing literature. When I decided to make WTSN the focal point of this project it still existed. Initially, when the network collapsed, my decision not to abandon it was a difficult one because I was not convinced that its short life span would provide enough information to move forward with the project. Eventually I realized that a study analyzing the arrival and demise of WTSN could offer a meaningful contribution to the existing literature on the sociology of sport, communications, culture, and feminism. Although Chapters 4 – 6 each have their respective methods sections, I briefly discuss here the general methodological approach that guided the entire study. What follows is a summary of how the overall project unfolded and an account of the pitfalls I encountered along the way.

The First Plan

Originally, I intended to conduct an ethnographic study of WTSN. In the summer of 2002, nearly a year after its launch, department colleagues began asking me if I had

heard about a new all-women's sports network. At that time, I had heard a little about the network but was convinced that I would have minimal access WTSN due to the fact that I did not have digital cable at home. In fact, as a student, I did not even have analogue cable. Initially, I combated this challenge by reading newspaper reports and magazine articles written on the arrival of digital television in Canada on a whole. Soon after, the idea of WTSN as a project seemed plausible--but more importantly, exciting and unique. Since it was the first all-women's sports television network in the world, an ethnography involving day-to-day observation and interaction with network members and creators struck me as a perfect opportunity to combine my academic interests in media culture and the sociology of sport.

After discussing the logistics of conducting an ethnography of the network with my advisor, I set out to find contact information on WTSN management and executive. First, I consulted websites and other BCE resources (i.e. press releases). This was difficult in that contact information in the form of email addresses and direct telephone lines was not easy to locate on the internet. Soon after, I decided to discuss my ideas with connections I had established while working on a previous project on the Canadian Intercollegiate Sport (CIS) community at McMaster. This strategy proved more fruitful than investigating via the internet on my own. One contact, with strong international, national, and local sports organization ties knew one of the executives of WTSN and was happy to introduce us. Shortly after this connection was made, I began by emailing the vice president of WTSN in late summer 2002. Early on, the response I had from her was

extremely positive and encouraging. She was open to granting me access to the broadcast environment and agreed to forward my request to her superiors in order to get the final approval. At this point, it appeared that starting the project was going to be easier than I thought. I had not anticipated such a prompt response.

The positive feedback I had from WTSN's vice president informed the documentation I submitted to the McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB) to gain approval for the study. This turned out to be quite a lengthy process because the MREB was concerned with the potential risks my participant observation could have on WTSN workers who did not wish to be observed or even included in the project. The date of my original application to the board was October 7, 2002. Subsequently, my advisor and I received email correspondence between from the chair of the Board that raised concerns about the technique of participant research, the level of interaction I intended to have with WTSN staff, and the proposed recruitment process for informal open-ended interviews. Simply, the Board stated that it could not grant approval until I demonstrated how these risks would be significantly minimized. I made some minor changes in study protocol to allay these fears and was granted approval for the project on November 29, 2002.

At the beginning of 2003, the frequency of my communication with WTSN's vice president became sporadic. Despite my best efforts to keep her informed of how long it would be before I could begin my observation at the network, many of my emails and phone calls were not returned. At first, I did not regard this as a large set-back because I believed that the vice president was busier with other commitments and my request just

was not a priority. On January 6, 2003, however, WTSN's vice president informed me that the network's legal department had concerns and wanted more information about my project. Specifically, the network's legal representatives were uncomfortable about the amount and type of information to which I would be privy to (Personal email correspondence, January 6, 2003). As such, a detailed outline of my research interests was requested by WTSN's vice president on behalf of the network's legal department. In order to address this concern, I informed my advisor that I offered his contact information as a reference for the project and communicated to the vice president that I would be pleased to have any level of access the network felt comfortable with. At this point, the project moved from being stalled with regards to the MREB's concerns (a condition that was somewhat within my control), to WTSN's legal reservations (a condition that was mostly beyond my control).

By early 2003 I hoped that the MREB's clearance would put WTSN's reservations at ease by demonstrating that my academic institution approved the study. After our January 6th email exchange, regular correspondence with WTSN's vice president began to wane (i.e. my email and telephone messages were not responded to). While I do not believe she had much control or influence over the final decision, I was disappointed that we were unable to meet in person and speak at length about the details of the project and legal department concerns outside of the network operations. I felt that an initial face-to-face meeting would have facilitated the process more effectively than email communication. At this time, some of my other contacts reported to me that they

had heard WTSN might be terminated. This, of course, helped me understand why my telephone calls and emails were not being returned. Still, I persisted in trying to contact WTSN's vice president in order to verify the information I had heard and possibly use it to expedite some sort of observation of day-to-day network operations. However, spring 2003 passed without any correspondence from the vice president. The contact that originally put me in touch with the vice president attempted to help me touch base but her attempts were also to no avail. At this point, she suggested that I may have to switch the focus of my project due to her insider knowledge about the future of WTSN. August 2003 arrived and a CTV media release confirmed that WTSN would cease operations in September 2003.

The Second Plan

In October 2003 I submitted a new research proposal to the MREB. The proposal essentially targeted the subject of WTSN but via interviews instead of ethnography. I believed that while the network had suspended operations I could still seek out those individuals who were directly affiliated with it for their retrospective accounts. I was disappointed that the original project was no longer possible but felt that there were still interesting avenues to pursue with regards to the representation of women's sports, alternative media, and mainstream sport culture. Also, in turning to an interview-based study, the potential pool of respondents could be widened since knowledge of WTSN and the general climate of media sports in Canada became the new criteria from which I would seek out interviewees.

WTSN's closure also forced me to think about the core data for the dissertation in another way. No longer would the data be derived from participant observation and informal interviews with WTSN staff. At the same time as I submitted this new interview-based proposal to the MREB, I felt that the study could be complemented with an account of the history behind digital television's implementation in Canada as a new technology and analysis of the type of programming broadcast on WTSN. Luckily, my advisor had recorded women's university basketball matches in spring 2003 on my behalf. My original plan was to use these broadcasts as supplementary data and a stepping stone for asking pointed questions in informal interviews conducted during the course of my daily interactions with network workers. I therefore had access to three CIS (Canadian Intercollegiate Sport) women's basketball championship tournament matches (a tournament that became known as "The Nationals") broadcast on WTSN prior to its closure. In a nutshell, the study was to consist of three parts: 1) a historical account of digital television in Canada and WTSN via government and network documents; 2) a content analysis of WTSN's broadcasts of CIS Basketball; and 3) a discussion of the pitfalls of certain cultural policies and how women's sports could be represented on television in the future. Each portion of the study would also be informed by the data gathered from the interview process. Interviews could be based on the themes that emerged from government documents, media reports, and basketball matches broadcast on WTSN. At this time, the study was markedly different from its original form but on some levels more robust.

On January 2, 2004, the MREB informed my advisor and me that one of its members had concerns over the proposed snowball sampling technique of the study and the potential inability to guarantee respondent anonymity. This was surprising to us since snowball sampling is a commonly used recruitment method in the social sciences especially in cases where individuals are difficult to trace (Babbie, 2001, p.180). By asking one participant to recommend another, a reasonable pool of participants can be assembled and the researcher's time can be saved from the tedious and often discouraging task of cold call recruiting. Due to WTSN's closure, it seemed most logical to recruit project participants by asking for the names of individuals who might be willing to participate in the study at the end of interviews. From the MREB's perspective, the sport media community in Canada was a small network of individuals and organizations that would be able to detect any commentaries that were made public by its members. The MREB suggested that I abandon the snowball sampling technique and seek volunteers through other means (i.e. advertisement) in order to minimize the risk of interviewees' anonymity being breached. I understood the MREB's concerns but also felt that members of the media community were well versed in the area of disclosure of information and opinions. I also could not afford to finance recruitment advertisements and risk being left with what I felt would have been an even smaller response pool than the snowball technique would have provided. Still, the MREB felt that recruiting interviewees via the snowball technique could potentially place respondents' employment at risk especially if

their responses were critical of the corporations that employed them and identifiable by colleagues or superiors in the final draft of the study.

The MREB's concerns took about two months to address and final approval was granted on March 12, 2004—five months after submission. By this time, I knew that the climate for beginning the study would not be favourable. This was due in part to the fact that WTSN's closure went into effect in September 2003—meaning that there would probably be numerous disadvantages to the network no longer being on the immediate radar of potential respondents. In addition, due to its untimely closure, WTSN websites and other internet resources were no longer posted. This created challenges for me because the plans of using website information, programming segments, and WTSN advertisements as conversation pieces in interviews had to be abandoned. In effect, while studying WTSN as a network was still possible, I was worried that it may be difficult to expect interviewees to take the subject matter seriously if little to no proof remained that could speak to its character. In a nutshell, I was not entirely confident that WTSN's short-lived existence would not impact interview responses to a point where respondents felt that perhaps there was very little to discuss about the network. By summer 2004 I was prepared to start interviewing.

Discussion of Methods

By and large, this examination of WTSN employed qualitative methods. While Chapter 5 includes some quantification, semi-structured interviews and an array of content analyses represent the bulk of the data sources. These approaches were selected in

order to address three key areas of interest to the project: 1) the regulatory and political

economy context in which WTSN came into being and subsequently languished in; 2) the

industry response to the network's short life span; and 3) the contrast between WTSN's

representation of women's sport programming and the findings of previously documented

studies. These interests mirror those found in other studies of television sports production

in Canada (see: Sparks, 1992; MacNeill 1996; Silk, 2001). The analyses borne from these

studies speak to the general concerns of media and cultural studies scholars. As outlined

by Gruneau et al. (1988, p. 267):

> Communications and cultural studies researchers have generally identified three
> distinct spheres in the analysis of mass media and cultural production: i) the
> institutional and organizational context of production (e.g. structures of
> ownership, and of journalists' work relations); ii) the structure and content of the
> text or message that is produced; and (iii) the audience that either "reads" the text
> or receives the message and is influenced by it in various ways.

I acknowledge that in choosing to address the above issues, others had to be sidelined.

For instance, I did not have the opportunity to interview WTSN employees in their work

environment or those who subscribed to the network. Talking to actual subscribers would

have provided insight into how the network was received by the public that paid for its

services. Such interviews, on a whole, may have also provided another angle from which

to understand WTSN's market value. The narrow window of time between being granted

approval to carry out the study and the closure of the network made this very difficult to

organize and execute. Also, I felt that at some point during the interviewing process the

snowball technique would lead me to respondents directly involved with the network in

some capacity. This gamble paid off in two ways: 1) respondents did refer me to

individuals closely associated with the network; and 2) almost all respondents were digital television subscribers themselves.

Semi-Structured Interviews

From summer 2004 to summer 2005 I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with six men and women who represented print and television sports reporters, anchors, colour commentators, analysts, and hosts. This gender demographic was not planned—it happened to materialize in this fashion via the snowball technique I employed in order to build the pool of respondents. These 12 individuals represented both the private or for-profit and the public media sector. The shortest interview lasted approximately 45 minutes while the longest was two hours in duration. Most of the interviews lasted 80 minutes. Four interviews were conducted via telephone due to the geographical location and schedules of interviewees. One of these four interviews began on the telephone and due to economic and scheduling constraints ended via email correspondence. Four respondents were either located in central or western Canada or were unable to meet in person in the greater Toronto area. The eight remaining interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' places of employment. The decision of where to conduct interviews was left up to respondents and in all I was grateful for their willingness to do so considering the project's limited financial resources. Before all interviews began, respondents were either presented with a form outlining the objectives of the study in order to obtain consent or they were verbally reminded, especially for telephone interviews, of the study goals that ensured their anonymity would be protected.

academic conference in February 2005 a conference delegate approached me and asked if I would like the name of an executive who worked at BCE who was directly involved with specialty television. I accepted the offer and we exchanged contact information. After two weeks of waiting to hear when I could meet with his contact I received an email from the conference delegate. In spite of his efforts (i.e. calling in a favour), his contact communicated to him that it was too soon to talk about WTSN in any capacity and that they felt "quite exposed" in lieu of the network's collapse (Personal email correspondence, March 14, 2005).

The structure of the interviews involved informal discussions on: a) the relationship between media, advertising, and sport in Canada; b) which North American sports tend to garner the most attention on television; c) the introduction of WTSN and their views on its demise; d) the differences between commercial and public media representation of sport; and e) what a project like WTSN would have to do in order to be successful in the future. In each interview, 35 questions were scheduled but in most cases respondents answered two or three questions at once. The general flow of conversation was dictated by how respondents expressed their opinions. A full list of the questions included in the interview schedule can be found in the Appendix. The in-depth, face-to-face interviews with the above-mentioned media members helped shed light on how WTSN was perceived and received by its peers. These individuals also provided significant insight on the challenges involved in covering women's sport in Canada more generally.

In her analysis of CTV coverage of men's Olympic ice hockey, MacNeill (1996) conducted interviews with network staff and executives in order to augment data she collected via participant observation and document analysis. From her perspective, it was important to account for the insights of media decision-makers because their organizations represent the primary site of where visual representations are negotiated, articulated, and packaged for consumption. Moreover, as institutions with their own laws, organizations, and norms, the sport media must be studied at the level of those workers who are involved in the daily construction of meaning because as MacNeill (1996, p. 122) suggests: "[t]he labour process is a site of struggle, resistance, and accommodation in which media personnel are able to borrow the ideological and material resources at hand to enable the production of privileged meaning and the accumulation of economic capital." These sentiments are echoed by Messner and Dworkin (1999) in their assessment of how the subjective experiences of media members impact day-to-day news gathering and reporting processes. According to these authors, studying institutions and the individuals who operate within them and on their behalf, is important because "…materialist analysis reveals how differential access to resources and opportunities and the varieties of structured constraints shape the contexts in which people think, interact, and construct political practices and discourses" (Messner & Dworkin, 1999, p. 356). I would also add that interviews with media members became vital to this project because hands-on assessment of WTSN was impossible after the Fall of 2003. Of course the study could have included a historical account of digital television via government documents

and a basic analysis of WTSN's license application and newspaper articles written about the network. But without some sense of how these factors came into being or the challenges encountered while attempting to introduce a new media product to consumers I believe the study would have lacked a crucial element. Conducting interviews with media workers was the best way to offset the loss of observing WTSN staff in their work environment. Even though the opinions shared by interviewees could be considered indirect accounts, their knowledge and expertise was beneficial because, in most cases, the very nature of their work routines involved observing and commenting on sport media.

Content Analysis

A) Government Documents

Documenting the life of WTSN began with accounting for Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) policy documents. In order to account for the broader context in which WTSN was introduced, it was necessary to trace the history of digital television implementation and the frames in which the Canadian government legitimized it as a form of new media. All CRTC documents were publicly accessible. The bulk of government document analysis occurs in Chapter 4.

Government documents were a significant source of rich data in that after its demise the maintenance of WTSN's website was not regular. Prior to its demise, the website would have updates and regular columns written by reporters and program hosts.

Even though CRTC documents could not offer much information with regards to the daily on-goings in the world of women's sport, its own website monitored the on-goings of digital television on a whole. Links to other websites found in CRTC documents were invaluable when it came to piecing together the finer details related to WTSN's ownership links and broadcasting license stipulations. License decisions and applications, public notices, press releases confirming the arrival of digital television, and ownership charts mapping out and financial summaries of broadcasting undertakings were all obtained from the CRTC's website.

Two other major government documents were also essential in tracing the history of digital television and providing context for WTSN's 2001 inception. The first was a 1997 report entitled, *Canadian Television in the Digital Era: The Report of the Task Force on the Implementation of Digital Television*. The second was a 2003 report entitled, *Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Broadcasting in Canada*. Both documents were commissioned by the CRTC to assess the feasibility of digital television implementation. The former supplied the CRTC with an account of how to go about introducing the new technology into the Canadian marketplace. The latter, a dense 899 page overview of the current state of affairs in Canada's major telecommunications industries (i.e., private/public radio, private/public television, internet, satellite), proposed recommendations for how industry and government can ensure the prosperity and cultural sovereignty of Canadian media production.

B) Network Documents

I began to regularly monitor WTSN's website in the Fall of 2002. This was a tedious task at times because editorials/columns and general content were not updated at the same rate as the network's programming schedule. This made daily analysis of website content challenging because little change was occurring. The real value in WTSN's website was that it included links to other women's sport leagues and sport organizations specializing in the development of women's sports. For instance, along side links to the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association, and WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) the website included those of CAAWS (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity) and the Women's Sports Foundation. Including these links on its webpage allowed WTSN to align itself with likeminded organizations that were already established.

When I attended the CIS basketball championships, an event where WTSN was one of the official broadcasters, I also collected flyers and other network paraphernalia (i.e. pins, picture holders, stickers, and other keepsakes) that provided useful background information on factors such as new broadcasting contracts, the amount of hours allocated to specific women's sports, and how one could subscribe to WTSN. These items, combined with website content, were important because they constituted primary data produced by WTSN.

Other network documents included those originating from other specialty sport networks like TSN, Rogers Sportsnet, OLN (Outdoor Life Network), and The Score. TSN included advertising and schedule information for WTSN on its webpage. Up until its

demise, a link to WTSN's homepage was also a feature on TSN's webpage. Accessing the other specialty sport networks' websites allowed me to gather information regarding the origins, ownership structure, and general nature of broadcasters in direct competition with WTSN. This also became a comparative tool that allowed me to document the types of sport programming broadcast across the board on each specialty network.

C) Television Broadcasts

Originally, actual WTSN programming was to be used a tool to generate questions in the interview process. But when the network ceased broadcasting operations, this programming became vital not just in order to supplement the data collected from government and network documents, but to offer another angle from which to understand WTSN's production of women's sport. In many ways, while the analysis of WTSN programming appears in Chapter 5, it is the glue that holds Chapters 4 and 6 together. It is a response to many of the questions raised in Chapter 4 with regards to the content that the network produced, and how closely WTSN adhered to its self-imposed pledge to "showcase the diversity and uniqueness of women's sports and women athletes in a way that is just not being done today;" and "…clearly look different from anything else on our screens" (TSN, 2005, p.5). As the set-up to Chapter 6, Chapter 5 also provides evidence of how a progressive representation of women athletes was produced for profit-driven purposes in the larger context of cultural policy objectives. It invites a discussion of praxis and raises some interesting questions regarding the representation of difference.

Three Canadian Intercollegiate Sport (CIS) women's basketball matches were analyzed. These matches were chosen because they were representative of original, in-house WTSN production. The main foci for the analysis of these matches were production standards (e.g. camera work, use of instant replays, and graphics), narrative (e.g. the themes used to frame action), and commentary (e.g. play-by-play and general descriptions). The length of appearance or occurrence for most production standard elements and interviews were also recorded. Close attention was paid to narrative devices employed by WTSN in order to shed light on how the frames in which sport is represented can work to re(produce) dominant or resistant readings. This decision was informed by Mary MacDonald and Susan Birrell's (1999, p. 295) contention that "[n]arratives matter because they do ideological work which has material consequences. And counter-narratives matter because they offer resistant visions while creating spaces for the mobilization of political action." I would add that the "material consequences" borne from the creation of these "spaces for the mobilization of political action" are vital in terms of generating and legitimizing new meanings of women's sport. As such, underscoring their appearance in the representation of women's basketball was extremely important considering the nature of WTSN's exclusive spotlight on women athletes and sports.

Overall the analyses conducted via government and network documents and television broadcasts documented both manifest (visible) and latent (underlying) content (Babbie, 2001, p. 310). The collection of government and network documents consisted

of gathering all materials directly referring to WTSN, digital television, and broader telecommunications policy correspondences affecting television production in Canada. The publication dates of this data range from 1984 – 2006 and most were easily accessible via the internet in CRTC archives. The broadcasts of CIS basketball games occurred over the short span of two days yet a considerable amount of data was collected as each game lasted just under two hours. On one hand, the advantage of having these matches recorded on video tape and hard copies of various government documents or saved internet links was that I could go back at any time to reference or to double-check evidence and dates. On the other hand, as a method, content analysis is vulnerable to instances of reliability or the ability for another researcher to come up with the same codes and categories to form her/his analysis (Deacon et al., 1999). While I was the only coder of data in this project, I tried to address the issue of reliability by paying close attention to how production standards and general narrative themes were organized into coding frames in previous studies on televised basketball and for the most part replicated them when analyzing WTSN's broadcasts. In order to create a more uniform and systematic content analysis, Chapter 4 organizes data in easy to read tables that contrast the representation of women's basketball reported in previous studies to that of WTSN's.

Miscellaneous Challenges

There were a few instances during the interviewing process and recording of broadcasts where Murphy's Law was in full effect. Technological compatibility was problematic standard VCR technology proved unreliable when recording the first of the

three games digitally broadcast on WTSN. As a result, segments of the game were not recorded. The early growing pains associated with the initial roll-out and distribution of digital television created further problems in recording the third match broadcast on WTSN. The network's digital signal caused instances of pixilation throughout the first half of the broadcast. Such technological issues were common for many consumers in late 2001 when digital television came online—an issue various interviewees confirmed and commented on in Chapter 4.

Situating the Author

  In all research it is necessary to address the role of the researcher and the biases s/he brings to the processes of data collection and analysis. This is especially true in qualitative studies, which are often termed "interpretive" work, even though quantitative work is also influenced by subjective inclinations. In my view, neglecting an open discussion of bias and identity at the outset of a research project means that, in the end, one runs the risk of such issues generating onerous criticisms instead of minor concessions of acknowledged flaws.

  I am a Canadian-born, Black woman, who is a feminist. The order of these signifiers is not as important to me as the recognition of the manner by which they inform my life and work. Deciding to study WTSN was easy in that it combined many of my scholarly interests; sport, media, gender, and culture. In reflecting on my role as a researcher, I am reminded by Sherryl Kleinman (2007) that my scholarly interests are also my overall life interests. Therefore, I acknowledge, as Kleinman believes, that scholars

are "'instruments' of research" (2007, p. 1) and that my experiences participating in sport

and consuming media undoubtedly shape my scholarly work. Elsewhere, Kleinman

(1997, p. 554) has written:

> …we are all stand-ins for groups, classes, and social categories. So, we are
> products of social-historical circumstances *and* we act with or upon them. If we
> understand how conditions and culture constrain us, and how our actions affect
> others and ourselves, then we have the potential to make changes in ourselves and
> the world (original emphasis).

These sentiments describe not only my general philosophy as a researcher but the attitude

in which I approached interviews with the study's respondents.

The interviewing process was a far more reflective and reflexive experience than I

had originally anticipated. The reason for this stems from many instances where I sensed

respondents were making assumptions about what I would want to hear regarding sport

and WTSN because I was a woman. This was experienced in two ways. Firstly, in a few

of my interviews with male interviewees responses would sometimes be prefaced with

comments like, "I know you're not going to like what I have to say but…" or "I know this

will sound totally sexist but…" While I can say that these sorts of comments were not

personally offensive, they did make me understand that these respondents assumed that

they could be. This of course made me ponder whether: a) my words or actions during

respective interviews gave off certain signals encouraging such responses; b) these

respondents made pre-judgements on what I would not feel comfortable knowing based

on my gender; or c) providing a disclaimer prior to delivering responses alleviated some

sense of personal responsibility in discussing gender issues with a female researcher who

may interpret their viewpoints as sexist. Secondly, my experiences with female interviewees tended to draw out responses that would attempt to hail or call out to an assumed, shared female sensibility. In these cases, comments like, "…you know how it is for us" or "I don't have to tell you what it's like…" would be used to tell stories or describe personal sentiments. Again, when responses were framed with these types of phrases I understood that my gender was probably the status that resonated most with respondents. I acknowledge that gender cannot be separated from the other statuses that I hold. But in all likelihood, due to the nature of my study, interviewees felt the need to first converse with me on that level.

Methods, Interpretation and Analysis

On a whole, this study discusses and assesses the measures taken by different groups in their efforts to address social, gender, and cultural inequities. The struggle for power is ubiquitous. For example, government documents shed light on how the state pursues cultural promotion through the creation of new media technologies and content analysis of WTSN programming provides evidence of how one television broadcaster responded to this government policy and the broader representation of sport in the media. My analysis of these efforts is largely grounded in a feminist framework and guided by a critical approach paying close attention to issues of political economy and the relationship between cultural production and meaning. This approach is reasonable considering the uniqueness of WTSN as an exclusive women's sport network that set out to offer an alternative to mainstream representations of sport. I do not believe that an analysis of

WTSN would be possible without accounting for how gender is implicated in the political economy of commercial media. This is the primary reason why a feminist analysis is well-suited to this study. I also recognize that an analysis of WTSN that is grounded in a feminist framework can run the risk of over-imputing feminist concerns when other factors may be more explanatory or relevant. In other words, my methodological and theoretical tools have wielded enormous clout from the conception of this project to its final conclusions. Still, I view these sensibilities more as strengths than weaknesses.

I have employed the strategy of formulating research entry points in order to capture the most comprehensive picture of WTSN's demise and bolster the quality of this analysis. Robert Alford (1998, p. 26) reminds us that both theoretical and empirical questions serve as research entry points in the process of a given study:

> There are two types of research questions: theoretical and empirical. An *empirical* question is one that is answerable from some kind of *evidence* or data. It is tempting to start with an empirical question, because it grounds you in a search for concrete evidence without worrying too much about what the answer might mean or what its significance might be. [...] A *theoretical* question is one that derives from an unsolved general conceptual issue in the field (original emphasis).

In this vein, some of this study's empirical research questions include:

How did WTSN come into being?

What circumstances surrounded the decision to launch WTSN in a Canadian television sports market already saturated by established players that predominantly broadcast male sport?

What transpired economically at WTSN during the period it was in operation?

According to media insiders, journalists, and producers, what were the circumstances leading to the demise of WTSN?

Whereas examples of theoretical questions include:

What is the nature of the relationship between women's sports and the political economy of the sport media in Canada?

How do the imperatives of feminism, in particular third wave feminism, inform a discussion of cultural diversity and the public interest? How do media texts appropriate feminist politics and codes?

How can feminist politics, via women's sports, be used to address issues related to the public interest? How can feminism be used as a tool to address representational deficits in the media?

Although there are many minor issues contained throughout this analysis, the above are representative of the major research questions taken up in the overall study. The strength of these research questions rests in their variety, and the methods of data collection I have employed to answer them. Here, triangulation, or the collection of evidence from a variety of different "vantage points" (Deacon, et al., 1999, p. 29), reinforces the reliability of content analysis findings by juxtaposing them with those acquired via interviews.

Finally, I would like to comment on the order and relationship between Chapters 4, 5, and 6 which are self-contained papers. Each paper informs the other thematically and theoretically. Empirically speaking, Chapter 4 first deals with the creation of the rules that WTSN operated within as a digital television network. These government regulations cannot be understated in their importance to this study's analysis because they are responsible for describing how the state articulated socio-cultural inequities and envisioned solutions to combat them. After discussing the characteristics of WTSN, an examination of the factors leading to its demise is taken up and informed by the opinions of media workers. In sum, Chapter 4 answers the following research questions:

1. How did WTSN come into being?

2. What circumstances surrounded the decision to launch WTSN in a Canadian television sports market already saturated by established players that predominantly broadcast male sport?

3. What transpired economically at WTSN during the period it was in operation?

4. What is the nature of the relationship between women's sports and the political economy of the sport media in Canada?

5. According to media insiders, journalists, and producers, what were the circumstances leading to the demise of WTSN?

Chapter 5 examines the programming produced by WTSN while contrasting findings on the representation of women's sport in previous studies. The programming produced by the network is measured against its self imposed promise to provide alternative sport coverage on television. The questions addressed here are:

1. How was women's intercollegiate basketball represented on WTSN, a network that exclusively broadcast women's sport on a for-profit/commercial basis in Canada?

2. What were the similarities and differences between WTSN's representation of women's basketball and those reported by previous examinations of mainstream coverage of women's basketball and sports?

Chapter 6 retreats back to the more theoretical questions raised by the findings of Chapters 4 and 5. It deals with what can be said about representational deficits in the media. It discusses the perception of sport as a cultural practice that benefits the public interest or public good. It uses the WTSN attempt as an entry point for an examination of the relationship between public interest issues and those of the feminist project – an emphasis is placed on the relevance of third wave feminism. While WTSN failed,

discussing how it may have changed the cultural and economic landscape of television

sport is still a relevant issue to explore. This type of discussion will also be used as an

evaluative tool with regards to the policy initiatives outlined in Chapter 4 and the

response to those initiatives in Chapter 5. As such, Chapter 6 examines these questions:

1. How has the public interest been conceptualized in the context of Canadian media? How have sports, via the media, gained cultural status and resonance as an issue of public interest?

2. How do the imperatives of feminism, in particular third wave feminism, inform a discussion of cultural diversity and the public interest? How do media texts appropriate feminist politics and codes?

3. How can feminist politics, via women's sports, be used to address issues related to the public interest? How can feminism be used as a tool to address representational deficits in the media?

4. What other strategies would prove beneficial in advancing the cause of women's sport at the same time as addressing representational deficits in the media?

Combined, the evidence provided in these papers should be regarded as an interpretation

of certain events and circumstances surrounding WTSN rather than proof of matters

easily generalized in broader contexts. Yet, the evidence presented in Chapters 4-6 does

seek to align itself with documented thematic patterns in relevant literature and analyses

of the sociologies of sport, gender, and media.

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Case Study 1

Chapter 4 - Build it and the Women Will Come? A Brief Account of WTSN and the Advent of Canadian Digital TV

Introduction

This paper explores the birth and demise of the Canadian digital specialty television channel WTSN (Women's Television Sports Network). WTSN was launched in September 2001 alongside an assortment of other digital channels. It was the first of its kind in the world, exclusively broadcasting women's sports and sports programming, 24 hours a day. From the beginning, WTSN and other digital channels were touted by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) as rich sites of diverse programming that would, among other things, invigorate and advance the distribution and consumption of digital technology in Canada. The CRTC's decision to launch these digital channels was also based on the assumption that the distribution of digital technology would be financially profitable. In the case of WTSN, however, September 30, 2003, marked its final day of broadcast operations—this only after two years of broadcasting. CTV (Canadian Television) Inc. president Rick Brace explained that "[a] combination of lower-than expected growth and limited access to advertising revenue led to [the] unfortunate decision, along with the high cost of running a sports service" (Bell Canada Enterprises, August 29, 2003). From CTV Inc.'s point of view, the suspension of WTSN's operations was framed as a decision based on financial feasibility more than other mitigating factors.

Following Robert Sparks' (1992) study of TSN's (The Sports Network) birth as a satellite-to-cable network service, this examination of WTSN attempts to demonstrate how two other major factors also explain the digital network's short-lived existence. First, the regulatory and policy context in which digital television came into being in Canada will provide insight into the circumstances surrounding WTSN's creation. Initial debate over the implementation of digital television in Canada can be traced back to CRTC documents of the mid to late 1990s. As Canada's regulatory body, the CRTC has been both applauded for recognizing the importance of offering the Canadian consumer market new technologies and services through awarding broadcasting licences to deserving applicants, and criticized for imposing unrealistic regulations and restrictions on new services that generally reduce broadcaster's chances of commercial success and long-term viability (see: Raboy, 1990; Christie, 2003; Killingsworth, 2005). The implementation of digital television was no exception. For instance, at the time of its implementation, some media observers argued that the Canadian consumer market had yet to show strong interest in digital television technology (see: Blackwell, 2003; Zelkovich, 2002; Vikhman, 2002). This aspect made the September 2001 arrival of over 200 digital television channels challenging in terms of encouraging awareness among consumers.

The second factor that this study considers is that of the audience commodity. The audience commodity, a concept first introduced through the work of Dallas Smythe (1977), will help develop an understanding of how WTSN's creators may have envisioned the network's ideal viewer and hence advertiser. For WTSN, securing a

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lucrative audience commodity was arguably the most important factor in surviving on the then obscure digital television platform. While the regulatory environment presented obstacles for WTSN, alternative explanatory frames, based on the observations of news media members, also demonstrate how the network's envisioned target audience may have predetermined the network's demise from the start. From the perspective of news media workers, one of WTSN's largest flaws was that its audience commodity was founded on an inherent gender-bias.

