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Breaking Back: A Content Analysis of Wimbledon Singles Coverage in America and Great Britain

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and Great Britain
By: Sarah Farrell

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Breaking Back: A Content Analysis of Wimbledon Singles Coverage in the United States and Great Britain

By: Sarah Farrell

Abstract

With fairly equitable distribution of coverage between male and female athletes, especially at Grand Slam tournaments like Wimbledon, tennis is the ideal sport to study in order to better understand the changing dynamics of gender construction within sports broadcast commentary. Using content analysis, this study examines ESPN and British Broadcasting Company (BBC) coverage of the 2016 men's and women's Wimbledon singles finals. Commentary was studied as a way to compare how prescribed gender roles are perpetuated for male and female players, as well as to examine the regional differences that exist between American and British sport commentary. The data from this study upheld findings from past research such as the continued presence of gendered naming practices in sports commentary. It also affirmed that while there have been changes in the use of gendered language in areas relating to emotion, coaches, and family, many of the commentary trends established in past research continue to exist in both American and British sports broadcasting.

Introduction

Strong play on the court during the early rounds of the 2016 Wimbledon Championships was overshadowed by a story that broke about a number of loosely hanging Nike dresses (Rothenburg, 2016; Ubha, 2016). These dresses, which had trouble staying in place, proved to be a considerable hindrance to the play several female players who were wearing it (Rothenburg, 2016). This caused many problems on the court, and made a real racket throughout world of international sport media as well. Days of coverage, as well as a number of in-depth articles, were devoted to investigative reporting regarding the dress and Nike's response to the issue

(Rothenburg, 2016; Ubha, 2016; Wilder, 2016). Media organizations play an important role in shaping what audiences view as important (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan et al., 1990), so much so that they could derail the coverage of a major international sporting event to talk about issues surrounding a single piece of clothing. This story from the 2016 Wimbledon Championships illustrates the prevalence of media framing, and highlights the importance of research in this area. This study examines the specific language used by sports broadcasters, and how that language is related to gender construction and understanding regional differences in sport commentary.

Studying the language used in a sports broadcast is one a way to understand how sports are presented to the general public, as well as whether a social, gendered bias continues to exist in the sporting world (Duncan et al., 1990; Hardin & Greer, 2009). Previous examinations of sports broadcast commentary illustrate that despite the overall growth of female sports participation, women's sports are still presented as *other* in the media (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Duncan & Messner, 1989) through subtle differentiations in word choices and differing areas of focus in the commentary itself (Duncan et al., 1990).

This study examines ESPN and BBC coverage of the 2016 men's and women's Wimbledon singles finals. By looking at commentary from the primary sports broadcasters in America and Britain, the study not only compares the way men and women are presented in tennis commentary, but also examines some cultural differences that exist in American and British sport commentary. Studying the commentary of these matches provides an insight as to the relative position and importance of male and female athletes in each country because sports are often considered to be a microcosm of society (Coakley, 1978; Eitzen, 2016).

Literature Review

Sexism In Media Coverage of Sports

Media coverage of sports is a useful lens through which to examine the maintenance of traditional gender roles. This coverage often reinforces ideas of traditional masculinity (Eitzen, 2016; Messner, 2002) through commentary language, visual production quality, and the quantity of coverage itself. These different elements found in most sport broadcasts provide a frame through which audiences deduce and ascribe meaning. Sport broadcasts also often present women in a stereotypical way, trivializing their accomplishments (Eitzen, 2016; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Kay, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994), restricting the roles they are portrayed in (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Hardin & Greer, 2009), and continuing to be a site for the construction and maintenance of masculine power (Duncan et al., 1990; Eitzen, 2016; Hardin & Greer, 2009).

Lack of Coverage

Overt sexism is trending towards obscurity in sports media (Duncan et al., 1990), but the lack of coverage of women's sports – which has continued – is a form of ambivalent sexism that remains prevalent in the field (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan et al., 1990; Duncan & Willms, 2006; Higgs & Weiller, 1999; Tuggle et al., 2002). News media have always played an important role in shaping what audiences view as important, which is why the lack of coverage at local, national, and sport-specific news outlets is especially problematic (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan et al., 1990; Kay, 2010). It continues to perpetuate male dominance by excluding women almost entirely from coverage (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan & Willms, 2006; Halbert & Latimer, 1994; Higgs & Weiller, 1999; Kay, 2010). This exclusion marginalizes women's sports and positions them as *other*, while

men's sports are presented as the norm or the standard (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Cooky et al., 2013; Tuggle et al., 2002).

This stagnated growth has also manifested itself in the lack of live coverage of women's sports, especially team sports such as basketball, which have traditionally been considered the *male* domain (Greer et al., 2009; Tuggle, 1997). These team sports are ones in which masculine traits such as devotion to a team, stamina, aggression, and competitive spirit are easily observable (Hardin & Greer, 2009). In the 1990's, over 90 percent of the coverage devoted to women's sports covered what were then considered *gender-appropriate* individual sports like tennis, gymnastics, or golf (Tuggle, 1997; Higgs & Weiller, 1999), which allow participants to exhibit more traditionally feminine characteristics such as grace and beauty (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Greer et al., 2009; Hardin & Greer, 2009; Halbert & Latimer, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Tuggle et al., 2002). The disparity of coverage between team and individual female sports has continued along this same trajectory into the 21st century with nearly 95 percent of the coverage of women's sports on ESPN dedicated to individual sports (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Hardin & Greer, 2009). The overall lack of coverage of women's sports presents a narrative to the public about which sports they should value – namely men's – and reinforces traditionally held gender roles and stereotypes about female athletes (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan et al., 1990; Greer et al., 2009; Lechuga & Schaefer, 2009).

Asymmetrical Gender Marking

Asymmetrical gender marking refers to the use of the word “women's” as a designation to differentiate male and female sports. For example, commentators say “Women's National Championship” when talking about women's coverage, and simply say National Championship when talking about the men's event (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Duncan & Messner, 1989). By overtly and consistently labeling women's athletic events as such, it presents them as the *other*,

and immediately marks them as different for the audience (Duncan & Messner, 2002; Halbert & Latimer, 1994; Higgs & Weiller, 1999; Messner et al., 1993). Men's games, on the other hand, are presented as the norm (Halbert & Latimer, 1994).

Women's athletic events are asymmetrically gender marked both verbally and visually (Duncan & Messner, 1989; Higgs & Weiller, 1999). Commentators often use "women" as a qualifying term to distinguish them from their male counterparts (Higgs & Weiller, 1999). While tennis commentators tended to gender mark male and female athletes more equitably (Duncan et al., 1990; Messner et al., 1993), gender marking in other sports such as basketball was much more evident in the women's games with little to no gender marking in men's games (Duncan & Messner, 1989). Visual and graphic gender marking included elements such as different logos for women's events that distinguish them as the "Women's National Championship" for example (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Duncan & Messner, 1989), as well as the use of blue and pink for each respective gender to reinforce conventional gender stereotypes (Duncan & Messner, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994).

