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## Framing the Winter Olympic Games: A Content Analysis of Polish Newspapers Coverage of Female and Male Athletes

*Abstract:* The aim of this paper is to analyse the media coverage provided by two Polish daily newspapers (*Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Przeгляд Sportowy*) during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games according to the athletes' gender. The paper makes reference to agenda setting theory and media framing and it is based on an analysis of photographs of the games on the front pages and the sporting articles' main themes. The analysis reveals that the press focused mainly on the Polish medal winners and did not reveal significant differences between women's and men's press coverage. Results show that the discourse of nationalism overrode the discourse of gender, the newspapers' coverage being mainly based on the success of the Polish athletes, regardless of their gender.

*Keywords:* Winter Olympic Games, press coverage, gender, nation, media framing

### Introduction

Media coverage of sports events in relation to athletes' gender has been extensively analysed in the Western scholarly literature. The findings have revealed that the media coverage of women's events differs from that of the men's events both in terms of its quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Women's sport is not only under-represented in the media (Billings and Eastman 2002, 2003; Bruce 2013; Kane et al. 2013), but is also shown and described in a way that reproduces gender differences and order in sport (Angelini et al. 2012; Duncan and Messner 2000; Pedersen et al. 2003; Vincent et al. 2003). The marginalization of sportswomen has been observed in the newspapers and other media (Cooky et al. 2010; Crossman et al. 2010; Delorme and Testard 2015).

Recently, Fink (2015) has made a review of the literature and listed the main practices (revealed in the previous studies) used by the sports journalists to maintain a difference between women's and men's sports and to present women as "the other" in the sports field (Cooky et al. 2013: 206; see also: Wensing and Bruce 2003; Bruce 2013). These practices are: (1) "gender marketing" (in the case of women's sports events, the athletes' gender is indicated, whereas in the case of men's events it is not, e.g. The FIFA World Cup and The FIFA Women's World Cup); (2) sportswomen's infantilization (naming female athletes by their first names or as "girls" or "ladies" and emphasizing their childlike qualities), (3) focus on beauty, sex appeal, as well as (heterosexual) familial roles; (4) more frequent media coverage of so-called feminine sports; (5) questioning of the femininity and heterosexuality of female athletes practicing "masculine" sports; (6) devaluation of female ath-

letes' achievements; (7) explication of both successes and failures by their emotions. The researchers have revealed also an ambivalence in the media coverage of women's sport—which refers to messages whose content has contradictory statements and images of the individual person (Duncan and Hasbrook 1988; Poniatowski and Hardin 2012; Eagleman 2015). In the case of sportswomen, this is illustrated by the news which on the one hand pays attention to their sports skills and good results and, on the other, describes non-sports issues, emphasizes their femininity and undermines their actual sports achievements.

The majority of the previous studies concluded that female athletes were underrepresented in the media coverage. However, some researchers stress that while in everyday coverage sportswomen are marginalized, women's sport becomes more visible during the Olympic Games, though mainly if the women win or are expected to win medals (Billings and Eastman 2002; Vincent et al. 2002; Wensing and Bruce 2003; Bruce and Scott-Chapman 2010; Delorme, 2014). Therefore the Olympic Games can be seen as a “path-breaking event” for the newspaper media coverage of women's sport (Capranica et al. 2005: 214).

There is a number of studies on Olympic Games, though more on the Summer Games (e.g., Billings and Eastman 2002; Billings et al. 2010; Tuggle et al. 2007) than the Winter Games (e.g., Billings and Eastman 2003; Billings et al. 2008; Daddario 1994; Vincent and Crossman 2012). The very limited Polish studies that have examined the issue of sports media coverage with reference to the athletes' gender in Poland have revealed that female sport is marginalized in the everyday media coverage—both on television and in the press—which can be mainly explained by the dominance of male soccer (Jakubowska 2013, 2015; Kluczyńska 2011; Kramarczyk et al. 2013). However, there is not, to the best of the author's knowledge, any Polish research on the media coverage of the Olympic Games. Therefore, the focus on the Polish press coverage of the Winter Games should be interesting for Polish readers, but also for international readers, regarding that the Winter Games, as mentioned above, have been less often analysed so far and there is significantly “less information about media coverage on non-English speaking countries” (Markula et al. 2010: 4). And even if there is some information, it usually concerns only Western European nations.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze the Polish press coverage of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games and to answer the following questions: (1) What were the main themes and athletes covered by the Polish press during the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi? (2) Whether there are gender differences in the media coverage?