Against All Odds: The Arrival of Digital Television in Canada

Channels offering exclusive genres of programming have been a part of Canadian broadcasting since stations like TSN and MuchMusic came onto the scene in 1984. These "narrowcasters" critically target fragmented segments of the general audience. By the mid-1990s, however, the ability to win the popularity and patronage of Canadian cable television consumers steadily increased to a point where as narrowcasters, TSN and MuchMusic had successfully lured substantial portions of the audience from conventional (over-the-air) broadcasters (see: Ashley, 1986; Davis, 1989). This phenomenon had been aided in 1989 when both TSN and MuchMusic gained access to the analogue cable system as discretionary services that could be purchased in addition to basic cable (Killingsworth, 2005). With this access, the two narrowcasters effectively secured guaranteed cable and specialty service revenues. Their evolution from stand-alone

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discretionary services, in hindsight, would place them in a different realm than their future specialty digital counterparts launched 21 years later.

At the time of its launch in fall 2001, one attraction of digital television was that it offered superior picture resolution and enhanced sound. Another special feature of the digital channels (also known as "diginets"—an amalgamation of "digital" and "network") was that consumers did not have to subscribe to digital cable services in order to receive a digital signal. While digital channels require an external box for television sets that can either be purchased or rented from a cable or digital television distributor, for the first three months a free viewing trial was available to all consumers who owned or rented a set-top digital box providing access to virtually every diginet available. This three month viewing trial was intended to market the diverse programming genres offered by the new digital channels, an exercise that would prove important for their market penetration. After this viewing trial, consumers could purchase digital services on a per channel basis or in themed packages. Individual sales for diginets like WTSN were crucial since, in contrast to specialty analogue narrowcasters like TSN and MuchMusic, eventual access to the analogue system, and its extra revenue streams was not permitted by CRTC regulations.

Lofty Ideas: The CRTC Vision of Digital Television

The implementation of an upgraded television cable system was envisioned by The Advanced Broadcasting Systems of Canada (ABSOC), an organization monitoring the progress of technological advancement in television broadcasting, as early as 1994.

One of the ABSOC's recommendations was that the CRTC take steps towards upgrading the dated analogue system of delivery with a superior digital one. Since space on the K-band analogue system could not be further extended to accommodate new channels, new innovations and modes of broadcasting delivery were necessary in order to further expand Canadian television distribution—digital technology was seen as analogue's practical replacement. In a 2000 news release, the CRTC announced that it introduced the digital platform because it was "…convinced that these high quality and varied services [would] help drive the penetration of digital technology in Canada and provide new windows for Canadian talent while offering Canadian viewers a wide array of new choices" (CRTC, 2000a, p. 1). These idealistic sentiments echoed those employed by the Commission in their decision to introduce Canada's first specialty channels in 1984—Much Music and TSN (Sparks, 1992). Then, however, the two speciality channels arguably were not genre competitors nor were they facing strong competition from other channels.

The cultural imperative was another force behind the Commission's decision to expand the cable delivery platform. In addition to expanding the delivery platform for television, the CRTC believed that digital channels would provide a diverse range of content that would reflect and cater not only to various cultural interests but consumer appeal. It reasoned that "the most attractive aspect" of this "wide array of new choices" was that customers would be "in the driver's seat" when determining which services they wanted to pay for (CRTC, 2000a: p. 1-3). More recently, two policy documents frame the regulatory context for the development and implementation of digital television in

Canada. The first, a Task Force report published in 1997, and the second, a 2003 Standing

Committee report from the Department of Canadian Heritage. Both reports provide

further context for government implementation of digital television technology.

Canadian Television in the Digital Era: The Report of the Task Force on the Implementation of Digital Television

In 1997, the Task Force on the Implementation of Digital Television (TFIDTV)

presented a report to then Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps. While the

primary focus of the Task Force was to recommend practical strategies for bringing

digital television technology to Canadian consumers, its members did not consist of

regular cable television customers. TFIDTV's members did include technology

manufacturers, established broadcasters, various players in the Canadian film/television

production community, and academic observers. Some ambiguous evidence of the

TFIDTV's consultation with would-be consumers is limited to a brief paragraph in their

report stating that "[t]he recommendations of [its] report [were] the result of the

consultations, research and analysis carried out and commissioned by the working groups

and subsequent deliberations of all the members of the Task Force" (TFIDTV, 1997, p.

6).

In addition to citing the potential technological prowess of a digital television

distribution system, there were two other driving forces behind the TFIDTV's evaluation

of Canada's need to move the mode of television broadcasting forward. The first was an

implicitly framed threat of the then already established and functioning U.S. digital

television system. The TFIDTV argued that Canada could not afford to relive the disaster of the DTH (direct-to-home) satellite grey market. In this case, the grey market constituted Canadian households that were able to access and pay for U.S. satellite cable television via U.S. post box numbers without residing inside "official" American service territories. This activity, according to the TFIDTV, "placed our fledging [Canadian], DTH operators squarely behind the eight ball" (TFIDTV, 1997, p. 7). The second motive for implementing digital television concerned the technology's "endless growth" potential. After initial investments to upgrade and convert existing analogue infrastructures, which the TFIDTV estimated to be between $90 and $500 million, it was believed that the digital platform would place Canada at the top of television production with its European, U.S., and South American counterparts. Such a move would also ensure a strong global technological compatibility which meant that an appropriate mechanism would be in place for the trade and purchase of cross-cultural and international media products.

The strategic framework proposed by the TFIDTV consisted of nine recommendations outlining how the transition from an analogue to digital television platform should be enacted, and eight recommendations that explicitly outlined the steps required for the final implementation. In all, the seventeen recommendations dealt with technological, market, content, and regulatory issues. Two highlights to come out of the report concerned the recommendation that the CRTC take steps towards totally phasing out analogue television transmission by the end of 2007 and a suggestion that the federal

government adopt a permanent $200 million per annum funding allotment for the Canadian Television and Cable Production Fund that would increase by $50 million per annum from 1997 – 2007 (TFIDTV, 1997, p. 15 & 28).[3] The projected ten year implementation target that was to take place from 1997-2007 in some ways could only be possible with appropriate government financial support. Notwithstanding the seven other recommendations regarding how the CRTC could address digital implementation, the TFIDTV stated that "[f]ailure to move with speed and precision in this critical area [would] jeopardize the whole transition process, with concomitant negative effects on the broadcasting system and [Canada's] domestic and international cultural and economic objectives" (TFIDTV, 1997, p. 29). These two recommendations foreshadowed the tone taken by the Task Force in its remaining outline of steps necessary for digital implementation. Recommendations 10-17 explicitly called for heavy CRTC involvement in the creation, regulation, and monitoring of digital television undertakings. In all, while the TFIDTV admirably outlined practical approaches to ensuring reasonable penetration of digital services by 2007, it did leave the task of determining market conditions and need largely in the hands of the CRTC.

Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Broadcasting in Canada

In 2003 the Standing Committee on Cultural Heritage (SCCH), chaired by Clifford Lincoln, published its nineteen chapter, 899 paged report outlining the successes, failures, and current state of affairs of public/private radio, television, and internet

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[3]   The Canadian Television and Cable Fund is a set of monies allocated for production of Canadian programming. Broadcasters can apply for funding on a case-by-case basis each fiscal year.

communication in Canada. The report maintained that "fundamental changes" to the delivery of broadcasting services would be essential in order to "…provide Canadians with the television, radio and new services that they want and expect" (OCS, 2003, p. 18). Of particular interest are Chapters 4 and 12 which detail the state of the audience, and recommendations for a smooth transition into the digital era. Chapter 4 which discusses particular implications for the Canadian audience will be discussed below. At this time, a brief account of Chapter 12 will provide context for how the SCCH envisioned the full implementation of digital transmission from 2003 and beyond.

Chapter 12 of the SCCH report entitled "The Digital Transition" begins by acknowledging that the digital revolution (the transition from analogue to digital technologies) will be faced with various challenges, some of which include: marketing to new audiences, and striking a fair balance between entertaining audiences and adhering to the regulations of the *Broadcasting Act*. The committee was informed by a variety of "witnesses" which included: industry groups (i.e. the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB), the Canadian Cable Television Association (CCTA); think-tank/lobbyists (i.e. Communications Research Centre Canada), and members representing the public and private broadcasting sectors (i.e. the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and CanWest Global). Each stakeholder expressed their respective concerns regarding the implementation of digital technology with particular attention paid to content issues, the acquisition of appropriate production equipment, and economic viability. As summarized by the SCCH, these witnesses were encouraged by the potential

ability of digital transmission to provide improved audio and visual quality, more programming options, and consumer friendly non-programming features (i.e. time shifting technology and digital recording) (OCS, 2003, p. 432). While these features were perceived as clear advantages among the witnesses heard by the committee, three main disadvantages were also cited: 1) how the transition from analogue to digital transmission would affect audience retention; 2) how digital television would be "phased in;" and 3) how pay and specialty services would be packaged for consumers (OCS, 2003, p. 432). Clearly, the SCCH organized much of its study of digital transition around the audience in theory. Of course it would seem impossible not to explicitly account for how consumers would be affected. Still, at this point in their account of the transition, the audience was framed more as a taken-for-granted afterthought rather than a fundamental piece and powerful player in successful digital transition.

While the sentiments of stakeholders contained in chapter 12 speak to the practical limitations faced by service providers and indirectly shareholders, there is little evidence that everyday consumers were consulted as part of this process of assessing market capacity and need. Implicitly, consumers were identified as playing a significant role in ensuring market penetration and abstaining from copyright infringement etc. but actual consumer input and formal address to the committee is not present in the report notwithstanding the handful organizations and groups that self-identified as consumer advocates.

A notable paragraph appears just before the committee's recommendations to the CRTC that outlines some concerns of a similar counterpart organization involved in assessing the implementation of digital technology in the U.S. The SCCH cites a 1999 U.S. Congressional Committee report recommending that digital television not be implemented until four major criteria were fulfilled. These criteria included: 1) that digital technology be proven to operate as intended, 2) that digital television broadcasting begin transmission at the earliest opportunity possible, and most importantly 3) that consumer demand must be firmly established in order for the "speedy adoption" of digital television (OCS, 2003, p. 439). While citing the Congressional Committee's recommendations appears to serve the purpose of communicating its own concerns over the issue of consumer demand and digital implementation, the SCCH's report continues to examine the issues of phasing out analogue technology and an imposed transition deadline yet neglects to address or even solicit the opinions of witnesses with regards to the level of consumer demand. Not until page 442 does the report explicitly address this concern. In commenting on the balance between government policy and a "laissez-faire" marketplace approach, the SCCH states:

> ...in no other case has a country allowed the market to totally drive the transition. Indeed, even in the United States, where the policy model is largely governed by a laissez-faire approach, The Federal Communications Commission has had to step in and insist that the industries involved cooperate to accelerate the transition (OCS, 2003, p. 442).

The acknowledgment of the pitfalls of the laissez-faire approach is apt. But a further ambiguity in the SCCH's report is the matter of whether in a smaller Canadian television

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marketplace, where audiences are already fragmented, the responsibility of industry in facilitating consumer awareness of new digital technologies was a fair expectation. In other words, even if industry players marketed and promoted digital services, adoption and purchasing power still rests in the hands of the consumer. Not only does this type of power have implications for whether digital technology is considered a value to consumers but it also impacts the types of content and programming that would be offered on the new platform and the subsequent success or failure of these offerings.

In sum, both the TFIDTV and SCCH pay close attention to the plight and state of affairs for broadcasters and cable service providers but neglect to fully and formally provide a context for consumer market need from the point of view of average television and cable users. Further, while both reports call attention to the ability of digital television cable to offer consumers more choice, and quality Canadian content, in reality this outcome has been historically overshadowed by the tensions created by market complexities and the need to fulfill stringent Canadian content regulations contained in original broadcasting licensing agreements. This constraint has been convincingly demonstrated by Jamie Killingsworth (2005) in his examination of how Canadian specialty channels lobby to modify or at least loosen Canadian content regulations in the middle of their current licensing agreements. Many broadcasters employ this method because their economic viability is in direct opposition to the admirable, "yet unrealistic regulatory environment, given the market size and economies of scale" (Killingsworth, 2005, p. 212). In other words, fulfilling Canadian content regulations is a struggle in the

small and fragmented Canadian television market where networks experience greater financial success in broadcasting American programming than they do Canadian. This reality is in direct opposition to the idealistic objective of fostering a greater appreciation of Canadian culture and content via digital television as outlined in both of the above mentioned policy documents. This economic reality serves as a critical departure point for interrogating the initial plight of digital television in Canada and the specific introduction of WTSN, an exclusive women's sports network, into an already heavily saturated sports specialty market.

The Audience Commodity

In its most basic form, Smythe (1977, p. 3) argues that the audience commodity is the product of "mass-produced, advertiser-supported communications…" The content of for-profit or commercial mass media, in this regard, does not solely produce meanings, messages, and entertainment, but markets from which potential audiences are drawn. These audiences are then sold to advertisers. Smythe (1977, p. 4) further adds that when considered as "collectivities" audiences perform as commodities with specific demographics such as age, sex, social class, marital status, ethnicity, hobby interests, etc. This unique relationship between mass media producers and advertisers is of course highly dependent on the type of programming that audiences choose to patronize and the given demographic qualities embodied by its members.

The audience commodity is a significant factor to consider in the story of WTSN for two reasons. One reason is that traditional television sport programming has

predominantly targeted an 18-40 year old male demographic mainly interested in watching sports where males are the primary participants (Duncan & Messner, 1998). As the predominant target market for television sports programming, the male audience is valuable not only because of its ability to reach a broad-ranging age demographic but because males have traditionally been primary household financial decision-makers (Jhally, 1982). In his assessment of the value of the audience commodity, Jhally (1982) builds on Smythe's (1977) work and adds that some audiences (i.e. those for television sports) can be sold or exchanged for a higher price than those for other genres. For instance, in comparing the regular prime-time audience for dramas, Jhally (1982) notes that because of its "demographic specificity," the sports audience can be sold at a higher cost to advertisers than the more demographically diverse audience for prime time programming.

In response to Smythe's (1977) contention that the commercial media together with advertisers produce audiences, Graham Murdock (1978) adds clarification and calls attention to how ideology is reproduced in mediated messages. In Murdock's (1978) view, Smythe's (1977) assessment of the audience commodity lacks an account of how ideologies are embedded in the creative process of media products, how those products then communicate particular ideologies, and how through audience interpretation and negotiation ideologies are engrained, struggled over, and contested. Therefore, endorsing an economically deterministic model of the commercial media (i.e. the cultivation of audiences from markets), neglects the fact that the media also play a role in setting the

terrain for cultural debate, the sharing of ideas, and the parameters of how "reality" is represented. This link between the media, ideology, and audiences is significant when accounting for the political economic dimension of media and the impact of ownership on products (i.e. programs, networks, and services). It also provides context for considering the potential consumer power of female audiences for sport in that more women are better financially equipped to make decisions on how discretionary income is spent.

For WTSN, pinpointing a female audience pool that would be attractive to potential advertisers was the paramount challenge because females have not historically figured prominently into the psychographic profile of television sport demographics (Messner et al., 2000). However, with the simultaneous launch of seven other sport digital channels in 2001 (including ESPN Classic Canada, Fox Sports World Canada, Leafs TV, The NHL Network, The Racing Network, Raptors NBA TV, and Xtreme Sports) Canadian television itself was entering uncharted waters. At first glance, securing an audience commodity for those other channels might have been an easier task than the one faced by an all-women's sports channel. Simply put, these channels supplemented an established genre of sport television programming (i.e., NHL hockey, NBA basketball, professional European football, and rugby) that WTSN did not. In this regard, WTSN could be considered as a wholly radical departure from what traditional television sports programming offered. Logically speaking, the network would also have to address its potential audience in a radically different way than its predecessors and competitors. This

factor sheds some light on the SCCH's position on the state of the Canadian television audience and popular genres.

The second reason why the audience commodity is an important factor to consider in the story of WTSN rests in chapter 4 of *Our Cultural Sovereignty* where the SCCH compiles ratings and survey data on English and French language television viewing on conventional, pay, and speciality broadcasters spanning 1993-2001. The general thrust of the chapter outlines that Canadian audiences are fragmented along technology and genre lines where viewing of a variety of programming on conventional broadcasters remains high but faces stiff competition from that of pay and specialty networks that target specific programming genres. For instance, in 2001 audience shares for English-language conventional broadcasters totalled 53%. These channels included CBC, CTV, other non-pay services, and U.S. conventional broadcasters (OCS, 2003, p. 88). The numbers for pay and specialty services totalled 46.9% of the entire audience (OCS, 2003, p. 88). Of particular note is that the 2001 numbers also show CTV/BellGlobemedia Inc. (owner of WTSN) held 18.4% of total audience share—the highest of all ownership groups for English television in Canada (OCS, 2003, p. 91). When viewing of television sport is taken into account, Canadian pay and specialty broadcasters garnered 46.9% of all viewing while the CBC came in a close second at 42.2%. This factor is significant due to the fact that as a new digital specialty channel, WTSN entered a market that demonstrated a desire to view sports. But what remained to be seen at the point of its inception is

whether or not this factor necessarily meant there was room for another specialty sport broadcaster.

As it happens WTSN was not unique in failing to attract a profitable audience commodity. Poor ratings also haunted EdgeTV (an alternative music network) and PrideVision (a gay and lesbian affairs and entertainment network) two other digital channels launched at the same time as WTSN. Still, WTSN can be considered unique when compared to its digital sport contemporaries listed above that launched in 2001 and beyond. It was the only digital sport channel that did not survive.

Methods

In order to understand the creation of WTSN as a digital channel and some of the challenges it faced, three qualitative methods were employed. The first is a brief tracing of the regulatory history of digital television in Canada. A review of CRTC policies and licensing decisions will help to shed light on the relationship between commercial television culture and relevant government policies. Second, a historical profile of WTSN including its ownership, programming, intended audience, and financial record is examined. Here, issues related to political economy will provide insight on both the advantages and disadvantages faced by the network upon its entry into the television market. Finally, the findings from 12 interviews conducted from 2004 to 2005 with Canadian media workers and insiders regarding the political economy of digital television in Canada, the media representation of sport culture, and the fate of WTSN will offer practical insight. The experiences and knowledge shared by these individuals are

indicative of an industry response to digital television in general and Canadian sport media in particular. Their knowledge of Canadian media and television sport are invaluable in considering some of WTSN's dilemmas but also how experts in the field of media sport in Canada envisioned the network's arrival in lieu of regular reporting routines and everyday sports coverage. The field experience of these six men and women represent a range of print and television commentators, print and television reporters, and television and radio hosts and anchors.

The eventual demise of WTSN should not be interpreted only in terms of its failure to attract advertising revenues and the weak market conditions into which digital television technology was introduced. Findings suggest that WTSN also failed because it could not secure a guaranteed audience commodity. While the economic imperative is held up as a common explanatory frame for the demise of WTSN, the gendered politics of media sport, consistently and at times uncritically identified during the interviews, also led to the demise of a network purportedly fashioned to attract a predominant female audience.

Findings

Digital Licensee Framework: A Brief Regulatory History

Out of over 450 applications for digital television specialty services, the CRTC approved licenses for 283 and released the details of its decision in November 2000 (see: CRTC, 2000b). The reasons for approving these licenses were numerous. The new digital channels were to make significant contributions to the Canadian broadcasting system by:

increasing the variety and diversity of programming choices for viewers;
maximizing the production and exhibition of new Canadian programming;
encouraging subscribers to subscribe to digital distribution;
providing additional content to distributors to expand packaging flexibility; [and]
pushing the capabilities of interactive digital technology (CRTC, 2000b, p. 1).

The digital licenses granted were classified in two ways. Category 1 (CAT 1) services (16

English and 5 French language channels) were defined as:

A limited number of services that make a strong contribution to the development,
diversity and distribution of Canadian programming and are the most attractive
services for early digital distribution. These services will have digital access
privileges and genre protection to support them during the uncertain period of
digital rollout (CRTC, 2000b, p. 2).

These channels were also granted automatic access to digital service carriers and

distributors.

The second classification accounted for Category 2 (CAT 2) services and was defined as:

An unlimited number of services that meet basic licensing criteria and are not
directly competitive with any existing pay or specialty, or CAT 1 service. These
services may be competitive with one another and are not assured digital access
(CRTC, 2000b, p. 7).

These channels were not granted automatic access to digital service providers. In order to

gain access they would have to negotiate with digital service distributors.

WTSN was granted a CAT 1 license. Along with other licensees in its category it

was required to launch before November 24th of 2001—which was within a year of being

granted its license. Since all digital service providers were required to carry every CAT 1

channel WTSN benefited from being packaged with other diginets for initial distribution.

This opportunity was not afforded to CAT 2 channels. These channels were required to

launch no later than November 24th of 2003. By contrast, carriage of CAT 2 channels had

to be negotiated between individual licensees and digital service providers. The effect of this stipulation was to guarantee CAT 1 licensees some genre protection from CAT 2 licensees, meaning that CAT 2 licensees could not offer programming identical to any CAT 1 service.

Both CAT 1 and CAT 2 licenses were secured by way of fulfilling specific selection criteria. For CAT 1 licenses, the criteria included:

> contributions to Canadian programming, including minimum commitments to exhibition (not less than 50% by the end of the license term), expenditures and original production;
> attractiveness of the proposed service to potential viewers, including evidence of demand;
> contribution to the diversity of available programming genres, as well as contributions to the reflection of Canada's cultural diversity and linguistic duality;
> reasonableness of the business plan and ability to fulfil proposed commitments;
> innovative use of the digital medium, e.g. interactivity; and
> cost of proposed service to subscribers (CRTC 2000b, p. 3).

The commission also cited that the primary criterion for the granting of CAT 1 licenses was "attractiveness." A channel's attractiveness, according to the commission, included its ability to offer "a unique genre of programming not generally available," and "innovative programming" that would be both complementary to digital technology while appealing to the initial consumers of it.

In September 2001, WTSN launched alongside 15 other CAT 1 English-language digital networks.[4] Table 1 includes some of the specialty offerings launched with WTSN.

[Insert Table 1 here]

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[4]   Five French-language diginets also launched in September 2001.

Not surprisingly, the ownership structures which backed the digital offerings were pre-established, successful media players in the Canadian marketplace. In fact, out of the 20 channels launched alongside WTSN, four other licensees came from companies and holdings held under the same BCE conglomerate banner. Their genres spanned travel, comedy, and sports information. Five other digital undertakings were owned by a variety of corporate configurations including Rogers, Shaw and CanWest-Global. These offerings ranged from technology, biography, and programming geared towards popular male entertainment interests.

CAT 2 licenses were regulated by fewer but slightly more restrictive selection criteria:

- Does the application meet all of the basic licensing criteria?; [and]
- Would the service be directly competitive with either an existing pay or specialty service or a new Category 1 service? (CRTC 2000b, p. 5).

At first glance, it could be argued that CAT 2 licenses would be more restrictive because of the decreased likelihood of creating a digital service unlike existing digital and pay specialty offerings. But a deeper probing of the criteria reveals that aside from basic *Broadcasting Act* regulations, CAT 2 licensees were responsible for broadcasting significantly less Canadian content. By the end of their six year license agreement, CAT 1 channels were expected to allocate 50% of programming to Canadian content whereas no specific Canadian content rules were found in the Commission's selection criteria for CAT 2 channels (see: CRTC, 2000b, p. 3-5). Clearly, even though CAT 2 licensees like The Racing Network were not guaranteed carriage by digital television distributors, one

could argue that their chances of survival may have been greater than those of CAT 1

offerings because of the absence of CAN-CON regulations (Christie, 2003). In other

words, not having the burden of producing Canadian content permitted CAT 2 networks

to spend significantly less on programming production. Instead, purchasing pre-recorded

programming (i.e., from U.S. or other foreign networks) or re-broadcasting events already

produced by conventional networks could constitute the bulk of CAT 2 programming

expenses.

To further cast a shadow on their arrival, some television critics claimed that CAT

1 channels were in steep competition not only amongst themselves, but also from

conventional broadcasters and established specialty news channels highly immersed in

coverage of the World Trade Centre attacks in New York on September 11, 2001

(Hawaleshka, 2001; Zelkovich, 2001, 2002). The latter factor may have influenced the

relatively small audiences that the new digital channels were able to attract. At that point

in time a large audience was particularly difficult to acquire—especially in the ever

important prime time.

Ambitious Beginnings: WTSN in Profile

"I think it was very ambitious. It was very brave. And I tip the cap to the folks who [tried it]. But it's an 800 channel universe" (Respondent 11, female reporter).

"What I saw that it had going for it is that it was linked to TSN. So it had that caché. It's interesting…I don't think that any of the […] personalities and […] stars of TSN…went on WTSN. So, all they had was the name" (Respondent 6, female commentator).

Ownership

From 2001 to the end of its broadcasting run WTSN was owned by CTV Specialty Television Inc. While TSN applied for WTSN's digital license, both channels were operated under the banner of CTV Specialty Television Inc. which is a division within Bell Globe Media Inc. Both companies were owned by the Canadian conglomerate BCE at the time. In Canada, BCE owns and operates various types of media that include television networks, telecommunications products, satellite distribution, newspapers, and internet domains. Specifically, its holdings include: CTV Television (Canada's first privately owned national television network), Bell Mobility Inc., (a mobile telephone and communications company), Bell Canada (Canada's largest telephone service provider), Bell ExpressVu (one of Canada's largest satellite television service distributors), *The Globe and Mail*, (Canada's largest national daily newspapers), ctv.ca, tsn.ca, and globeandmail.com (internet portals associated with its holdings) among others.[5]

At the time of WTSN's demise, CTV Specialty was responsible for operating other exclusive sports specialty channels including: TSN, and its French-language counterpart RDS (Reseau de Sports), and OLN (The Outdoor Life Network—specializing in sport, recreation, and leisure lifestyles). Other non-sport specialty services operated by CTV Specialty included: CTV Newsnet (a 24-hour news service), the Comedy Network, and ROBTv (Report on Business TV—a business news service). The size and number of these holdings are indicative of what some respondents referred to as Bell Globemedia's "deep pockets."

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[5]   These holdings can also be viewed at www.crtc.gc.ca-ownership-cht143.pdf

As an established leader in specialty sport services, most respondents suggested

that a major reason why Bell Globemedia introduced WTSN was because it could afford

to take the financial risk. In fact, it was the only player that had sufficient financial clout:

> It might have to do with the fact that they've been so lucrative over the years. TSN has been incredibly successful—probably of all the cable stations out there. It's been in existence now for 20 years. But it's just been a cash-box. So, they might have thought that it was worth the gamble. That they're doing so well that they've got a chance to... 'Well, okay, let's put some cash into this and see what happens.' To them, it was probably just a drop in the bucket. Nobody likes to lose money and they did lose money on that venture. But TSN has been so lucrative over the years, they might have thought, 'Let's give it a shot' (Respondent 10, male reporter).

> Well, CTV right now...I mean they're kind of a conglomerate. They have access to print reporters. They have access to TSN. They have access to their main CTV network. And they have access to Bell as a sponsor...as the mother company or whatever. I think they've proven that they're willing to take some risk... (Respondent 6, female host/commentator).

As outlined in the second quote, CTV's (Bell Globemedia) backing went beyond

financial clout. With access to other sport speciality channels, many respondents reasoned

that if WTSN's owners were not able to purchase programming and events, then perhaps

women's sporting events already broadcast on sibling networks could be broadcast on the

service.

Programming

"Synergies will also result from the fact that CTV owns other sport-related programming services such as Outdoor Life, RDS and pay-per-view sports. WSN will benefit significantly from NetStar's experience in sports programming and cross promotional opportunities" (CRTC, 2000c, p. 2).

In its decision to grant a digital broadcasting license to WTSN, the CRTC claimed that the shared synergies with the network's lineage of experienced and successful specialty broadcasters would be a particular strength (CRTC, 2000c, p. 2). The respondents to this study had mixed feelings about this claim. On the whole, they felt that while WTSN's broadcasting lineage was undoubtedly experienced in sport programming, an all-women's sports format did not necessarily fit the mould of its predecessors. For instance, when asked to name the top revenue producing television sports, respondents placed NHL hockey, Major League Baseball, NFL football, and CFL football (all professional men's sports) at the top of their lists. These sports were also thought to be popular with audiences and already extensively covered by existing Canadian channels. While women's tennis, hockey, and golf were identified as making modest gains in revenues and viewership in recent history, respondents repeatedly noted that these sports tend to experience sharp spikes in appeal, a pattern that does not generally translate into year round financial sustainability. In other words, not one women's sport was deemed a long-standing, revenue-rich source of programming with a guaranteed audience commodity. One respondent commented:

> As far as I know, there is no women's sport that makes money. Women's sports tend to be put in the same category as amateur sports. I wouldn't say public service. But it is almost done more for altruistic reasons. I would think women's tennis makes good money in Canada because again, you don't have to produce it. And it does fairly well. It's not hockey, or football, or baseball numbers, but it's better than basketball for example (Respondent 4, male reporter).

The above comment speaks to what some respondents identified as disconnect between the realities of running an all-women's sport service and the availability of

women's sport event programming to broadcast. Again, the case of TSN is instructive. Killingsworth (1999, 2005) and Sparks (1992) have documented that most of TSN's early success as a specialty sport service was attributed to a combination of factors—three of which are particularly significant. First, Canadian brewer John Labatt Ltd. was TSN's original owner. This relationship provided the network with enough financial clout to purchase lucrative television broadcasting rights for major sporting events. It also forged a steadfast relationship between TSN's audience commodity—mainly males 18-49 years old—and beer (Sparks, 1992). Second, during this time, Labatt also owned The Toronto Blue Jays which meant that TSN became the Canadian destination for Major League Baseball. Third, and perhaps most noteworthy, due to its nature as an all-sports service TSN was able to offer blanket or "bulk" coverage of sporting events that conventional broadcasters could not. That is, TSN could provide coverage of entire tournaments or events uninterrupted and free from regularly scheduled programming, rather than more fragmented coverage (see: Killingsworth, 1999, p. 52). This bulk coverage offered guaranteed exposure for sporting events which in turn enticed other leagues and event organizers to side with TSN rather than any of the other "big three" Canadian conventional broadcasters (Global, CTV, and CBC). As a result, these three factors rewarded TSN with more than encouraging financial success.

From 2001-2002, WTSN broadcast an array of news, documentary, instructional, educational/recreational, professional/amateur, and film programming. The network covered major professional sports such as: LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association)

golf, WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) basketball, and WTA (Women's Tennis Association) tennis. Soccer, curling, swimming, figure skating, and beach volley ball, among others, were also popular sports included in the network's programming. WTSN was also an official broadcaster of the CIS (Canadian Intercollegiate Sport) basketball, volleyball, and hockey championships. An advertising flyer for a CIS women's basketball event, where WTSN was one of the official tournament broadcasters, reviewed the total broadcasting hours dedicated to certain sports. These details appear in the table below:

[Insert Table 2 here]

These sports, while representative of a variety of female athletic endeavour and interest, were not easy to broadcast because in many cases they were not produced and ready for purchase. This created a significant cost burden. As one respondent explained: "[s]ports [are] very expensive to cover, especially in a live level. It's one thing to maybe make a talk show or a documentary program or whatever, or programs designed to fit the demographic. But to mount live sports coverage of women's events…that's expensive" (Respondent 9, male). Even though WTSN was able to purchase programming feeds for certain events, it still incurred the high cost of producing original programming and purchasing broadcasting rights for women's sporting events (Houston, 2003; Zelkovich, 2003). In addition, programming that could be harvested from WTSN's existing "synergies" with brother network TSN and the CTV Television Network was set to a limit of 10 percent per week (CRTC, 2000b, p.4).

To further complicate matters and hamstring the network, 30 percent of its programming had to be devoted to Canadian content from 6am to midnight (the entire broadcasting day-18 hours) and from 6pm to midnight (primetime-6 hours) daily (CRTC, 2000c, p.2). In other words, WTSN may have been less burdened in fulfilling the 30% rule in the day time but likely faced significant challenges in offering 30% Canadian content in the lucrative prime time period between 6pm and midnight where competition for audiences would be higher. In comparison, WTSN's sport diginet counterparts arguably had deeper and cheaper sources of sport programming to draw from to operate their services. As previously noted, these CAT 2 sport diginets were free from rigid Canadian content regulations. For instance, the NHL Network, principally owned by the NHL, could access programming without cost via ownership synergies. Raptors NBA TV and Leafs TV were also in the same position being predominantly owned by their respective sport team franchises. ESPN Classic Canada had the advantage of airing programs already purchased by ESPN and TSN, and Fox Sport World Canada featured pre-taped rugby, soccer, and cricket matches (see Houston, 2003). As noted by one interviewee (Respondent 4, male): "You know TSN had ESPN Classic—[these are the] cheapest [channels] you could run. You know? I mean really. You pay next to nothing for rights; you bring in some people to talk in the studio for a while. I mean, this is almost a guaranteed winner. Although it still isn't making money."