Gendered Naming Practices

A stark contrast exists between how commentators refer to male and female athletes. According to Halbert and Latimer (1994), "The language [used in commentary] reflects present attitudes about women's participation in sport; but it also reinforces and educates viewers on what is 'reality'," (Halbert & Latimer, 1994, p.307), and this attitude in many cases continues to be one of gender inequity (Duncan et al., 1990). Commentary – although not always directly – patronizes female athletes' accomplishments, presents them as the *other*, and highlights the traditional ideals of femininity (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Duncan & Messner, 1989). A number of studies on broadcast commentary of women's sports have found that female athletes are often referred to as "girls" or "ladies", while male athletes on the other hand are almost never

called “boys” (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Duncan & Messner, 1989; Halbert & Latimer, 1994). This language creates a dominant and subordinate dynamic with male athletes being presented linguistically as adults, while female athletes by contrast, are infantilized (Duncan et al., 1990).

Another pattern found in the commentary of women’s sports compared to men’s is that women are more often referred to by only their first name, while men are usually called by their last name or a combination of their first and last name (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Duncan & Messner, 1989; Halbert & Latimer, 1994). Henley (1977) gives context to this finding by establishing that, dominant participants in society are referred to by their last name, and have license to refer to subordinates by their first names. Through these sometimes-subtle distinctions in language, gender and power are clearly defined for the audience.

Technical Aspects and Production Value

The quantity and quality of coverage of women’s sports plays a role in the amount of interest and excitement an audience has for women’s sports (Cooky et al., 2013; Higgs & Weiller, 1999). Television, as a medium, is a site where these feelings can be constructed and manipulated (Greer et al., 2009; Kennedy, 2001; Messner et al., 2016); It both shapes and reflects our attitudes about society (Chittenden, 2014; Tuggle et al., 2002; Duncan et al. 1994). Sports coverage is particularly mediated because the audience does not have a direct view of the action. The director, producer, cameraman, and many others involved in producing the event directly shape the audience’s view (Chandler, 1988; Duncan & Messner, 2002; Greer et al., 2009). This framing that takes place impacts the emotional response that an audience may have, and whether they feel that an event is exciting or not (Greer et al., 2009).

Men’s sports are often seen as more exciting, not because of the athletes’ performances, but because they are presented with a more appealing visual representation and higher technical production value (Duncan & Messner, 2002; Higgs & Weiller, 1999). Men’s sports coverage

features multiple shot types, camera angles, and special effects, as well as the use of statistics and on screen graphics to appear more stimulating to audiences (Duncan & Messner, 2002; Duncan et al., 1994; Greer et al., 2009; Higgs & Weiller, 1999). Men's events in the same sport tend to have higher technical quality than the women's broadcasts (Duncan & Messner, 1989), even when the events are held nearly simultaneously, as is often the case with Olympic coverage (Tuggle et al., 2002). One of the most effective ways to manifest a sense of excitement in broadcasting is through the number of times that camera angles change during a broadcast (Cummins et al., 2012), and scholars have found that men's coverage tends to have considerably higher shot variation than women's coverage (Greer et al., 2009; Messner et al., 2016)

The way that producers choose to frame events, the shots and angles they choose to show, is influenced by the prevalent ideology that sport is a primary site for the maintenance of masculine hegemony (Bissell & Duke, 2007; Duncan & Messner, 2002; Greer et al., 2009; Tuggle et al., 2002). As Bissell & Duke (2007) found, shots of women were highly sexualized and presented female athletes as sexual objects ignoring their strength, athleticism, and power. While commentary may not be overtly sexist (Antunovic & Hardin, 2013; Bissell & Duke, 2007), camera angles tended to objectify women by focusing on their chest and buttocks areas specifically (Bissell & Duke, 2007).

History of Tennis Broadcasting

History of Tennis Broadcasting on Radio and Television in the United States

In the 1920's, sport assumed its modern position as a cornerstone of American culture through a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship with the mass media (Chandler, 1988; McChesney, 1989). This relationship began with newspapers in the 19th Century promoting mostly baseball – but some boxing as well – in their pages, which then led to a gradual increase in the space allotted for sports coverage in both print and broadcast media (McChesney, 1989).

The increased coverage helped sports blossom as a prime source of entertainment in American society (Carvalho, 2007; Chandler, 1988; Lipsky, 1981; McChesney, 1989). In 1921, American radio stations were the first to broadcast sports results from boxing to World Series baseball to Davis Cup tennis (Huggins, 2007; McCoy, 1997).

Considerable differences continue to exist in the American and British television industries in large part because of the way their radio industries were established (Chandler, 1988). In America, radio broadcasts were shaped by American antitrust laws – which encouraged competition in industry – commercial advertising and sponsorship, and the idea that content, should reflect public interest (Chandler, 1988; Lewis, 1991). American radio was state-regulated, with private ownership, and financed through advertisements (Huggins, 2007). And radio manufacturers like RCA and Westinghouse often initiated the broadcasts (Chandler, 1988; Lewis, 1991; McCoy, 1997). These manufacturers many times also owned the broadcasters. RCA for example, established and owned NBC through much of the early 20th Century (Chandler, 1988). The symbiotic relationship between sports entities and broadcasters, like NBC, was evident as sports broadcasts were highly commercial, and often led journalists to function both as reporters and event promoters for games (Chandler, 1988; McChesney, 1989).

When television became widespread in the 1950's and 1960's (Barnouw, 1990; Dauncey & Hare, 2014; McChesney, 1989), NBC, CBS and ABC ruled American sports broadcasting (McChesney, 1989). In 1979 that dynamic began to shift though when the cable network ESPN was founded (Freeman, 2000; Vogan, 2015). ESPN offered something unprecedented in American sports coverage – 24 hour sports broadcasting. This breadth and depth of coverage changed the landscape of how sports were broadcast in America, and decades later vaulted the network to its current status as an integral part of American television and culture (Freeman, 2000; McChesney, 1989; Vogan, 2015).

Televised tennis broadcasting became prevalent in the United States in the 1960's. By that time tennis had fundamentally transformed from an amateur sport played by affluent citizens in country clubs around the world to a professional sport more open and accessible to a wide variety participants and viewers (Carvalho, 2007; Chandler, 1988; Galenson, 1992; Jefferys, 2009; Zirin, 2008). For decades, CBS and NBC were the sole rights holders to Grand Slam coverage in the United States (Gruber, 2014). By 2015 though, ESPN had acquired the rights to broadcast three of the four Grand Slam tournaments in America, with the rights to the French Open still belonging to NBC (Gruber, 2014).

In America, the production of tennis was greatly influenced by previous decades of broadcast coverage of sports like baseball and football (Chandler, 1988). This affected everything from the use of statistics – which were not traditionally kept in lawn tennis – to camera angles and commentary (Chandler, 1988). American broadcasters used these elements to alter the essence of early lawn tennis to fit what they believed American sports fans would find interesting, which was coverage with a constant flow of information (Chandler, 1988).