### **Theoretical Framework: Agenda Setting and Media Framing**

According to the theory of agenda setting, the media determines what we are going to think about (McCombs, Shaw 1972; McCombs 1982). As Bernard Cohen (1963: 13) stated: “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” The media, by focusing on selected themes chosen from numerous events that happen each day, indicate what should be considered to be the major issues. The television audiences and readers learn about an issue, “but also how much importance is attached to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position” (McCombs and Shaw 1972: 176). Therefore, the

importance of the issues is constructed by the number of news items devoted to a particular theme and the prominence of the news on that theme, which can be built by the page placement, size of headlines, appearances in the head, etc. (McCombs 2005; McCombs n.d.).

Although, at the beginning the theory of agenda setting has considered that the media does not influence people's way of thinking, in the following years, one of its key authors, McCombs (2005: 546), noted that "the media not only can be successful in telling us what to think about, they also can be successful in telling us how to think about it."

In this context, one of the key elements of the media's influence is how they frame the content of the news they provide. According to McCombs (2005), framing should be considered as a part of the agenda-setting theory which creates its "second-level." To frame, as Entman (1993: 52) notes, is:

to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.

The framing process is based on the choice of words and phrases, choice of sources, repetition and highlighting of some issues and omission of others, etc. As a consequence, the media present "reality" and provide the "right" interpretation of the covered events and issues, defining our understanding of them (Kuypers 2002; Rohlinger 2002). Moreover, as the researchers have shown, "once an issue is defined, it is difficult to redefine it" (Kian and Hardin 2009: 188).

In gender studies, the concept of framing has been used to analyze women's and women's issues media coverage. In 1978, Tuchman used the term "symbolic annihilation" to describe women's marginalization and trivialization in the media coverage. In the following years, a lot of authors have analyzed this process, also with reference to sports media coverage, as indicated in the beginning of this paper. The media practices gathered by Fink (2015) presented above, should also be perceived as a tool of women's symbolic annihilation in mediatized sport. The perception of sport is impacted by the media framing—the media create the meaning of events and help readers and viewers interpret them. As a consequence, the media coverage reproduces gender ideals, gender differentiation and can contribute to maintaining male domination in sport. However, if one perceives sport also as a field where gender stereotypes and patterns are challenged (Messner 2002; Hardin et al. 2005; Kian et al. 2008; see also: Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), the media can be also seen "as sites where struggles for power take place" (Kian, Fink and Hardin 2011: 5).

## Methodology

### Data Collection

In this study a content analysis was carried out on *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Przegląd Sportowy*. *Gazeta Wyborcza* is an independent nationwide daily newspaper, which has been published since 1989. According to the Institute of Media Monitoring, *Gazeta Wyborcza* was the most opinion-forming media in Poland in 2014. In 2014, it was the third highest

selling newspaper, overtaken only by two tabloids *Fakt* and *Super Express*. In that year, its average circulation was 253,772 copies. *Gazeta Wyborcza* consists of two parts—the main nationwide part, and smaller local parts edited in the biggest Polish cities. Sports news items are published on the last 2 pages of this newspaper, in the sport’s section; however, some of them, related to political, organizational or financial dimensions are sometimes published on the other pages. A similar pattern is observed in the local editions. The average number of sports news items per day is 20.

*Przełqđ Sportowy* is a sports daily newspaper and has an average circulation of 68,048 copies (ZKDP, 2014). About a half of each issue is devoted to football (mainly—national leagues and the national team, the UEFA Champions League, the UEFA European League, but also: English Premier League, Spanish Primera Division, German Bundesliga and Italian Serie A). The newspaper is divided into sections and each of them has headlines—usually the name of sports disciplines or sports events. Some sections are called “other sports” or “other sports events.” Since the first issue—which was published in 1921—the editors of *Przełqđ Sportowy* have initiated important sports events such as the organization of the national football league or the national cycling race. The history of *Przełqđ Sportowy* is inextricably linked to the history of the “Plebiscite for the Best Polish Athlete,” organized and then coorganized by the newspaper since 1926.

The newspapers considered in this study were collected from the day before the opening ceremony to the day after the closing ceremony of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games (i.e., from 6th to 24th February). Each newspaper has been manually screened by the author. Articles were individual units of analysis. All the data were coded by the same researcher. Statistical/results columns, news briefs and telegraphs were excluded from the analysis. A sample of 97 articles from *Gazeta Wyborcza* and a sample of 158 articles from *Przełqđ Sportowy* were collected and analysed.