Eventually, not being able to access cheap programming affected the quality of WTSN broadcasts. The high cost of producing most of its original content took a heavy

toll on other aspects of the network's "unique approach" to women's sport programming. As early as October 2001, barely a month after its launch, the network gutted production of "WTSN Connects," one of its flagship shows which started out as a two-hour long weekend news show hosted by Norma Wick offering viewers a "dynamic mix of news and information about pro athletes, amateurs and the everyday participant" (WTSN, 2002, www.wtsn.ca). Very quickly, WTSN released two employees and reduced the show from a two-hour, in-depth look into the world of women's sports to a 30 minute news spot (Zelkovich, 2001). By April 2002, the show and another flagship show, "Fight to the Finish," were cancelled altogether. Not long after, both Norma Wick and Jennifer Hedger, host of "Fight to the Finish," were released by the network (Zerbisias, 2002).

WTSN, the Female Audience Commodity, and Making the Apolitical Political

Researcher: So who do you think the intended audience was for WTSN?

Respondent 2, female commentator: Me. Probably a whole bunch of Mes...

A brief review of TSN's envisioned audience commodity is useful in order to understand the underlying logic of that of WTSN. TSN's success as a broadcaster provides a yardstick with which to compare the subsequent situation as it evolved for WTSN since it too was introduced as a new specialty channel in 1984. Beyond sharing ownership synergies, TSN's seventeen years worth of broadcasting experience and familiarity in negotiating the television sport market in Canada can be considered an invaluable asset in tracing the conceptual design of WTSN's audience commodity.

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There was ambiguity in TSN's[6] target audience as originally stated. In TSN's original license application, it was initially proposed that a broad spectrum of men and women of "all age groups" would be targeted (Sparks, 1992, p. 333). Later on in the licence application, however, the criteria were expressed differently, proposing to appeal to a "dedicated sports fan." As Sparks (1992, p. 334) suggested, this was problematic because: "[t]his conception of the viewer-as-dedicated-sports-fan conflicted with the notion of 'men and women of all age groups' already cited, and corresponded more closely to the composition of network sports audiences which traditionally were male." Regardless of this discrepancy, TSN went on to successfully use the idea of the "dedicated sports fan" to sell its image and secure itself as a powerful brand for consumers interested in all-sport specialty programming. Still, males have dominated TSN's audience. In fact, between 1985 and 1990, "…male athletes, male celebrities, male sports events, and male commentators predominated in 94% or more of TSN's programming…" (Sparks, 1992, p. 335). In a more recent estimate, Killingsworth (1999, p. 69) reported that males and females constituted 69% and 31% of the network's audience respectively. The closest margin in this divide occurred for "Skins Curling" events where the split was males 55.3% and females 44.7% (Killingsworth, 1999, p. 69).

WTSN's intended audience as proposed in their network application was less ambiguous than TSN's:

> The Women's Sports Network, [is] a specialty service dedicated exclusively to showcasing all aspects of women's sports and sports of interest to women…;

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[6] At the time of TSN's original license application, its name was *ACSN* (Action Canada Sports Network).

WSN will focus on women in the sporting world and their fans: showcasing events; creating the first of its kind sports magazine programs aimed at women; sports coaching and instruction; [and]

The Women's Sports Network will also utilize current and future interactive technology to develop meaningful and proactive sports oriented programs for women: all produced with and for women, addressing topics and issues that are timely and relevant (TSN, 2000, p. 4)

These excerpts place women at the heart of WTSN's intended audience. The intention to cover "all aspects of women's sports and sports of interest to women" retrospectively was considered highly problematic by all interviewees. On the one hand, most observed that, with the exception of the Olympics, "all aspects of women's sports" was not a viable basis for a sports network because mainstream television sport programming had rarely featured women's events on a consistent basis. In other words, the expectation that a potential audience would acquire a taste for something they had yet to taste was optimistic at best. On the other hand, according to respondents, "sports of interest to women," such as figure skating or other Olympic event programming that have previously attracted large female audiences, could not adequately support an all-sport format service since they are stand-alone events rather than sports that have lengthy seasons.

Overwhelmingly, in addition to the poor implementation of digital technology roll-out that was identified as a great disadvantage to WTSN and other diginets, the most pervasive theme to emerge over the course of interviews was that the predominant female audience commodity was the most damaging criterion on which the network was based:

I think the biggest problem they faced was that they were appealing to a very small audience. And in general women just aren't as crazy about sports as men. I certainly wouldn't say that that's a character flaw [...] and then on top of that, the digital world...the world was not ready for digital at that point (Respondent 4, male reporter).

When you think about it, what are women doing? Women are working, a lot of times full-time. They're looking after children. They're looking after spouses. They are... generally speaking...women are the caregivers in the family [...] They're out playing hockey on Sunday nights [...] The type of women who would be [interested in watching] ...that I know that are involved in athletics...there is a full plate there. And there's not a lot of time [to] just hang around watching TV. You're out there, you're doing it. Not watching (Respondent 2, female commentator).

...so when you come out and you try to push something on a female audience, the audience is not there first of all because traditionally women are not sports watchers, I mean on television. But they are now the sporting audience, they are becoming fans and you're gonna see them at games. But they're not necessarily fitting the package to watch WTSN... (Respondent 7, female commentator).

Many women watch sports to spend time with their husband or boyfriend or whatever. Not many women...not many men tuned to WTSN. On the cycle of sports channels...it might have been about number 12. So unless women themselves tuned to it, it wasn't gonna get the viewership. That's not gonna cut it. I may be wrong in this, times may have changed more than I think but I still don't think there are all that many women out there...I don't think there's a giant chunk of the [female] population that turns to sports first when they turn on the TV (Respondent 5, male reporter).

These views of industry insiders contrast markedly with the rationalization for WTSN as outlined in its license application. Specifically, the application slightly departed from not only envisioning women as its intended patrons but it made further distinctions when it highlighted "women as fans," a unique "women's perspective," and "women as athletes." The following statements speak to the most ideological sentiments in the network's license application:

Until now, there has been no broadcasting service whose sole focus is achieving the growth, popularity and acceptance of women's sports, women athletes and women as fans;

The WSN concept is entirely original. Our emphasis on sports of interest to women and women's perspective on sports will contribute to the goals of developing positive role models for women and youth, developing female Canadian athletes and developing their sports. Sports on television tends to be programmed for men and the programming itself emphasizes men's sports by a very significant margin. There can be little doubt that Canadian women's sports is underrepresented on Canadian television. This is true in terms of coverage of women's sports events but is even more true of non-event programming. The uniqueness of women's roles, goals and needs in sports is rarely if ever addressed on television; [and]

To the extent that women's sports are broadcast at all, they tend to be aired in fringe time periods. WSN will showcase the diversity and uniqueness of women's sports and women athletes in a way that is just not being done today. By focusing exclusively on women's sports, WSN will clearly look different from anything else on our screens. Virtually all of the programming on WSN will not be seen elsewhere on Canadian television (TSN, 2000, p. 5).

These statements convey the outlook that WTSN would not be a commonplace addition to specialty sport television. Rather, they explicitly exude a political critique of the under-representation of women's sports on television—one that is firmly entrenched in feminist sentiments of gender equality. The interviewees did not regard this to be a fruitful approach. Explicitly targeting an audience in this manner was regarded as being too aggressively political and consequently counter-productive to the goals of attracting an audience and legitimizing women's sport within television sport culture.

Specifically, the claims made in the application statements cited above painted a picture of long standing gender inequity (the problem), and the potential value, if granted license approval, of WTSN (the solution). For respondents, politicizing WTSN would not

lure a viable female audience to watch women's sports. The following interviewee

remarks addressed this concern:

> There was a show years ago, called "Women in Sport." First of all, I don't like
> that title. The title is very boring. It comes off [as] carrying the torch, 'Women in
> Sport,' it turns people off [...] The women's branding I think actually hurts.
> Because what you end up doing is you end up sort of creating this little niche for
> it. But you don't need to. You need people watching. You just need eyeballs. And
> that's what I mean, I think it was portrayed or presented more towards trying to
> get females and they weren't into it [...] If I remember correctly, when WTSN
> came out, some of the things that were said about it...[were] 'Well every other
> sports network is a men's sports...[network]' Like there was something like that.
> And to me, that's not what you want to say. Right away, you're cutting out half
> the population. You're saying, 'This station is really only for women.' And it
> shouldn't have been. It should have just been about female sport (Respondent 7,
> female commentator).
>
> I think that was not an unrealistic target or an unrealistic expectation that women
> would watch it. But women don't just watch women any more than...that would
> be kind of like saying Chinese people will only watch Chinese people. That is not
> the case. You'll watch what you want to watch. You'll watch what you're
> interested in. Just having ovaries doesn't make every woman exactly the same as
> every other woman. Every woman is as different as every man is different [...]
> But then we say, 'But there's one women's channel and we know they'll watch
> because they're women.' I hope I'm not saying anything out of line but...barring
> the intensely, intensely, militant feminist, who will say, 'We are only going to
> watch only because it's women...and because we are gonna support women
> regardless of what's on there,' the reality is, that you can't sort of just corrale
> women like a bunch of cattle out in the wilderness somewhere and say, 'Here's
> the women's show, you guys watch the women's show,' while all the guys go and
> watch their stuff. That's not realistic. Women have brains and interests and
> everything else just like men do (Respondent 5, male reporter).
>
> In terms of the overall, women are maybe, not en masse going to...it's one of
> those things about making a determination about mass culture or like political
> decisions. That somehow if it's women's sports [that] women are automatically
> going to watch it. Why? It's making an awfully big assumption, you know? It's
> assuming that...all African-Americans like hip-hop. Well, they don't. Or all hip-
> hop kids don't like jazz. Sure they do...some of them do. You just can't sort of
> say they're just going to rush off to support a cause—that's not how it works.
> They'll watch if they are interested. If they even have kids who play the sport,

they will be more interested. There are other factors that determine it. But it won't be just because we're going to do it for the cause. They're not going to watch it for that reason. I think it's complex. […] But I know you can't assume that they're watching with a sense of solidarity. Men don't watch hockey because it's men playing it. They *like* hockey. They like action and all the rest of it. If women like action, and like athletes [and] sports, they'll watch…(Respondent 9, male host/reporter).

Another statement from the license application claimed that WTSN would attract a previously "untapped" audience commodity for television sport and therefore a distinct advertiser base:

> Finally, because our audience mix will be so different and targeted, WSN will be able to offer advertising opportunities to advertisers who don't currently spend significantly in the sports sector and to those advertising women's health, active women's clothing and sporting gear, beverages and cosmetics. This will tend to increase new non-duplicated revenues to the broadcast sector (TSN, 2000, p. 5).

While this excerpt identified an "audience mix," it was clear that women would be the primary demographic and they would be a desirable demographic for advertisers of women's health, sporting apparel, and cosmetics.

In conclusion, the target audience for WTSN was considerably less ambiguously defined than that of TSN. Paradoxically, however, the interviewees articulated clearly that this approach was ultimately a weakness. The perception that WTSN was rationalized on the basis of political arguments about gender inequity in sport television was viewed as one reason why the network found it difficult to establish an audience. In this regard, politicizing women's sports was perceived to have precipitated the downfall of WTSN because women, according to above interviewees' accounts, were not necessarily apt to be persuaded to watch sports just because women were the participants. Later, and

ironically, because women were the intended audience for the network, they were not only blamed for its downfall but also in some ways chastised by respondents for not demonstrating wilful and collective political agency by watching WTSN en masse. The following remarks exemplified this politically charged double-edged sword:

> None of my friends were watching. Very few of my friends were subscribing. They are big sports women. They are fans, they are athletes, some of them are high-performance athletes. They weren't subscribing and they weren't watching. Regardless of my social campaigning at the outset saying, 'Listen girls… you better sign on, we all have to support this.' […] I was saying, 'You know girls…come on. You gotta subscribe to this. Do your part. Because if we don't support this and it fails…it's going to be a *long* time before someone tries again' (Respondent 2, female commentator).

> My feeling is the women were at fault for letting that go down the toilet […] [L]et's face it there are a lot of women out there in major positions of authority for revenue. If they wanted it, here was their chance to keep it going. Now there is absolutely no excuse in the world for them to say, 'There's nothing for us' (Respondent 3, male host/reporter).

In the Red: Notes on WTSN's Financial Record

As noted above, TSN's 1989 move from individual pay service to the discretionary tier created a stable foundation upon which to cultivate its future market. After being packaged with other specialty channels and sold as the "first tier" to consumers TSN was able to collect both advertising and cable subscription revenues (Sparks, 1992, p. 322). When compared to pay-per-view services that relied on advertising revenue alone, TSN's advantage was that it was also able to collect subscriber revenue from the cable companies. Being permitted to do so put TSN at an advantage in terms of attracting sufficient revenues required to run a profitable 24-hour sports service.

When asked about the importance of having two secure revenue streams (cable subscriber and advertising) then network president Rick Brace remarked: "You couldn't run the service if you run on advertising alone [...] You'd be out of business" (Quoted in Killingsworth, 1999, p. 47). This observation ironically foreshadowed the conditions under which WTSN subsequently began as a digital television service. WTSN did not have the advantage of collecting cable subscriber revenue. As a digital channel, WTSN's major revenue sources came from digital television service subscriptions and advertising.

The Numbers

In 2000, the Canadian Cable Television Association (CCTA) estimated that there were 500,000 potential digital cable customers in Canada; in 2004 this estimate grew to just over 2 million. These numbers call attention to WTSN's ability to exist as a service without access to substantial digital television subscriber revenue. Like the other diginets that launched in 2001, WTSN relied heavily on both digital television subscriber and advertising revenue in order to make a profit. This, coupled with only 317,866 customers subscribing to its service in year one, makes it reasonable to assume that unless the network's advertising revenues were significantly high, it did not have much chance to at least break even. Figures filed with the CRTC show that WTSN's total revenue in its inaugural broadcast year was $693,856, while expenses totalled $3,132,181. In comparison, WTSN's sport diginet contemporaries like ESPN Classic Canada, The NHL Network, and Raptors NBA TV, had comparable financial data. But what separated the financial records of these stations was that they were CAT 2 licensees and, on average,

their revenue outnumbered those of WTSN in 2003. These factors provide some evidence

of the channels being successful in attracting more subscribers and advertising revenue

than WTSN. Interviewees also speculated that because their CAT 2 status liberated them

from the strict CAN-CON restrictions of CAT 1 stations like WTSN, ESPN Classic

Canada, The NHL Network, and Raptors NBA TV were not in jeopardy of ceasing

operations even though they did not have promising subscription numbers. Table 3

outlines 2002-2003 financial details for WTSN and three of its diginet contemporaries.

[Insert Table 3 here]

These numbers foreshadowed WTSN's financial demise. After only one month of

operation WTSN had not attracted strong ratings. In October 2001, the number one digital

channel was Lone Star (classic cowboy/Western film and television shows) with a 13,400

per minute audience in prime time (Zelkovich, 2001). At this time, out of 55 new digital

channels launched in September 2001, the sport diginets performed as follows:

[Insert Table 4 here]

By spring 2002, approximately seven months after roll-out, Lone Star was still the

number one diginet with approximately 13,500 viewers in prime time. But the only sport

diginet in Nielsen's top 15 ranking was Fox Sports World (ranked number 15) with

roughly 1,300 viewers per minute (Poulton, 2002).

Reflecting back on this period of time, interviewees speculated that perhaps

WTSN was never really expected to be profitable. They also cited a combination of

factors to explain the poor ratings: poor programming quality; a lack of diverse content;

and, that WTSN was not afforded enough time to iron out the growing pains associated

with digital channel roll-out. Two comments illustrate these judgments:

> I don't know that people are prepared to take a risk when they already know the slice of the pie is going to be thin. You know that niche marketing is how anybody is going to reach any kind of audience unless you're at a certain of level of broadcasting. Even the [conventional] networks are feeling it. If you're telling somebody, 'Okay here's what you're gonna do. You're […] not going to be reaching 100% of the audience. Maybe you're gonna be reaching 14% and of that 14%, well, 2 [%] is really gonna be your share.' What?! 'But the dollars you have to spend for the cameramen, for the studio…you still spend the same dollars that the people who have 14, 20, 23, 25% of the audience [do] and in turn [you have to] get the advertising dollars that having that much audience entails. You still have to spend the same amount of money as him. But you'll never make the money he makes.' The only way someone would do it […] again, it would have to be a pet project and completely writing off any losses (Respondent 11, female reporter).

> Yes, it must have been a pretty big risk. However, there are also political workings in place that we don't know about. Another thing that was expressed to me was the budget that they had […] was not good. So, your hands are tied with what you can show, with how much people you can hire. Was it maybe…? I'm not trying to have any conspiracy theory …but I certainly heard a lot of things. It was almost set up to fail. I don't know if that's the case but yes they probably did go in knowing how limited they would be. So of course I would think it would be a very big financial risk…(Respondent 12, female host/anchor);

> Researcher - Why then would they […] set-up a network to fail?;

> Perhaps there was some political pressure to have more women's programming. I couldn't even imagine. I do recall [that] when everybody heard about this station starting up that it was sort of like, 'Well how long is that going to last? Who's gonna even watch that? (Respondent 12, female host/anchor).

Discussion and Conclusion

From its very inception WTSN faced an uncertain future. As a digital service it

had a limited audience pool from which to draw upon which led to difficulties attracting

advertisers. In order to compensate for its limited audience reach, WTSN (and other diginets) had to create services that would a) lure established audiences away from existing analogue conventional broadcasters and specialty channels; and/or b) cultivate a completely different audience with unique programming. As discussed above, WTSN made a bold attempt to do the latter. Due to the nature of CAT 1 digital television licenses, this option was reasonable given the uniqueness of its intended programming. The anticipated audience commodity, however, did not materialize.

In more general terms, the introduction of digital television has not enticed subscriptions from a critical mass of Canadian consumers. Much of the ultra-niche programming provided by the diginets can also be found on established conventional and specialty broadcasting services, albeit in limited quantities, where consumers pay considerably less. If the overarching motive of the CRTC was to "maximize the production and exhibition of new Canadian programming," what has been demonstrated by the demise of networks like WTSN is that the laissez-faire market approach to television broadcasting that may have been of extreme benefit to TSN and MuchMusic some 20 years ago, has turned into a liability for the new digital services. Put another way, when given the choice of purchasing digital services on a per channel basis, between the arrival and demise of WTSN, Canadian consumers did not support the new technology by choosing digital television in sufficient numbers to make most channels financially viable.

The ideological dimension cannot be understated as a contributing factor in WTSN's demise. By design, WTSN may have attempted to attract an audience commodity that perhaps was not even aware of the channel's existence or wholly convinced to subscribe. The proposed predominant female audience commodity may have been a larger threat to the channel's success than the digital platform on which it was delivered. For that reason, any logic in cultivating a female audience commodity would be rendered *illogical* because of the impracticality of delivering such a demographic for television sports to advertisers. The statements contained in the network's license application claim that its arrival would speak directly to a gender void in television sport programming. For the most part, these claims were based on many feminist inspired objectives of gender equality. While there was little evidence to support WTSN's identity as a feminist venture, it is safe to say that the network did appropriate many feminist codes in its creation and eventual programming production. This appropriation may have been unavoidable based on the fact that the CRTC's own impetus for introducing digital television was ideologically entrenched itself. The cultural imperative of advancing and enhancing diversity through television representation, while aptly noble, placed WTSN's for-profit orientation at a clear disadvantage. This of course raises the issue of whether cultural interests or those that address democratic ideals are best represented by for-profit enterprises at all. Scholars have argued that the relationship between cultural interests and for-profit media has tended to be toxic at best (see: Jhally, 1987; Sauvageau, 2006; Taras, 2006).

A final ideological factor that was not formally recognized by those interviewed was that of the economic imperative. Respondents were well aware of the necessary requirements for sport to be successful on television. That is, they consistently cited the commercial market logic of profit-making as a practice that exists, almost alone and without any input or influence from outside agents. The profit-making philosophy as the ultimate marker of successful for television-sport marriage was not examined with the same level of criticism as the decision to launch WTSN as an exclusive women's sport network. In other words, the ideological dimension of the economic imperative was not wholly problematized by respondents. This was curious in lieu of the fact that some respondents deemed that women's sports, even professional women's sports, were best suited for the same level of television attention as amateur sports—public broadcasting.

The demise of WTSN is also interesting from a theoretical standpoint because it is not the only commercial women's sport venture that has collapsed in recent years due to the financial realities of the marketplace. For instance, after a publication run of only two years, *Sports Illustrated Women*, an American magazine celebrating the achievements of women's sport, folded in December 2002. The magazine's publisher Time Incorporated stated that it was too costly to keep the monthly in publication since it could not attract lucrative advertising contracts. The American Basketball League (ABL)—a professional women's league—was established in 1996 and abandoned in 1998 due to a lack of sponsorship. The Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) survived only two years after its 2001 inauguration. Sponsors of both the ABL and WUSA withdrew support

because the limited audience did not justify their continued involvement. In the case of

WUSA, ticket sales drastically plunged after a promising start, along with television

ratings. In September 2003, the league reported an operating loss of just under $90

million (Da Costa, 2003, p. D04).

The commonalities among the above examples are numerous. On one hand, each

venture faced stiff challenges in terms of attracting viable revenues, sponsorship, and

audiences. On the other hand, they all attempted to pioneer women's spectator sport as an

alternative to mainstream (male-stream) sport culture. The fate of each venture

underscores the key role of media generated revenue (especially television) for the

financial viability of commercial sport. Undoubtedly, commercial imperatives will

continue to determine the decision-making processes in the private sector of sport

business. Because profitability is the marker of success in the market economy, difficult

decisions will have to be made in establishing future elite women's sport ventures.

Ultimately, the opportunity to produce radical representations of women's sport will exist

but economic imperatives will undeniably do more to stifle their innovative attempts than

promote them.

The case of WTSN presents a timely opportunity for theoretical and practical

interrogation of women's mediated sport. Where issues of praxis are concerned, it is

necessary to advance discussions regarding the socio-political status of women's media or

alternative media forms to a point where the objectives of sport media services and

representation can be debated. In other words, decisions around whether or not

commercial imperatives should outweigh those of the 'public good' need to be more fully considered. Clearly, on its own (at least in Canada), an exclusive women's sports network was not viable as a for-profit enterprise. For the time being, the commercial imperatives catering to women as a sole audience commodity for sport may overwhelmingly dictate their availability in the marketplace.

Table 1: Selected Digital Offerings 2001

Digital Offering	Ownership/License Applicant
WTSN*	TSN
The Biography Channel	Rogers, Shaw, A&E
Fashion Television: The Channel	CHUM
Men TV	TVA, Global
PrideVision	Levfam, Alliance Atlantis

Source: CRTC. (2000). Public Notice 2000-171.
* At the time of its original license application, WTSN was known as WSN (Women's Sports Network). WSN appears as the official network name on all CRTC documents prior to its launch in 2001.

Table 2: Selected sport broadcast hours in WTSN's inaugural year

Sport	Broadcast Hours
Curling	130
Golf (LPGA)	110
Basketball (WNBA)	90
Soccer (WUSA & World Cup)	70
Figure Skating	70
Track and Field	50

Source: WTSN (2003). Print advertisement.

Table 3: CAT 2 Sport Diginet Financial Data 2002-2003

	WTSN	ESPN Classic Canada	The NHL Network	Raptors NBA TV
2002				
Total Revenue	693,856	601,837	1,363,985	1,463,164
Total Expenses	3,132,181	2,146,602	4,876,603	5,057,693
Number of Subscribers	317,866	318,108	328,930	318,000
2003				
Total Revenue	1,422,387	1,436,920	3,305,938	2,720,042
Total Expenses	4,595,625	3,703,775	6,648,278	5,116,670
Number of Subscribers	426,743	434,583	446,105	408,967

Source: CRTC. (2004). Individual pay and specialty services: Statistical and financial summaries, pages 44, 46, 54, and 63.

Table 4: Diginet Ratings per Minute October 2001

Channel	Ratings Per Min.	Rank/50 Diginets
ESPN Classic	2,200	13
Xtreme Sports	1,600	19
Fox Sports World Canada	800	31
WTSN	600	34
Leafs TV	200	37
Raptors NBA TV	200	37

Source: Zelkovich, C. (2001).

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Case Study 2

Chapter 5 - Full Court Coverage: WTSN and the Representation of Canadian Women's Intercollegiate Basketball

"WTSN takes a new approach to sports programming. It celebrates the accomplishments of female athletes, profiles celebrated female sports figures and puts female athletes in the spotlight as role models."[7]

Introduction

Scholars have long drawn our attention to the fact that women's sport receives less media coverage than men's sport (Lenskyj, 1986; Messner, Duncan & Jensen, 1993; White & Gillett, 1994; Billings, 2000; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Hall, 2002; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Although there is some evidence of a trend toward increased media coverage of women's sport—witness in recent years the popularity of events such as the Women's World Cup of Soccer, women's Olympic events, the World Ice Hockey Championships, as well as professional tennis and golf, the 2002 demise of American magazine Sports Illustrated Women, the sudden termination of WUSA (The Women's United Soccer Association)—a professional soccer league in the U.S., and the recent 2003 demise of WTSN (Women's Television Sports Network) in Canada has cast a pall over the future of women's sports as for-profit enterprises.

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[7]As appeared March 3, 2002 on network website: www. wtsn.ca. This commentary accompanied the home page of the site and was found in a piece entitled: "About Us." As of August 2002 the network eliminated this piece from its homepage. The "look" of the WTSN homepage was strikingly similar to that of its brother network TSN (The Sports Network). Currently, since the network has folded, the WTSN website contains an official announcement publicizing its termination and a link to TSN.

The existing body of research on gender and media coverage has focused almost entirely on media outlets not specializing in the coverage of female athletes. This paper departs from that pattern by focusing on WTSN, a Canadian television network devoted at its inception in 2001 to broadcasting women's sports only. To our knowledge, this was a novel departure for the world of sport broadcasting. As such, our paper will contribute both to the broader literature on gender and sport media coverage and, more specifically, the emerging literature of resistance by women's sport culture to the dominant male model (see Banet-Weiser, 1999; Christopherson, et al., 2002).

The structure of our paper is two-fold. First we examine the origins and demise of the WTSN venture. This will provide the backdrop for interrogating the overall themes and patterns of audio visual representation. Second, we conduct a textual analysis of a WTSN in-house production of the 2002 Canadian Intercollegiate Sport (CIS) women's basketball championships. The purpose of this second aspect of our paper is to assess how WTSN's coverage compared to coverage of mainstream sport as documented in previous studies. It is our contention that our findings will demonstrate that WTSN's coverage differed markedly to mainstream broadcast coverage, but was neither wholly progressive nor wholly unproblematic in terms of its transmission of gendered meanings.

Televising Intercollegiate Sport in Canada: A Brief History

Until 2001, there had been no national broadcasts of the semi-final and bronze medal matches of the CIS women's basketball tournament. At that point in time, TSN (The Sports Network) and The Score, two national broadcasters available on cable, began

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telecasting games from the tournament's earlier rounds. In Canada, TSN has been the top

sport and specialty channel for some years and has been available on the 'first tier' of

channels offered over and above basic cable or satellite services.[8] WTSN, a digital sport

specialty network which was launched in 2001, also broadcast matches from the national

tournament. In terms of access, however, WTSN could only be acquired by purchasing a

separate set-top digital receiver which would pick-up a signal emitted by a service

distributor. From its inception in September 2001 to its termination in September 2003,

WTSN was an official broadcaster of the CIS Women's Basketball Championship. In the

spring of 2002, WTSN broadcast three of the tournament's games: two semi-finals and

one bronze medal match-up. WTSN's brother network, TSN, broadcast the tournament's

gold medal match. Together, the two networks provided extensive nation-wide coverage

of the tournament's final play-off rounds.

For viewers interested in expanded coverage of women's sport in Canada, the

2002 WTSN broadcasts represented a breakthrough for alternative sport programming. In

reality, however, WTSN was introduced into a broadcasting climate in which its brother

network TSN (a non-digital network) was already dominant. Following its launch in

1984, TSN had been immediately successful and had quickly become Canada's top sport

broadcaster.[9] Canadian Cable Association statistics showed that TSN was Canada's top

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[8]   The "first tier" corresponds to the first group of channels available for distribution after those of
basic cable, often including Canadian and American specialty channels.

[9]   Killingsworth's (1999) in-depth study of TSN provides a detailed history of Canada's first
specialty sport channel. The political economy of TSN is of particular interest in his study as the network's
beginnings stem from close association with the Canadian brewer Labatt Breweries Ltd. This study

English-language specialty channel in 2002 with 40 percent of Canadian cable customers tuning into the network at least once a week.[10] Much of the network's success was attributed to it being the first station in Canada to adopt an all sports format and that it implemented a business plan focused on a specific audience demographic—young to middle-aged Canadian males. As Robert Sparks (1992) has suggested, TSN's sports broadcasting focused on a conception of its audience consisting mostly of males wanting to watch male sport. For TSN, "delivering the male" viewer to advertisers was more than an early marketing slogan. It was also a well-researched and successful method for securing lucrative advertising revenues (Sparks, 1992, p. 334).

Although WTSN's plan was to broadcast women's sports programming only, the presence of TSN in the market was an imposing factor. Even though both networks were owned by CTV (Canadian Television) Specialty Television Inc., which in turn is a holding within the larger corporate structure of Canadian conglomerate Bell Globemedia,[11] the two stations were effectively competitors. While the conditions of

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historically charts issues concerning TSN's ownership and programming via personal interviews with those affiliated with the organization from 1984 to 1999. See: Killingsworth, J. (1999). The Sports Network: A case study in specialty channel evolution 1984-1999. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Carleton University.

[10]   From Canadian Cable Association 2002-2003 annual report. Both TSN and RDS (its French-language) counter-part led other specialty channel competitors in weekly market share.

[11]   It should also be noted that the endless chain of media ownership does not end with CTV Specialty Television Inc.'s ownership of WTSN. While CTV Specialty Television Inc., is a holding in the larger corporate structure of Bell Globemedia, it also held ownership interest and operation rights over TSN (The Sports Network) and RDS (Le Reseau des sports – the French language counter-part to TSN). Other specialty networks operated by CTV Specialty include ESPN Classic Canada and the NHL Network. These particulars are thoroughly outlined in CRTC (Canadian Radio Television Telecommunications Commission) ownership charts available at: http://www/crtc.gc.ca/ownership/cht143.pdf; AND http--www.crtc.gc.ca-ownership-cht143e.pdf.

WTSN's broadcasting license as issued by the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission) stipulated the network's programming could not directly compete with any existing service provider, presumably, WTSN would still have to vie for a piece of the sport television audience. Not only did WTSN enter a market already dominated by its brother network TSN, it also faced competition from two other long-established sport broadcasting players in Canada, The Score, and Rogers SportsNet. In turn, the network faced the challenging task of attracting and maintaining an audience that would stay loyal and not revert to patronizing these already established and financially successful sport programming providers.

To further put WTSN's competitive position as a digital channel into perspective, its competitors, Rogers Sportsnet, The Score, and TSN were all available through more accessible, popular, and generally less expensive analogue cable distributors. Statistics for 2001 showed that 8,285,461 of 11,097,860 households with televisions were analogue cable customers.[12] In comparison, while 7,665,000 households had access to digital cable services in 2001, only approximately 500,000 subscribed.[13] Thus, not only did WTSN compete with analogue sports channels already ensconced in the market, it also had a limited pool of potential digital customers to draw from. This factor is significant in that WTSN faced added competition from twenty other digital channels that were launched

[12]   Source: Canadian Cable Television Association. See: www.ccta.ca.

[13]   Source: Canadian Cable Television Association. See: http--www.ccta.ca-english-publications-annual-reports-2003-pdf-charts20-21.pdf; AND http--www.ccta.ca-english-publications-annual-reports-2003-pdf-charts22-23.pdf.

alongside the network in September 2001. These channel genres ranged from fashion, books, documentaries, science-technology, and religion, to travel.