History of Tennis Broadcasting on Radio and Television in Great Britain

Radio broadcasts of sporting events began in the mid 1920's on BBC radio in Britain (Dauncey & Hare, 2014; Lake, 2015; McCoy, 1997), and provided a unique opportunity for a larger portion of the population to share major sporting events of national significance – like Wimbledon – together in their homes for the first time (Chandler, 1988; Dauncey & Hare, 2014; Huggins, 2007). BBC radio coverage of Wimbledon began in 1927, with the first live television broadcast of the tournament coming in 1937 (Lake, 2015). And soon, the BBC would retain exclusive rights to broadcast the tournament (Lake, 2015). Although regional radio coverage in Manchester, Wales, and other areas was still prevalent in the 1930's, the BBC helped shape

Britain's national sporting culture with emphasis on the *national character* of sports like football, tennis, and rugby (Huggins, 2007).

British radio broadcasting – unlike its American counterpart – was established by the central government in 1922 (Burrows, 1924; Chandler, 1988; Huggins, 2007; McCoy, 1997). Although the BBC broadcast was controlled by the government, it stood at a distance from political influence and positioned itself as a neutral source with a focus on public service, common good, and content curated with the purpose of being more educational than entertaining (Burrows, 1924; Chandler, 1988; Huggins, 2007; Silva, 2011). Although the BBC's monopoly ended in 1945, its commercial enterprise was crafted in a very similar light (Chandler, 1988). Content was strictly regulated, and commercials on programs were controlled with an emphasis on good taste (Chandler, 1988).

While many people worried radio would die out after the advent of television, sport radio broadcasts remained strong even after television came onto the scene in the 1950's and 1960's (Dauncey & Hare, 2014). The BBC's strong journalistic ideals established during its radio days carried over as the network made the transition to television, and helped it survive threats from both competing networks and government influence (Silva, 2011). In 1954 BBC2 was introduced, which allowed the BBC to increase the variety of sports that it broadcast and expand the coverage of sports it already featured like golf, tennis, and cricket (Whannel, 1986).

BBC sports broadcasts, unlike American coverage, presented sport as an event and not a spectacle by translating the coverage as faithfully as possible and not inserting an abundance of commentary (Chandler, 1988). BBC producers were concerned with providing the best representation of the sport for the fan that was knowledgeable and absorbed in its tradition (Chandler, 1988). With Wimbledon specifically, the BBC framed the tournament within the cultural context of what it means to be English (Blain et al., 1993; Hills & Kennedy, 2009). The

BBC reaffirmed the Wimbledon brand, and broadcast it around the world allowing this once highly exclusive event to be open to a wider public (Hills & Kennedy, 2009).

Contemporary Wimbledon Broadcasting

Today, television and streaming video services available on the Internet have continued to segment the tennis broadcast market. From 1970 to 2013, NBC held sole rights to broadcast Wimbledon in America (Gruber, 2014). They aired matches for men and women's singles from the semifinals and finals giving fans access to only a small portion of the action (Chandler, 1988; Gruber, 2014). In 2012, ESPN took over the broadcast rights from NBC for Wimbledon coverage in a \$40 million-a-year deal (Gruber, 2014). This deal gave ESPN the rights to broadcast the tournament in the United States for the next 12 years – until 2024 (Gruber, 2014). Rights to British coverage of the tournament are still owned by the BBC until 2017 with an estimated global cumulative audience of 378 million people in over 182 countries around the world (Chittenden, 2014).

Sport Broadcasting in a Digital Age

With Internet usage growing exponentially around the world, providers like NBC, ESPN, Sky Sports, and the BBC look to use online streaming as a way to increase their digital coverage, and reach a larger portion of an already segmented market (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). Through online streaming coverage American providers ESPN3 – an online streaming option that users who purchase cable packages with the ESPN family of channels can access (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012) – and the Tennis Channel allow fans to watch any match they choose, and switch from court to court whenever they please (Dauncey & Hare, 2014; Gruber, 2014, Whannel, 2009). This is especially important because in the past, if two matches were going on simultaneously, viewers were at the mercy of the television producers as to what portions of each match they were able to view (Chandler, 1988; Dauncey & Hare, 2014; Kian & Clavio, 2011).

This debundling of coverage represents a huge expansion of time and content from the options offered by CBS and NBC with their previous years of television coverage. While ESPN has been on the forefront of providing online streaming of live sports coverage in America, the BBC's iPlayer has played a similar role in Britain (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). With the proliferation of online streaming, individualized consumption of sports broadcasts is a trend present in both tennis coverage as well as coverage of almost every other sport around the world (Dauncey & Hare, 2014; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012).

A Selective History of Tennis

British Tennis

In 1874, Englishman Major Walter Wingfield established the modern game of tennis (Collins, 2010; Lake, 2015; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014). Wimbledon, the first lawn tennis tournament and Britain's national tournament, was first contested a few years later in 1877 (Collins, 2010; Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2015; Wilson, 2014), with Englishwoman Maud Watson being first to win the women's singles title in 1884 (Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014). Wingfield's version of tennis borrowed elements and rules from both real tennis, also known as royal tennis, and badminton (Lake, 2015). When the British Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) was formed in 1888, it helped solidify the rules of lawn tennis throughout the country (Lake, 2011; 2015).

In the early days of the sport, lawn tennis was considered a strictly upper-middle class sport (Jefferys, 2009; Kay, 2012; Lake, 2011; 2015; Schattner, 2014; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014) with strong ties to the ethical ideals of amateurism (Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2015). In amateur competitions, athletes did not receive any prize money or compensation for food or travel (Jefferys, 2009) and there was a greater value placed on playing with the appropriate style and practicing fair play than trying to win (Lake, 2011; 2015). Along with that, there was an element of restraint in the early style of play, which made the sport more socially suitable for

women both as spectators and competitors (Lake, 2011; 2015). Amateurism touted the ideals of honor, competition, and chivalry, which were also deeply ingrained into British culture and identity (Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2011; 2015; Schattner, 2014), especially within the upper-middle class (Lake, 2015).

After World War I, British tennis experienced democratization of membership with an influx of players from various social classes (Lake, 2011; 2015), which reflected the broader societal changes also taking place in Britain during the interwar years (Lake, 2015). This influx was due in part to the boom in the formation of tennis clubs in the 1920's, with membership becoming increasingly egalitarian due to postwar economic prosperity (Lake, 2015), as well as the relative fall of equipment prices (Lake, 2011). After World War II, amateurism was superseded in competitive sport culture in Britain (Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2015) primarily amongst elite tennis players (Lake, 2011; 2015). This shift came sports broadcasts via radio were becoming prevalent, and sport itself was becoming increasingly commercialized and globalized (Lake, 2015). The popularity of tennis as a leisure activity also began to decline in the years immediately following World War II (Kay, 2012) bringing with it a shift from solely aristocratic participants to an increase in both upper-class and middle-class participation (Lake, 2011).