### Data Analysis

Firstly, regarding their impact on the issue’s salience, the front pages, and more precisely, the photographs on the front pages were analysed. Although both the photographs and the articles are deemed important, the photographs have a quicker and a greater impact on the readership (Dixon 2008). Moreover, the results from previous studies have stressed an important role of press photographs in the reconstruction of gender differences in sport and indicated sportswomen’s under-representation in the visual dimension (Hardin et al. 2002; Jones 2010; Pedersen 2002; Buysse and Embser-Herbert 2004; Vincent 2010). The photographs from the front pages were analysed and coded by four variables: (1) the sport’s discipline, (2) athlete’s sex, (3) athlete’s name, (4) type of photograph. The last variable was coded according to the typology proposed by Pedersen (2002) which includes four types of photographs: (1) “action” (i.e. a sport-related action), (2) “sports context” (i.e. coaches and athletes who are not in action but in a sports-related setting), (3) “head” (i.e. a head shot) and (4) “outside the sports context” (i.e. outside a sport-related setting).

Secondly, to analyse the articles’ content, a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006) was used to jointly code the data, adopting a perspective sensitive to the concerns surrounding gender, nation, sports achievements, and so forth. Due to this analy-

sis, four main themes were distinguished and interpreted with reference to the theoretical framework.

## Findings

### The Front Pages

During the sports mega-events (SME), the front page of a newspaper presents an athlete or an event which is perceived as the most important from the previous day/s in the (sports) world. The front pages' analysis is thus valuable in the context of gender equality in the press, especially in the case of sports journals.

In *Przeegląd Sportowy* the photograph of an athlete is usually situated in the middle of a page and covers at least a half of it. Additionally, one can see also on the front page smaller photographs of athletes announcing articles about them inside the newspaper. Only once was there not a photograph of any athlete(s) competing in the Olympics on the front page of *Przeegląd Sportowy* in the analysed period. And only on 3 days was the biggest photograph not related to the Olympics. In each case the Olympics were “visually” marginalized by football (twice by the Champions League and once by a Polish player who had scored 5 goals in one match of a national league game), which stresses the status of football and its domination in the press coverage (Jakubowska 2013).

The photographs from the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi presented Polish athletes, actually three of them. They were the Olympic gold medalists: Justyna Kowalczyk (cross country skiing—10 km), Kamil Stoch (ski jumping—2 medals in the individual's competitions) and Zbigniew Bródka (speed skating—1500 m and bronze medal in the team event). Kowalczyk was the heroine in 9 out of 17 front pages of the analysed issues of *Przeegląd Sportowy*, Kamil Stoch was the hero of 10 front pages and Zbigniew Bródka could be seen on 4 front pages. The Poles, both men and women, were also medalists in speed skating team competitions. The next day after the closing ceremony, all mentioned medalists were presented on the front page of *Przeegląd Sportowy*.

As one can observe, almost all the photographs (with one exception) on the front pages were categorized as “action shot” or “still shot.” In a second case, they were related mainly to the flowers or medals” ceremonies (Table 1).

It should be also noted that in every issue of *Przeegląd Sportowy*, articles concerning the Olympics were published in the part of the journal called *Przeegląd Olimpijski* [Olympics Review]. Pages about the Olympics usually were in the middle of the newspaper, but, in a few cases, they were moved to the beginning. This took place one day before and one day after the Olympics and when the Poles won medals (10, 11, 14 and 17 February). Therefore, one can say that the Olympics became more important when the Polish athletes won medals. In other cases, the Games gave way to domestic and foreign competitions in various disciplines, mainly team sports, especially football.