Female Athletes and Gendered Representations in Television Sport

A large body of literature has documented that the mediation of sport is profoundly gendered (Blinde, et al., 1991; MacNeill, 1996; Billings, 2000; Duncan & Messner, 2000, 2005; Messner, et al., 2000). Consistent with male domination of sport organization and involvement, with the exception of viewership of the Olympic Games and a limited selection of other sporting events, television sport audiences have been predominantly composed of males (Morse, 1983; Creedon, et al., 1994; Daddario, 1997; Duncan & Messner, 1998; White & Wilson, 1999). The standard explanation for this is that programming is determined by demand. Invoking the "chicken versus the egg" metaphor, the argument goes that sports programming generally caters to an audience that is "composed of mainly males who want to watch only men's sports" (Duncan & Messner, 1998, p. 184). As such, previous research has identified four common approaches employed by the media to represent female athletes. What follows is a brief discussion of these approaches and some of the potential implications they have on established notions of sport and gender.

Absence and Trivialization

First and most simply, female sport is by and large either absent, or when present, trivialized in media coverage (Crossman, et al., 1994; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Duncan

& Messner, 2005). Often, when coverage of women's sport surfaces, Messner et al., (1996), and Duncan & Messner, (1998), have documented how techniques of televisual production common to male sport broadcasts, such as the construction of dramatic narrative or the use of sophisticated visual and audio technologies, are generally absent from the female equivalent. Common place sport narratives, the underdog beating the odds, an individual triumphing over adversity, and the pitting of the seasoned veteran player against the promising rookie, often found in mediated male sport, are generally absent in televisual representations of female sport.

Similarly, research conducted by Michael Messner et al. (1996) on NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) basketball television coverage found that standard production mechanisms were differentially employed for men's and women's games. The men's games incorporated more close-ups, interviews, instant replays, crowd shots, attractive screen graphics, and creative highlight reels than the women's. Messner et al. (1996) also reported that a variety of techniques were employed to build an audience specifically for men's, but not women's, NCAA tournament games. For instance, giving more broadcast exposure to men's regular season games than women's, routinely covering men's games on nightly news broadcasts and virtually ignoring women's games, and devoting more advertising resources to men's events (and often airing advertisements for men's events during the broadcast of women's games, but not vice-versa) were cited as tools that framed the participation of males (and directly the capital of male sport) as more valuable and important than that of females.

Sexualization

A second theme in the research literature suggests a tendency for media coverage and reporting of sports to sexualize female athletes (Creedon, et al., Granitz, 1994; Lenskyj, 1998; Schultz, 2004). For example, when examining media coverage of sportswomen, research has identified undue emphasis on heterosexual attributes (i.e. marital status, physical appearance, familial relationships, etc.) as opposed to athletic accomplishments (Messner, 1988; Daddario, 1997; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Lenskyj, 1998). According to these studies, when a sexualized femininity is prioritized and emphasized as the most salient characteristic in female athletic participation, dominant representations tend to be one dimensional and inaccurate depictions of female sporting achievement.

Findings have also revealed that televised images represent female athletes as being less powerful and less active than males, and as being weak, emotional and having less control over athletic outcomes than males (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Messner, et al., 1993; Eastman & Billings, 2000). Content analyses have also provided further evidence of how female athletes are more often shown participating in conventionally "feminine" sports such as gymnastics, tennis, and figure skating (Tuggle & Owen, 1999).

Gender and Sexual Marking

Gender marking is the tendency for texts to have gendered meanings explicitly embedded within them. For example, researchers have reported that the women's NCAA basketball championship is labelled as "the *women's* National game," (Messner, et al.,

1996), or qualified as "women's basketball" (Blinde, et al., 1991) while the male equivalent is known as "the National game," or just "basketball." Thus, in the latter case the absence of the gender marker "male" signifies, by default, that the game described is male. When spectator attention is directed specifically towards "femaleness," as in the above cited gender marking cases, women's sporting events are constructed as being 'other' or "a hybrid form (or off-shoot) of normative or universal basketball – men's basketball" (Blinde, et al., 1991, p. 105). In turn, gender marking often conveys the sentiment that the level of sporting competition in women's events is inferior to that of men's.

In a related area of research, Sarah Banet-Weiser (1999) found that advertising and promotion strategies employed by the WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) emphasized the femininity of the athletes, branding them as "wholesome" women defined by moral character, strong family connections, and maternal aspirations. While these representations symbolically offset the hyper-masculine image of male NBA players and allowed the WNBA to stand alone as a distinct alternative to the NBA itself, it offered little to advance progressive notions of femininity. This strategy, of course, alerts us to the ongoing presence of the "feminine apologetic" in women's sport – that is, the presence of compensatory behaviours and practices among female athletes for the purpose of dissociating them with lesbianism and counter-stereotypical notions of womanhood (see: Felshin, 1974; Festle, 1996; Broad, 2001).

Oppositional/Ambiguous Ideals of Femininity in Narrative and Commentary

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Researchers have also identified ambiguity as a characteristic of representations of female athletes in television imagery and accompanying narratives. Narratives or story-telling devices help to visually and aurally organize sporting events as competitions between characters fulfilling various roles in given plots. Culturally and morally entrenched, narratives offer points of reference to sporting audiences with regards to interpreting events and meaning in given competitions. Following Graham Knight et al. (2005, p. 29), narratives engage two types of interpretive frames: 1) thematic frames that isolate the central focus of what is being represented; and 2) explanatory frames that outline the causes and effects of particular situations. Narratives frequently used in televised representation of sport include: 1) the tale of the undefeated or perfect season where teams record zero losses heading into championship matches; 2) the Cinderella story where an unlikely team or player succeeds at playing in the championship and possibly winning; 3) veteran players/teams versus rookie/inexperienced players/teams; and 4) the mystery of whether the underdog will muster enough talent or luck to upset the favourite. These examples are usually included throughout the course of competition via play-by-play or colour commentary but can also appear in stand alone vignettes and profiles accompanied by commentator analysis and expertise. To this end, sport scholars have observed that many narratives used in representing female athletes combine "positive descriptions and images of women athletes [that] are juxtaposed with descriptions and images that undermine and [continue to] trivialize women's efforts and successes" (Wensing & Bruce, 2004, p. 388). Such strategies underscore the fact that

female athletes are more often than not represented in contradictory and ambivalent terms.

In the 1996 Wimbledon women's tennis final the two finalists, Steffi Graf and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario were portrayed as dramatic foils. According to Eileen Kennedy (2001), Graf was constructed as the popular, hegemonic-feminine, graceful, modest crowd favourite—representing *emphasized femininity* (Connell, 1987)—that which is widely celebrated and closely related to stereotypical signifiers of womanhood. Her opponent, Sanchez-Vicario, was portrayed as a hot-blooded, hot-tempered, and awkward Spanish tomboy. In juxtaposing Graf with the more resistant femininity of Sanchez-Vicario's, Kennedy suggests that sportswomen are often framed in contexts similar to soap opera narratives—the tension of good versus evil. Such narratives facilitate not only ambiguous meanings and hence readings of a text but too encourage rather simplistic frames in which to interpret the personalities and performances of female athletes.

It would seem here that unwritten, but agreed upon, rules tend to legitimize female athletic achievement only if dominant heterosexual notions of femininity are embedded in text (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). This process, while arguably muting resistance to dominant gender ideologies can also counteract conventional representations of women's sport. As Neal Christopherson, et al., (2002, p. 173) suggest:

> …women in contemporary society are thought to be both empowered and oppressed, with both positive and negative statuses presented in the media. Positive status here refers to empowerment and egalitarianism, while negative status connotes the maintenance of inequality for women. Through coverage of women's sports, these representations of differing statuses show that participation in sports is good for females because it is a sign of the improving status of

women, yet they also perpetuate preexisting gender stereotypes and institutional gender inequality.

This observation has significant implications for future representations of female athletes given the steady rise of young girls and women participation in organized sport. If, for example, it is difficult to identify non-stereotypical and more egalitarian portrayals of female athletes in media coverage that are not coupled with signifiers of traditional gender inequality, as Christopherson et al. (2002) claim, then attempts to improve upon the status of women's sport will inevitably encounter a new set of dilemmas that accompany the old ones. Therefore, even in the face of growth in participation in women's sports, media coverage and representation may still be characterized by ambivalence at best, and neglect at worst (see: Duncan & Messner, 2005).

Canadian Context

In an earlier extensive Canadian study, Sparks (1992) discussed the launch in 1984 of TSN, Canada's first 24-hour sports network. Sparks argued that from its inception the network's content was aimed almost exclusively at a male audience. As a result, broadcast content was based on a self-fulfilling logic:

> …one condition—the ritual basis of sport and beer consumption as "male preserves" in North American culture—is an essential feature in the logic of TSN's market strategy and helps to explain (but not justify) the overly masculine character of the programming the network develops. In TSN's case, however, the network's prerogative of producing masculine sport is seen to emerge as an extension of the prerogative of media ownership and therefore the ulterior bases of masculine power (patriarchy, masculinist social practice) separated from the political economic bases of power [that being] private ownership of means of production, [and] rights to a "regulated" monopoly (Sparks, 1992, p. 321).

In essence, then, masculinist perceptions of the nature of TSN's "audience" directly influenced programming. As a result, women's sports events/programming accounted for 3.1% or less of TSN's programming between 1985 and 1991; and the promotion of women's sports was nearly non-existent (Sparks, 1992).

In another Canadian study on the sport media Margaret MacNeill (1996) demonstrated how coverage of men's ice hockey at the1988 Winter Olympics was packaged specifically to attract male viewers. Masculine codes of excellence such as hard work, determination, toughness, 'grit' and intense nationalism were harnessed to appeal to the male gaze. For MacNeill (1996, p. 115) such "narrative codes of masculinity" guided the television production and as a result, "television crews assumed the audience-of-address they broadcast to was wholly male." In sum, MacNeill (1996, p.122) documented how the organizational procedures and production practices of the CTV network crew heavily influenced the "role of televised sport, and indeed the role of sporting practice, in the social construction of gender, nationhood, Olympic grandeur, and social relationships." This positioning provided an example of how cultural and ideological discourses become normalized in television sport programming. These dominant discourses (as opposed to competing discourses) then become legitimated as 'authentic' representations of sporting reality in Canada. By emphasizing hockey over other sports and foregrounding "narrative codes of masculinity" the CTV network symbolically excluded female viewers as serious fans.

The analysis presented below takes the works of Sparks (1992) and MacNeill (1996) as a point of departure. It differs, though, by focusing on a few specific dynamics: a) how WTSN represented women's intercollegiate basketball, b) how this representation was located in the broader context of mainstream sport, and c) how the "female gaze" may have been corralled for women's basketball by a network purporting to solely appeal to women.[14] Our attention to these issues is important, and timely, because as discussed above WTSN was a digital network that was created (and subsequently failed) in a highly gendered televisual sport market.

Methods

Three games at the Canadian Women's Basketball Championship that were held in April 2002 were recorded and analyzed. The games were aired at 6pm and 8pm on April 8th, and 8pm on April 9th. All the games were tape recorded in their entirety for viewing and analysis. Our analysis followed the same cultural studies focus as previous studies of televised representations of female athletes as well as those that have paid attention to broader media representations of female sport (see: Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Messner et al., 1996; Daddario, 1997; Banet-Weiser, 1999; Lucas, 2000; Kennedy, 2001). As such, we undertook a textual analysis of the meanings embedded within the broadcasts.

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[14]   While the "W" in WTSN identifies the obvious link to women, in WTSN's original license application to the CRTC, there were many instances where "women" were identified as the intended audience commodity. For instance, some excerpts declared that WTSN would: cater to "sports of interest to women;" produce "programs with and for women;" and address "women as [sports] fans." For the complete license application, please see: http://www.crtc.gc.ca/ENG/public/2000/5060/nph2000-5/CTV_Category2/2000-1065-3.doc

Each broadcast was viewed four times, each with a specified purpose. The first

viewing was used to identify dominant themes warranting closer attention. The second

viewing focused on the presence or not, of themes identified in the existing studies of

mainstream television sport broadcasts. The third viewing examined whether

representations of female athletes were: (i) consistent with or contrasting to those found

in previous work and/or (ii) new to televisual representations of female athletes. The

fourth viewing focused on the verbal commentary accompanying the visual text. These

commentaries were transcribed verbatim for this purpose.

The analysis was guided by three research questions addressed in previous

investigations. First, did WTSN's coverage trivialize the accomplishments of players?

Second, did the coverage employ gender stereotypes and were representations of female

athletes sexualized and/or gender marked? Third, were ambiguous representations of

female athletes present in the broadcasts?

The texts analyzed included language, symbols, and visual images that, upon

reflection, were both common to and distinct from other sport representations on

television. As Kathleen Kinkema and Janet Harris (1998, p. 34) have suggested:

> although it is clear that audiences [can] interpret media texts in a variety of ways,
> texts are thought to sway audiences toward particular interpretations rather than
> others, [and] these 'preferred' ways of understanding are usually found to be
> supportive of dominant ideologies.

Preferred readings of mediated texts have been identified as reinforcing dominant cultural

codes (see: Hall, 1977; Fiske, 1987; Morley, 1992). While we anticipated that WTSN's

broadcasts would offer many counter or alternative readings of women's sport, we

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suggest that the preferred readings contained in broadcasts also tended to be negotiated within dominant sport culture.

Our findings are presented in three sections. Each section compares the representation of women's CIS basketball on WTSN to prevalent themes in previous studies of representations of men's and women's NCAA basketball. At times, for comparative purposes, our findings are also set against research on the representation of NBA and WNBA basketball. The data are organized in this fashion to establish a comparative tool with which to examine WTSN's production in relation to similar televised events. Each section presents tables summarizing major findings of previous studies in the field. Section one examines production standards. Section two examines narrative devices. The final section discusses play-by-play, colour, and sideline game crew commentary. To anticipate our findings, our analysis suggests that a predominantly gender neutral discourse was employed in the production of the broadcasts. However, comparing our findings with those of prior investigations, it was also clear that representations of women's sport in the WTSN CIS broadcasts, while relatively progressive, were also ambiguous and complex.

Findings

Production Standards and other Technical Aspects of CIS Broadcasts

Table 1 identifies production techniques employed in representations of men's and women's NCAA basketball as documented by Messner et al. (1996):

[Insert Table 1 here]

Production standards are techniques used in the production of the broadcast: different camera angles, music, slow motion and instant replays. Messner et al. (1996) show that production standards for men's and women's television productions of NCAA basketball were inequitably distributed. Not only were certain production techniques less frequently used in the production of women's games, in some instances techniques employed for men's matches were completely absent for women's matches. For example, instant replays, shots of team celebrations, and graphics outlining player and team statistics were more often used in men's matches than they were for women's – all strategies that construct a sense of excitement and importance around basketball events. The absence of these techniques in women's games renders them lesser or 'other.' Put another way, the consistent absence of graphics depicting shot and game clocks, and game statistics in the women's matches suggested that there omission was not due to chance or error. It indicates exclusion of legitimated techniques of television representation of women's basketball.

By contrast, the presentation of the basketball matches on WTSN involved complex production techniques. With the exception of telestrator use, all three WTSN broadcasts employed the same production standards as the men's NCAA matches studied by Messner et al. (1996). Tables 2a and 2b outline these observations:

[Insert Tables 2a and 2b here]

The WTSN broadcasts began with montages clips that ran for an average of 42 seconds from each team's previous matches. Each montage which was accompanied by a voice-over commentary by sideline commentator Norma Wick highlighted performances and identified key players. Following each montage, an opening graphic "CIS on WTSN" appeared on the screen followed by a graphic composed of: 1) logos for CIS (top left-hand corner) and WTSN (top right-hand corner); the words "CIS Semi Final in between the two logos; 2) the names and logos of the two teams playing underneath this title (i.e. Winnipeg Wesmen and Simon Fraser Clan) and the name of the host -- McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. This graphic was accompanied by a voice-over welcome to the broadcast given by either Wick or Glen Suitor (play-by-play commentator) depending on the particular broadcast. These subsequent graphics and information on team records appeared on the screen for approximately eleven seconds. Each team's respective nickname was then displayed in a subsequent logo. Simon Fraser University (SFU) were also identified as The Clan, The Université de Laval, The Rouge et Or (Red and Gold), The University of Winnipeg, The Wesmen, and The University of Regina, The Cougars.

Primary visual action was captured via the standard elevated sideline camera providing a panoramic view of the court. All three WTSN broadcasts employed this camera angle. Other cameras were located on the baseline and sideline for close-up game action as well as intermittent cut-away shots to team benches. The baseline cameras added close-ups of action close to the baskets. The sideline cameras were used during

timeouts to capture coaches talking to their players allowing the viewer to get a sense of being 'in the action.' These cameras were also used to pan players sitting on the benches as coaches explained and mapped out plays and imparted information. On average, each match contained three shots of time-out bench shots and lasted for approximately 1.5 minutes. The use of this sort of camera work conveyed a sense of immediacy and the importance of working together as a team for the television audience. These techniques are standard to mediated sport productions (Duncan & Brummett, 1989; MacNeill, 1996) and suggest which parts of a given event are significant.

Similar to television coverage of men's basketball (see: Messner et al., 1996; Duncan and Messner, 1998), cameras often isolated players who had recently scored or made note-worthy plays. These shots created a narrative of unfolding drama relating to the performances of individually identifiable characters. Similarly, and again consistent with men's coverage, slow motion replays were frequently utilized to review game action. Typically, slow motion/instant replays offer intricate details to viewers that often go unnoticed during real time as well as offering the aura of "scientificity" (Morse, 1983, p. 49). Instant replays were presented in two ways: 1) with league or network logos, and 2) without logos but immediately leading into commercial breaks. In Semi-finals 1 and 2, the league logo for the CIS was flashed quickly on the screen leading into replays and appeared on the screen leading out of replays. In the Bronze medal match, this same technique was employed but with WTSN's logo. Some instant replays led directly into commercial breaks and did not incorporate logos at all but instead opted to show the

current score and game clock. Instant replays with logos appeared ten times and took up 1 minute forty-two seconds of air time on average. There were approximately four instant replays without logos which were allotted an average of thirty-six seconds worth of coverage. The instant replays were used to highlight noteworthy plays, and tended to appear before players shot free throws, as teams sat for time-outs, and leading to commercial breaks. The presence of this technique contributed to the presentation of the event as a sport "spectacle" as reported in previous studies (MacNeill, 1996, p. 107). In all, multiple camera angles coupled with slow-motion replays identified the athletes as more than *just* basketball players – they were stars in an entertainment event with a dramatic outcome that garnered spectator interest. In effect, the basketball matches broadcast by WTSN were represented as compelling not-to-be-missed sporting events.

Research on televised men's basketball has argued that the use of on-screen graphics serve a few important functions. As summarized in Table 1, when Messner et al. (1996) examined NCAA basketball broadcasts, men's games included "little extras" such as graphics for things such as: a) when players are introduced graphics showed name, position, and other personal characteristics, b) when coaches were introduced their career win-loss records and tenure of their coaching position were identified, and c) and halftime analyses breaking down crucial game information. The authors concluded that these "little extras" were rarely used in women's matches, a dynamic which continued to

reinforce the notion that the men's game was more valuable and worthy of attention.[15] As

in Messner et al.'s (1996) study, the absence of these techniques in women's matches

indicate that producers assumed that the audience for the women's game would not

appreciate such a production standard, or the production budget could not afford this level

of production. The absence of "little extras" in the production of women's matches meant

that the visual quality of women's matches paled in comparison to men's matches.

During the player introductions segment at the beginning of each of WTSN's

broadcasts, graphics were inserted showing a head-shot photograph of each player and

her tournament statistics. Back court players (guards) were shown first followed by front

court players (centres and forwards). Typically, statistics for back court players showed

points per game and assists; and for front court players, points per game and rebounds.

Throughout game play, the red WTSN logo appeared in the top right-hand corner of the

screen accompanied by a small box in the bottom right-hand corner displaying the game

clock, abbreviated team names, and the score. The game clock was ever-present—a factor

that Messner et al. (1996) stated was not present in productions of women's NCAA

basketball matches.

Whenever the teams returned to the floor from commercial breaks, both the CIS

basketball and WTSN logos were superimposed on screen before play resumed. This

provided a visual association between the league and the network, reinforcing the CIS and

WTSN as brands. The brand 'marking' of the event via brand logos and other hi-tech

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[15]   We acknowledge that the breaking down of additional statistics and obscure information could constitute a tool that speaks directly to a statistically savvy audience accustomed to sophisticated game analyses incorporated into the production of men's basketball.

graphic techniques bestowed a sense of "spectacle" upon the event, and adding cultural legitimacy of women's basketball. Positioning both the CIS and WTSN logos in this fashion achieved two things. The logos illustrated that women's university basketball had won prestigious access to television and that a sports network had purchased broadcasting rights to one of the elite events of the women's sport calendar. Thus, the "commercial imperative" (MacNeill, 1996, p. 109) of WTSN was linked to the cultural imperative of CIS basketball. Furthermore, because WTSN was visually connected to the CIS in the production, each validated or endorsed the other as authentic sites of female athletic achievement in Canada.

Some other production techniques employed by WTSN included half-time and post-game statistical wrap-ups, information on upcoming matches, and highlight reels of individual star players' performances. Each highlight reel presented lasted for fifty-five seconds on average and provided visual evidence of exceptional performances within the grand scheme of CIS women's basketball.

Less than a minute into the bronze medal game, Glen Suitor (play-by-play commentator) and Marie Verdun (colour commentator) explained a graphic which appeared on the screen outlining some of the basic rules of women's basketball. No reference was made to men's basketball even though the graphics was titled "Rule Differences." The commentators noted that CIS women's basketball rules were introduced to conform to FIBA (Fédération de Internationale de Basketball) rules. Their

explanation was brief and provided context within which to understand the game – but in relation to the unspoken standard of men's basketball.

A final notable production technique was occasional graphics advertising upcoming games on WTSN or its brother network TSN. Upcoming games were featured an average of four times per game. In Semi-Final 1, each subsequent match was advertised. In the bronze medal match, a graphic advertising the gold medal match appeared five times during the broadcast. The WTSN commentary crew also referenced upcoming matches various times throughout the broadcasts an average of five times per game. This finding differed markedly from previous studies that have shown that the advertisements of upcoming broadcasts during women's matches tend to be those for men's matches if there is any sort of upcoming match-up advertising at all (Messner et al., 1996).

Sport Narrative

Narrative is an important tool in televised representations of sport. Many of the production techniques discussed above contributed to the essence of narrative as conduits through which narrative can be represented and communicated. In other words, highlight reels, instant/slow-motion replays, graphics, logos, and commentary help to tell the stories, many of which become reoccurring themes or patterns in broadcast coverage. Table 3 outlines some findings from previous studies with regards to televised NCAA, NBA and WNBA basketball:

[Insert Table 3 here]

While Leah Vande Berg and Sarah Projansky's (2003) study charts thematic patterns incorporated in NBA and WNBA televised broadcasts, Messner et al. (1996) describe how various production techniques were used to create narrative interest. When it came to the themes used to characterize court performances, Vande Berg and Projansky (2003) found that success, athletic agency and adversity were consistently and equitably applied to productions of both NBA and WNBA basketball. Accounts of players' performances from both leagues were based on stories about hard work and determination, playing through pain or illness, and of star players holding their team's destiny in their hands. Table 3 illustrates that where narratives for the men's and women's game diverged were in the matters of the description of player identities. For example, WNBA players were portrayed as more disciplined and dependent on coaching guidance than NBA players. WNBA players were also framed as female athletes associated with stereotypical markers of femininity such as being caregivers, wives, and mothers. The quintessential WNBA role model was characterized as a player who embodied an equitable balance of mother-athlete. The authors conclude that such portrayals deflected attention away from the themes of athletic adversity and agency which were prominently featured in WNBA broadcasts. These narratives undermined the legitimacy of WNBA players being first and foremost hard-working and dedicated athletes; they "…highlighted and legitimated very different aspects of female and male professional athletes' identities and performances" (Vande Berg & Projansky, 2003, p. 43).

Messner et al.'s (1996) documentation of narratives in NCAA basketball identified how production techniques and features served to provide different representations of the men's and women's games. In their view the predominant effect of poorly executed narrative strategies in the production of women's NCAA basketball was to undermine the legitimacy of the game in the eyes of the viewer. For instance, pre-game montages and shows for men's matches were complex, exciting productions involving interviews with players and commentary by expert analysts. Analysis of upcoming games showcased spirited dialogue between commentators who hyped men's games as spectacular events. These segments typically ran forty minutes in length.

Women's matches featured one minute thirty seconds worth of highlight footage. While team coaches were interviewed for pre-game shows, there was no expert commentary as there was for the men's games. Finally, half-time and post-game shows for men's games provided in-depth statistical analysis, interviews with key players and coaching staff, and debate among experts – all which were largely absent in the production of women's games. During half-time shows, discussion of the women's game was terminated because of time allotted to commercials and to the hyping of upcoming men's games. Post-game shows also demonstrated evidence of devaluing the women's game by not featuring interviews with team players or coaches from either the winning or losing team.

[Insert Table 4 here]

As Table 4 indicates, WTSN broadcasts utilized thematic narratives that were woven together with high quality production techniques. During the broadcast of Semi-Final 1, featuring the University of Laval and the University of Regina, WTSN promoted three up-coming women's matches: the second semi-final game between Simon Fraser University and the University of Winnipeg; the following day's bronze match-up; and, the gold medal match-up (to be broadcast on TSN the following day). Graphics were inserted at the bottom of the screen during game action or during time-outs and commercial breaks. Suitor and Verdun verbally reviewed the information on upcoming matches as play resumed following a break in the action. This attention effectually provided publicity for up-coming matches in tournament play.

A predominant theme with the WTSN coverage of the tournament was SFU's untarnished 32-0 season record heading into the championships. No other team in the tournament boasted an undefeated season. SFU's record dominated the narrative accounting for their appearance in the second semi-final and subsequent gold medal match. Commentators highlighted both the pressure on SFU's players coming into the tournament with a perfect record and the fact that all other teams that they would face in the CIS tournament would be considered underdogs. Even though Simon Fraser was making its first appearance in the CIS tournament, Suitor remarked, "SFU [are] the big favourites in this one" during the warm-up before their semi-final game with Winnipeg. Their success was also attributed to the fact that both the CIS's most valuable player (Jessica Kaczowka) and defensive player of the year (Teresa Kleindienst) were members

of the team. To further identify SFU as the team to beat, commentators underscored that their coach, Bruce Langford, had been named CIS coach of the year and had an untarnished record of his own. Norma Wick commented, "…SFU will be playing next and he is the guy, Bruce Langford—undefeated not just this year but since 2000…" This story-telling strategy was analogous with the "codes of signification" MacNeill (1996) identified in her research on televised men's ice hockey. Such codes, "…permit cultural meanings about sporting elements such as "excellence" or contemporary notions of "Olympism" to be shaped and conveyed…" (MacNeill, 1996, p. 112). Furthermore, this narrative strategy mirrors what scholars have recognized as the "personalization process" (see: Cantelon & Gruneau, 1988, p. 189) whereby event coverage creates "buzz" around a select few individuals in order to enhance viewer identification with the event. As a whole, SFU was associated with cultural meanings linked to athletic excellence, success, consistency, and dominance, all themes commonly found in the sport narratives. As such, the team represented sporting "excellence," and was held up as the "cream of the crop" of women's basketball. In a comment regarding SFU's dominance just prior to tip-off, Suitor remarks:

> 32 and 0 overall. In their conference play, 20 and 0. Averaging 78 points for, 49 against. A differential of 29 points. Simon Fraser is quite frankly dominant. But you know what Marie? In my time in sports, I loved being the underdog and that's right where Winnipeg is.

The story made SFU the team to "watch for" but also ensured a narrative open to multiple interpretations and "mininarratives" (Daddario, 1997). In other words, the narrative suggested that SFU's games could be: a) very entertaining for the audience because they

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were a dominant team, b) sites where history would be made, and c) sites where the unknown "underdog" could potentially "upset" the favourite.

Other conventional methods of generating excitement and interest within the broadcasts included player interviews and player profiles (see also: Duncan & Brummett, 1987; and Daddario, 1997). For instance, Gina Daddario found that video profiles of female athletes during the broadcast of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games represented the extraordinary and ordinary. She observed that: "The Olympic performances provided viewers with a heightening few will ever experience in the real world, whereas the video profiles provided viewers with the sense of the ordinary or the everyday" (Daddario, 1997, p. 112). Likewise, Margaret Duncan and Barry Brummett (1987, p. 173) reason that "...televised personal interviews with the athletes and coaches before or after the competition allow the audience to feel that they are privy to a more intimate side of sports."

In comparison to previous studies documenting how interviews with female athletes tend to emphasize femininity, heterosexuality, and personal lives, WTSN was different and much more progressive. As teams warmed up in the background, Wick interviewed the opposing coaches on the sideline. Interviews with Bruce Langford (SFU), Tanya McKay (Winnipeg), and Christine Stapleton (Regina) lasted anywhere from thirty-five to fifty seconds. The players themselves participated in post-game interviews with Wick. The interviews foregrounded the success theme by interviewing star players from winning teams. For example, post game interviews were conducted with Isabelle Grenier

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of Laval in Semi-Final 1, both Teresa Kleindienst and Jessica Kaczowka of SFU in Semi-Final 2, and JoAnne Wells of Winnipeg in the Bronze medal match. Typically, these interviews ran for about one minute and asked each player to comment on personal and team performances. The focus of these interviews, however, did not follow patterns reported in previous studies where female athletes were often asked questions about personal lives or other non-sport issues.

While success was probably the most evident narrative device in all three matches, two additional mininarratives further contextualized the tournament and generated "buzz" around certain players or teams. This was achieved in two ways: 1) a brief segment on the CIS annual awards ceremony for women's basketball which aired during half-time of Semi-Final 1, and 2) a story inserted into the half-time of Semi-Final 2 featuring SFU team members, Teresa Kleindienst (defensive player of the year), Jessica Kaczowka (national player of the year), and coach of the year, Bruce Langford.

In the segment on the annual CIS basketball awards Norma Wick provided voice-over commentary on a full screen graphic identifying major awards and winners. This served as a foreshadowing tool as Kaczowka, Kleindienst, and Langford's name were emphasized toward the end of the segment. Foregrounding these names was an important strategy in promoting the same day's other Semi-Final match-up (where SFU would play Winnipeg). SFU was touted as the team to watch because it held four key elements (read characters) important to gold medal success; the player of the year, defensive player of the year, coach of the year, and momentum.

These themes carried over into Semi-Final 2 where SFU played Winnipeg. At the beginning of the broadcast Suitor and Verdun shared the following exchange:

Suitor: …SFU, [are] the big favourites in this one…They handled McMaster with no problem in the quarter final. They're favoured in this game as well. You don't play this game on paper but when you have the MVP, Marie, it looks pretty good.

Verdun: It does look good. When you've got an MVP like Jessica Kaczowka things can go your way, and often. They're undefeated coming in. She's a huge presence inside. She's very big. She's very talented. She competes at the international level. You can't say enough about Jessica Kaczowka, she's the anchor of [SFU's] offence most definitely.

And following a pre-game interview with SFU head coach Bruce Langford, Suitor added the following comment: "SFU did not lose a game all season long; Winnipeg ranked number 5…Marie, I say we just fold it up and head home…" These comments not only denote the taken-for-granted supremacy of SFU, but again set the stage for the success narrative to unfold with its primary protagonist being SFU.

The three minute feature segment aired at half-time of Semi-Final 2 built on the themes of success/accolades by introducing viewers to SFU's major award winners. The story featured montage footage of SFU's regular season games with an emphasis on the play of Kleindienst and Kaczowka. Before each player was interviewed, footage from previous matches focusing on their individual court play was featured. Kleindienst and Kaczowka were asked by network reporter Farhan Lalji to reflect on their undefeated season and CIS tournament goals. Following these interviews, SFU's coach was interviewed. Lalji continued to hype the team's dominant record by explaining the how

Coach Langford brought his own excellence to the team in being an undefeated high school coach the year before his first season at SFU. Even though half-time statistics and key plays were reviewed before the second half of Semi-Final 2 began, this feature story accounted for about fifty percent of total half-time show air time. In fact, the first half highlight reel, which lasted thirty-six seconds, was almost entirely composed of Kleindienst's court performance.