In 1968, there was a worldwide shift from amateurism to professionalism in tennis (Collins, 2010). This adoption of professionals amongst amateur tennis players ushered in what is known as the Open Era of tennis (Collins, 2010). The first tournament in the Open Era was the British Hard Court Championships in Bournemouth with a \$14,000 combined prize payout (Collins, 2010; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014). Virginia Wade – the top British female singles player at the time – won the women's singles draw in the tournament and would be one of many tennis players to make the switch from amateurism to become a professional in the late 1960's

(Collins, 2010). As in America, British tennis also began to shift towards entertainment and spectacle in the late 20th Century (Wilson, 2014).

Tennis in the United States

Lawn tennis began to be played with some regularity in the late 19th Century in America (Gillmeister, 1998), with one of the first official tournaments being held at the Staten Island Cricket and Baseball Club in September 1880 (Gillmeister, 1998; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014). The inaugural United States Championships for men and women were held in 1881 and 1887 respectively (Collins, 2010), and the United States Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA) was established as the governing body for American tennis in 1881 as well (Gillmeister, 1998; Lake, 2015; Tingay, 1977; Wilson).

In the early years, American tennis was most prominent on the East Coast (Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2011; 2015), with the Men's National Championship being held at the Newport Casino in Rhode Island (Gillmeister, 1998; Lake, 2015; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014) and the Women's National Championship being held at the Philadelphia Cricket Club (Tingay, 1977). In 1923, the new stadium court at Forrest Hills in Queens, New York was completed, (Gillmeister, 1998; Tingay, 1977) and both the Men and Women's National Championships moved there that same year (Tingay, 1977). The strict amateurism rule put in place by the USLTA, which explicitly prohibited the reimbursement of travel expenses for players (Jefferys, 2009), helped contribute to the prominence of tennis on the East Coast as well in the early 19th Century. The financial constraints of this rule made it difficult for players from the West Coast to travel and compete in national tournaments during the amateur era (Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2011).

As World War II came to a close, the first signs of a shift from amateurism to professionalism began to appear in American tennis (Wilson, 2014). Tennis stars of the 1940's and 1950's like Bobby Riggs, Jack Kramer and Pancho Gonzalez (Collins, 2010; Wilson, 2014)

were no longer casual gentlemen athletes who played for the love of the game, but rather career athletes concerned with winning titles (Wilson, 2014). This change in tennis – known as ‘shamateurism’ – was also felt throughout the sporting world as focus on commercialization and entertainment in sport began to emerge (Wilson, 2014). Another shift in American tennis came in the 1950’s when Althea Gibson became the first African American player – man or woman – to compete in the United States National Championships (Collins, 2010; Thurmond & Tignor, 2007; Wilson, 2014). Her entry into the highest level of the professional game helped make tennis part of the integration movement occurring in American sports, and the country as a whole, at the time (Thurmond & Tignor, 2007; Wilson, 2014). In America, as in Britain, the Open Era of professional tennis players began in 1968 (Collins, 2010). The Open Era meant that players who were openly professional could enter major tournaments and compete alongside amateurs for the first time in tennis history (Collins, 2010). A time of turbulence immediately followed as officials and players tried to figure out how amateurs and professionals could coexist and compete (Wilson, 2014). Despite this transition towards commercialization, tennis was not far removed from the genteel, country-club sport that it had been in the 1920’s and 1930’s though (Ware, 2011).

While the popularity of tennis as a leisure sport began to decline in the 1940’s in Britain, tennis’s peak years of popularity in America came in the 1970’s with approximately 41 million recreational participants in 1974 (Ware, 2011). By the 1980’s that boom was over, and tennis was once again changing as sponsorships and television became key parts of the sport (Wilson, 2014). As tennis moved into the 21st Century, the biggest changes came in the technology related to equipment (Wilson, 2014). The way that tennis rackets, court surfaces, outfits, and training techniques were produced were all evolving as tennis became fully integrated into the information age (Wilson, 2014).

The Championships Wimbledon

The first Wimbledon Championships, also considered to be the first lawn tennis tournament contested as well (Collins, 2010; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014), was held in 1877 in the suburbs of London (Collins, 2010; Wilson, 2014). It is the championship of Great Britain, with the tournament officially titled The Lawn Tennis Championships (Collins, 2010). Wimbledon was originally located at Worple Road (Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2015; Tingay, 1977), but moved to its current location at Church Road in 1922 (Collins, 2010; Lake, 2015; Tingay, 1977). The West London location helped the tournament blossom into a well-attended social affair (Wilson, 2014), and helped to establish its ‘posh,’ English, garden party atmosphere (Jefferys, 2009). “Throughout the post-war period, the Championships grew to sustain itself as Britain’s tennis monolith, a social institution invested with immense cultural significance” (Lake, 2015, p.265). The main show court – Centre Court – resembles an Elizabethan theater (McPhee, 1972), with a capacity of about 10,000 seats (Collins, 2010).

Wimbledon was one of the first Grand Slam tournaments to lobby for ‘Open Tournaments’—allowing professional players to compete alongside amateurs—and it welcomed amateurs and professionals together for the first time in 1968 (Collins, 2010; Tingay 1977). Rod Laver and Billie Jean King won the men’s and women’s singles tournaments respectively with a combined prize payout of \$63,000 (Collins, 2010). Wimbledon was the last Grand Slam tournament – the US Open, Australian Open, and French Open being the other three – to offer equal pay for male and female singles champions in 2007 (Collins, 2010).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to increase current understanding of how gender is constructed in tennis commentary as well as to explore the regional differences that exist between American and British sports commentary. Using past research as a guide, the following

research questions were designed to facilitate the content analysis of the 2016 men's and women's Wimbledon singles finals.

RQ1: How is gender constructed by ESPN and BBC commentators in the 2016 men's and women's Wimbledon singles finals?

H1: Commentators will reference the emotional state of the female players more often than the emotional state of male players.

H2: Commentators will reference the physical play of male players more often than the physical play of female players.

H3: Overall, the comments about female players will have a more negative tone than comments about male players.

H4: Overall, the comments about male players will have a more positive tone than comments about female players.

H5: Commentators will talk about external factors such as coaches, family, and court conditions as they relate to play more often for female players than for male players

H6: Gendered naming will occur more often for female players than male players.

RQ2: How does this commentary fit within the cultural context of televised sport and gender in America and Britain?

H7: The length of the American commentary will be longer, meaning that the overall number of comments will be higher.

H8: The BBC broadcast will have more instances of gendered naming practices than the ESPN broadcast.

H9: The overall tone of the comments on the BBC broadcast will be more negative than the tone of the comments on the ESPN broadcast.

Methods

In order to answer these questions about the construction of gender and the regional differences in sport commentary, this study reports findings from a content analysis of the 2016 men's and women's Wimbledon singles finals.

The Sample

This study examined the commentary from ESPN and BBC video recordings of 2016 men's and women's Wimbledon singles finals. Overall, the commentary examined includes 72

individual games from the men's final and 42 individual games from the women's final.