The Olympics' events, especially Polish successes, were also appreciated by the editors of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which published Olympic athletes' photographs on the front page of 11 out of 17 analysed issues. Similarly to *Przeegląd Sportowy*, they presented mainly Justyna

Table 1

**The Photographs on the Front Pages of *Przełęcz Sportowy***

Date	Sport	Sex	Name	Type
06.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	action shot
07.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	action shot
08–09.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	action shot
08–09.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	action shot
10.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
11.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
12.02	ski jumping	M	Łukasz Kruczek (coach, M)	still shot
13.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	action shot
14.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	still shot
15–16.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	action shot
15–16.02	speed skating	M	Zbigniew Bródka	mug shot
15–16.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	still shot
17.02	speed skating	M	Zbigniew Bródka	still shot
17.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
18.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	action shot
19.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
20.02	no photo related to IO			
21.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	action shot
22–23.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk + her coach (M)	still shot
22–23.02	speed skating	W	Katarzyna Bachleđa	action shot
24.02	all medalists	W/M	JK, KS, ZB + both teams	still shot
25.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
25.02	speed skating	M	Zbigniew Bródka	action shot
25.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	still shot

Kowalczyk (4 times) and Kamil Stoch (6 times), in one of two situations—during competition (“action shot”) or the medal’s ceremony (“still shot”). Additionally to Kowalczyk and Stoch, the medalists competing in speed skating, one ski jumper and a female biathlete were presented on the front page of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Table 2).

In both newspapers, photographs on the front pages presented only Polish athletes. There were no significant differences between the women’s and men’s photographs.

## The Dominant Themes

### The Chances, Expectations and Results of Poles

The vast majority of articles focused on the competition. The articles announced the competitions mainly with Poles’ participation and/or described their races and results. Three individuals, all Polish gold medalists: Justyna Kowalczyk, Kamil Stoch and to a lesser extent Zbigniew Bródka dominated the press coverage during the Olympics. As a consequence, the three disciplines practiced by these athletes were the ones that were predominantly covered.

Table 2

**The Photographs on the Front Pages of *Gazeta Wyborcza***

Date	Sport	Sex	Name	Type
06.02	ski jumping	M	Maciej Kot	mug shot
07.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	action shot
08–09.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
10.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	action shot
11.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
12.02	Biathlon	W	Weronika Nowakowska-Ziemniak	action shot
13.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	action shot
14.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	still shot
15–16.02	cross country skiing	W	Justyna Kowalczyk	still shot
15–16.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
17.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	still shot
17.02	speed skating	M	Zbigniew Bródka	still shot
18.02	ski jumping	M	Kamil Stoch	action shot
19.02	no photo related to IO			
20.02	no photo related to IO			
21.02	no photo related to IO			
22–23.02	no photo related to IO			
24.02	speed skating	W	team of 3 women	action shot
25.02	no photo related to IO			

From the beginning of the Winter Games 2014, Kowalczyk and Stoch were perceived as the greatest Polish stars and “hopes” for Polish success:

*Justyna Kowalczyk and Kamil Stoch—without a doubt, the majority of Poles know these two names. They are the biggest stars of Polish sport* (PS, 08.02, p. 9)

*(...) we all hope that these two will be our heroes* (PS, 08.02, p. 9)

[Kowalczyk] *our great hope for medals* (PS, 13.02, p. 9)

Bródka has not been widely known; however, his first place in the speed skating World Cup 2012/2013 and bronze medal in a team competition in the World Championship in Sochi in 2013 allowed to perceive his races as a chance for a Polish medal.

In addition to the gold medalists mentioned above, the press focused on other more (e.g. speed skaters) or less (e.g. female biathletes) successful Polish athletes. In the second case, the journalists wrote about the performances that were below expectations or let-downs:

*In different arenas stars fell down, unfortunately also Poles, who we were hoping for, did so too* (PS, 12.02., p. 9)

*with each of these three we have had certain hopes* (PS, 12.02., p. 9)

Some gender differences were observed. For instance, in the case of the biathlon and cross country skiing, the articles focused nearly only on the female athletes although male athletes also competed at the Olympics. This disproportion could be explained by the athletes' personal records (a potential medalist) and their results in Sochi (which were better

in the case of the sportswomen). In the case of the cross country skiing, Kowalczyk was the heroine of almost all the articles, although 10 Polish runners (5 of each sex) competed at the Olympics.

When both sportswomen and sportsmen were successful, as in the case of speed skating, the articles were sex neutral and related to nationality (e.g., *Speed skating rules in Poland* (GW, 24.02), *The wonderful Saturday of Polish speed skating* (PS, 24.02)). Similar practices could be observed in the titles referring to cross country skiing (“female” medal) and ski jumping (“male” medal): *Sports Poland is only one* (GW, 15.02), *A galaxy of Polish medals—running and jumping* (GW, 17.02), *Sochi was magic. The Poles won the medals* (PS, 24.02).