The theme of accolades also featured during commentary on the career experience and past successes of other head coaches and players. While Langford was singled out as SFU's exemplary coach, Verdun pointed out during the Semi-final broadcast that Laval head coach Linda Marquis had been named CIS coach of the year in both 2000 and 2001. Viewers are also told that Marquis is an assistant coach at the national level and holds a prestigious position at a Quebec athletic development institution. In another example, Regina guard Bree Burgess and Winnipeg forward Heather Thompson were often referred to as "All Canadians"—a distinction given to players who excel athletically and academically. Lastly, in Semi-Final 1, the commenting crew emphasized the benefits of the experiences Laval forward Isabelle Grenier and Regina Centre Phoebe DeCiman gained from being national junior team mates.

While narratives were primarily constructed around the SFU team, individual players from other teams were also singled out as notable players. For example, in Semi-Final 1, Isabelle Grenier and Josée Lalonde were portrayed as the two players essential to Laval's chances of advancing to the gold medal match. Finally, in the pre-game

commentary of the bronze medal match, Janet Wells, Heather Thompson, and Heidi Schwartz were touted as the likely heroes if Winnipeg was to be victorious over Regina. In the end, these players ended up being the supporting cast for eventual game hero, JoAnne Wells. While JoAnne Wells was not necessarily on WTSN's likely hero radar, her surprise performance in the match-up still fit into the mould of a developing character within the hero/star narrative.

In major tournaments the trophy or prize given to the winners of a sporting event is often imbued with nostalgia and tradition. These inanimate "spoils" of victory are often embedded in the overall narrative surrounding the event because they are perceived as the "holy grails" as well as a reminder of the historical tradition of success. As Kinkema and Harris (1998, p. 40) note: "wins, medals, and championships are the products of sport, and individuals, teams, franchises and nations are ultimately judged by the number of victories accumulated." As the narrative develops, the question of "What will be won?" becomes just as important as "Who will win?"

For the CIS Women's Basketball tournament the trophy awarded to the winning team of the championship is popularly known as "The Bronze Baby." The trophy is a replica of a statue donated to the CIS (formerly the CIAU-Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Union) in 1972. During the CIS competition, it is tradition for the trophy to be presented to tournament officials by the previous year's champion in order that it be prominently displayed for fans and players to visit with as part of event festivities prior to the gold medal match. The Bronze Baby was featured prominently in commentary during

both semi-final and bronze medal matches. Glen Suitor used a play on words to promote both the bronze medal game and the subsequent championship game by remarking: "…we've got the bronze medal game tonight. Tomorrow, 6 o'clock Eastern/3 o'clock Pacific, we will have the gold medal match for the Bronze Baby…" Attention also focussed on the Bronze Baby during the match between Simon Fraser University and the University of Winnipeg: "The Bronze Baby [is] on the line," and "the winner goes on to play Laval for the gold medal—for the Bronze Baby—the national title." The trophy was also highlighted in Wick's voice-over commentary accompanying the opening montages of the Bronze medal match. Bree Burgess, a graduating senior player from the Regina Cougars is prominently featured in her team's opening montage. As the montage plays, Wick's voice over is heard: "Now if this year's senior Bree Burgess can't win a Bronze Baby in her last game, she'll try to lead her team to the bronze…" These references are significant in that they marked the gold medal game as historically distinct and unique to Canada. The trophy, which was at some point in the past coined as "The Bronze Baby," became a symbol of athletic achievement, historic distinction, and legitimacy for the national tournament.

Commentary

In previous research, on broadcast commentary accompanying women's basketball findings have revealed a tendency to describe female athletes as being: less skilful, powerful and competent than males (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Messner et. al., 1996; Bruce, 1998). Studies have also documented instances of gender marking and

infantilizing in play-by-play and regular commentary for women's events. Table 5 outlines some of the major findings of this research:

[Insert Table 5 here]

The studies summarized in Table 5 identify processes of gender marking/qualifying, infantilizing, and comparing the women's game to that of the men's. Evidence shows that for college basketball, female players and the women's game were symbolically undervalued in commentary accompanying NCAA basketball coverage. Notwithstanding men's and women's games occurring in the same venue, elements of the women's game were usually qualified and gender marked as "the women's final" or "the women's championship" while the same was not done for men's. When commentary approached a somewhat equitable level in terms of gender- neutral descriptions of actual play-by-play action, these efforts were tainted by sexist or heteronormative characterizations of female players' skill and athletic prowess.

With only a few exceptions, this pattern was not evident in our analysis of WTSN. In fact, the commentary was extremely equitable. Again, WTSN's commentary team consisted of one male, Glen Suitor (play-by-play), and two females, Marie Verdun (colour commentator) and Norma Wick (floor reporting/interviewing). Generally, the players were not "denied" power in the broadcast commentary. Table 6 summarizes our findings.

[Insert Table 6 here]

"Powerful" drives to the hoop, "big" rebounds, and "strong" bodies were accorded only positive connotations in the WTSN commentary. Commonplace vernacular found in the male game (but substituting "she" rather than "he") was also prevalent in the WTSN commentary. Suitor routinely used "she nails the jumper," "she's got the hot hand," "she drains it," and "she slashes through the lane," to describe play-by-play action in all three broadcasts. Thus, 'difference' was not established in the commentary. Gendered tropes connoting fragility or physical passivity among these female players were never present. When Regina played Winnipeg for the bronze medal, Verdun described Regina forward Cymone Bouchard as being "so athletic," and when commenting on team mate Phoebe DeCiman said, "...at 6'3", she's a dominant presence." Likewise, when describing an offensive move by Winnipeg forward JoAnne Wells in the same game, Suitor pointed out her physicality and competitiveness with flair: "What a move! Strong to the hoop for JoAnne Wells...JoAnne Wells is on fire for Winnipeg!" Overall, the descriptions of the performances of the players were not bounded by feminizing biases.

In the Andrew Billings, et al. (2002, p. 313) study the commentary teams for women's NCAA basketball matches comprised one male and two females. The male commentator's role was to describe the physical performance of the players, while the female commentators focused primarily on personality and character. Our data shows that each commentator wove all of these attributes into their individual play-by-play, colour commentary, and interviews. Verdun, Wick, and Suitor each paid close attention to the athletic and physical ability of the players. However, on occasion, they did refer to

players by their first names or call them 'girls' -- a trend that has long been identified in research as infantilizing (see: Messner et al., 1993; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). During Semi-Final 1, Suitor referred to Regina guard Bree Burgess as the "go-to-girl." Wick, in a halftime interview with Laval head coach Linda Marquis commented, "...it looked like your girls were tiring a little bit there..."

The subsequent Semi-Final match-up between Simon Fraser and Winnipeg contained two incidents where the players were referred to as girls. Wick interviewed Simon Fraser's head coach Bruce Langford and asked, "How are the girls handling the pressure...?" Verdun also referred to SFU's Jessica Kaczowka as "Jessica." The use of infantilizing language occurred most frequently in the bronze medal game. Players were referred to as "girls" or by their first names alone on six occasions. Suitor twice referred to Phoebe DeCiman as "Phoebe" and Wick referred to players as "girls" a few times in interviews with head coaches. But these instances were exceptions—first and last or just last names were predominantly used when referring to players throughout play-by-play and in segmented reports. In sum, while there were few instances of what could be interpreted as infantilizing language, WTSN's coverage was predominantly progressive and non-sexist.

As noted in the above, research has suggested that the use of the word "girl" to describe female athletes could be considered infantilizing since it serves to reinforce the notion that in comparison to male athletes, female athletes are inferior or not adults (Weiller & Higgs, 1999; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). This has been especially so in cases

where in comparison to male athletes who were addressed as "men" or "young men,"

(and not "boys"), female athletes were addressed as "girls," or "young ladies" (see:

Messner et al., 1993, p. 128). While we acknowledge the rationale for the interpretation

that using these terms is infantilizing, we also suggest that their connotations have

undergone a recent cultural shift. For instance, "girl" has now been embraced as part of

the new ideology of female empowerment. Expressions such as "girl power", "grrl

power" or "you go girl" underscore the contemporary multiple signifieds of the word

"girl." As Dorie Geissler (2001, p. 324) suggests, "girl power" can be defined as

> [p]art social transformation and part niche market, Girl Power!, in its multiple
> guises, signifies a celebration of girlhood and femininity in all their complexities.
> Girl Power! is an empowerment that comes from within, the power of women and
> girls to break traditional molds and become whom they want to be, feminine but
> strong, free yet in control. More than a trendy T-shirt slogan, Girl Power! is an
> increasingly visible reality.

We also suggest that using the term "girl" during female-to-female address may be a less

contentious issue as it would be for male-to-female address. This is because while

females may use "girl" in order to hail or pay tribute to each other, males addressing adult

females as "girls" may still be viewed as diminishing. Therefore, when a female

commentator, Wick, addresses female basketball players as "girls" it is plausible that her

remarks are not as contentious as those of Suitor, a male commentator, when he addresses

players as "girls."

A final factor documented in our study involved the gender marking of the name

of the CIS tournament. According to Table 5, this aspect was dominant in coverage of

NCAA basketball where the prefix "Women's" was concluded in the title of the

tournament but "Men's" was absent from the title of the men's. Commentators in three of the four studies accounted for in Table 5 recorded the strong presence of marking women's events as "women's" but not doing the same for men's. WTSN's coverage of the CIS tournament frequently referred to "women's basketball." In all, twenty-seven instances of gender marking were identified for all three games. In each instance, the CIS tournament was gender marked with "women" when commentators promoted upcoming matches or when matches were advertised via on-screen graphics. For instance, graphics advertising all upcoming games appeared as "(name of game, i.e. Gold Medal) Match; CIS Women's Basketball; (broadcast time and station). When Suitor added verbal commentary to on screen graphics, he too would use a combination of "Welcome back to CIS women's basketball" or "…the women's national finals" to describe the event. There were, though, some exceptions. When commercial breaks were about to be taken in the bronze medal game, the score/game clock were shown on the screen but the graphics box containing this information simply read "CIS Bronze Medal Game." The presence of gender-marking during the broadcasts was particularly notable given that it was produced for WTSN, a network that only broadcast women's sports. In other words, did an event require gender marking/qualifying if it was going to be broadcast on a network that was already gender marked?

Taken as a whole, the findings reported above suggest substantive progress in representations of female intercollegiate athletes on television, at least for Canada. This may be indicative of a progressive cultural shift. For the most part, WTSN's

representation of CIS basketball avoided previously reported shortcomings regarding trivialization, infantilization and sexualization.

Implications and Conclusion

Our findings for WTSN's coverage of women's basketball represent a departure from those reported in previous research. Players were overwhelmingly represented as strong, competent, and skilful athletes. The few instances of infantilizing and gender qualification sprinkled within the overall coverage did not detract from generally progressive portrayals of female athletes. In contrast to previous studies that identified how power was denied of female athletes in broadcasts, we contend that WTSN's coverage suggests some positive change and awareness that when women participate in sports their athletic identities can and should be dominant in representations of their participation.

The quality of the narrative offered by game commentators and the strategic employment of various camera angles and equipment capturing sound created a 'spectacle' comparable to that found for the men's game. Production techniques were markedly different from those identified in previous studies of women's basketball. Standard camera angles afforded to coverage of men's basketball were also found in WTSN's coverage. The presence of these production techniques supports the findings of recent studies suggesting that greater resources are now being devoted to the production of female sport—a trend attributable both to growing female interest in sport and the

arrival of professional leagues such as WUSA and the WNBA (see: Christopherson et al., 2001; Banet-Weiser, 1999). This progressive trend is noteworthy indeed and begs attention in future research. The key question for future research here would be whether the progressive coverage was a proactive attempt on behalf of WTSN personnel to promote an alternative to traditional sports programming or whether production qualities were reactively tailored to an anticipated sport-savvy female audience, or both. WTSN's representation of women's basketball may have also come across in a more egalitarian fashion due to the fact that student-athletes were at the heart of its representation. In other words, the pursuit of higher education may have influenced how these athletes were envisioned and represented by producers. There may also have been a recognition that the representation of intercollegiate basketball would be produced for an audience knowledgeable about the game and perhaps tuning into WTSN with the expectation that coverage would be devoid of sexism and positively progressive. Viewers could have also of progressive production values. Further research on the day-to-day decisions underpinning programming production could assist in developing an in-depth understanding of the process through which WTSN went about taking a progressive approach to programming. Indeed, the progressive nature of its CIS basketball coverage may also beg the question of whether WTSN could be considered a stand-alone feminist media form, not because it exclusively broadcast women's sports but because it attributed equitable coverage to women's sport.

What did this trend towards progressive representation of female athletes mean for the future of televised women's sport? WTSN (now defunct) was an example of alternative sport programming—a network dedicated to women's sport achievement, producing programming to appeal to women. What remains problematic for future ventures is to better understand the "audience" for televised women's sport. As Brown (1990, p. 186) has suggested in her consideration of daytime soap operas, the viewer should not be necessarily categorized as fan, nor should a fan necessarily be considered as a viewer at any given time during a broadcast. On one hand, "viewers" could arguably be considered whoever watches programming and possesses potential consumer power. On the other hand, "fans" are usually recognized as more committed consumers who have high levels of technical knowledge, are familiar with the discourses surrounding it, and who follow characters throughout the season. Analogously, our reading of CIS coverage would likely be different for a generalized female/male viewer as opposed to a basketball fan. Though the differences between "viewer" and "fan" may not, at first blush, be obvious, they may be important. Moreover, there could be significant differences between individuals who would attend women's basketball games in person as opposed to those who watch the games on television. Hence, motivations of the television sport audience add complexity to the issue (see: Wenner & Gantz, 1998).

A primary concern when broadcasting any form of programming on television is that of the audience/consumer. Sport, of course is no exception and televising women's sport undoubtedly has many challenges as demonstrated in Chapter 4. Identifying an

economically viable audience base for women's sport was difficult for WTSN from its inception. Advertisers play a significant role in the livelihood of most media products and television programming. Without advertising revenue commercial enterprises cannot survive on television. On a side note, the commercials aired during the three broadcasts we analyzed spanned the following: Endbridge Gas (a natural gas company and the broadcasts' title sponsor), The Canadian Armed Forces, various WTSN programs, Kids Help Phone (a youth social services agency), Team Canada Gold Rush (a DVD of Canada's 2002 men's and women's national hockey team Olympic gold medal wins), Mazda, KIA, and Toyota (automobiles), Castrol (motor oil), Old South (orange juice), Chunky Soup, AOL (internet service provider), McCain Fries, Esquire Watches, FIDO (cell phones), Colon Cancer Society, The Keg (restaurant), Dempster's bread, and various Canadian Heritage spots (re-enactments of historic Canadian events). These commercials represent examples of the major products and services advertised during each of the broadcasts and some (i.e. those for automobiles, sports, and food) were arguably commonplace spots for a sporting event. On one hand, commercials for automobiles, internet services, natural gas, and expensive watches may have spoken to a demographic of home owners or individuals with large amounts of disposable income. On the other hand, advertisements for the Armed Forces, cell phones, and Kids Help Phone, probably targeted the youth audience. This suggests that the envisioned audience was broad ranging and included males and females aged 15-45. As discussed at the outset of our discussion, WTSN's existence was short-lived due to the inability of attracting enough

advertising revenue in order to sustain its operations. This was primarily responsible for its downfall.

Our findings, of course, differ from previous studies in that we examined programming produced by a network exclusively broadcasting women's sport that purportedly targeted women as a primary audience. For example, Kennedy (2001) examined BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) tennis coverage in Britain, Messner et. al., (1996), reported on CBS (Columbia Broadcast System) Final Four basketball coverage in the U.S., and Daddario (1997) looked at Olympic coverage in the U.S. broadcast on NBC (National Broadcasting Corporation)—at the time of these studies, WTSN did not exist. This evaluation of WTSN's coverage was also conducted within a broader media context dominated by masculine narratives of sport. As a consequence of the ingrained nature of this context, those responsible for creating the images, sound, and discourses of the games may have unconsciously employed the signifiers of traditional sports programming but augmented them for the sake of representing sport as envisioned in WTSN mission statement cited at the outset of our paper. We suggest here that because women's basketball was the only game WTSN produced, it is possible that the pitfalls other networks have faced when broadcasting both men's and women's games were either avoided or significantly minimized. Therefore, WTSN incorporated novel elements in broadcasting CIS basketball. First, the network promoted empowering images of female athletes. Second, it was a unique product in the field of television sport production—female sport for a predominantly female audience. Third, WTSN provided

progressive coverage of women's intercollegiate sport. And fourth, as a separate media entity, WTSN signified a possible site where traditional notions of "woman" or "femininity" could be contested.

At a time when women's sports are still underrepresented in television news broadcasts and newspaper stories (see: Duncan & Messner, 2005), it was evident that WTSN offered a space where commodity and liberal feminism met. In all likelihood, a similar argument could be made for other exclusive women's sport ventures. For instance, the rise in early 1999 and eventual demise in late 2002 of the American magazine, *Sports Illustrated Women*, could also be considered an attempt to promote women's sport culture on a for-profit basis. Future research should endeavour to critically examine the related patterns and *a priori* assumptions about gender and sport that business and eventually content decisions are based on with regards to such exclusive ventures of the past. In all likelihood, it will be imperative for future women's sport ventures to re-visit previous strategies in order that their approaches can be fine-tuned to identify a viable consumer base.

While the fate of WTSN was unfortunate, future research concerning women's-centred culture and entertainment in the form of magazines, public events, and television programming should endeavour to find the theoretical connections between what proves successful and unsuccessful when progressive attempts are made to promote alternative representations of female athletes in mainstream (commercial) sport culture. WTSN's representation of CIS basketball demonstrated a concerted attempt at improving upon

mainstream depictions of female athletes. Arguably, these efforts were driven by another explicitly politicized network mantra similar to the one mentioned at the outset of our paper: "[WTSN] will showcase the diversity and uniqueness of women's sports and women athletes in a way that is just not being done today. By focusing exclusively on women's sports, [WTSN] will clearly look different from anything else on our screens." Ultimately, progressive images of female athletes akin to the ones represented in WTSN's productions of women's intercollegiate basketball will tend to look like nothing else offered on television. But what remains to be seen is how often these progressive images are sustained and given priority over those that are less flattering and faithful to female athletes and their sports.

Table 1 - Brief Descriptive Summary of Production Standards Findings from Previous Studies of Men's and Women's NCAA Basketball (Messner et al., 1996)

Production Technique	Description of Findings for Men's Matches	Description of Findings for Women's Matches
Camera Angles & Editing	High quality; "technically sophisticated;"	Fewer camera angles
Graphics	"…stylish, and frequent"	Fewer and sometimes incorrectly
Presence of shot and game clocks	Frequent and appropriately featured for viewer reference	Less frequent
Scenes of team celebrations	Dramatic camera coverage with substantial commentary on game outcomes	Camera coverage no substantial commentary on game outcomes
Introduction of players w/graphics and accompanying info. (name, position, rank (freshman, senior, etc.), height, and weight	Whenever a player was introduced	Only name and position
Introduction of coaches with career records in graphics	When coaches were introduced	No information supplied
Stats. and slow-motion replays	Used nearly all time-outs and commercial breaks	Not present
Display game and shot clock after each basket scored	All	Not present
Use of telestrator to diagram player action by commentators	Used during pre-game and half-time show and time-outs	Less frequent

Table 2a – Brief Summary of WTSN Production Standards Findings for Women's CIS Basketball

Production Technique	Semi-Final 1**	Semi-Final 2**	Bronze Medal**	Average Time** (if applicable)
Montages	N/A*	1 (0:41)	1 (0:42)	0:42
Opening w/Logos (WTSN, CIS, respective teams)	N/A*	Yes (0:9)	Yes (0:12)	0:11
Instant Replay w/logos	6 (0:57)	11 (1:58)	13 (2:5)	10 (1:40)
Instant Replay w/out logos	3 (0:29)	7 (1:5)	2 (0:14)	4 (0:36)
Time-out/ Bench camera	5 (2:21)	1 (0:42)	2 (1:29)	3 (1:31)
Half-time highlights	1 (0:42)	1 (0:42)	1 (0:46)	1 (0:43)
Graphics for upcoming games w/graphics	3	4	5	4
Graphics for upcoming games w/out graphics (commentary only)	6	7	3	5
Statistics Pre-Game w/graphics	N/A	Yes	Yes	
Highlight Reels (Individuals)	I.G. (1:10)	T.K.= H 0:36& J.K. Post/Inter. = 0:13	J.W. (0:46)	1 (0:55)
Graphics for Starting Line-ups w/player photo	N/A*	Yes	Yes	-
Player Tournament Statistics w/graphics	N/A*	Yes	Yes	-
Game rules w/graphics	No	No	Yes	-
Statistics Half-time w/graphics	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Statistics Post-game w/graphics	Yes	Yes	No	-
Display of Game Clock during play	Yes	Yes	Yes	-

*N/A was used to denote information in Semi-Final match that is not known due to technical difficulties in recording process.
**Time (if applicable) represented as - minutes: seconds

Table 2b – Brief Descriptive Summary of WTSN Production Standards Findings for Women's CIS Basketball

Production Technique	Semi-Final 1	Semi-Final 2**	Bronze Medal**
Montages	N/A	• Open the broadcast (Clips from previous matches for both SFU & Winnipeg).	• Open the broadcast (Clips from Regina's previous match and its first National Championship in 2001. Also included are clips from Winnipeg's previous match).
Opening w/Logos (WTSN, CIS, respective teams)	N/A	• At the beginning of match. "CIS on WTSN" • WTSN, CIS, SFU & Winnipeg on following screen; below is location - McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario	• At the beginning of match. "CIS on WTSN" • WTSN, CIS, Regina & Winnipeg on following screen; below is location - McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario
Instant Replay w/logos	• CIS logo superimposed on red screen before and after each.	• CIS logo superimposed on red screen before and after each.	• Red WTSN logo superimposed on screen before and after each.
Instant Replay w/out logos	• Logos did not appear. Game clock and score led to commercial.	• Logos did not appear. Game clock and score led to commercial.	• Logos did not appear. Game clock and score led to commercial.
Time-out/ Bench camera	• Camera focus on Laval and Regina. • As commentators discuss action graphic with star player Grenier photo and tournament statistics are posted and further discussed	• Camera focus on Winnipeg bench and Coach McKay imparting instructions.	• Camera focus on Regina and Coach Stapleton imparting instructions.
Half-time highlights	• As part of	• As part of commentator	• As part of commentator

	commentator analysis. • Key plays and players highlighted and discussed.	analysis. • Key plays and players highlighted and discussed.	analysis. • Key plays and players highlighted and discussed.
Graphics for upcoming games	• Usually at bottom of screen in red box and bold white text.	• Usually at bottom of screen in red box and bold white text.	• Usually at bottom of screen in red box and bold white text.
Statistics Pre-Game w/graphics	• Full-screen. • Both team's tournament statistics are posted with respective team logos.	• Full-screen. • Both team's tournament statistics are posted with respective team logos.	• Full-screen. • Both team's tournament statistics are posted with respective team logos.
Highlight Reels (Individuals)	• Laval's Isabelle Grenier	• SFU's Theresa Kleindienst and Jessica Kaczowka	• Winnipeg's Joanne Wells.
Graphics for Starting Line-ups w/player photo	• All five starters. • Photo accompanied by statistics.	• All five starters. • Photo accompanied by statistics.	• All five starters. • Photo accompanied by statistics.
Season Statistics w/graphics	N/A	• Before tip-off. • Respective team records in Championship posted alongside graphic of team logo.	• Before tip-off. • Respective team records in Championship posted alongside graphic of team logo.
Game rules w/graphics	No	No	• Yes. Describing smaller game ball, number of officials, handling of ball in back court, etc.
Statistics Half-time w/graphics	• Full screen graphics. • Both teams with respective logos listing field goal percentage, free throws, rebounds, etc.	• Full screen graphics. • Both teams with respective logos listing field goal percentage, free throws, rebounds, etc.	• Full screen graphics. • Both teams with respective logos listing field goal percentage, free throws, rebounds, etc.
Statistics Post-game w/graphics	• Yes. Full screen graphics.	• Yes. Full screen graphics. • Both teams with respective	• Yes. Full screen graphics. • Both teams with respective

	Both teams with respective logos listing field goal percentage, free throws, rebounds, etc.	logos listing field goal percentage, free throws, rebounds, etc.	logos listing field goal percentage, free throws, rebounds, etc.
Display of Game Clock during play	• Yes. Ever-present.	• Yes. Ever-present.	• Yes. Ever-present.

Table 3 - Brief Summary of Narrative and other Story Telling Techniques from Previous Studies of Men's and Women's NCAA, NBA, and WNBA (Various Researchers)

Narrative Device	Men's Matches	Women's Matches	Researchers and Subject
Success	Extraordinary ability and determination; hard workers, etc.	Achievements of players; outstanding play and dedication	Vande Berg and Projansky (2003) – NBA and WNBA
Athletic Adversity	Playing through pain	Stories of inspiration for refusing to quit due to pain or illness	
Athletic Agency	Star players having ability to lift their teams to victory	Star players holding team's fate in hands; experience as ultimate advantage	
Discipline	Not present	Players listen to coach's orders; players need constant guidance; victories result of coaching dependence	
Diaspora	Not present	Players constructed as migrant workers who played in other professional leagues before arriving in U.S.; players constructed as coming home; performances held to masculine standard	
Domestic	Not present	Working parent; mothers, daughters, wives, etc.	
Sex role	Not present	Mother-athlete balance } good model for young girls	
Caregiver	Not present	Players as primary caregivers of immediate and extended family members	
Heteronormative	Not present	Heterosexuality emphasized through reference to relationships with husbands and male fiancés	
Pre-Game Montages	Cinematic, sharply edited, exciting	Present but not as polished as men's	Messner et al. (1996) – Men's and Women's NCAA
Pre-Game Shows	Entertaining, musical	Lack of expert commentators, and constant	

	accompaniment, and sound effects; shots of crowds taking in games; interviews; expert commentators, 40min etc.	comparisons to men's game.	
Half-time shows	Concentrated on men's matches/game; statistical analysis, graphic, expert discussion, etc.	Discussion and game analysis alternates between men's and women's matches; men's games hyped	
Post-game show	Camera angles showing victors and losers, cutting of the nets, drama invoking interviews w/star players and losing coaches	Camera angles showing victors and losers, no interviews, included promo for men's game	

Table 4 - Brief Summary of Narrative and other Story Telling Techniques from WTSN Women's CIS Basketball

Narrative Device	Semi-Final 1*	Semi-Final 2*	Bronze Medal*
Anticipation of Subsequent & Final Championship Matches	• Yes: 3 times • Semi-Final 2, Bronze Medal, & Gold Medal	• Yes: 4 times • Bronze Medal (1); Gold Medal (2); & Both in same Graphic/commentary (1)	• Yes: 5 times • Gold Medal: specific emphasis on naming SFU vs. Laval
Untarnished Records	No	SFU/SFU Coach Langford	No
Underdog versus Favourite	No	Yes	No
Youth versus Experience	No	Yes	Yes
Success/Accolades	• Re-cap of annual CIS awards dinner. • SFU receives top awards: MVP, Defensive Player of Year, and Coach of the Year. 1:18	On-going talk about T.K. & J.K.'s awards and accomplishments.	No
Interviews w/Players	Post Game – Grenier (Laval) – (1:06)	• 3 times (total time - 2:37) • Inserted into first half at bottom of screen during play - Kleindienst (SFU) - 0:23; & post-game -1:06 • Post Game - Kaczowka (SFU) – (1:08)	Post Game: Joanne Wells (Winnipeg) – 0:39
Interviews w/Coaches	• 3 times (total time – 2: 59) • Going into Half-time - Stapleton (Regina) - 0:54 • Coming out of Half-time - Marquis – (Laval) - 0:54 • Post Game – Marquis (Laval) – 1:11	• 5 times (total time – 5:09) • Pre Game – Langford (SFU) - 0:35; half-time 0:42 & post-game 2:00) • Half-time - Tanya McKay (Winnipeg) - 0:36 & Pre-Game 0:40	• 3 times (total time – 2:21) • Pre-Game – Stapleton (Regina) - 0:48 & Half-time 0:44 • Pre-Game – McKay (Winnipeg) - 0:49
Feature Stories	No	Players: Kleindienst. & Kaczowka.	No

		Coach: Langford. – (All SFU) 3:00	
(Un)likely Heroes	Grenier is hyped. (Laval)	Kaczowka & Kleindienst. (SFU)	Janet Wells, Heather Thompson and Heidi Schwartz (Winnipeg)
Players to watch for	Grenier and Lalonde. (Laval)	Kaczowka & Kleindienst (SFU)	Janet Wells (Winnipeg)
Playing for injured team mates	Laval. (Mentioned in post-game interview with Grenier and in colour commentary by Verdun).	No	No
Rich Tradition/Championship Trophy	Yes.	Yes.	Yes. More emphasis on Bronze Baby.
Pre-Game Montage of previous match performances	N/A	Both teams	Both teams
Half-time highlights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Team Post-game Celebrations	Laval	SFU	• Winnipeg • Laval & SFU from respective games as broadcast ends
Shattered Dreams of Victory	No	No	Opening montage for Regina.

*Time (if applicable) represented as: minutes: seconds

Table 5 - Brief Summary of Commentary Findings from previous Studies of Men's and Women's NCAA Basketball (Various Researchers)

Type of Commentary	Men's	Women's	Researchers
Descriptions of Athletes	Physical and athletic	Personality, looks and appearance	Billings, Halone, and Denham (2002) – Men's and Women's NCAA
Descriptions given by male commentators	Physicality and athleticism	Physicality and athleticism	
Descriptions given by female commentators	Personality and appearance	Personality and appearance	
Overall amount of commentary	Almost twice as many commentary lines	Half the commentary lines of men's games	
Gender marking	Qualified as "men's" game verbally	• Game qualified as "women's" game verbally and in graphics • constantly reminding viewers that "women's" game was being televised	Messner et al. (1996) – Men's and Women's NCAA
Attributing success/failure	• Players succeed due to instinct, intelligence, and hard work, etc. • Failure more likely to be framed as lack of aggression and stamina • errors in play attributed to superiority of opponent, anomalies in play or bad luck	• Players succeed due to hard work and intelligence coupled with emotion and strong family support • Failure more likely to be framed as lack of confidence and nerves • errors in play attributed to individual player misjudgements	
Gender marking	• Universal title used no marking as "men's" • no gender marking verbally or graphically	Games marked as "women's" games verbally and graphically for one network (CBS) but not for ESPN	Messner et al. (1993) – Men's and Women's NCAA
Infantilizing	• Players not referred to as "boys" • "men," "young men," "young	• Players often referred to as "girls," "young ladies," and	

	fellas" • usually referred to by last name	women" • first names only used more than men's games	
Male standard of evaluating play	5. Players acted as default comparative tool 6. male performances not compared to female	Female performances compared to male, also compared to prominent male professional basketball players (NBA)	Blinde and Greendorfer (1991) – Men's and Women's NCAA
Rules of Game description	• Used as reference point for women's game • no rule comparisons to women's game	• Compared to men's games' rules • rule comparisons made to men's • occasions where men's rules were applied	
Gender Marking/Qualifying	• No qualification • When discussing careers of male coaches, "…he is one of the top coaches in the game today."	• "women's" game or "NCAA women's championship" • when discussing careers of female coaches "She is one of the finest coaches in the women's game."	
Infantilizing/sexist language	"men"	• "man-to-man" " • "Workmanlike;" "girls;" "she's the girl they want to look for;" "they will wear out their big girls if they run too much."	
Description of play	Same terms but usually reserved for far greater aggressive activity and play	• "clobbered;" "hammered;" bodies "banging" • shots were "nailed"	
Expectations of athleticism and physicality	• More emphasis on athleticism • characterized often with regards to success in high school sport teams and sport career	• More emphasis on non-sport related factors • characterized as accomplished students • sometimes male commentators seemed surprised at level and intensity of physical play	

Table 6 - Brief Summary of Commentary Findings from WTSN CIS Women's Basketball

Type of Commentary	Semi-Final 1	Semi-Final 2	Bronze Medal
Gender Marking	6 times - Game marked as "Women's Basketball" in opening graphics - Game marked as "Women's" in G.S. commentary when advertising upcoming matches	10 times - Game marked as "Women's Basketball" in opening graphics	11 times - Game marked as "Women's Basketball" in opening graphics
Infantilizing	4 times - G.S. refers to Bree Burgess as "girl" - N.W. refers to Laval players as "girls"	2 times - N.W. refers to SFU players as "girls" - M.V. refers to Jessica Kaczowka as "Jessica" (first name only)	6 times - N.W. refers to Winnipeg players as "girls" in interview - N.W. refers to Regina players as "girls" in interview - G.S. refers to Phoebe DeCiman as "Phoebe" (first name only)
General description of play/performances	"So athletic" - Players being "fired up." "She has a powerful drive to the basket."	- Teams having "offensive firepower." - Players being "in the zone." "strong battles" underneath baskets	- Players having "dominant presence." "athletic teams" "she nails the jumper"
Attributing of success/failure	- Success = Hard work - Success = "battling" on the court - Success = Playing as a team (Laval) - Success = having heart (Laval)	- Success = Hard work - Success = Experience and dominance (SFU) - Failure = Playing against a team with more talent and firepower (Winnipeg)	- Success = Hard Work - Success = Youth (Winnipeg) outperforming Experience (Regina)

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Case Study 3

Chapter 6 – Moving Forward: The Public Interest, Women's Sports, and Recommendations for Representation

Introduction

This paper shifts the focus of this dissertation from the sociological analysis of the rise, demise, and content of WTSN to a normative discussion of the issues bearing on cultural policy and democratic deficits in media representation. Generally speaking, representational deficits in the media constitute societal failings to provide access to media representation to all groups in a given culture. Groups that are marginalized in the media include but are not limited to racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities, senior citizens, gays and lesbians, and women. The task of addressing these deficits underscores the debates over what culture is and which practices best enable equitable representation. In addition to clashing over the context in which cultural practice takes place, government and media corporations tend to disagree on who is in the best position to make this decision. In Canada, while some view the commercial media as a consumer-driven sector that should exist with minimal state intervention, cultural policy initiatives and regulations, designed to address democratic issues such as the representational deficit of marginal groups, compel media businesses to operate within set rules as outlined by the government. While these policies serve to rectify representational imbalances, their implementation often clashes with the commercial/for-profit agenda of privately owned media.