Wimbledon was chosen as the Grand Slam tournament to focus on for this study because it was one of the earliest tennis tournaments to be contested. In 1874, Englishman Major Walter Wingfield invented the modern game of tennis (Collins, 2010; Lake, 2015; Tingay, 1977; Wilson, 2014). Soon after, Wimbledon began hosting The Championships, and has hosted them every year since 1877 (Collins, 2010; Jefferys, 2009; Lake, 2015; Wilson, 2014), except during the years of World War I and World War II (Collins, 2010). The finals were chosen to examine for this sample because historically they were the only rounds of a Grand Slam tournament to be broadcast at all (Chandler, 1988; Dauncey & Hare, 2014; Kian & Clavio, 2011). While that changed in recent years with the introduction of live online streaming from services like ESPN3 in the United States (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012), these matches still have the highest viewership numbers (Paulsen, 2016) in the tournament.

ESPN was chosen as the network to examine the Wimbledon coverage in the United States because it holds the sole rights to broadcast the tournament until 2024 (Gruber, 2014). ESPN was established in 1979, and their introduction of 24-hour sport coverage increased both the breadth and depth of available sports coverage, which forever changed the sport broadcast landscape in America (Freeman, 2000; McChesney, 1989; Vogan, 2015). Both matches on ESPN were recorded on DVDs at the time of the tournament, July 9th and 10th, 2016.

The BBC also has exclusive rights to broadcast Wimbledon in the United Kingdom (UK), and their contract extends until 2017 (Chittenden, 2014; Lake, 2015). Their first radio broadcast of the tournament was in 1927, with the first televised broadcast coming in 1937 (Lake, 2015). The men's finals match from the BBC was purchased as a DVD via Amazon months after the match occurred. The BBC coverage of the women's final match was downloaded from a European archive, also at a later date from when the match originally occurred. For the women's

singles final, the original BBC commentary was re-broadcast on Eurosport. Eurosport was determined to be a valid alternative as they are attempting to work out a deal with BBC and the All England Club to become the first live commercial broadcaster of Wimbledon in the United Kingdom (Conlan, 2016). The Eurosport version was analyzed in this study because it was the only one accessible at the time of analysis. Match highlight clips from the Women’s singles final (from bbc.com/sport/tennis) were used to ensure the validity of the commentary, i.e. that the Eurosport video was actually from the BBC feed.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is comments made by the commentator about a player. This study analyzed many aspects of these comments such as descriptions of *physical play*, *mental state*, *emotion*, references to off-court life (e.g. a *player’s coach* or *family*), and *gendered naming*. See Table 1 for a list of themes and subthemes from the codebook.

Table 1

Adjectives Referencing Physical Play, Mental State, Emotion, Player References, and Coaches

Physical play	Mental state	Emotion	Player references	Coach
Precision/control	Intelligent/good decision-making	Nervous	First name	Personal relationship with
Aggression	Stupid/poor decision-making	Sad	First and last name	Gender of
Being defensive	Confident	Happy	Last name	Training/strategy
Being tentative	Tough/resilient	Angry	Nickname	Reliance on for emotional support
Consistent	Vulnerable	Frustrated	Uses pronouns	
Quick	Focused	Lack of Emotion	Multiple categories evenly	
Stamina and endurance	Making mental errors			
Power				
Error-free				

Variables were coded if they were mentioned in a comment about a specific player. Coding for *gendered naming* in particular was in reference to the comment as a whole. For example, if the commentator used a player's last name most often throughout a comment, that code was recorded. Match-level items such as *network* and *commentator gender*, which are more objective facts related to the match, were also coded for each comment. This unit of analysis was chosen because it provided insight as to which general elements of a match that a commentary team decided to focus on for a particular player as well as the specific, gendered terms they used. These elements played a role in the narrative that was established during the match about a player, and how the audience perceives players of different genders (Duncan et al., 1990; Hardin & Greer, 2009).

Coding Procedure

Because the focus of this study was to examine the commentary as it related to the athletic play of each player, coding was only conducted during match play; pre-match, post-match, and changeover commentary were not considered. While these other commentary elements are important when considering the overall narrative established by the commentators, this study focused on the comments made as they related to the match itself.

Three coders were used in this content analysis, and all three were undergraduate students in varying degree programs at a small liberal arts university in the Southwest. Each of the three coders were trained in the use of the codebook by watching the first set from the quarterfinal men's (Wawrinka v. Tsonga) and women's (S. Williams v. Konta) singles matches from the 2017 Australian Open broadcast on ESPN. Intercoder reliability was established by having coders watch selections from the first set of the 2017 Australian Open men's singles match between Goffin and Dimitrov also broadcast on ESPN.

Krippendorff's alpha was the statistical coefficient used to establish agreement for each of the 59 variables in the codebook. The acceptable threshold for intercoder reliability was chosen to be .80 for this study. This threshold was established based on Neuendorf's seminal work on content analysis, "that agreement reliability coefficients that account for chance of .80 or greater would be acceptable to all" (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 168). Krippendorff's alpha was used because it takes into account chance agreement as well as the magnitude of misses when calculating intercoder reliability (Neuendorf, 2017). In addition, it is a statistic that can incorporate multiple coders (Neuendorf, 2017), which was important in this particular study since three coders were utilized.

Once the coding was complete, a chi-square test was conducted to explore the relationship between the variables of *physical play*, *precision and control*, *aggression*, *emotion*, *overall tone*, *gendered naming practices*, *coaches*, and *family* and *athlete gender*. Frequency tests were also used for each of these variable combinations. In situations where a significant relationship was not found between the variables, another chi-square test was run with the additional restriction of looking at comments from either one network or the other. For the hypotheses relating to regional differences (H8 and H9), a chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between the variables of *network* and *overall tone* as well as *network* and *gendered naming practices*. Frequency tests were also run for these variable combinations in order to get a clearer understanding of the more minute aspects of the commentary. Finally, the hypothesis (H7) relating to overall number of comments was examined by running a cross tabulation between the *network* and *athlete gender* variables.

Findings

Gender construction was determined by comparing the *athlete gender* variable with claims made by commentators relating to *emotion*, *physical play*, and the *overall tone* of the

comments. Comparing the *network* variable with *gendered naming* and *overall tone*, as well as looking at the overall numbers of comments made by each network was how this study examined the regional differences between the two broadcasters.

Table 2

Association Between Athlete Gender and Broadcast Commentary

	Male		Female		χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Valid %	<i>n</i>	Valid %	<i>n</i>				
Emotion	11.0	54	3.7	39	.001	1	.001	.970
Physical play	68.0	330	66.0	231	.540	1	.026	.463
Precision and control	17.6	85	20.0	70	.724	1	.030	.395
Aggression	10.0	63	13.0	35	1.869	1	.047	.172
Coaches	4.0	19	3.0	10	.719	1	.029	.397
Family and significant other	5.0	23	2.5	8	3.514	1	.065	.061*
Gendered naming	63.0	481	80.0	350	71.726	7	.294	.000**

* $p < .10$

** $p < .001$

Athlete Gender and Emotion

No association between athlete gender and comments about their emotions and feelings was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = .001, p < .1$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 11% (54 out of 481) of the comments about male players were made in relation to their emotions and feelings, while about only 3.7% (39 out of 350) of the comments about female players were made in relation to their emotions and feelings.