It should also be noted that not only national patriotism was presented in the press coverage, but also a regional patriotism. The references to local homelands could be observed both on the national pages of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and on the local pages. In the second case, the local journalists were focused mainly on the performances of Jan Szymański (bronze medalist in the team competition in speed skating) and stressed several times his connection with Poznań<sup>1</sup>:

*Sochi also for Poznaniaków* [people from Poznań] (GW, 07.02, p. 8/local)

*The Poznań race in Sochi* (GW, 10.02, p. 8/local),

*Poznaniak [a man from Poznań] one race from medal* (GW, 22.02, p. 11/local)

If the press covered events without the participation of any Polish athletes, the articles’ content referred mainly to the sports stars, usually men (e.g., Bode Miller and Aksel Lund Svindal (both skiers)), and less often women (e.g. Tina Maze), but also to the multimetalists, (e.g., Ole Einar Bjoerdalen) and Russian athletes (e.g., Pluszczenko and the male ice hockey team).

### Her (left) Foot

The second theme that dominated the press coverage was Justyna Kowalczyk’s broken foot. The articles related to her sports opportunities and performances focused mostly on her injury. This topic, according to the journalists, interested everyone:

*everybody cares about our runner’s health* (PS, 06.02, p. 2)

*the Pole’s health is a hot topic* (PS, 13.02, p. 9)

*we are trembling with fear. Not because of the organizers’ troubles, but we are concerned about the health of our biggest star* (PS, 06.02, p. 2)

The focus on Kowalczyk’s broken foot can be explained by the fact that she was perceived as one of the main candidates to win a medal. In this way, the media put pressure

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned in the methodological part, *Gazeta Wyborcza* has a big common national part and small local parts edited in different Polish cities. In the case of this paper the local part of *Gazeta Wyborcza* was related to Poznań.

on the athletes who had already won medals in the previous Olympic Games and/or World Championships (Chang et al. 2011). On the other hand, the emphasis on her injury can be seen as an example of the media practice which focuses on the physical and psychological difficulties the athletes have to overcome to win a medal (Chang et al. 2011; Yu 2009). This is confirmed by the examples taken from *Przegląd Sportowy*. Before the competition, this journal announced her race in this way:

*Today, the [female] Pole undertakes an almost impossible [task]. With a broken foot she will try to fight for an Olympic medal over her favorite distance* (PS, 13.02, p. 10)

After her victory, one journalist wrote:

*Kowalczyk won her second Olympic gold medal competing with a broken bone in her foot and abrasion on her Achilles tendon. Until recently she had struggled with a high fever* (PS, 14.02, p. 2)

Therefore, not only did she win the gold medal, but she did it against all the obstacles and this discourse increased the significance of her victory.

### Polish Villages and a Long Way to Sochi

Polish villages (small towns) appeared in many articles—regardless of the athlete's sex—in two contexts. Firstly, this was as the places of their birth, growing up or place of living of the Olympic medalists:

*both gold medalists [Stoch and Bródka] come from small towns* (PS, 17.02, p. 2)

*the Pole [Stoch] superstar! The world admires a ski jumper from Ząb* (PS, 17.02, p. 4)

*The modest boy from Ząb has reached the top* (PS, 11.02, p. 5)

The press described how these villages had supported their countrymen by watching together the competitions and how proud they were of them, e.g. *Kasina* [where Kowalczyk and her family live] *had celebrated until the morning* (GW, 14.02, p. 39), *The most happiest village. The champion's [Stoch] visit in Ząb* (PS, 10.02, p. 5), *Domaniewice is proud of its countryman [Bródka]* (PS, 17.20, p. 9).

Secondly, the press focused on these places to stress that the Polish gold medalists' way to success was long and not easy, which is very well illustrated by this quotation from *Gazeta Wyborcza*:

*It has been a long way from Domaniewice, where Zbigniew Bródka skated, when a few buckets of poured water froze on the asphalt to Sochi, where he will compete today for a medal in the 1500 m race* (GW, 15.02, p. 36)

The journalists also stressed the poor financial situation of Polish sport and sports infrastructures, which can be very well illustrated by the articles about Bródka. They noticed that the speed skaters had very poor conditions for training in Poland, because they did not have any indoor speed skating rink:

*Here is the Master, but there is no track* (PS, 18.02, p. 7)

*The Poles have to deal with half-measures* (PS, 17.02, p. 8)

*Additionally to the difficulties and challenges which Polish speed skaters have in comparison to the foreign leaders, they have limited opportunities to start [their career]. There is no indoor track in Poland* (GW, 15.02, p. 36)

The press stressed also that some athletes had to work outside sport to earn a living. The journalists did not let the readers forget that Bródka worked as a fireman (e.g. *The fireman extinguished his rivals*—PS, 17.20, p. 8; *The Day of the Fireman?*—PS, 15.02, p. 15).