When governments legislate cultural policies, they are generally framed as being in the best interest of the public or for the "public good." The 2000 decision by the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to introduce digital technology as a means to increase the profile of previously untapped television genres and promote the consumer adoption of new media is an example of such government policy. As taken up in Chapter 4, the CRTC claimed that the introduction of digital television would significantly increase the production and availability of Canadian programming, fuel consumer desire for adopting the new interactive digital technology, and provide broadcasters with new repertoire from which to market services to consumers (CRTC, 2000b). The assumption, from the perspective of the Canadian government, is that media representation has popular, political, and economic consequences that have positive outcomes.

On another level, technological nationalism, or the use of technology by governments to promote culture via technology in order to symbolically unify diverse populations (Kinahan, 2006, p. 34), is also implicated as the CRTC's move to promote "a diversity of voices across the broadcasting system," (CRTC, 2000a) involved using television as a tool with which to advance culture. While this paper evaluates the merits of such technological nationalism in small part, it largely discusses how given forms of culture like sport (esp. television sport) are perceived as practices that should be promoted in the public interest.

Scope of Chapter

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section discusses the notion of the public interest and its relation to culture, diversity and the media in Canada. It specifically examines how sport via the media has grown in popularity and cultural resonance. The intent of this section is to demonstrate how sport has been constructed as a 'cultural good' and how, largely through television, the symbolic meanings attached to sport create a sense that its practices are important to the public interest. In the second section, a discussion of second and third wave feminism is presented. This discussion builds on the notion of the public interest and diversity addressed in the previous section by considering how feminist politics can be used to address representational deficits in the media. The social and cultural goals of third wave feminism in particular raise some important questions regarding representation in popular culture and how embracing 'difference' is advantageous. This discussion opens the door for understanding how many contemporary women's sports can achieve a higher profile in media by engaging alternative approaches to representation that are markedly different to those of traditional mainstream sport. Third wave feminism, for example, provides rhetorical tools for interrogating the historical socio-cultural context with which future enterprises like WTSN could appropriate "brand new feminism" (Shugart, et al., 2001) sensibilities for the future production of women's sport. Finally, the third section of this paper offers recommendations on how best to use women's sport as a proactive response to representational deficits in the media. The objective of this section is to

demonstrate how public interest and feminist imperatives inform one another and can offer a common strategy for achieving legitimacy for the televisual representation of women's sports. Such a strategy takes into account the struggles faced by many for-profit women's sports ventures and considers re-location to less profit-inclined public service modes of representation.

On one hand, WTSN showed that it is possible to change representation of sport in a gender sensitive way. On the other hand, the network's demise raises serious questions about how to sustain and change in an environment dominated by the logic of commodification in which the imperatives of exchange value take precedence over the ethics of use values (Jhally, 1987). Such representational deficits are also symptomatic of the tensions that arise between consumerism and citizenship. In this regard, consumerism and citizenship are viewed as binary concepts. The following discussion suggests that the two concepts can be hybridized; they are not, then, mutually exclusive. Consumerism can be politicized, and commercialized activities like sports can be vehicles for the promotion of citizenship. On the whole, sport can help to fulfill the rights of cultural inclusion that are valuable to the public and the development of cultural diversity as a mechanism of social solidarity. The nexus of sport and media is not only about commodification and commercialization; it is also about socialization and conditions of cultural pluralism and inequality.

Culture: Commodity or Democratic Obligation?

In his examination of the political economy of mediated culture in North America, Sut Jhally (1987, p. 66) poses two questions that have a direct impact on how we conceive of cultural diversity and the manner in which we choose to represent it:

> Is there a contradiction between expecting the marketplace to provide genuine diversity while at the same time treating ideas as economic goods to be bought and sold?
>
> What are the implications of expecting the marketplace to work in the *public* interest and at the same time leaving the control of the institutions expected to accomplish this in *private* hands? (Original emphasis)

These two questions suggest that modern societies tend to view culture in three distinct ways: a) as an industrial issue--meaning we are involved in its (re)production; b) an economic issue--meaning we trade its products for economic capital in the marketplace; and c) a democratic issue--meaning that we expect cultural products to reflect socio-democratic concerns and in turn, be accountable to citizens. On a whole, these factors set the limits for determining the value of the "public interest," and underscore the historical tensions of the public versus private sector television broadcasting debate in Canada.

The Public Interest and Culture

In Canada, the notion of the public interest has a symbolic connection with cultural, regional, and geographic diversity, the commonly heralded multicultural society, and threat of media concentration (Taras, 2001; Raboy, 1996; 2006; Nesbitt-Larking, 2007). Historically, the media have been entrusted to uphold

these values in Canadian society. This is best evidenced in the long history of

Special Committees and Royal Commissions created by government agencies to

debate, formulate and revise cultural policies regarding: the sovereignty of

Canada's cultural industries (The Massey Commission, 1951), newspaper

ownership and social responsibility (The Davey, 1971 and Kent, 1981

Commissions), and the broadcasting system (The Parliamentary Standing

Committees on Cultural Heritage 1995 and 2003). The overarching theme in these

reports is that of government intervention in the cultural industries in order to

safeguard: Canadian culture from foreign media (i.e. U.S. media products);

geographical identities; and, Canada's sovereignty in delivering cultural products

to its public. The measures taken to ensure these qualities have been almost

exclusively enacted by the Canadian government due in part to the assessment

that private media institutions could not be trusted to do so, and that protecting

culture was a government imperative.

In theory and practice, the public interest has been constructed in

opposition to private interest goals. In this regard, media owned by the public/tax

payers are expected to serve a broad range of interests for the citizenry. In

describing the role of publicly owned media, Rowland Lorimer and Mike Gasher

(2004, p. 206) state:

> The idea of public service is to employ the mass media for social goals.
> This can mean the provision of universal and equitable service to all
> Canadians, as in the telecommunications, radio, and television industries.
> It can mean foregrounding the educational component of communication,
> which informs all cultural policy to some extent. Or it can mean ensuring
> Canadian voice in film, radio, TV, publishing, and popular music, where

there is a clear risk of being drowned out by American voices. Communication as public service is inherently inclusive, addressing audiences as citizens rather than consumers, and asserting citizens' rights to communicate and be informed.

This link between public service or interest and the address of audience members as citizens is analogous to the definition of "public" in David Taras' (2001, p. 141) view of public broadcasting:

> Public broadcasting organizations were created to insulate national societies from the power of multinational media conglomerates and the imperatives that drive commercial broadcasters. Public broadcasters are designed to be the alternate media -- the guarantee that a society will have a place within the broadcasting community where its problems and prospects can be fully explored.

While radio and to some extent print media have been employed to deliver the democratic ideals of public service, television has been the most popular site in which the "public" is constituted. As Serge Proulx and Marc Raboy (2003, p. 334) write:

> ... television plays a central role in constituting the public spaces in which take place key social and political debates on democratic life, on civic roles, on identity politics and on social inclusion. States have historically regulated these public media spaces by invoking the principles of public interest, or public service. The airwaves are recognized as a public utility good...

These perspectives assign a moral dimension to public interest. In one sense, upholding the standards of the public interest is noble and the right thing to do for all citizens. In another way, catering to the public interest is moral because it is not primarily concerned with reaping financial profit from representing issues related to social and cultural diversity and therefore seemingly virtuous because of this rejection of market objectives (see: Dayton-Johnson, 2002).

Marking television as a site where spaces for the "public utility" should be reserved has also resulted in a long tradition of problematically casting public broadcasters as the saviours of the public good and interest. Public broadcasters have been implicitly mandated to prioritize cultural imperatives over economic ones in order to serve the public interest and offer a distinct alternative to private media and a space from which to represent democratic ideals. These sentiments assume that "real" culture or that which expresses diverse societal voices is best represented by media institutions that do not prioritize economic imperatives over cultural ones. Kevin Williams (2003, p. 232) has agreed with this view in stating: "public service broadcasting basically regards information as a social good not a commodity. [Such] [b]roadcasting serves the community not the market." The consistent theme in these perspectives is the belief that representing cultural diversity, which is a social good, is not profitable enterprise. Or at least, the expectation of profit should be dismissed since such enterprises envision the public as citizens rather than consumers. This perspective is elaborated on in the words of 2003 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Chair Carole Taylor:

> Because of public financial support, public broadcasting is able to present cultural events, policy debates and other niche programming that is *valuable* but may not be *profitable*...programming that is challenging, and sometimes controversial, but not necessarily ratings-driven (2003, p. A17, emphasis added).

Taylor's comments champion the social democratic (Flew, 2000, p. 15) perspective that believes governments have an essential role in regulating media and creating policy focused on upholding democratic ideals. While noble in

sentiment, achieving social democratic objectives has not come without its dilemmas in systems where for-profit media have an influential presence.

One outcome of the prioritization of culture over economics (citizen over consumer) is that the representation of issues related to public interest operates on the assumption that the use-value (meaning) of a mediated program or event, for example, is more important than its exchange value (the amount for which it can be sold for in the marketplace). This view also privileges culture as both an industrial and democratic issue while diminishing the necessity of economic success. Some have argued, however, that upholding this principle has not been easy for public broadcasters in the current era of media saturation and a thousand channel universe where an increase in competition for audiences has been accompanied by reductions in federal government funding necessary to uphold the ideals of the public service model (Padovani & Tracey, 2003; Meijer, 2005; Hoynes, 2003). Conversely, for private for-profit media, the prioritization, for the most part, has been reversed. Here, programming that has high exchange value may or may not have high use value. But for for-profit enterprises that are accountable to share holders and advertisers, reflecting the public interest is not a priority as viewers are envisioned as consumers first before they are citizens. Thus, culture is regarded as an industrial issue that is contingent on economic gain.

In this case, the nature of the dilemma facing many public broadcasters concerns not necessarily the choice to address the public as citizens but the

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realities of a market driven media that hold profit-driven enterprises at an advantage to those that are not. One response to this dilemma has been to integrate profit-driven orientations, such as the sale of advertising time, into public broadcasting delivery. This of course calls the essential role of serving the public interest into question. Some scholars have argued that if public broadcasting continues to succumb to the pressure to address the audience as consumer, then its democratic worth will diminish (Hoynes, 2003; Sussman, 2003). In his examination of the pitfalls faced by PBS in the U.S. as it moves towards increasing for-profit orientations, William Hoynes (2003, p.128) argues:

> As PBS becomes more integrated into the commercial media system and develops a business model that sees public television as an increasingly commercial enterprise, the foundations of the public service model are eroding. Indeed, the branding strategy [as a quasi-commercial broadcaster] is an attempt to turn the cultural value of the "old PBS" into financial value for the new PBS. This exchange is a means of transforming public service, and the trust that accompanies such public service, into a marketable commodity. In the midst of this transformation, PBS runs a substantial risk that their aggressive branding strategy will undermine the very trust and loyalty that make their brand so valuable.

Deferring to the commercial marketplace brings Jhally's (1987) concern with the public interest back into the broader discussion about the representation, and subsequent problematic commodification, of culture. His reflections on the conditions within which diversity and public interest can be represented in the media warn of the dilemmas at play in a social democratic perspective that equates the public interest to that which is of interest to citizens or consumers. The social democratic perspective allocates the public's orientation towards broadcasting on the basis of a binary logic – the public can either be addressed as

citizens or consumers but not both. Certain forms of cultural practices, like sports, however, present interesting grounds for the debate over how the public interest can be represented in the media.

The Representation of Sport as a Public Good

In their examination of the prominence of sport in Canadian society, Ann Hall et al. (1991, p. 31, original emphasis) conceive of culture as "the *symbolic forms and the everyday practices through which people express and experience meaning.*" By extension, this definition encompasses the diverse range of formal and informal practices that constitute sport in Canada. In this view, sport is a form of cultural practice that includes professional basketball, football, and baseball or what Hall et al. (1991) refer to as "excellence sports." It also includes Olympic sports and a variety of other popular leisure activities such as bowling, hiking, and fishing.

Sport occupies a unique space in culture. Numerous scholars have drawn attention to how the sport world provides insight into a given society's values, struggles, and cultural ideology (Washington & Karen, 2001; Crossman, 2003; Coakley & Donnelly, 2004). For instance, in the collection *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture, and Commerce* (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006), the historical and cultural prominence of ice hockey in Canada are examined. Many of the articles in the collection identify popular myths surrounding ice hockey as a central feature of Canadian nationhood. The introduction to the book provides the following description of hockey culture in Canada or what the authors term "artificial ice":

Canadians moved the game of hockey indoors into arenas with artificial ice; we organized hockey, standardized it, regulated it, and put it to a variety of cultural and economic uses. In other words, hockey, like artificial ice, is not "natural" at all. It is a human social and cultural product, something that we Canadians have "made" over a period of years (Whitson & Gruneau, 2006, p. 2).

While hockey is held up as a key feature of an imagined Canadian identity, this popular view is highly flawed because only certain hockey performances are valid and legitimate within the broader Canadian community. Hockey, then, is not "Canada's game" as such because it symbolically, and, in some cases, economically excludes many groups and identities in Canada. This observation is key to Adams' (2006) contribution to the collection. She argues that hockey has become "shorthand" for an imagined national identity that privileges male experience over female and develops "different versions of citizenship" for men and women" (Adams, 2006, p. 74). Elsewhere Mary Louise Adams (2006, p. 71) argues:

> If hockey is life in Canada, then life in Canada remains decidedly masculine and white. Despite increasing numbers of female players, hockey still makes a major contribution to discourses of Canadian national identity that privilege native-born, white men. In its roles as national symbol and everyday pastime, hockey produces a very ordinary but pernicious sense of male entitlement: to space, to status, to national belonging. Hockey is part of the obfuscating construction of the so-called "ordinary Canadian," a creature whose evocation in popular political commentary helps to homogenize discourses about an increasingly heterogeneous population.

In the face of these circumstances, hockey continues to be regarded as a quintessential essence of Canadian cultural practice and identity. Adams calls

attention to the gender, class, racial and ethnic bias inherent in the conception of

hockey and aptly questions its validity in characterizing an entire nation.

David Whitson and Richard Gruneau (2006, p. 4) suggest that this

phenomenon is best explained by understanding the influence of myth:

> Myths in any culture have a complex character. On the one hand, they often distil and dramatize the deepest truths about a society and its people. That is why myth so often blurs into the realm of the sacred. On the other hand, myths are also often highly misleading, suggesting an abstract, even sacred, "truth" that has little grounding in historical reality. In this case, myths hide historical truths behind the façade of the sacred and the illusion of consensus. The myth is true because "everybody" knows it to be true as a matter of belief or common sense.

This description of how cultural myth operates offers much to the analysis of

sport as a public good. First, it lays the groundwork for understanding how

sporting practices are seemingly accepted as forms of culture that a collective

community can appreciate and support. Second, it is an entry point from which to

observe how some sports come to legitimate cultural practice at the expense of

others. Third, it provides some context for examining how sport addresses the

public as citizens who share collective beliefs and understandings about culture.

In all, these factors highlight the fact that "[t]he sporting nation is, therefore,

shown to be a profoundly ideological formation, whose artificiality – that is, its

"constructedness" – is matched only by its drive to affirm its organic purity"

(Rowe, et al., 1998, p. 120). The work of sport media complex utilizes and relies

on the presence of embedded cultural myths. These embedded myths then become

part of media discourses and central to content creation and attracting advertisers.

Myth, then, is fundamentally important in cultivating the citizen-consumer.

Myth also affords sport a unique yet achieved cultural status. This is

largely because sport is a key site where cultural struggle and tangible change take

place, thus affecting the personal, community, national, and even, global arena.

Although this view is highly functionalist in origin and logic, the perceived

positive outcomes afforded by sport have been used by governments and

organizations to advance social, political, and cultural causes in the name of the

public good. At the socio-political level, municipal and federal governments have

invested resources in effort to support economic development in the form of the

construction of sports arenas and stadiums or by safeguarding public order by

placing basketball courts or other sports facilities in at-risk neighbourhoods

(Coakley & Donnelly, 2004). Canadian governments have also demonstrated their

moral authority in the promotion of sport as a public good by allocating resources

for national fitness programs (i.e. ParticipAction Canada, created in 1971[16]),

appointing official Ministers of State for Sport (beginning with the 1976

appointment of Iona Campagnolo), and providing amateur athletes with financial

grants while training for competition (i.e. the Athlete Assistance Program created

in 1980[17]) (see: Sport Canada (2007) website:

http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/index_e.cfm). Recently, this moral authority has

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[16]   As an agency of Sport Canada, and indirectly The Department of Canadian Heritage, The ParticipAction program was terminated in 1993 by the federal government. It was re-instated 13 years later in 2006 by federal Health Minister Tony Clement as part of broader initiatives to promote sport and fitness for citizens of all ages.
[17]   Federal funding for amateur sports and athletes began as early as 1960 as outlined in Bill C-131. The Athlete Assistance Program amalgamated many amateur sport funding programs in 1980 (see: Hall, et al., 1991, p. 91-92).

extended directly to citizens in the form of federal government tax credits

implemented in 2007 for families with children participating organized sports.[18]

Nowhere else is this perception of sport as a public good more evident

than in the context of international events like the Olympic Games. Governments

successful in their bids to host the event have generally considered the Games as

an opportunity to promote national and cultural identity within and beyond

domestic borders. Soft or public diplomacy (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004, p. 416)

which evoke feel-good emotions are usually at play in this regard as symbols of

nationhood and culture are on display. In describing the role of international

sporting competitions and their apparent influence on the citizenry, Dwight Zakus

(2008, p. 289) writes:

> Canada's national and international teams have come to represent more
> than their own performances. Their successes and failures influence
> Canadians to different degrees. One does not have to be a fan or sport
> aficionado to revel in the outcomes of local, regional, national, or
> international teams. Spontaneous crowd outbursts, flag waving, and
> euphoric cheering by the general population are expressions of
> nationalistic joy that is easily witnessed. As both fans and non-fans exhibit
> this behaviour, they are saying something important about being Canadian.

The collective response to sport practices described in this quote also call

attention to the important work of the media, in particular television, in

representing the symbols and signs of nationhood and excellence. As David Rowe

et al. (1998, p. 120) state:

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[18]   The creation of this benefit is not without controversy. Critics have observed that while
parents can claim up to $500 per child under the age of 16, only $80 is refundable. Also, there
remains some ambiguity over what activities qualify as sports resulting in the benefit not being
beneficial to many Canadian families (see:
http://www.cbc.ca/canada/calgary/story/2007/01/03/fitness-credit.html).

> This symbolic binding of the people of a country through culture is a concept derived from social and political theory and public policy, but popular culture – notably televised sport – is the site where populations are targeted by different forms of governmental and commercial knowledge/power.

"Governmental and commercial knowledge/power" also underscores the 'high stakes' ideological game played by nations, sporting organizations, and the mass media in the course of advancing their respective agendas. In other words, elected officials are aware of the beneficial political gains they can accrue when the staging of such international events are associated with their administrations. Sporting organizations like the International Olympic Committee (IOC) bolster its authority in the arena of amateur sport when members, guided by a variety of motives, exercise their power by voting for host cities. Mass media organizations influence when events take place in the name of attracting the largest amount of advertising dollars for lucrative, mostly North American, prime-time television audiences (see: Rowe, 1996, p. 573).

The process by which countries compete for the privilege to host The Olympic Games has, as of the last twenty-five years, become less dedicated to the ideals of fair play, camaraderie, and celebration of humanity and increasingly beholden to transnational corporations and media conglomerates eager to expose their products and services to a large world-wide audience (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004; Horne, 2006; Bernstein, 2000). For instance, the 1996 Summer Olympic Games hosted in Atlanta, Georgia are often and quite unaffectionately referred to as "The Coca-Cola Games" (Burton, 2003). Coca Cola was the top commercial

sponsor providing the IOC with $179 million (see: Real, 1998, p. 20), and was

rumoured to be the deciding factor in the city's successful bid. From another

perspective, corporate involvement in the Olympics can be viewed as beneficial to

domestic economies and by association can bolster support for given

governments. Hosting the Olympic Games provides the opportunity not only to

showcase culture and symbolically unite citizens but to attract new investors and

tourists from the international community. In this respect, governments are often

afforded privileged positions as the rightful architects and protectors of the public

good because they are perceived as enhancers of national prosperity in economic

and political terms and boosters of cultural esteem.

Mediated themes of failure and disappointment also provide clues for

understanding the symbolic link between sport and the public good. In their

examination of Canadian and New Zealand press coverage during the 2000

Sydney Games, Graham Knight et al. (2005) observed that narrative frames of

disappointment dominated the representation of the respective nations' Olympic

teams. Described as "a breach between actions and expectations that is potentially

disruptive and calls for explanation and understanding" (Knight, et al., 2005, p.

26), disappointment as an explanatory frame attributed Team New Zealand's poor

performance to a lack of commitment on behalf of athletes, and a failure of

government financial support and the larger sport apparatus for Team Canada.

When athletes fail to perform at the international level an invitation to evaluate

their character and the value of tax payers' financial support are called into

question. Effectively, and ironically, the support for sport as a cultural and public good is called into question in times of failure. When expectations are met in sport public funds are thought to have been well invested. When expectations are unfulfilled public spending on sport is a waste of tax payers' dollars and investing more funds is deemed necessary. This phenomenon is puzzling since, by its very nature, sport is organized such that there are both winners and losers. But as the authors remind us, "this is particularly so for an event on the scale of the Olympics where expectations, identifications, and interests are intensified" (Knight, et al., 2005, p. 26).

Even before Olympic Games are staged, their value to the public good is often called into question by oppositional groups and resistive voices. In this regard, sport's contribution to the public good is a contested issue; witness the current debates and concerns over China's human rights record and its hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing (see: Schiller, 2007).[19] Protests in Vancouver over the construction of 2010 Winter Olympic venues that arguably disrupt the natural state of communities and displace homeless individuals with little input from or regard for the implications of these groups is another example of the ambiguous relationship between sport and the public good (see: Cox, 2007; Bains, 2007). Oppositional voices also question the promises of Olympic organizers to place little to no burden on tax payers in terms of financing the

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[19]   A 2007 Toronto Star editorial provides further context for China's human rights record. See: Editorial from Thursday August, 9, 2007: p AA06.

event. Oppositional groups often claim that the cost of hosting The Games is too high a price to pay. For instance, Montreal, host of the 1976 Summer Games, initially proposed a $310 million operating budget. This figure ballooned to an estimated $1.5 billion debt that was only paid off in 2004 – twenty-eight years later (see: Beacon, 2006).

Despite issues of corruption in the form of doping scandals that imply the adulteration of sporting ideals, and the commercialization and increasing dependency on sponsorship on all levels, ethical ideals remain the viewpoint from which social activism around and critique of The Games have originated. In other words, it is from the point of view of citizenship interests rather than consumer interests that amateur (and perhaps even professional) sport is problematized. For instance, gender equity is an issue that Olympic organizers have been unable to ignore in the more recent staging of the event. The 2000 Sydney Games were organized around discourses of gender activism as a means of self-promotion for Australia and the celebration of women in sport was the overarching theme on which the final stages of the Olympic torch relay were based in the opening ceremonies. Former and current Australian female athletes were chosen to complete the final lap of the torch relay which culminated with Australian Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman lighting the Olympic cauldron. Freeman's selection as cauldron lighter seemed to place gender and race at the forefront of sentiments related to the Games' ability to highlight social justice issues (see: Knight et al., 2007 for discussion).

Televised Sport as Entertainment

Forms of popular culture like sport are embedded in and are largely legitimated by the mass media, in particular, television attention. Robert Bellamy and Kelly Shultz (2006, p. 165) reflect upon the mutual benefits of the sport-television relationship:

> Sport in general succeeded as television programming because, first of all sporting events are typically presented live, with the attendant element of "real time" suspense. Yet, in contrast to other live events, or indeed sports events like the Masters tournament in golf, or the Olympics, a "season" of major league sport constitutes a kind of serial, made up of connected and regularly scheduled dramas, not unlike other entertainment series. This continuing presence helps to draw fans—especially uncommitted fans—into the cumulative suspense of playoff races, and the successes and failures of individual characters. There are also minimal barriers of language and literacy for sports viewers.

The mediation of the sport world makes, then, for a successful form of cultural entertainment. For example, during the 2007 Major League Baseball season there has been great ambivalence about the authenticity of San Francisco Giants' player Barry Bonds' quest to break revered baseball legend Hank Aaron's homerun record. Though Bonds successfully broke Aaron's long standing record, the validity of his feat has been called into question due to the fact that his athletic trainer was indicted on charges of supplying baseball players with anabolic steroids. Although Bonds has denied knowingly taking anabolic steroids, critics have determined that his homerun record will be forever tainted by association (see: Blair, 2007). To date there is no evidence that Bonds actually used anabolic steroids; but in many ways the allegations that he did were amplified by intense

media scrutiny. In other words, much like the unfolding narrative of a primetime drama, the audience awaits a final resolution to the controversy.

Numerous other professional sports have gone through or are currently experiencing similar struggles with doping and cheating scandals. These include the Tour de France cycling race that suffered a record number of cyclist ejections during the 2007 event. In the NBA referee Tim Donaghy was arrested and subsequently pled guilty to providing bookies with information and personally betting on games he officiated. In the NFL, Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick was arrested for allegedly operating an illegal dog fighting operation on his property.

What makes these scandals all the more titillating, and subsequently profitable, for many branches of the sport-media complex is the fact that they are sites where sports stories morph into stories that bleed beyond the sports pages and into mainstream news. While they obviously contribute to the coffers of tabloid news or "infotainment," these betting, doping, and "bad boy" scandals add to the debate over whether sport is indeed of value to the public good and are a call to arms for government and legal officials to investigate what has become a perceived morally bankrupt enterprise. For instance, the imagined and mythical prestige America attached to baseball was officially called into question after retired baseball player José Conseco released his controversial autobiography entitled *Juiced* based on his baseball career and experiences using and injecting other players with steroids. As a response, in 2005 a U.S. Congressional panel

was created in order to investigate the steroid use allegations in Major League

Baseball -- subpoenas were served to many of the individuals named in the

Conseco book ordering them to testify before the panel. This move, while heckled

by many in the media, placed sport culture in the spotlight, albeit a damaging one,

as something that was devoid of integrity and required moral cleansing and

restoration. In sum, when the unwritten rules of "fair play" are threatened or

broken, the taken-for-granted relationship of trust between cultural myth and sport

is severed, and the consequences of risky behaviours are played out in the media--

the same media that benefit from narrating positive sport stories.

The relationship between sport and television is symbiotic. Sport

programming is highly attractive to advertisers and marketers. Following the work

of Dallas Smythe, Jhally (1984, 1987) observes that mass media (television) do

more than produce ideology – they perform a more significant role in producing

and delivering audiences (consumers) to advertisers. Historically, access to

private/for profit television broadcasters has been crucial for sport leagues and

sporting events seeking entry into mainstream media and culture. Securing large

audiences in order to attract advertising contracts has played a significant role in

turning a profit for sports leagues, events, teams, and television stations. The

sport-media complex is fundamental in the pursuit of revenues for television

broadcasters, sport organizations, and advertisers. As Jhally (1987, p. 79)

explains:

> ...professional sports is a cultural industry that has found it impossible to
> survive without substantial revenues from the media for the rights to

televise their games. The sports industry has become so dependent upon the media; the media in turn derive their revenues for the purchase of sports broadcast rights from advertisers who wish to reach the audiences that watch sports […] The sale of audience time as a commodity influences what actually gets defined as sports in a more general sense. The other way in which sports can derive additional revenue is to sell themselves directly to advertisers.

This symbiotic relationship outlined by Jhally illustrates that without the media,

many mainstream sports would not be financially viable. Rowe (1996, p. 565)

suggests:

> Points of conflict have ranged from the commercial rivalry between initially competing forms of popular entertainment, to the resentment that TV has conferred its favours on only a few, mainly masculine sports, leaving the majority with insufficient resources and exposure. The most contentious issue of all concerns the common claim that TV has taken over sport, and that in the process it has debased and debauched it. Such criticisms of the sport-business-TV nexus take on a social justice dimension when the commodification of TV sport develops to the level that it must be paid for directly.

The economic imperatives underlying sport culture, then, are most apparent not

only when sporting endeavours are successful in forging lucrative and sustaining

relationships with television and advertisers but also when they fail in this regard.

Television Sport in the Name of the Public Good

Sport is a cultural practice that governments and, by extension, public

broadcasters have used to cultivate nationalistic sentiment among citizens (Silk,

2001). In Canada and other similarly organized welfare states, public broadcasting

and investing in sectors like the arts or amateur sport programs have been

considered valuable enterprises as they reaffirm cultural and social imperatives.

Canada's official public service broadcaster, the CBC has enjoyed a privileged

status as sport's traditional home with regards to ice hockey (mostly men's) and

the Olympic Games (Whitson, 1998; Gruneau & Whitson, 1993).[20] When the

network started to take on a more important role as national public television

broadcaster in the 1950s, sport was marked as for aggressive program production.

Richard Cavanagh (1992, p. 307) describes how sport's burgeoning international

popularity coupled with federal initiatives in developing amateur sport in Canada

provided a cultural justification for national media exposure in the 1950s:

> ...political and ideological emphasis on state-controlled broadcasting as a
> bearer of nationalism and promoter of unity was broadening the role which
> sport could play as a bearer of dominant messages. As the organization
> and internationalism of sport developed, it became harmoniously aligned
> with favourable sentiments of national unity and international prestige.

Some would agree that sport is no less a medium for promoting national unity and

narratives of nationhood today than it was in the 1950s. The only difference now

is that the scale of media exposure that facilitates the representation of these

values is influenced by the operations of the sport-media marketplace.

The CBC has a unique role in constituting nationhood because a broad

interpretation of its mandate would include representing sport as a cultural

practice intrinsic to Canadian identity. As Cavanagh (1992) has observed, in the

CBC's earlier years broadcasting sport was a natural extension for the public

network as government promotion and development of amateur athletics

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[20]   Over the last decade, however, this status has been challenged by private sector
broadcasters interested in expanding their audience base and revenues. For instance, in 2005, the
network was outbid by a consortium headed by private broadcaster CTV for the official
broadcasting rights to the 2010 and 2012 Olympic Games effectively shutting out the public
broadcaster's capacity to cover a Winter Games on home soil.

programs offered the opportunity to produce sport for a national television audience and therefore marry two state-supported activities.