Athlete Gender and Physical Play

No significant association between athlete gender and comments about their physical play was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = .540, p < .5$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 68% (330 out of 481) of the comments made about male players were made in relation to their physical play, and about 66% (231 out of 350) of the comments made about female players were made in relation to their physical play.

Athlete Gender and Precision and Control

No significant association between athlete gender and comments about the precision and control of their physical play was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = .724, p < .2$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that amongst comments made about female players 20% (70 out of 350) were in relation to their precision and control, while for male players on the other hand it was only 17.6% (85 out of 481).

Athlete Gender and Aggression

No significant association between athlete gender and comments about the aggression of their physical play was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = .1869, p < .5$. An examination of the cell frequencies found that about 13% (64 out of 481) comments made about male players were in relation to aggression, while for female players it was about 10% (35 out of 350). Furthermore, amongst the comments made about being aggressive, 64.3% (63 out of 98) were made about male players, while 35.7% (35 out of 98) were made about female players.

Athlete Gender and Coaches

No significant association between athlete gender and comments about their coaches was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = .719, p < .5$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 3.95% (19 out of 481) of the comments made about male players were made in relation to their coaches, and about 2.86% (10 out of 350) of the comments made about female players were made in relation to their coaches.

Athlete Gender and Family or Significant Other

A significant association between athlete gender and comments about their family and significant other was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = 3.51, p < .1$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 4.78% (23 out of 481) of the comments made about male players were made in relation to their family or significant other, and about 2.5% (8 out of 350) of the comments

made about female players were in relation to their family or significant other. The Cramer's V value for this relationship was .065, which is considered very weak.

Table 3

Athlete Gender and Gendered Naming Terms

Male (n =481)		Female (n =350)	
Gendered Naming Term	%	Gendered Naming Term	%
Pronoun	34.9	Pronoun	34.9
Last Name	17.3	Last Name	14.3
First Name	2.5	First Name	14.0

Athlete Gender and Gendered Naming Practices

A significant relationship between athlete gender and gendered naming practices was found, $\chi^2(7, n = 831) = 71.726, p < .001$. The relationship between these variables has a Cramer's V value of .294, which is strong. Cell frequencies indicate that pronouns were used to talk about male players 34.9% (168 out of 481) of the time, followed by last name at 17.3% (83 out of 481), and first name at 2.5% (12 out of 481). Amongst female players, pronouns were used 34.9% (122 out of 350) as well, last name was used 14.3% (50 out of 350) of the time, and first name was used at 14.0% (49 out of 350).

Table 4

Association Between Athlete Gender and Overall tone for ESPN, BBC, and Combined

	Male			n	Female			n	χ^2	df	v	p
	Positive tone	Negative tone	Neutral tone		Positive tone	Negative tone	Neutral tone					
Both	47.6%	27.4%	23.3%	481	54.9%	23.1%	20.5%	350	5.999	4	.085	.200
ESPN	50.0%	32.2%	10.2%	270	59.4%	19.4%	8.3%	190	10.469	4	.151	.033*
BBC	44.5%	21.3%	17.5%	211	49.3%	27.5%	9.2%	160	5.716	3	.124	.126

* $p < .05$

Athlete Gender and Tone

No significant relationship between athlete gender and overall tone was found, $\chi^2(1, n = 831) = 5.99, p < .2$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 27.4% (132 out of

481) of the comments made about male players had an overall negative tone, and about 23.1% (81 out of 350) of the comments made about female players had an overall negative tone. Furthermore, 47.6% (229 out of 481) comments made about male players had an overall positive tone, while 54.9% (192 out of 350) comments made about female players had an overall positive tone. A significant association between athlete gender and overall tone of comments was found on ESPN though, $\chi^2(4, n = 460) = 10.469, p < .05$. Again, the same trend exists on that broadcast as well with more positive comments being made about female players and more negative comments being made about male players.

Table 5

Association Between Network and Overall Tone of Comments

	ESPN				BBC				χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Positive tone	Negative tone	Neutral tone	<i>n</i>	Positive tone	Negative tone	Neutral tone	<i>n</i>				
Overall tone	53.9%	26.9%	18.5%	460	46.6%	23.9%	26.7%	371	17.176	4	.144	.002

* $p < .01$

Network and Overall Tone

A significant association between network and overall tone of comments was found, $\chi^2(4, n = 831) = 17.176, p < .05$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 53.9% (248 out of 460) of the comments made on ESPN had an overall positive tone, while about 46.6% (173 out of 371) of the comments made on BBC had an overall positive tone. Furthermore, 26.9% (124 out of 460) of the comments made on ESPN had an overall negative tone, while about 23.9% (89 out of 371) of the comments made on BBC had an overall negative tone. Importantly, BBC had a higher proportion of overall neutral comments than ESPN with 26.7% (99 out of 371) of their comments being neutral and 18.5% (85 out of 481) of the comments on ESPN being neutral. While the association between overall tone and network was high, these two variables have a weak Cramer's V value of .144.

Table 6

Association Between Network and Gendered Naming Practices

	ESPN		BBC		χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Valid %	<i>n</i>	Valid %	<i>n</i>				
Gendered naming	72.8	460	66.8	371	13.125	7	.126	.069*

* $p < .10$

Table 7

Network and Gendered Naming Terms

ESPN (<i>n</i> =460)		BBC (<i>n</i> =371)	
Gendered Naming Term	%	Gendered Naming Term	%
Pronoun	37.6	Pronoun	31.5
Last Name	15.9	Last Name	16.2
Combination	8.5	Combination	8.1
First Name	8.0	First Name	6.5

Network and Gendered Naming Practices

A significant association between network and gendered naming practices was found, χ^2 (7, $n = 831$) = 13.125, $p < .1$. Examination of the cell frequencies showed that about 37.6% (173 out of 460) of the comments made on ESPN referenced a player using predominately pronouns, while about 31.5% (117 out of 371) of the comments made on BBC referenced a player using predominately pronouns. Furthermore, 15.9% (73 out of 460) of the comments made on ESPN referenced a player using only their last name, while about 16.2% (60 out of 371) of the comments made on BBC featured only a player's last name. And finally, 8% (37 out of 460) comments on ESPN included only a player's first name, while 6.5% (24 out of 371) of the comments on BBC referenced a player by first name. While the association between gendered naming practices and network was fairly high, these two variables have a weak Cramer's V value of .126.