### **The great rivals and predecessors**

The last main theme which can be distinguished, though covered to a smaller extent, was the direct and indirect rivalry between the individual athletes and between the teams. This theme can be perceived as an element of the “us versus them” discourse in which sports competition is seen as a battle between different nations (Vincent and Crossman 2012). A few articles referred to the rivalry between Kowalczyk and Marit Bjoergen, e.g.:

*She lost four seconds, then she cried many nights, wondering what to do to win against Bjoergen in the future. And she decided that if she took revenge, the 10km classic style would be the best occasion to do it* (GW, 13/02)

*And therefore, since she has started another dispute with all those who tread on her corns regarding her form, her foot, her professionalism, the decisive blow should be dealt during the run* (GW, 14/02).

Kowalczyk’s racing was also perceived as a battle of one Polish sportswoman against the Norwegian team. However, this national discourse was mainly observed in the articles on the ice hockey tournament and was quite often reinforced by the battle (war) language used:

*Today, the jokes are over, the ice hockey tournament begins, which means a Russian war against the rest of the world starts* (GW, 12.02, p. 28)

*Sborna goes for power* (PS, 13.02, p. 13)

*Obama–Putin 3 : 2. In the ice hockey war in Sochi the United States defeated Russia 3 : 2 after penalties* (GW, 17.02, p. 27)

Kamil Stoch did not have a specific main rival to compete against in Sochi, but he was caught up in an indirect rivalry between himself and Adam Małysz (a former ski jumper) by the journalists. Małysz as a ski jumper has achieved the great successes (several times competing in world championships, Olympic medals and a victory in the World Cup) in the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century and is still the most popular, liked and respected Polish athlete. The journalists of both newspapers constantly compared Stoch to his famous predecessor. In *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Małysz’s name appeared in 4 titles while Stoch’s name appeared in 5 titles. This newspaper published also articles which compared the achievements of these two athletes (i.e., *Adam’s ski trembled, Kamil is like a monument* (GW, 11/02); *Will Stoch outstrip Małysz?* (GW, 13/02)). Also *Przegląd Sportowy* confronted these two ski jumpers, e.g. in a 2-page article entitled *Who is better: Małysz or Stoch?* (19/02), and the opinions of seven experts were presented to compare them. At the same time, Sochi was seen as

a chance for Stoch to *escape the shadow of his historic predecessor* (GW, 08.02, p. 38). It seems, however, that despite Stoch's two gold medals and the fact that Małysz was not Olympic champion, the latter is still perceived as the greater sportsman.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The Olympic competitions were presented as the major issues by the press, mainly with reference to Polish success. In the case of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a socio-political newspaper, the photographs of the Polish athletes appeared in 12 out of 17 analysed front pages, which stresses the important role of national sporting success and indicates such successes as important social and national events.

Three individuals dominated the press reporting during the Olympics: Justyna Kowalczyk (cross-country skier), Kamil Stoch (ski jumper) and, to a lesser extent, Zbigniew Bródka (speed skater). As a consequence, it was the three disciplines practiced by these athletes, and additionally the biathlon, that were predominantly covered. This is not so surprising because it was in these disciplines that Poles won medals or finished the competition in the top eight (which is important for athletics' fellowships). If the press focused only on one sex, in spite of an equal number of female and male athletes, it was mainly a consequence of the level represented by the sportsmen and sportswomen and their places on the world lists, which is well illustrated by the biathlon and mainly by the cross-country skiing and Justyna Kowalczyk. The male athletes had poor results, and no other female runner had any success comparable to Kowalczyk. Everyone therefore were overshadowed by her.

The press coverage was mainly focused on the Polish athletes with a chance of gaining a medal and those who won medals. Any attention paid to one or other gender was a direct consequence of the sports results. The analysis of the front pages confirmed that the most important criterion of choosing a photograph was the actual sporting success. Therefore, it does not confirm the previous studies that have revealed female athletes' under-representation in the visual dimension (Hardin et al. 2002; Jones 2010; Pedersen 2002). The editors showed on the front pages Polish medalists, mainly the gold medalists.