Nowadays there is some ambiguity about whether the CBC is an exclusively public service broadcaster. Over time, while it was the first to broadcast professional sports in the form of popular programming like *Hockey Night in Canada*, the broadcaster has morphed into a hybrid network financed by both government allocations and advertising revenue. This state of affairs is examined by James Gillett et al., (1996) in their analysis of the popular segment "Coach's Corner" that airs during the first intermission of *Hockey Night in Canada*. The authors discuss how the segment's celebrity panellist, Don Cherry, "has been cultivated by the media and advertising industries," as well as how his persona is marketed and located in broader power structures (Gillett et al., 1996, p. 60). Cherry, according to the authors, is a lucrative asset to the CBC as the network and is able to garner substantial revenues from advertisers who are willing to pay to have their products associated with the broadcast and more importantly, Cherry. The financial pay-off for the network, however, is in direct conflict with its public service mandate. In all, provisions in the CBC's broadcasting mandate, outlined in the 1968 *Broadcasting Act*, allowed for (and still does) the in-depth promotion and coverage of amateur sports (Cavanagh, 1992, p. 310). In 1968, the perception was that amateur sports were devoid of commercial interests and therefore relevant to the objectives of public service broadcasting -- unlike professional sports. Detractors have warned that

broadcasting hockey, while obviously fulfilling the mythical qualities related to nationhood and cultural resonance discussed earlier, does not fit within the CBC's mandate of delivering "distinct" programming especially when sporting competition is not at the amateur level. Some critics have even gone as far as to claim that the CBC has no role in broadcasting sports because such programming is abundant on private Canadian networks (see: Hoskins & McFadyen, 1996).

While public service broadcasters like the CBC have been criticized for their increasing commercial orientation, it is rare that private broadcasters are scrutinized for their attention to the public interest. I am not claiming that private broadcasters necessarily seek to serve the public interest but rather that they receive less criticism when co-opting public service ideals than public service broadcasters do when they move towards commercialization. Sport, in and of itself, is a practice that melds together the binary of citizen and consumer. Private broadcasters have keenly used this binary to their advantage when seeking out and competing against one another for exclusive broadcasting rights to international events like the Olympics or the World Cup of Soccer. These events, as discussed above, are highly valued both culturally and economically. While host cities and countries reap economic benefits from their involvement in major sport events, so do broadcasters, and by extension their advertisers.

When broadcasters bid for the rights to broadcast the Olympics, the economic relationship shared with advertisers and marketers creates a unique context in which cultural interests such as nationhood and fair-play intersect with

the economic interests of consumption and accumulation. Margaret MacNeill (1996, p. 104) aptly describes this phenomenon in her ethnographic account of CTV's (Canadian Television) production of ice hockey during the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary:

> The Olympic Games has become one of the world's most prestigious international sporting festivals and largest media events. Massive television rights payments, advertising, and sponsorship revenues derived from the 1988 Games suggest they operated on a corporate-financial level as a spectacle of consumption, as well as on the level of audience entertainment and national celebration.

Scholars agree that the juxtaposition of cultural symbols and signs with those belonging to advertisers and sponsors work to mask the humanitarian and democratic values at the heart of the Olympic event (see: Real, 1998; Tomlinson, 1996). This practice creates a condition where mediated messages of sport interpellate audiences as citizen-consumer/consumer-citizen rather than in exclusive citizen or consumer terms. Further evidence of how television corporations exploit the citizen-consumer/consumer-citizen address is provided in the amount of money offered in the broadcasting rights bidding process. One consequence of the escalating costs of retaining Olympic broadcast rights is that the value of the Games becomes less linked to cultural imperatives and more so to those of the marketplace (see: Burton, 2003 for discussion); all the while creating an atmosphere where public broadcasters who have traditionally covered the Games (i.e. the CBC) find it increasingly difficult to justify competing for rights using tax payer dollars even though they have established a trusted reputation for covering them with competence and success. This issue has been taken up by

Rowe (1996) in his work on the relationship between television, sport, and "cultural citizenship." He (1996, p. 566) makes a case for Australian government intervention in the marketplace for the sake of protecting and salvaging cultural citizenship from being co-opted by "an aggressively globalizing and a seductively consumerist union of commerce, sport and television."

It is apparent that sport has taken on a somewhat mythical character of its own when it comes to its representation in the media. In many ways sport has become so embedded in popular culture that its presence is normalized on the grounds of 'tradition' alone. The prevailing sense is that television broadcasters and other media players are 'naturally' entitled to profit from representing sport. While this may be the case, television broadcasters and the larger sport-media complex (ex: advertisers, marketers, and sponsors), thrive on representing only a fraction of sport culture. This circumstance is aptly described by Rowe (1996, p. 579):

> The market value of an individual sport is primarily determined by its established popularity (in either gross or strategic terms) – the dowry that it brings to the union with television. Fordist commercial television, in seeking to build on this foundational support, has, therefore been a largely conservative force, showcasing a small number of mainly masculine sports codes at the expense of others deemed to be 'unsaleable' or 'unwatchable'.

A further consequence of the relationship described by Rowe is that sports shunned by the television marketplace as "unsaleable" and "unwatchable" are clearly disadvantaged in terms of gaining cultural resonance. This is certainly the case for many niche sports, particularly those played by females. Women's sports ventures have hitherto tended to rapidly expire in the media marketplace.

Examples include: *Women's Sports Illustrated*, the ABL, WUSA, and of course WTSN.

The fact that these ventures built their foundations on women's sports, and to a large degree, predominantly female audiences offers a unique opportunity to interrogate the implications of feminist politics on media representations of sport culture. The motive for this move is twofold. Firstly, these nascent ventures appropriated feminist sensibilities in form and practice, while not overtly taking a feminist stance. Secondly, many of the debates in feminist politics and culture are analogous to those found in the debate over how best to ensure democratic representation in media productions. For instance, both the feminist project and the broader movement to safeguard the public interest grapple with the tensions of addressing audiences as citizens first, rather than consumers. Third wave feminism, however, offers appealing 'food for thought' for the debate as it identifies the mass media as a battleground for (re)claiming distinction in socio-political identities. In all, third wave feminism deems the citizen/consumer dichotomy no longer intact. Tension still exists within the dichotomy yet room remains to negotiate ambivalence personally, socially, and hence politically.

The amalgam of citizen-consumer has recently been traced and examined in a special issue of the *Journal of Consumer Culture*. Contributors discuss the merits of citizenship in the context of public policy, social movements, and global consumer practices. Historically, research literature has separated the concepts of citizen and consumer, treating one as the foil of the other (Trentmann, 2007).

Currently, as evidenced in the popular culture elements of sport, it is difficult to separate the two concepts. Another pointed example is the current advertising/marketing/consumer/charity campaign known as *Product (red)*. Its manifesto calls upon individuals to exercise their consumer power by making socially conscious product and service purchases endorsed by *Product (red)*. In doing so, businesses participating in the *Product (red)* campaign donate portions of (red) product sales to humanitarian organizations distributing anti-retroviral drugs in Africa (see: http://www.joinred.com/manifesto/). All at once, consumer practices and seemingly politically conscious actions intersect resulting in the amalgamation of consumer and citizen. As Frank Trentmann (2007, p. 148) writes:

> While not conflict-free, citizenship and consumption have moved closer together. The focus of attention is now as much on overlap and interaction, even contingent symbiosis, as well as on rivalry. This shift reflects major political, cultural, and academic reorientations at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. Fascination with the civic potential of consumption has, most importantly, received an impetus from neoliberalism and the backlash of new social movements. With older producer-oriented labour politics in crisis, political energy and legitimacy have moved more easily to consumption as a site of action and mobilization.

Viewing consumption as "a site of action and mobilization" also invites a discussion of how, through feminist politics, women's sport can be used to address representational deficits in the media. What follows is a discussion of the relevance of feminist politics to the citizen-consumer debate and overall consideration of the public interest.

Feminist Politics: From Second to Third Wave Teachings

In the wake of increasing consumerism and ability of women to command greater attention in the marketplace, feminist politics have undergone a social and political shift. This shift has been characterized by diverging political philosophies and practices of the second and third wave feminist movements. The reasons for this divergence, some have argued, can be traced to irreconcilable generational differences (Gillis & Munford, 2004; Gill & Arthurs, 2006; Schnittker, et al., 2003). Here, differences in the meanings of feminism and political action differ for each group because their respective "political coming-of-age has occurred at different times" (Schnittker, et al., 2003, p. 608). Others have argued that this 'difference of opinion' between the two camps is better understood in terms of the "relationship between consciousness and social change" than a bona fide generational rift (see: Hogeland, 2001, p. 107). The practice of consciousness-raising is fluid across the envisioned divide between second and third wave feminist mindsets as women represent a diverse range of subjectivities.

Second wave feminism encompasses the broad social movement of the 1960s and 1970s that called attention to women's subordination, objectification, and exploitation at social, economic, cultural, and political levels (Frankin, et al., 1991; Findlen, 1993). In particular, the movement highlighted the oppression of women in the private and public spheres, citing the eradication of patriarchy as one of the first criteria for women's liberation. The mass media, in particular, was

also identified as a site where women's voices were stifled in place of sexist and exploitative representations that contributed to overall social and political domination. During the 1960s and 1970s, second wave feminism's strong social and political activist character gained an influential foothold in academic circles resulting in the type of research and theorizing that had direct impact on guiding the movement. Some claim that the second wave feminist movement performed much of the "heavy lifting" in terms of bringing women's issues to the forefront of the social agenda, and using collective energy to push for institutional reform and gender equality (Kinser, 2004). For this reason, second wave feminism has been anointed as "revolutionary" not only because it took up from where first wave feminism left off, but because it corralled and articulated many of the democratic and human rights issues arguably relevant to a critical mass of predominantly middle to upper class White women. The movement determined that women were united in a homogenous block along the lines of socio-political gender inequalities and that a contested mass movement was the best course of action in affecting change.

Third wave feminism, in many ways, has constructed itself in terms of its second wave predecessor's shortcomings. Often described as individualistic in practice, and non-academic in origin (see: Gillis & Munford, 2004, p. 168), third wave feminism has evolved in an era that has benefited from many of the advantages afforded by second wave feminism. It is a movement that has matured with the expectations of gender equality or with what some have called "political

fluoride" (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; see also: Banet-Weiser, 2004). This pre-embedded assumption of gender equality also suggests that third wave feminism operates as if the second wave movement is extinct and no longer relevant to the everyday lives of women who have come of age over the last twenty years. Third wave feminism perceives the disposition of its predecessor as being rampant with patriarchal victim-hood and flawed "one size fits all" activism that failed to account for the socio-economic, sexual, racial, and ethnic diversity of all women in its quest for gender equality (Shugart, et al., 2001). Thus, a rejection of these shortcomings is another galvanizing force of the third wave position. According to Amber Kinser (2004, p. 133) third wave generally refers to:

> A current era political body whose constituents practice a multiplicity of feminist ideologies and praxes while generally sharing the following characteristics: (1) They came to young adulthood as feminists; (2) They practice feminism in a schizophrenic cultural milieu which on one side grants that they have a right to improved opportunities, resources, and legislative support, and on the other side resists their politics which enable them to lay claim to, embody, and hold onto same; (3) They embrace pluralistic thinking within feminism and work to undermine narrow visions of feminism and their consequent confinements, through in large part the significantly more prominent voice of women of color and global feminism; [and] (4) They live feminism in constant tension with postfeminism, though such tension often goes unnoticed as such.

In this regard, the heterogeneous character of third wave feminism stands in stark contrast to the homogenous collective embodied in second wave feminism. If the third wave mindset promotes pluralistic identities and subjectivities amongst women, it is easy to understand how the movement's approach to defining its battlegrounds and objectives is also multi-faceted and complicated. This is

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prominently found in analogous feminist responses to second wave neglect of the

intersections shared by class, race, sexuality, and power in the work of Black

feminist scholars like Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) and bell hooks (2000), and

social commentators like Joan Morgan (2002).

The "schizophrenic cultural milieu" that third wave feminism negotiates is

media saturated -- a mass media that all too well speaks to its multi-faceted

character not only by way of the advertisement and marketing of products but in

the very icons held up as exemplars of third wave embodiment. As Shugart et al.

(2001, p. 194) write:

> They are evident everywhere in the mass media today: Scores of out-
> spoken, vibrant, defiant young women, vocal about sexism and endowed
> with an exhilarating sense of entitlement based precisely on their gender,
> are demanding our attention. Popular culture touts this phenomenon as a
> "brand new feminism" that appears to take gender equity for granted, is
> more self-obsessed, wed to the culture of celebrity, primarily concerned
> with sexual self-revelation, and focused on the body rather than social
> change

To this end, scholars like Sarah Banet-Weiser (2004) add:

> Third Wave feminism (or sometimes "Girlie feminism") embraces
> commercial media visibility and enthusiastically celebrates the power that
> comes with it. In this way, Third Wave feminism situates issues of gender
> within commercial and popular culture, and insistently positions Third
> Wave feminist politics as not only fundamentally different from Second
> Wave feminist politics, but because of the embrace of media visibility and
> the commercial world, as also more representative for a new generation of
> women (Banet-Weiser, 2004, p. 121).

This attention to and overall positive reception of mass media provides another

example of how the philosophical differences between second and third wave

feminism also present differing approaches to activism. Where the mass media

was viewed as a formidable site of women's oppression by second wave

feminists, third wavers have in many ways come to terms with this tension and

claimed many forms of popular culture as their personal identity politics stomping

ground or in the least, taken up resistive practices in the form of alternative

cultural texts. This is evidenced in many forms of popular media that play-up

"girl-power" or "grrl power" as common markers of young and modern female

sensibilities. Banet-Weiser (2004, p. 124) describes girl power as a commercially

driven brand of feminism laden with the "…politics of contradiction and tension:

the dynamics between the ideological claims of the cultural phenomenon—girls

are powerful, strong, independent—and the commercial merchandising of these

claims.…" A similar take on "girl power" as a rhetorical device has also been

taken up by Dorie Geissler (2001, p. 324). Geissler extends Banet-Weiser's

(2004) account of "girl power" to the realm of sport where it is often regarded as

an essential accessory in the promotion of women's sport culture. The "girl

power" address is successful in hailing a large cross-section of individuals (mostly

women) because it casts its net in such a fashion that it attracts hard-core fans but

also other contemporaries who may have little interest in women's sport per se but

negotiate and appreciate the codes of empowerment and entitlement offered by its

address. The online alternative zine BUST (see: www.bust.com) serves as another

good example of how third wave feminism has carved out alternative ground for

its politics, culture and celebration of difference.

It should be noted that some have questioned the authenticity of the third wave feminist address in media products and popular culture. In their examination of gender and the representation of female pop culture icons of the 1990s, Shugart et al. (2001) warn that the appropriation of feminist signs by mainstream media as a strategy of attracting female consumers does not necessarily translate into the type of consciousness-raising and celebration of difference characteristic of the third wave movement. The authors argue that many of the celebrated female icons in 1990s media (ex. Alanis Morissette, Kate Moss, and Ally McBeal) that appropriated third wave feminist markers, failed at positioning feminist issues as mainstream issues, and instead offered further evidence of how female resistance is contained within traditional hegemonic accord. The authors remark:

> As to the question of whether feminism has arrived and made its mark in the mainstream, the answer is, to some extent, yes--the term "feminism" is frequently and casually bandied about, especially in connection with women featured in the media. However [...] this is an appropriation--a misrepresentation--of feminism that functions hegemonically and thus serves to reify and reinforce established patriarchal codes and discourses (Shugart, et al., 2001, p. 207).

Others have echoed these sentiments (see: Goldman et al., 1991; and Clark, 1995). While it can be argued that third wave feminism is nothing more than a commodity that has been sold in the current era under the guise of emancipatory politics, a re-assessment of how, when aligned with public interest philosophies, the movement can achieve more tangible and authentic praxis is valuable.

Suggestions for the Road Less Taken

The sensibilities and practices of third wave feminism offer fertile ground for the cultivation of a feminist infused consideration of the citizen-consumer. A clear advantage provided by the movement rests in the fact that it embraces media culture as a tool through which to contest, affirm, and revel in its post-second wave identities. In addition, its quest to celebrate difference in subjectivities is an invitation to contrast third wave feminism with the democratic goals of the public interest, and by extension, explore their collective utility for addressing representational deficits in the media with regards to gender via women's sports.

The importance of feminist politics in advancing public interest issues in the social world has been a large part of the praxis agenda of the movement. While second wave feminism based its praxis on pushing for gender equality in the workplace/workforce, economic and cultural sphere, as well as addressing women's subordination in home relations, third wave feminism has revised the model by embracing difference as an advantage rather than a liability of subjectivity at the same time as resisting the rhetoric of equality--thereby revealing its paradox. In many ways, third wave feminism has perhaps done more to embody the old feminist adage "the personal is the political" than it has been given credit for. This may be due in part to third wave feminism taking little lead from academe when it comes to setting its agenda. Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford (2004, p. 169) explain that "[t]he academy, in the eyes of the self-identified third wavers, has failed to meet the needs of those women outside of it and has little impact on the material needs of women, which can only be redressed

by activist activities." This orientation suggests that third wave feminism has

important things to say about citizenship and how, even under a cloud of

ambivalence and contradiction, that same citizenship can guide the type of praxis

that can gain a more permanent mainstream footing.

It would seem, however, that a large part of third wave feminism's praxis

is based on what is alternative, or at least opposite to mainstream. Being

alternative comes with its paradoxes and consequences as alternative practices

cultivate themselves in response to a mainstream that they can never fully

separate from. As John Fiske (1987, p. 323) argues:

> The attempt to produce a culture for others, whether that otherness be
> defined in terms of class, gender, race, nation, or whatever, can never be
> finally successful, for culture can only be produced from within, not from
> outside. In a mass society the materials and meaning systems out of which
> cultures are made will almost inevitably be produced by the cultural
> industries: but the making of these materials into culture, that is, into
> meanings of self and social relations, and then exchange of these materials
> for pleasure is a process that can only be performed by their consumer-
> users, not by their producers.

The fact that third wave feminists claim consumerism as a legitimate practice on

the road to empowerment certainly offers a basis from which to consider the

appropriation of feminist interests in for-profit mainstream enterprises. A

burgeoning body of literature has already done so (see: Cole & Hribar, 1995;

Schultz, 2004; Lucas, 2000; McDonald, 2005 for discussion). But the attention to

difference and obvious investment in, if not celebration of the niche, are also

dispositions of the third wave that provide clues as to how activism can be

practised against the grain of the mainstream. In the case of women's sports, this

could conceivably mean that its followers, or what Fiske (1987) refers to as "consumer-users," may have to understand and reconcile the fact that their patronage comes at a different cost than that of other sports. This cost entails not having access to a diverse range of women's sport texts and having to take on the task of actively seeking out these very texts if the intention is to consume and remain in touch with the culture. In other words, fans of women's sport may on some levels be more proactive in their consumption of women's sports -- they may have to work harder than fans of predominantly men's sports. Fans of women's sports may also be examples of how the rights of citizenship (i.e., social inclusion and equity in access) must often be accompanied by responsibilities of citizenship. Therefore, broadcasters have to demonstrate that they are willing to pay greater qualitative attention to women's sports via representing them, and fans may have to demand such changes and hold broadcasters accountable to these desires by enacting more politically minded strategies in their consumption of sports programming. Indeed, fans' decisions to endorse or reject broadcasters who do not provide them with representations that they want to see can be viewed as a form of political consumerism (Micheletti & Stolle, in press; Micheletti, et al., 2003).

If we can for the sake of argument consider women's sport an institution (and by extension mediated women's sports), then it too must come to terms with the reality of its strengths and weaknesses. Here, Steiner's (1992) work on women's alternative media is instructive. In her conceptualization, women's

alternative media have four distinct characteristics. They: 1) intend to represent the viewpoints of certain women; 2) are created with limited male involvement; 3) stress the grass roots content of their communication; and 4) are not principally motivated by economic imperatives (Steiner, 1992, p. 123-126). *Women's Sports Illustrated*, WUSA, the ABL, and of course WTSN can be considered examples of alternative media forms given that each embodied most of these attributes to some degree. They also, however, deviate substantially as they were principally beholden to economic imperatives. In the case of the WTSN venture, this is particularly true as it existed on television, a medium almost exclusively driven by economics and advertiser interests. Ventures like *Women's Sports Illustrated*, WUSA, the ABL, and WTSN failed as for-profit enterprises not only because they could not mimic the well-established rules of play of commercial media sport but also, conceivably, because they misread the market when appropriating feminist-minded codes in their operations. It should be noted that these feminist-minded codes may have addressed more liberal and second wave feminist sensibilities of equality and sameness with regards to gender issues and the eradication of difference. In other words, while these ventures may have intended to achieve market presence by 'cashing-in' on third wave feminist codes of girl power, their retreat to 'one-size-fits-all' feminism effectively cancelled out the former.

As such, promoting women's sport carries different kinds of costs to malestream sport. These costs mean that such enterprises may not be viable on a

for-profit basis and that in form and content, women's sports lend themselves better to public service models of representation. Accordingly, a third wave feminist discourse of difference shares a common thread with a public interest discourse of culture with regards to acknowledging the limitations of the mainstream. Each recognizes that representing and legitimating difference in the social and cultural realm is important to the validation of citizens with diverse subjectivities. The activist-minded agendas of both orientations also provide a firm foundation on which to develop better strategies for addressing representational media deficits.

What follows below are four recommendations that deploy women's sport as a response to representational deficits in the media. They are borne from many of the observations of WTSN made throughout Chapters 4 and 5 but speak more generally of women's sport on a whole.

Recommendation 1: Technology

The direction for the promotion of women's sports should temporarily abandon the for-profit digital television format.

On the digital platform, networks are at the mercy of advertisers who are not inclined to endorse projects that are unable to draw a critical audience mass. This is even true of the CBC's digital network *Country Canada*--those interested in receiving the channel have to pay to access it thereby rendering the public broadcaster's only digital offering a commodified for-profit service. While it has only been a reality in Canada since 2002, the CRTC has placed a tentative date of

2010 for complete upgrade to digital delivery for all analogue television services. Recent Statistics Canada numbers show that there were 2.3 million digital cable subscribers in 2005 meaning that approximately 30% of cable subscribers chose digital services.[21] The intentions of government organizations such as the CRTC are to improve the technological delivery of television and encourage the production of diverse programming genres at the same time may be short-sighted due to the fact that for-profit digital networks require advertising dollars to survive. If the niche programming speaking to different citizen subjectivities is an objective of the public interest then it would be best to explore future programming genres that are different from those of the mainstream, yet vital to cultural identity, on the public service platform. The type of media that envisions the audience as consumers as opposed to citizens does not bode well for any sort of long-term mediation of women's sports.

Currently, the analogue (or free-to-air) system of delivery characteristically has greater advantages, (i.e. access to cable subscriber revenues that would enhance profits). In 1995, WTN (Women's Television Network), now known as W, began broadcasting on the analogue cable system and much like WTSN targeted its programming at a predominant female audience commodity. Even though W was carried on the less volatile analogue system, it had difficulty finding an audience because of its predominant focus on women's lifestyle programming. As a result, in 2001 the station began to reinvent itself. It placed

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[21]   See: http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/061102/d061102b.htm

less emphasis on domestically produced shows and sought out broadcasting

contracts for popular U.S. syndicated dramas and sitcoms as well as Hollywood

and made-for-TV movies (Killingsworth, 2005, p. 223-225). The changes

accompanying W's reinvention were feasible and easier to implement since the

station had the economic stability provided by the analogue system. In addition,

following W's transition to U.S. programming, its ratings and advertising revenue

increased allowing the station to survive. These advantages were not available to

WTSN.

The eventual upgrade of free-to-air broadcast services (or those that

people access by simply plugging in their TVs) to the digital format will better

allow for niche genres like women's sport to appear on television. Televised

representation of women's sport would benefit from the broadening of digital

technology because it would be less hamstrung by the economic imperative. This

type of arrangement is currently practiced as many fee-to-air broadcasters like the

CBC, Global, and CTV claim that the purchase of sporting events and American

programming, which brings in the advertising revenue, is necessary to subsidize

domestic and other in-house programming that is not as profitable or popular (see:

Taras, 2001 for discussion of this issue).

Recommendation 2: Strict Public Service Broadcasting

*Public television's commitment to representing cultural practices not usually
covered by for-profit broadcasters should be considered an initial entry point for
staking out territory for women's sport culture.*

In Canada, the CBC is regarded as one of the major sites of an imagined "village square" (Taras, 2001) where citizenship is represented and consumed. The CBC's mandate is to represent Canada's cultural diversity through distinct programming. Historically, the public broadcaster has indeed taken an altruistic approach to representing sport culture in Canada. For example, since 2002, the CBC has prioritized amateur sports in its television programming (CBC/Radio-Canada annual report, 2002-2003, p. 74). This focus, according to the broadcaster, was essential in order to promote amateur events and athletes that would otherwise go unnoticed by for-profit broadcasters. As a result there was increased coverage in 2002 and 2003 of amateur sport and in particular women's sport (see: CBC/Radio Canada annual report 2002-2003).

The expectation that the CBC should champion the representation of women's sport culture is well-placed. The interests of women's sport culture and public broadcasting are compatible. Although the CBC's mandate is not driven by the profit motive, some have argued that it is problematic to produce programming that will not attract large enough audiences to attract potential advertisers—even for a publicly funded network. Colin Hoskins and Stuart McFadyen (1996), Marc Raboy (1996), and more recently David Taras (2001), have all suggested that federal government cutbacks will probably force the public broadcaster to restructure its operations and rely more heavily on other methods (e.g. selling advertising time) in order to finance programming. While this development threatens to transform the CBC into a public-private broadcasting

hybrid, it may be inevitable, given the political economic climate, in order to finance the quality of programming the broadcaster is mandated to provide. To insist that the CBC is indeed a purely public network is somewhat disingenuous given that it is an "amalgam" of public and private (for-profit) interests (see Taras, 2001, p.178).

Recommendation 3: Hybrid and Augmented Delivery

Two Hybrid Approaches

Public/Private Undertakings: Under this system, the development and broadcasting of women's sporting events and activities could be taken on as a joint venture between public and willing commercial media broadcasters. This could be executed in two ways: 1) Legislation that would allow public sector development and initial implementation giving way to commercial permanence; or 2) Increased public and commercial sector production cooperative relationships sharing the responsibility of producing the same events.

Public Sector Implementation

Public broadcasters take on cultural, social, and political responsibility to represent issues and groups that do not normally have a voice in privately-owned media. To fulfil its mandate, the CBC could be expected to accept responsibility of producing, fostering, and sustaining representations of women's sport culture. In many ways, the CBC could initiate what Padovani and Tracey (2003, p. 139) term the "virtuous cycle" whereby quality public service programming provokes commercial sector broadcasters to upgrade their own content. The second step of this leap of faith involves the relationship between public and commercial broadcasters in Canada. Specifically, it would entail developing and supporting a

hybrid system where women's sport programming could be initially developed under the umbrella of public broadcasting and eventually be adopted by commercial broadcasters. Although I recognize this sort of co-operation would require consensus, compromise, and an ideological shift on the behalf of both the public and commercial broadcasting sector, in the current structure progress has not occurred.

Various programming strategies could be employed to this end. For example, instead of producing a variety of women's events, the public broadcasting sector could re-focus on representing cultural diversity (as in CBC's existing mandate) by raising awareness for athletes, and women's sports. Rather than simply airing women's sport, the public sector may have to take on the form of advocacy and education (i.e. introducing the public to female athletes and perhaps developing a star system of reference similar to that found in men's sport). This would be an appropriate role for Canada's public broadcaster and its commitment to public interest. If the CBC were to take the lead and build a market for women's sport programming the commercial media would become involved when profit-making became a reality. For instance, a network like TSN that leads in television sport programming in Canada could partner with and eventually assume responsibility of regularly broadcasting women's sports, taking advantage of the groundwork laid by public broadcasters. Such public/commercial ventures would result in increasing the quality and quantity of women's sport represented in Canadian television media. Tax incentives and disincentives could

also be a part of this approach. If broadcasters meet instituted quotas they could

be eligible to receive a tax break; if they do not, they would be compelled to

contribute to a fund that broadcasters willing to do so can use to enhance their

programming.

Public and Commercial Sector Sharing of Events

This model of delivering amateur sport events has already achieved

success with the relationship between TSN and the CBC. In a broadcast

partnership that began with the 2000 Sydney Summer Games and will end with

the 2008 Beijing Summer Games, the networks shared production facilities and

on-air personalities. This relationship was mutually beneficial in enabling the

CBC to place greater emphasis on the human interest stories and to carry a larger

variety of Olympic events than they would normally while TSN was able to

provide in-depth coverage of specific sports that it otherwise would not have.

Both networks also shared the advantage of having both national French and

English language channels (Radio- Canada and Réseau de Sport/CBC (CBC

Newsworld) and TSN respectively). The results were beneficial in that TSN was

positively associated with the CBC's cultural and public interest.

Given this precedent these sorts of broadcasting partnerships could be

developed beyond the framework of Olympic Games and other international event

programming. Both networks could do the same with women's sports. Sharing

production facilities and other materials could potentially reduce the cost for

television stations while also fulfilling Canadian content requirements if national

events were produced. Canada is already well-versed in such partnerships especially in the realm of feature film co-production with foreign nations.[22] It is feasible that similar partnerships could be cultivated in the realm of television sport production.

Augmented approach: Commercial Citizens for the 'Public Good'

Commercial networks should allocate more of their programming schedules to broadcasting women's sports as a community service.

The final recommendation applies to private networks and the advantages they hold in terms of market reach. It would require that private networks take a more progressive approach to representing women's sport. The discourses of "corporate citizenship" normally associated with ethical labour practices or safe work environments could be extended to culturally balanced broadcasting principles. In the realm of television production, good corporate citizenship would be come in the form of community channels. For instance, in the greater Toronto area, Rogers Cable supports community programming and broadcasts university basketball each week. These broadcasts do not have the highest production standards but they are in many ways an excellent avenue with which to raise the profile of women's sports. The same can be said for Cogeco Cable and its community-driven television station based in Hamilton.

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[22]   For information on Canada's international co-production in feature film see: The Department of Canadian Heritage: http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/mindep/misc/culture/htm/3.htm (The Department of Canadian Heritage); and Telefilm Canada: http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/accueil.asp.

One final suggestion that should be considered the most easy to implement involves private networks increasing coverage of women's sports as a part of existing schedules. Once more, it does not appear that this approach will garner serious consideration from private networks who maintain that they are obliged to return profits to share holders. Incentives in the form of tax credits or cultural production funds in order to subsidize the production of women's sport programming would undoubtedly be welcomed by the private sector. Such programs already exist for Canadian film and television production and are taken advantage of by for-profit and public media players (see Beaty, 2006 for discussion).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some of the factors at play in relation to the public interest and television representation. The debate over whether the public interest can be served under the umbrella of commercial, for-profit oriented media or that of government mandated public sector media hinges on how culture is defined. In Canada, cultural commissions and reports on the state of affairs in the domestic media have tended to treat culture as something that is indigenous, distinct from that of other nations and international identities, and therefore something to protect. This protectionist strategy has favoured a conception of the public as citizens rather than consumers. However, this distinction has been challenged by popular forms of culture such as sport that tend to bridge the dichotomy especially in the form of events broadcast by television.

Currently, it may be difficult to conceive of the public as merely citizens or consumers with regards to the representation of culture in the mass media. The reason for this is the fact that in the contemporary world the division between citizen and consumer is permeable if not temporary or negotiable in different contexts. The media representation of sport offers a unique case for understanding this flexible division. Television sport has the ability to cater to the needs of the public as citizens which in turn benefits cultural interests. But this achievement is usually accompanied by the fulfillment of the economic interests of the for-profit media marketplace because the types of sport culture most accessible on television tends to be intricately linked to and dependent on advertiser dollars in order to remain viable. This condition serves many professional sport and international sporting events well but is detrimental to other forms of sport culture that represent more diverse practices.

The general argument of this paper recognizes that the representation of the public interest is not well suited to private enterprise. It also argues for a re-examination of the ideological citizen-consumer dichotomy for the sake of understanding how public interests can be addressed in the media. In this regard, the objectives of public interest policies that serve to bring about equitable access to media for marginal voices share many commonalities with feminist-minded objectives of equity, access, and the representation of difference. I have argued for a serious consideration of third wave feminist politics not only for the purpose of cultivating a more nuanced foundation on which to develop relevant media

exposure for women's sports, but also because the approach is critical of the problems that arise when equality politics are positioned as a politics for all.