Table 8

Total Number of Comments for men's and women's final on ESPN and BBC

	ESPN (n = 460)	BBC (n = 371)
Men's Final	270	211
Women's Final	190	160

Overall Number of Comments

Despite the fact that the ESPN and BBC broadcasts of each match covered the same amount of match play, the overall number of comments was higher on ESPN with 55.42% (460 out of 831) of the total comments coming from that network. For both the men and women's broadcasts, ESPN had a higher overall number of comments. The BBC women's final did feature two American broadcasters, which meant that the broadcast had an overall number of comments more closely aligned with the ESPN women's final broadcast.

Discussion

While many of the specific hypotheses in this study were not supported, it is important to note that there were still many instances where this commentary confirmed the findings of previous studies as a reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity in sports (Duncan et al. 1990; Eitzen, 2016; Messner, 2002; Hardin & Greer, 2009).

Athlete Gender and Emotion

The hypothesis that the commentator would focus more on the emotional state of female players (H1) was based on Halbert & Latimer's (1994) content analysis of the 1992 Jimmy Connors vs. Martina Navratilova match. In that study they found that commentators often differentiated female athletes by emphasizing their emotions or vulnerable side. Duncan & Messner (1989) also found that commentators, and media in general, tend to blame a sportswoman's losses on their fragile emotional states. Interestingly the results of this study do not support the conclusions of earlier research. While there was no significant relationship

between athlete gender and comments about emotions surprisingly, more comments were made about the emotions of male players than female players. In this study, 11% of comments made about male players were in relation to their emotions, while only 3.7% of comments made about female players referenced their emotions. For example BBC commentators stated the following about Milos Raonic, “It’s funny, Andy Murray actually turned around after winning that point because he heard this roar out of Milos Raonic, screaming at himself. So accustomed to the big Canadian showing no emotion out there. That’s the second time today he’s been really frustrated that he hasn’t been able to keep an easy ball in play.” This comment indicates that the norm for male players is a lack of emotion (Duncan & Messner, 1989; Halbert & Latimer, 1994); so much so that the commentator felt it necessary to point out when Raonic was showing emotion. Furthermore, commentators talked most often about male players feeling happy and frustrated, while commentators talked most often about female players feeling frustrated or pressured.

Athlete Gender and Physical Play

The hypothesis that commentators will focus on the physical play of male players more often (H2) was based on studies by Duncan & Messner (1989), Higgs & Weiller (1999), and Halbert & Latimer (1994). All of those studies found that commentators focused on the aggression and physical aspects of male sports. Although there was no significant relationship found between the variables of physical play and athlete gender generally in this study, there were some specific variables related to physical play that supported the previous findings.

Certain physical play variables were included in the codebook (*precision and control* and *aggression*) that past research had determined to be inherently more feminine or masculine (Duncan & Messner, 1989; Higgs & Weiller, 1999; and Halbert & Latimer, 1994). Higgs & Weiller (1999) established that the differentiation between these two elements of physical play existed along gender lines. In their research on professional golf tournaments, they found that

terms such as “violent”, “powerful” and “macho” were often used for male players, while female strength descriptors were often framed in an ambivalent way with terms such as “excellent ball striker” (Higgs & Weiller, 1999). The results of this study support these earlier findings.

Precision and control was generally assumed to be associated with finesse as well, which carries an inherently feminine connotation based off of traditional sporting stereotypes (Hardin & Greer, 2009). Hardin and Greer (2009) also found that sports that involved less contact were deemed to be less aggressive and therefore, more feminine. Codes that did not directly relate to combat or conflict between players, like precision and control, were determined to be more feminine in nature as well. Twenty percent of comments made about female players mentioned their precision and control, whereas only 17.6% of the comments about male players did so.

The aggression variable, on the other hand, is something that has been determined to be more masculine in nature. Messner et al. (1993) suggested that sports commentary in general is often male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered (Coakley, 1978). Halbert & Latimer (1994) also established that commentators used aggressive terms to describe male tennis players’ physical play. This assumption is based on the fact that an aggressive style of play is generally more accepted for male athletes than female athletes. Tennis began as a genteel, upper-class sport, and therefore a certainly level of restraint was expected especially amongst female players (Lake, 2011; 2015). Hardin & Greer (2009) found that sports emphasizing overt displays of aggression or strength were determined to be more masculine. Since sports that involve less aggression are more widely accepted for female athletes, it was assumed that commentators would not focus on the aggression of female athletes. While not a statistically significant relationship, there were a higher number of comments made about male players regarding aggression than female players. Of the comments made about being aggressive, 64.29% were about male players, while only 35.7% were about female players.

Athlete Gender and Coaches/Family

Another hypothesis that was based on the results from Halbert & Latimer (1994) is the fact that commentators would mention relationships with coaches and family more for female players than for male players (H5). Their study found that Navratilova's relationship with her coach was emphasized, especially as it related to her reliance on her coach for emotional support as well as tactics and strategy. Once again, a significant relationship was not found between the athlete gender and coach variable in this study. There was a significant relationship on the BBC broadcasts between these two variables, but it was a weak one. Of the comments made about a player's coach on the BBC, the majority, 50% (6 out of 12), were in relation to strategy and training. This makes sense within the context of British sports broadcasting, as a major focus of their commentary is on the match itself (Chandler, 1988).

A significant relationship was found between athlete gender and comments made about the player's family and significant others. This hypothesis (H5) was based on many of the same studies as the previous hypothesis (H5) relating to a player's coach. The premise is that families, much like coaches, are there to emotionally and mentally support female players. What this study uncovered was quite the opposite however. While the relationship was not strong, comments were more frequently made about family in relation to male players than female players. As an example, near the end of the second set, an ESPN commentator made the following comment about Andy Murray, "Murray told his camp, 'Fire up now, fire up.'" And then, later in the match, BBC commentators added, "He's got the crowd fired up, and now he wants his box to fire up." Throughout both of the broadcasts, the commentators expressly point out the fact that Murray is imploring his friends and family in his box to give him energy and urge him on. This commentary tend is something that past research identified as occurring more for female athletes, but this specific set of comments relating to Andy Murray may have occurred because men are

often presented as tough, straightforward, and lacking emotion. When commentators talked about the families of male players it humanized for the audience and added more depth to them as players. More research in this area is warranted.

Gendered Naming Practices

The hypothesis (H6) related to gendered naming is based in extensive research that has been conducted in the area of sports commentary, which suggests that language in commentary reinforces ideas about gender inequality in sports. Antunovic & Hardin (2013), Duncan & Messner (1989), Halbert & Latimer (1994), and Higgs & Weiller (1999) all found that women were often referred to by only their first name, while men were called by their last name or a combination of their first and last names. This study supports previous findings, especially when considering the use of first name. Female players were referenced by their first name 14% of the time, while male players were only referenced by their first name 2.5% of the time. This difference in cell frequencies illustrates that gendered naming practices do occur, especially when comparing male and female sports. Henley (1977) indicated that there is a social hierarchy associated with the use of first name versus last name, with men inherently receiving more respect through use of full name.