The focus on the successful Polish athletes and a lack of significant differences between the media coverage of the men's and women's events can be explained mainly by the intersection of nationality and gender. Polish press framing of Sochi 2014 Winter Games was based on nationality—national expectations, pride and success, which should be appreciated regarding the difficult situation of Poles compared with their rivals from other countries. The previous studies have revealed over-representation of “home” athletes and expressions of nationalism in media coverage during sports mega-events (Bie and Billings 2015; Jiang 2013). The media in order to satisfy their audiences by supporting a national identity, tend to show a nationalist bias in the coverage of sporting events, tending to over-represent and glorify their athletes (Billings and Angelini 2007). Consequently, in the context of mega sporting events, the national identity of the athletes as well as their potential to compete for medals sometimes subsumes their gendered identity in print media coverage during the Olympic Games (Bruce et al. 2010; Bruce and Scott-Chapman 2010; Hardin et al. 2002; Vincent et al. 2002). As a consequence, female athletes become (have a chance

to become) “embodiments of the nations” and “patriots at play” (Vincent and Crossman 2012; see also: Bernstein 2002; Vincent and Crossman 2009; von der Lippe 2002; Wensing and Bruce 2003), as illustrated by Justyna Kowalczyk’s example.

The previous Polish studies have also revealed that women become heroines of sports news when they succeed in sports, especially in sports where there are no men who are equally successful (Jakubowska 2015). The author’s own studies and secondary data confirm that sportswomen who have become successful are shown by the media, become recognizable and are appreciated by sports fans (Jakubowska 2015, Kompas Social Media 2012). Therefore, on the one hand, a focus on “home” athletes, as well as the success of Kowalczyk and female national team in speed skating, can explain why the analysis of the main themes has not revealed many gender differences.

Among them, one can notice a focus only on Kowalczyk, i.e. woman’s, injury, however none of Polish male athlete had similar health problem. Therefore, it was not possible to compare how female and male injuries are covered. A little more often the journalists wrote about a long way to success and difficult trainings conditions in a case of Bródka (male speed skater) which can be explained mainly by his status in sport. Compared to Kowalczyk and Stoch he had not been perceived as a big sports star before the Olympic Games and indeed a situation of speed skating in Poland is much more difficult than that of (male) ski jumping or cross country skiing. Regarding the fourth theme—the great rivals and predecessors—a discourse of national team rivalry was used only with a reference to male competition. The previous studies revealed that the discourse of sport and nation is more often focused on men, and usually male athletes are presented as symbols of nationality, “patriots at play” (Vincent and Crossman 2012), mainly in the case of team sports (von der Lippe 2002; Rowe et al. 2002). The coverage of ice-hockey tournaments, without a participation of Polish teams, confirms the analysis that have been conducted so far.

### Limitations and Further Studies

Several limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, it is geographically limited to Poland. However, this weakness can be turned into strength regarding that: (1) the socio-cultural specificities of each country influence the media coverage of the SMEs and (2) there is a small number of the studies from this part of Europe and lack of Polish data.

Second, the analysis concerns only two newspapers. Moreover, the analysis of *Gazeta Wyborcza* was limited to the edition from one city. It could be worth to take into account a tabloid to reveal its way to present sportsmen and sportswomen, but also to study local editions of *Gazeta Wyborcza* from other cities to deepen the analysis of local patriotism.

Third, the study concerns only media coverage and does not take into account the readers’ reception. The meaning of reception research has been emphasised in the literature (Kane et al. 2013), however, the authors still quite rarely focus on fans’ perception of mediated sports. Therefore, we know much about media coverage but we do not have enough knowledge about the viewers’ and readers’ interpretation of the news. This paper fits into this trend.

Fourth, it should be noted that although, in general, these results reveal an equitable coverage, one must however remain cautious and not generalize about the fairness of the Polish media coverage of female sports. As aforementioned above, in the everyday coverage Polish sportswomen are often marginalized and further studies are needed to confirm and monitor their media coverage during the Olympic Games.

And finally, it should be emphasized that the analysis has revealed several issues, not necessarily related to the athletes' gender, that are worth further studies of (Polish) media coverage. The examples of them are: (1) local patriotism, (2) achieving a success in spite of the obstacles and (3) political framing of sports rivalry.

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