The realities of the mainstream commercial sport marketplace will continue to make it difficult for issues related to the public interest to be represented in the mainstream. What the above discussion has provided is a critical response to this issue of longevity and the broader debate over how perceptions of the citizen and consumer must change in order to effectively address representational cultural deficits in the media.

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Chapter 7 – Conclusions and Reflections

The overall intention of this analysis has been to examine the factors that led to the demise of the exclusive women's sports network WTSN. For the most part, WTSN was created in response to two related factors: 1) the CRTC's call for greater diversity in television broadcasting genres; and 2) the lack of attention paid to women's sports on mainstream television. As such, the general argument of this analysis has been that both factors were ideologically driven. This of course is not surprising in that ideology necessarily plays an influential role in the creation of public policy, particularly that which strives to promote inclusiveness in the representation of culture in multicultural and democratic societies. In addition, as evident throughout this discussion, ideologically created public policy tends to bear or at least attract ideological reaction. Put another way, both the CRTC's call for the implementation of digital television and WTSN's response to that call made claims about television, cultural, democratic, market, and gender reality. These claims about social inequality also make their own statements regarding the relationship different groups or agents have in negotiating power. Hence, this analysis took into account both social democratic and feminist discourses about culture and more generally, social inequality.

This dissertation also accounts for the political economy of mass media production and how it, too, is implicated in the story of WTSN. The market, and the power struggles involved in building and consolidating assets, is often overlooked as an ideological site. The decision-making strategies employed by

media conglomerates like BCE justify production or in this case, the elimination of production, in economical rather than ideological terms. These are important elements to consider given that federal policies and regulations have largely left the task of representing culture in the hands of the mass media, in particular television. While public broadcasters often assume responsibility for representing diversity, the CRTC's decision to promote culture via the for-profit orientation of the private broadcaster has diverted attention from that goal. The WTSN solution provided unique opportunity to study the ideological processes at play when freedom of cultural representation is institutionally entrusted to those who are guided more by the economic imperative and less by the altruistic motives of the public interest. These underlying themes of the dissertation were explicitly taken up in Chapters 4 and 6.

The issue of representation itself was an important theme of this study. The programming produced by WTSN provided textual data with which to analyze its representation of gender and women's sports. This critical feminist analysis demonstrated how WTSN's production values contrasted those findings reported in previous studies of female athletes and women's sports. While this finding was not particularly surprising, it is important to note that its progressive orientation was constructed despite government policy regarding television content and a foregoing tradition of neglect of women's sport on mainstream television. It should also be noted that in comparison to most other digital television offerings, with the exception of Pride Vision (predominantly targeting

the gay and lesbian community--sexuality), and Men TV (a channel targeting

popular genres among male viewers), WTSN was a channel that was gender-

driven both in terms of content and presumed audience commodity. In all, the

network's adoption of feminist codes was undoubtedly responsible for its

progressive coverage of intercollegiate women's basketball -- as discussed in

Chapter 5. The sociological issue of representation is again taken up in the

overarching debate presented in Chapter 6. Here, the issue of televised sport is

examined in the context of what is 'good' for the public interest. A case is made

for understanding sport as a form of cultural practice that can be appropriated for

the purpose of addressing representational deficits in the media. I argue that the

principles of third wave feminism provide a framework for such a task in that

feminist politics are particularly instructive for lobbying decisions on broadcast

content and that women's sport is a promising cultural arena for doing so.

What follows in this concluding chapter is a summary of the findings in

Chapters 4 through 6. I review the major findings within each chapter and identify

common themes and the general implications of the study's findings. I conclude

with some thoughts on directions for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

Digital TV, Cultural Policy, and the Female Audience Commodity

The implementation of digital television by the CRTC represented an

opportunity for broadcasters to create programming that would cater to previously

"untapped" genres and attract new audiences. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, many new digital channels offered predominantly pre-established programming previously found on mainstream television (i.e., NHL hockey, NBA basketball, and classic movies). WTSN was an exception in that not until the network was launched did women's sports receive substantial and consistent coverage.

The CRTC's decision to launch digital television as a new platform of delivery can be described as technologically deterministic. In this case, television, in particular private television, assumed the responsibility of promoting cultural interests that were previously ignored in analogue and satellite cable coverage. I argue that the expectations that CRTC regulations placed on digital television license holders like WTSN actually contributed to its early demise. Canadian content and other genre restrictions hamstrung the network over the course of the first three months of its broadcasting tenure. While BCE framed the network's collapse in purely economic terms, I argue that ideologically driven public policy was also a major factor.

In comparison to mainstream broadcasting history, WTSN provided an alternative to male-dominated television sport programming. What was a dramatic departure from the norm was the assumption that the primary audience would be women. This assumption is somewhat analogous to those evident in studies of gender and organizational norms in the process of newsgathering and sport reporting (see: Knoppers & Elling, 2004). These studies demonstrated that being a female reporter did not necessarily translate into support for feminist politics or a

desire to cover stories of interest to or featuring women. Working toward gender equity was not a top priority for most female reporters. As van Zoonen (1998, p. 33) has observed, the assumption that gender is the most evident factor in decision-making and the day-to-day interpretation of events encountered by female journalists is tenuous, especially in a male-dominated field where many females wish to be "accepted as one of the boys" in order to be taken seriously by their male peers.

It was evident in WTSN's license application that gender parity was conceived as more of an issue of an inter-gender divide in sport culture between male and female sport than an intra-gender divide within the targeted female audience. In raising the political significance of the under representation of women's sports on television, WTSN seemingly overlooked the intra-gender dynamics involved in attracting female viewers to its service. As it turned out, the assumption that women would subscribe in viable numbers was highly problematic. This assumption was also particularly ideological in as far as WTSN's implicit feminist imperatives in attempting to attract female viewers was quite simplistic in its 'one size fits all' approach. As some of the respondents observed, this ideological orientation was a problematic and precarious basis upon which to develop the network. Gender politics was not viewed as a favourable theme for justifying the creation of WTSN. This, in many ways, fuelled predictions of WTSN's early demise. Of course, the notion that the 'political' has no place in the operation of money-making enterprises -- as if money-making

enterprises are free from the 'political' or other ideological work – is sociologically naïve. This observation was the primary impetus for the discussion taken up in Chapter 6.

WTSN's Representation of Women's Intercollegiate Basketball

Despite its early demise, WTSN's coverage of women's intercollegiate basketball was noteworthy with regards to its progressive representation of women's sports in the media. In Chapter 5, it is argued that WTSN's coverage employed high quality production standards, created relevant and exciting sport narratives around teams and competitors, and presented largely gender neutral play-by-play commentary. These findings are important not just because they are markedly different from those reported in previous studies (see: Messner et al., 1996; Billings et al., 2002; Vande Berg & Projansky, 2003) but also because they affirmed WTSN's commitment to offering an alternative "look" for televised women's sports. As noted in Chapter 5, it is difficult to determine whether this particular finding was a result of a concerted attempt by people at the network to produce gender appropriate coverage. Another question is whether the network employed production standards typical of mainstream televised sports in order to appeal to a sport savvy audience. A reasonable claim can be made that the network employed both strategies because its coverage was comparable to standard television sport productions thereby fulfilling many of the tenets in its mission statement and also because the 2002 CIS Women's Basketball

Championship was one of the few marquee events exclusively broadcast on WTSN.

Another implication of these findings was that WTSN's representation of women's intercollegiate basketball contested representations of female athletes as reported in studies of mainstream television sport coverage. This indicates that there is some evidence that the network did not mimic normalized ways of televising women's sport. It also signifies an embracing of feminist principles in this instance of the televisualization of women's sport culture. Once more, WTSN's mission statement speak to this: "WTSN takes a new approach to sports programming. It celebrates the accomplishments of female athletes, profiles celebrated female sports figures and puts female athletes in the spotlight as role models" (WTSN website, 2002). In sum, the coverage of the three intercollegiate basketball matches incorporated many of the characteristics of "women's media" as conceived by Linda Steiner (1992) and discussed above in Chapter 1: a) calling out for "social change and justice for women"; b) dealing with gender issues "buried, ignored, or distorted in mainstream media"; c) addressing women's oppression; and d) being "oppositional, alternative, resistant in both product and process" (Steiner, 1992, p. 123). As will be discussed below, however, there is some evidence that while WTSN was alternative in some ways, it was not alternative in others.

The Public Interest and the Representation of Women's Sports

Progressing from the textual analysis of WTSN in Chapters 4 and 5, Chapter 6 considered some of the implications that arise when the for-profit media marketplace is entrusted with representing public interest issues. The line of argument distils the findings of the two previous chapters alongside the ideological work of cultural policies employed to protect democratic ideals and the public interest. It calls for a feminist response to representational deficits in the media by examining how mediated sport is an issue worthy of the public interest. Similarities between public interest goals are contrasted with those of a feminist "action agenda" and used as a rationale for implementing a new approach to the representation of women's sport on television.

At the heart of this discussion of the public interest are the notions of citizen and consumer. Historically speaking, the two terms have been conceptualized as oppositional and exclusive of one another. In a review of how Canadian cultural policies have envisioned the role of public broadcasting, it is evident that addressing the public as citizens has fostered a sense that the protection of culture is a social imperative essential to balance out the economic imperative of the private, for-profit, media (Taras, 2001; Proulx & Raboy, 2003; Dayton-Johnson, 2002). Although I argue that it is appropriate to provide the tools with which diverse voices of the public can be represented, I propose that this link is problematic because it is based on the premise that citizens are not able to cultivate or extract desired meaning from structures that do not set out to serve the public interest in non-profit driven ways. It also suggests that there is a definitive

distinction between citizens and consumers, resulting in a perception of a public without agency that must be culturally inoculated. Throughout most of the debates presented in the discussion, the desire to address the public as consumers has been characterized as a threat to democratic cultural imperatives. The private, for-profit media is viewed as an unproductive platform from which to promote the public interest.

Sport is a unique factor in the general discussion of how the public interest is represented in the media. In the context of public service television sport has had ideological inflections with which regional and national identities have been constructed as essential elements of a diverse Canadian culture. As demonstrated by the work of David Whitson (1998), Richard Gruneau and David Whitson (1993), and Richard Cavanagh (1992), sport is often viewed as the "bearer of nationalism and promoter of unity" (Cavanagh, 1992, p. 307) via public institutions like national broadcaster CBC and broader government funded initiatives for amateur sport and healthy living. This process is disturbed when sport is taken up and represented as entertainment in a media complex that principally operates and maintains itself by selling audiences to advertisers. In this case, the ideological character of sport is co-opted into the fold of popular culture via the mass media. This results in programming and other productions that address the public as both citizens and consumers.

The main objective of Chapter 6 was to interrogate the tension between the desire to address representational deficits in the media and the increasingly

ambivalent amalgam of the citizen-consumer. It proposes an alternative strategy for developing cultural policies catering to the public interest by proposing how feminist politics can be a bridge to representing sport as a culturally valuable activity. At first blush, it was suggested that social democratic and feminist politics, specifically third wave feminism, seem incompatible. A deeper probing revealed that, at a basic level, policies addressing cultural deficits and feminist standpoints are both activist in their very nature. Though they take ideological standpoints both endeavour to affect social change. In this regard, there is much commonality between representing marginal voices in the media and seeking out new avenues for televising women's sport. On another level, cultural policies and feminist critiques of the media acknowledge that marginal voices may be best suited to alternative yet accessible modes of representation (Steiner, 1992; Taras, 2001; Barney & Murray, 2006). The embracing of difference as a legitimate feature of identity and cultural value also ties issues of the public interest to those of feminist politics.

The recommendations offered at the end of Chapter 6 are synthesized from the arguments surrounding public interest, sport as a cultural value, and feminist standpoints (esp. the third wave). While I acknowledge these recommendations on how women's sport can be better represented in the media are no less ideological than the ideologies they are borne from, I contend that they move beyond a stagnant, and problematic equality-based model of representation towards one that is proactive in equity issues. Here, the main argument is that to upgrade the

representation of women's sports, striving for the same or equal coverage as men's sports is not currently realistic in the for-profit realm. While there are many qualities of the televisual representation of men's sport that warrant a certain degree of imitation or reproduction (i.e. production values, the construction of narratives around competitors and events), de-emphasizing the for-profit orientation should be considered a potential alternative.

Representation and Difference: Common Themes and Major Contributions

Two of the more major and interrelated themes of this analysis are representation and difference. Broadly speaking, the issue of representation is implicated in: the political realm via government policies surrounding the implementation and delivery of digital television; the mass media via WTSN's television coverage of women's intercollegiate basketball; and the socio-cultural realm with regard to women's sport, feminist politics, and the public interest. Representation, according to Stuart Hall (2003, p. 17) is best understood as a system "because it consists, not of individual concepts, but of different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relations between them." Representation also makes claims about the social world and what is meaningful.

Chapter 4 examined how, through CRTC policy, new media (digital television) was chosen as the appropriate vehicle for the promotion and representation of diverse culture. For example, in the CRTC commissioned report by the 1997 TFIDTV (Task Force for the Implementation of Digital Television),

failing to establish the digital platform translated into putting Canada's "domestic and international cultural and economic objectives" in jeopardy (TFIDTV, 1997, p. 29). Similar sentiments were echoed in the CRTC's rationale for implementing digital television. The digital platform would "increase the variety and diversity of programming" and maximize the "production and exhibition of new Canadian programming" (CRTC, 2000, p. 1). The domain of television was constructed as one that must be protected by the government because it represents culture, is the primary source for the delivery of new media, and can be seemingly trusted to place some emphasis on cultural imperatives (i.e. "increasing the variety and diversity of programming"). What was also evident in the digital television policy is that in taking up the recommendations made by the TFIDTV, the CRTC implicitly constructed cultural and economic imperatives as one and the same, or at least as inter-dependent. In sum, the Commission was persuaded that it was implementing a digital system that would not only be financially viable, but that programming variety and diversity would be the basis of that success.

Chapter 5's textual analysis of women's intercollegiate basketball illustrated how traditional representations of female athletes were contested by WTSN in their progressive and high quality television productions. WTSN's coverage of women's sports was markedly different to that offered in mainstream media. At the same time, by incorporating many features of television production codes of men's basketball, their representation of women's basketball implies that there are productive synergies between the two. Still, this representation of

women's basketball suggested that images that are progressive, and that counter gender inappropriate features of mainstream coverage, utilize the same signifiers of success as those of men's sports. In sum, WTSN's representation of basketball suggests that progressive portrayals of female athletes can also employ productions strategies found in the production of men's sport.

Chapter 6 underscores how representation issues involve struggle and contestation. In this view, culture is dynamic and ever-evolving as groups struggle over meaning. In the case of television representation of public interest issues (i.e. cultural difference and diversity) is constructed as a moral and democratic imperative which is at odds with the for-profit media agenda which is presumably focused on profit. The politics of representation are most evident when matters of public interest are not attended to by the mainstream, for-profit media.

This analysis contributes to a better understanding of social inequality in the Canadian sport media. For instance, this study demonstrates how difference translates into inequality. In television, the differences between the representation of men's and women's sports exemplify gender inequalities because women's events and female athletes do not garner the same amount of media coverage as their male counterparts. Again, the existing literature on the representation of males and females in sport has pointed to vast differences in how each are portrayed in the media whereby women's sports are largely absent from, or highly trivialized in mainstream media representations (Messner et al., 1996; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Duncan & Messner, 2005; Billings, 2000). Female athletes tend to

be sexualized in media representations in comparison to their male counterparts and their non-athletic and heterosexual attributes are foregrounded (Daddario, 1997; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). The media's practice of gender marking women's events results in the perception that women's games are different and alternative to the male standard (Messner et al., 1996; Blinde et al., 1991). Finally, difference translates into inequality when female athletes are portrayed ambiguously. The athletic achievements of female athletes are legitimized when they conform to traditional or stereotypical markers of heterosexual femininity (Christopherson et al., 2002). In sum, inequality is the result of qualitative and quantitative differences in the portrayal of men's and women's sports—absence of quality and quantity means inequality.

The results of my analysis of WTSN differ from those documented in previous studies of the representation of women's sports in the media. Though short-lived, WTSN was a unique network that offered a clear alternative to mainstream sport media. The sport produced for the exclusive women's sports network was different in some ways to mainstream representations of women's sport but comparable in others.

This account of WTSN also contributes to existing debates and knowledge about the costs or risks of representing the marginal or niche. On a basic level, the cost that WTSN paid for not being economically successful was its ultimate collapse. Currently, most exclusive female sport programming does not attract substantial television audiences and therefore advertisers. While this example of

market logic explicitly illustrates the fundamental relationship between the commercial media and commercial sport, it also implicitly makes claims about the commercial, and by extension, cultural legitimacy of women's sport. While failure in the commercial realm may be the current reality for exclusive women's sports ventures like WTSN, the taken-for-grantedness that this failure is evidence that such cultural practices should not be represented in the media is unwarranted. Challenging this orthodoxy and extending observation beyond the commonsensical, poses a different set of questions which need to be addressed if being represented and legitimized as a form of sport culture remains an important goal of women's sports. Instead of dismissing these media representations of women's sport as economic failures, a more fruitful practise may be to challenge and re-assess the value of the economic imperative itself. Put another way, the economic imperative and agenda, at times, tends not to promote creativity and innovation but stifles or repels them for the sake of maintaining an environment where the successful sale of audiences to advertisers can remain a certainty, even if the products offered in the marketplace share more similarities than differences.

The costs of representing the marginal also point toward the ongoing battles and struggles of feminist praxis. As demonstrated through WTSN, attempts to enact feminist politics in the social world face many obstacles. The quest for gender equality fuelled the WTSN project from the beginning. The network's feminist-minded principles did make some claims about the state of affairs in mainstream television sport. Even though these claims (i.e. mainly that

women's sport is underrepresented) were valid, a response in the form of a network appropriating feminist codes of empowerment and equality, proved incongruous with the for profit realm. WTSN, then, was a material source that communicated valuable lessons about the failures of the feminist project. Its failure, however, can be framed as a turning point from which to re-evaluate and position liberal feminist politics in a consumer-driven world where third-wave feminist identities and sensibilities offer new tools with which to negotiate gender equity.

This project also contributes to the work and debates around what Jeff Dayton-Johnson (2002) terms "activist cultural policy." Policy activism, I argue, is an increasingly necessary component of modern societies in which the mass media's presence is ubiquitous and largely unrivalled by other cultural industries. This analysis has taken gender, specifically women's sports as one example of how cultural deficits can be addressed in the media. Gender is a proxy for other issues related to democratic representation of culture and identities that mainstream media tends to ignore, such as the poor or the elderly. In the case of WTSN, however, advocating for cultural policy seems to match some of the inherent goals of the current, third wave feminist project that seeks to encourage and understand the importance of gaining equity through difference. Present day feminist practices can still be movement oriented in lieu of this acknowledgement of diversity and difference. It can do so in a way that warns the creators of cultural policy of the dangers in assuming the "one size fits all" logic is the best strategy

for promoting culture that will not only represent marginal voices but that will encourage those outside of these margins to take interest in and consider such representations valuable. Policy activism in the realm of communication industries is also an effective method of combating the perspective that the for-profit marketplace remain unaccountable to no one else asides from its share holders. Current Canadian content rules are examples of measures already taken to address the private media industry's desire to remain autonomous in making the decisions of what content they produce and eventually broadcast.

Final Thoughts and Directions for Future Research

It is evident from Case Studies 1 – 3 that despite current debates about the "spectre" of ideology (see: Žižek, 1994), it still has resonance when it comes to how individuals or groups envision their social position and potential course of action for improving on it in the social world. In the case of WTSN, it can be inferred that even though the words "feminism" or "feminist" did not appear in its license application, the network offered a feminist solution to the problem of the underrepresentation of women's sports on Canadian television. The absence of "feminism" or "feminist" may have been due to the often "loaded" sentiments associated with the terms (see Offen, 1988; and Schnittker el al., 2003 for discussion). It is possible that the network avoided reference to being an explicit feminist project—much like usage of the common phrase, "I'm not a feminist but…"-- in order to dispel fears that it was to be a radical feminist medium.

While the network was commendable for seeking a more equitable balance in the representation of gender in television sports, it is inescapable that women's sports programming did not, at that point in time, have the capacity to mobilize a critical mass of female viewers in the name of gender equity. I make this contention even though I am aware that creators of new products perform extensive focus group studies and execute comprehensive consumer-market surveys in the process of making decisions about how to bring their creations to life and who they should be targeted to. I also think that what is important to keep in mind is that the average citizen probably believes that she or he is quite gender enlightened and open to the democratic ideals of cultural and gender equality. In other words, there may exist a great divide between the moral and democratic obligations that citizens believe they have, and the steps that they are actually willing to take towards turning these ideals into reality. Consuming media may not be a part of this. Another plausible explanation is that individuals outwardly express their belief in gender equity, even if they are in disagreement with its merits, in order to escape censure or disapproval of their peers or members of society thereby creating a kind of "spiral of silence" (see: Noelle-Neumann, 1974). This is similar to observations that Liz Grauerholz and Lori Baker-Sperry (2007) describe in their work on the dilemmas that arise when feminist research is brought into the public domain. The authors note that the most innocuous or "safe" subject matter can sometimes strike "a deep cultural nerve" among citizens (Grauerholz & Baker-Sperry, 2007, p. 285). This may have been the case with the

type of sport available on WTSN. As a text itself, WTSN was unsuccessful in ideologically "hailing" or calling out to the (assumed) inner political will of its intended female audience and this had a direct impact on its commercial viability. Simply put, the kind of commodity feminism (Goldman et al., 1991) for sale on WTSN was not bought by nearly enough viewers—women in particular. The identified gender inequities in sport media representations were not quelled by way of offering the network as an alternative media site for consuming women's sport. The assumption that female viewers would patronize the network not only as fans but as citizens socially cognizant of the evident gender inequity in television sport culture was flawed.

This brings the issue of feminism(s) back into the debate. Many scholars who acknowledge the merits of second wave/liberal feminism also have called attention to the limits of its "one size fits all" liberal-minded approach to gender equity. For example, Ann Hall (1996, p. 91) reminds us that in the political struggle within culture for meaning, "[l]iberal feminism in sport also tends to treat women as a homogeneous category without recognizing that there are enormous differences among us in background, class, race, ethnicity, age, disability, and sexual preference that lead to very different expectations and experiences of sport." This view is echoed by Sarah Banet-Weiser (2004) who contextualizes the issue of "one size fits all" in terms of the generational tension between second and third wave feminism. As she argues, in a consumer driven world, liberal feminist sensibilities do not have a monopoly on setting the political agenda for an

imagined homogeneous collective of "women." In describing the third wave as an updated form of feminism, one that offers a stark contrast to that of the Second Wave, Banet-Weiser (2004, p. 123) explains that it:

> ...is precisely *not* the same old feminism that structures the politics of Third Wave feminism. The insistence that it is stems from a range of sentiments, from nostalgic yearnings for real social protest movements to respectful acknowledgments of political practices that open up economic and social opportunities to a sheer base desire to belong to something. Without discounting these sentiments, it is also the case that lingering in this generational territory battle between Second Wave and Third Wave feminism has paralyzed the debate, and prevented the further development and refinement of a feminist praxis and material feminist politics.

WTSN is a textbook case of this kind of territorial battle. Moreover, its demise calls for this "development and refinement of feminist and material feminist politics" that Banet-Weiser (2004) describes. WTSN arrived at a time where women merited a more nuanced address that hailed them as individuals with multiple characteristics, needs, desires, and consumer clout, rather than members of a homogeneous collective. The network may have been *past* its time with regards to mobilizing this demographic en masse as its potential audience. In other words, it is possible that the network's liberal-minded agenda was better suited for a network launch 20-30 years ago when such politics resonated with a particular group of women in a way that constructed tangible change as being achievable through collective action rather than in attention to difference.

If welcoming the products of consumerist culture functions as a style of being for an increasing number of modern women, then a contemporary feminist media project must also recognize and accept the reality of some women not

identifying with every feminist cause. In other words, just because a certain brand of feminism may be marketed for sale, (i.e. on WTSN), it is problematic to conclude that it will influence and resonate with women. Accounting for a diversity of identities in the community of "women" may involve engaging more than one type of programming genre and hence "feminism." The WTSN concept in all likelihood needed to be more radical in character as to not simply set itself apart from men's sport on the basis of gender. As evidenced in the network's production of intercollegiate basketball, progressive approaches address feminist imperatives for equality and quality. Future research should begin at this stage and look beyond equality as a marker of legitimacy for women's sports. The academy is still well endowed with the tools and resources to re-fashion and re-assess what the current battlegrounds are for a feminist project that is relevant in the context of sport. In a true exercise of praxis, however, this re-assessment must begin by sociologists taking account of the track record of feminist politics in the broader social world.

Another direction for future research should focus attention on how gender is implicated in the conceptualization of the audience commodity for sport texts. This focus should include but extend beyond the ideological constraints of political economy analyses that take ownership and assets of media products and services into account and look deeper into how gender can inform radical attempts at representing sporting practices in the media. This analysis has acknowledged WTSN as an enterprise appropriating feminist principles for an envisioned female

audience commodity. Indeed WTSN was unique as discussed above. But WTSN was also unique in the realm of television sport because it sought out a predominantly female audience while overlooking the traditional television sport audience—males. This factor is an obvious challenge to the feminist framework employed in this analysis. For instance, my arguments in support of WTSN's as an appropriation of feminist codes only discussed the role of women in the feminist project. It is plausible to assume that where the genre of television sport is considered, males may play a supporting role in advancing and popularizing women's sports. Stephanie Sargent et al. (1998), for example, examined the impact of gender on television sport viewing. The authors found that while females and males equally enjoyed viewing sports, the types of sporting competitions enjoyed by each group differed. Males tended to enjoy sports that emphasized "combative coordination" and females those that placed less emphasis on aggression and more on style or aesthetic. Combative sports were defined as those involving competition based on physical strength, power, and speed and agility, "one party wins at the expense of an opposing party." These sports included basketball, soccer, hockey, and boxing. Stylistic sports were defined as those also involving competition but where speed, agility, and elegance were stressed. To a certain degree, these findings suggest that males could conceivably have been part of WTSN's target audience—or in the least, complement the network's primary female audience. The logic behind this argument rests in the fact that there exist various sports in which both males and

females participate -- hockey, basketball, and soccer are examples of this overlap. While I acknowledge that there may be appreciable differences in the flow and style between men's and women's hockey for example, what I think is important to keep in mind is that a propensity for males to watch hockey, basketball, and soccer on television may have a positive influence on the cultural appreciation of women's sport. In other words, in choosing sport as the conduit in which to address gender inequity, a demographic consisting of both women and men will cast a wider audience net.

The work of Third wave feminists inside the academy is also well positioned to interrogate the movement's embrace of males who are supportive of the representation of difference and gender equity in the broader social world. In my view, it appears that in much of the third wave feminist literature, feminists who are males have an implicit presence in the process of negotiating personal politics and acknowledging gender inequities but not an explicit one. Males have been the predominant audience for sports but many males have also matured in the same era of embedded gender equality as their female counterparts who have been the subject of third wave feminist work and address. It is also plausible that the promotion of women's sport would benefit not just from bringing young males onside but older men who are parents to both young girls and boys. In sum, the examination of the role males play in the process would shed light on the old conceptions of women's alternative media as conceived by Steiner (1992) and the

execution of effective praxis in the realm of women's sport as outlined in the work of Hall (1993, 1996, 1997) for instance.

Another avenue for future research would be to generate a body of literature around the issue of failure in the appropriation of feminist politics in the larger social world. There have been a few instances in this analysis of WTSN where I have offered the stories of similarly minded women's sports ventures as a comparative and illustrative tool. These enterprises include: *Women's Sports Illustrated*, the WNBA, and the ABL. They failed for the same reasons as WTSN did. Future work could examine the creation and production of these ventures and document their respective stories of demise. In this account of WTSN for instance, there is a gap in the data that the opinions of those directly involved with could have addressed. It has now been four years since the network ceased broadcasting. There could be a good chance that enough time has passed to heal wounds or allay fears about passing judgment on what occurred behind the scenes leading up to WTSN's demise. It would be interesting to document what occurred at the turning point in organizational awareness of the network's looming collapse. The meanings associated with success, risk, and failure from the perspective of those involved with the network would shed light on the material conditions that exist when the representation of democratic issues are rejected in the for-profit media.

As with so many other research projects, this analysis of WTSN is not closed. Thematically, it continues. A recent *Globe & Mail* newspaper article has

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confirmed that The Canadian Olympic Committee (a governing body of amateur sport) is interested in introducing an exclusive sports channel that would be dedicated to broadcasting amateur sports (see: Houston, 2007, p. S5). In the article, William Houston (2007, p. S5) reviews the impetus for the network in paraphrasing the words of Committee member and World Anti-Doping President Richard Pound: "There isn't much amateur sport on television. What's more, watching elite Canadian athletes compete would encourage children to participate. …" One notable difference in this recent attempt at addressing this representational media deficit, is that those proposing the channel will request that the CRTC assign the broadcasting service as a "must carry"—meaning that its delivery would be mandatory and it would be guaranteed revenue from cable and satellite carriers. However, the politics of representing the public interest in the private media are still in effect as a main step in brining the channel to life includes consulting with privately owned cable and satellite businesses. It may be too soon to predict the outcome of such a channel but the move to establish it in the mainstream television marketplace will provide another opportunity to re-examine the sociological implications and risks associated with representing the marginal.

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Appendix – Interview Schedule

Tentative interview schedule (Note: this list is not exhaustive).

How did you get involved in the type of work have you been doing in during your career?

(If relevant): What sporting events do you cover/have you covered during your career? Why?

In your particular medium, which sports would you say are most **popular** in terms of volume of reporting?

Which would you say are the most **popular** television sports? Why?

In your opinion, of all television sports, which make more advertising revenue for broadcasters?

Obviously, male athletes get greater coverage than female athletes. Is that because that's what people want to read about/watch **OR** because that's what people in the media want to cover?

In your opinion, beyond the amount of coverage, is there a difference between **HOW** women's and men's sport are covered in the media? If there are differences, what are they and why do you believe they exist?

What are the most popular commercial television **men's** sports? Why? By commercial I mean money making or for-profit.

What are the most popular commercial television women's sports? Why?
**
What do you think led to the demise of *WTSN*?

Where did the idea for an exclusive women's sport network come from?

   Why do you think the *CTV* network decided to launch an exclusive women's sport network?

   In your opinion, beyond the fact it covered women's sport, how was *WTSN* unique and how did it compare to other sports specialty networks?

Who do you think the intended audience was for *WTSN*?

Who do you think watched *WTSN*?

Is there a difference between "sport fan" and "sport audience?"

Who do you think would have been better for *WTSN*, fans or an audience?

In your personal opinion, how big a financial risk was it to create *WTSN*?

How did other people in your business assess the economic viability/chances of WTSN?

What do you think is the likelihood of a future network wanting to exclusively broadcast women's sport? What obstacles would they have to overcome?

From your perspective as an insider, what are the difficulties and obstacles involved in producing women's sport programming?

Do you know why *WTSN* started out as a digital channel? Was there an opportunity to start as an analogue cable channel?

What was the nature of WTSN's relationship with broadcast brother *TSN* (The Sports Network)?

Do you feel *WTSN* competed with *TSN* in terms of audience and popularity?

How did *WTSN* become involved with broadcasting Canadian Intercollegiate Sport (CIS) Women's Basketball? What was behind this decision?

How is broadcasting women's university sport different from professional sport?
**
Do you think a public broadcaster like the CBC should be allowed to broadcast sports?

What do you feel some of the major differences are between public and commercial broadcasting of sports? [Should they play a different role…to what extent should *CBC* broadcast decisions be driven by advertising revenue?]
Do you think a public broadcaster should broadcast sports that commercial networks avoid because they are not profitable?

Do you think women's sport, in particular university sport, would benefit from having a dedicated national broadcaster for their events? How?

What factors would determine whether a commercial/private broadcaster would broadcast women's university sports?

What factors would make the *CBC* interested in broadcasting women's interuniversity sports?

If the *CBC* did so, what impact would it have on Canadian intercollegiate sport?