As far as networks are concerned, it was hypothesized (H8) that the BBC would have more instances of gendered naming than ESPN. This is because Title IX legislation was passed in the United States, which opened up significant opportunities for women to participate in sports beginning in the 1970's (Ware, 2011; Zirin, 2008). In Britain no such national legislation exists, and therefore it was predicted their commentary would be more gendered to reflect the relatively limited role of female athletes (O'Neill & Mulready, 2015). A significant but weak relationship was found between the variables of network and gendered naming. These results did not support past research or the hypothesis (H8). The BBC was found to have a slightly higher use of last

name in their commentary with 16.2%, while ESPN commentators used last name 15.9% of the time. Subsequently, ESPN also had a higher use of first name in their commentary with 8% compared to the 6.5% use of first name in the BBC commentary. These results are significant for the same reasons described above, and it suggests that in fact the ESPN commentary included more instances of gendered naming than the BBC broadcasts.

Network and Overall Number of Comments

Regional differences were predicted (H7) concerning the overall number of comments on each broadcast. This was hypothesized based on Chandler (1988) who reported: 1) in the history of American sports broadcasting, fans have come to expect and need a constant flow of information in order to remain entertained and engaged; 2) British sports broadcasting, is characterized by translating the coverage as faithfully as possible and not inserting an abundance of commentary. The ESPN commentary not only had a higher overall number of comments, but they made more comments about each individual player as well. BBC commentator Andrew Castle points out this distinction during the broadcast of the men's final when he says, "Must be on a commercial break on American TV. Mac [John McEnroe] silent, and into it."

Another factor in this study was the nationality of the commentators. John McEnroe and Lindsay Davenport, both former American professional tennis players, were in the commentary booth for the BBC women's final. Their style of commentary fit more closely with an American style due to the fact that they were socialized within the American system of sports broadcasting. This study indicates that there is a strong relationship between the individual commentator and overall tone of their comments during the BBC women's final. The two American commentators contributed 59% (95 out of 160) of the overall comments on the broadcast, while the lone British broadcaster was responsible for the other 41% (65 out of 160). Again, this overall number of comments fits more with findings from the commentators on ESPN than the other commentators

on BBC. So, it may be the cultural socialization in the broadcast systems rather than the network itself that differentiates the number of comments.

Overall Tone

There were two hypotheses (H3 and H4) related to athlete gender and overall tone of comments. The basis for these hypotheses was from research conducted by Duncan et al. (1990) with the LA84 Foundation. They established that the agency commentators gave players for wins and losses were correlated with gender. For example, commentators attributed a male player's success to his competence, while his failure was due to his opponent's exemplary play. For female players, on the other hand, their failures were often talked about in relation to their own incompetence (Duncan et al., 1990). Duncan and Messner (1989) also found that commentators often used terms like, "female athletes were nervous, not aggressive enough, too emotional, or uncomfortable" (Duncan & Messner, 1989, p.177). Based on this past research, it was hypothesized that more negative comments would be made about female players and more positive comments would be made about male players whether they were winning or losing.

What this study revealed was less clear-cut than the original hypothesis though. There was no significant relationship between the variables of athlete gender and overall tone of comments. Male players had a higher percentage of comments with an overall negative tone, while female players had a higher percentage of comments with an overall positive tone. What the results indicated, on a player-by-player basis, is that the tone of the comment depends more upon who was winning or losing the match than athlete gender. In some respects, this finding confirms earlier research regarding agency. Both Andy Murray and Serena Williams had more positive comments and fewer negative comments than their opponents. In fact, Milos Raonic had the highest percentage of negative comments, with 36.8% of the comments made about him being negative. This suggests that the theory of agency based on gender may not be easily

transferable to every situation. While commentators did mention Andy Murray's exceptionally high level of play when talking about Raonic's struggles, they also focused on Raonic's mistakes more than expected. On ESPN, commentators began pointing out Raonic's mistakes in the first set with comments like this one from Chris Fowler, "Only a couple of serves over 135 from Milos, both of them in the opening game, but the pace for whatever reason hasn't quite been there yet."

The final hypothesis (H9), that the ESPN broadcast would contain more comments with an overall positive tone while the BBC broadcast would contain comments with an overall negative tone, was based off the idea discussed previously relating to culture and broadcasting. A major objective in American sports broadcasting is to entertain the audience (Chandler, 1988), therefore it was assumed that their broadcast would be lighter and more upbeat in nature with a more positive focus. The BBC's goal, on the other hand, is to provide an accurate representation of the sport for fans (Chandler, 1988). Based on this, one would expect the BBC to hone in on the details of the match, which often means addressing, focusing on, and criticizing the poor play of the losing player. A significant relationship was found between the network and overall tone variables, with that relationship being weak. Frequencies outlined in Table 5 indicate that BBC had fewer positive and negative comments compared to the ESPN broadcast. They did, however, have a much higher percentage of neutral comments. On ESPN, 18.5% of the comments were neutral compared to 26.7% for the BBC. The high number of neutral comments on the BBC broadcasts compared to the ESPN broadcasts confounds the results, not allowing as clear and direct of a comparison as expected.

Conclusion

While this research can provide insight into the way that tennis matches are framed and constructed by commentators, there are some also limitations to this study. To begin, the sample

size of four matches, 831 comments overall, is not quite large enough to make generalizations about ESPN or BBC tennis commentary. A higher number of comments in the sample would help increase the statistical significance of the relationships between variables as well. While this research does provide a useful starting point for examining the differences that exist between the commentaries in each country, it is certainly far from complete. More extensive research must be conducted to have a fuller understanding of the context of these findings within the sporting cultures in the United States and Britain.

An additional limitation relating to the ability to draw conclusions about cultural differences is the fact that American broadcasters were in the booth for the BBC women's final. The broadcasters' American nationality confounds the results when trying to establish an understanding of British tennis broadcasting. Future studies examining cultural differences in sports broadcasting should be wary of the nationality of the broadcasters.

Furthermore, it may be difficult to draw conclusions from the data collected about the gendered naming variable in this study. The data would be more accurate if the way a commentator referenced a player was counted every time a specific player was mentioned, but since this was not the focus of the study, it was only considered in the context of the comment as a whole. In this study, the way a commentator referenced a player was coded based on what term was used most often throughout the comment. This means that some aspects of this variable were not captured in the data, making it harder to determine the accuracy and validity of the data in terms of the gendered naming variable. Again, specific research in this area would provide a more accurate representation of the prevalence of gendered naming in tennis commentary.

Future research on tennis commentary should focus on two areas. First, as mentioned previously, a larger sample size should be considered. While the finals are important matches to analyze because of their widespread viewership, looking at the tournament from start to finish

would be more revealing and a larger sample would help to establish and reinforce the results from this study. By including a larger sample, future researchers would also be able to examine a wider variety of commentators and understand how an individual's commentary differs or remains the same from match to match as the tournament progresses. The second area that should be considered is a sample of matches that span over multiple years. A sample spanning this length will allow researchers to better understand how tennis commentary fits within the general social and cultural sporting context of each country.

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